

## Coffee Addict

### Chapter 8 - Jaimie

**“Jorge Alvarez had been saying for a while, that the plantation needed a better police force than two trainees. Now he had a selection of keen and bright new cops to choose from, he found himself always taking Olie and Julian out with him. They were like that badly worn pair of slippers, which felt really comfortable.”**

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Jaimie Gosse was rarely known by anything other than Jaimie. The name Gosse seemed to have come from a great-great grandfather of French ancestry. Even Jaimie wasn't his real first name, but he'd long ago ceased explaining the weirdness of his name, or how he'd ended up in Colombia. He had a large house a long way out of town, but still close enough for the phone company to put him on their network. He was wealthy enough to be comfortable and an old friend of Julie Yago. Had they once been lovers ? Like his name, Jaimie never felt the need to explain their friendship to anyone. Jaimie had reached an age where his brown hair was turning grey at the edges. Not that he'd ever considered dyeing it.

“What's got you upset, Yolana ?” He asked.

Yolana was his dog, a huge female bear of a dog. A cross between several breeds, all of them tough looking and massive. Jaimie had never been worried about burglars, since Yolana had arrived as a very large and expensive to feed puppy. His dog was growling, the deep in her throat angry growl. There was something annoying her that morning, in ten acre field. He stroked her head, which stopped the growl.

“Are you alright girl ? Darned if I can see anything.” Said Jaimie.

Officially Jaimie was a farmer, but he hired other people to do that. Ten acre field had been turned into an avocado plantation. There was good money in avocados; everyone seemed to be growing them. As Yolana began her growl again, he saw something moving among the avocado trees.

“Now I see it.....Stay close girl.....No running after it.”

Jaimie had begun carrying a gun after the incident with Michelle, Teresa and the beast that had butted a Range Rover, and almost won the battle. It was a weird and impossible event, which had led to a few phone calls and the arrival of a powerful hunting rifle. It had a clip, no trying to use a bolt action with a ferocious beast coming after you. It had wonderful online reviews, but the hunting rifle came with no guarantees that it would kill one of the weird creatures, or even stop it. Jaimie had the rifle on a strap over his shoulder. He took it off his shoulder and held it, ready for anything, but hoping a deer would come out of the trees. It definitely wasn't a deer, which came out of the trees, making a noise like an angry parrot.

“No.....Stay, Yolana.....Stay.” Yelled Jaimie.

No good, it was like trying to hold back a runaway train. Yolana was off, running straight at the creature. The beast looked like a lizard, with a lot of bird in its makeup. About three times the size of a large thanksgiving turkey, it had feathers all over its body, in clumps. It wasn't pretty and its legs looked very lizard like. Nasty looking claws and teeth, Jaimie hoped it didn't seriously injure his dog. It was screeching, the noise was almost deafening.

“You're not hurting Yolana, you bastard !” Yelled Jaimie

Five rounds in the clip on the rifle. The general assumption being that if you couldn't hit your prey in five shots, maybe you ought to find another pastime than hunting. Jaimie moved closer to the beast, but of course, his dog was getting in the way of a clear shot.

"Keep away from it, girl." Jamie yelled.

It was hurting his dog, biting her and clawing at her. Yolana actually whimpered, as the brute clawed at her nose. As his dog jumped to one side, Jaimie had his chance. He fired his hunting rifle and the creature yelled, in a very birdlike way. It didn't die though, or even seem to be hurt.

"Hideous looking thing.....Why won't you die?" Shouted Jaimie.

Yolana had huge jaws and a massive weight advantage. The creature was keeping her at bay though, by using its claws. They had to be as sharp as razors; his poor dog was covered in bleeding wounds. As his dog backed away a little, Jaimie decided to use every bullet in the clip. It might mean him having to try and club the brute to death with an empty gun, but Jaimie was fed up with watching it hurt his dog.

"One way or another, you're going to die." Said Jaimie.

He fired all four remaining rounds, though it stopped screeching after the third. By the time Jaimie had walked close enough to get a good look, the creature was a dead carcass, with his dog chewing at it.

"Hey, leave it, girl.....Luke will want to examine the brute." Said Jaimie.

It had been hard to kill, but not impossible. It was large, but it probably wasn't fully grown. Jaimie dreaded to think about facing one the size of horse. He'd been lucky and Jaimie possessed the forethought to find a weapon that just might kill the weird creatures.

"Maybe it hatched from the eggs at the old Wilkins place?" Jaimie muttered.

Jaimie dragged the dead beast by one of its legs, while Yolana kept growling at it. In future he'd carry a couple of spare clips for the rifle, just in case.

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"How does anyone set off an explosion like this, by accident?" Asked Olie.

Jorge Alvarez had been saying for a while, that the plantation needed a better police force than two trainees. Now he had a selection of keen and bright new cops to choose from, he found himself always taking Olie and Julian out with him. They were like that badly worn pair of slippers, which felt really comfortable.

"Young Garcia will know, but well.....Boom." Said Julian.

Julian even made a bomb blowing up movement with his hands. Dreadful, but Jorge didn't tell him off. When volunteers had been asked for, to look for what might be left of Garcia; Julian and Olie had been the first to sign up. Not that much had been found of the cop from Bogotá. Just enough pieces to avoid his family burying an empty coffin.

"Come on guys.....Once this is finished, we can avoid the Wilkins place for a while." Said Jorge.

"I heard Colonel Hernandez is being recalled to Bogotá." Said Olie.

"I was at Café Loco.....Everyone is talking about it." Said Julian.

Jorge had heard the rumours and Julie Yago had confirmed it, though only in private. Even a famous colonel, couldn't get away with blowing a young cop to bits. Unintentional of course, but it screamed incompetence. Hernandez was tidying up his paperwork, for a new guy to takeover. No one knew who, not even Julie.

"No good looking at me.....I can't confirm it." Said Jorge. "Look guys.....The sooner we get this done, the sooner we can be having a cold beer."

It was tidy up and make safe day at what was left at the old Wilkins place. Hopefully it wouldn't take all day, but there was a lot of work to do. A proper gate across the road for a start, something strong to try and stop whole families of Lookie loos, turning up in their trucks. They'd just finished putting up the gate, with its red on white 'Danger Keep Out,' sign.

"They'll just park here, or drive around the gate." Said Olie.

"Yeah, but we've done our bit.....Another box ticked off the list." Said Jorge.

Julie Yago had come up with most of the list. Basically lots of keep out signs and danger warnings in front of the buildings the explosion hadn't quite managed to destroy. One day someone was going to do something silly at the Wilkins Farm and die of it. The signs might not be fun to put up, but they might save the plantation a small fortune in damages.

"Why not demolish everything and have done with it?" Asked Julian.

"Too expensive.....Signs are cheap." Said Olie.

Jorge knew both his trainees were cynical, but had they always been that clever? Again, he didn't want to reply; anything might be repeated one morning in Café Loco. There were a lot of chains, signs and a couple of gates. Jorge had borrowed an open back truck for the day. He was still unsure why the local police, him, had been given the tidy up and make safe job.

"Here we go.....Hammer in the signs." Said Jorge. "It won't take long."

There were a lot of half destroyed sheds and outhouses; even the old farmhouse was partly standing. It took a while, a surprisingly large amount of time. By the time Olie hammered the last 'Keep Out,' sign into the ground, it was nearly dusk.

"Shit.....They should have hired a proper crew to do this." Muttered Julian.

"I know.....I'll have a talk to Julie Yago." Said Jorge. "I promise to get something for you guys as a bonus."

"That'd be nice." Said Olie. "Today was.....A lot of very hard work."

"Tonight is on me.....All the burgers and beer you can eat and drink." Said Jorge.

Scrub up first, before going out? They did look a mess and someone had a bit of body odour.

Actually, all three of them were a bit smelly. The village burger place wouldn't mind, they put up with groups of smelly kids.

"Let's go now.....I really need a beer." Said Jorge.

"I need several." Said Julian.

And there it was, high up in the trees and making a low and repetitive chiming sound. Maybe it came out at dusk, when it was less likely to be seen. Quite large, the tops of branches were bending under its weight. Julie claimed to have heard something in the trees when he'd been with her at the old Wilkins Place. Jorge had seen something, but he'd thought it was a bird. This wasn't a bird; it was one of them, some form of the creatures plaguing the plantation.

"Have you got your super gun?" Asked Olie.

"It gets in the way while I work." Said Jorge. "It's in the truck's glove box."

Silly really, one of the huge wolf type creatures, might turn up anywhere. Jorge walked towards the truck to get his pocket howitzer. He stopped when he heard the screeching noise. There were two of them in the trees and they seemed to be going through a mating ritual. As Jorge watched, one of them mounted the other.

"Shit.....They're fucking." Said Julian.

Too dark to see much detail, but the creatures looked like large birds, though it was unclear if they had wings. It seemed improbable that anything that large, could fly.

"Do we shoot at them?" Asked Olie.

"Wait until I have my gun." Said Jorge.

He never did get his gun. The screeching noise got louder for a moment, before both of the creatures took to the air.

"Damn, these things can fly." Yelled Julian.

On huge wings, they headed a little north of west, towards Gregory's plateau and the mountains.

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Michelle Thorpe had started coming back to Hacienda Yago, during the day. Part of her role was protection for Julie and her family, so it wouldn't look like skiving. Teresa was usually there, if she wasn't out shopping in the village. They'd become like two proud parents to Rocky, even if they both knew the situation couldn't last. Rocky was an unknown really, a potentially dangerous species that didn't appear in any books. He might suddenly become a killer of pets, once he reached puberty.....

"We don't even know if they have anything like puberty." Said Teresa.

"Trust me.....If they're laying eggs, they have to reach puberty." Said Michelle.

Rocky was starting to sprout wings and there were now tufts of feathers all over his body. A friendly creature, he reminded Michelle of a kitten she'd had as a child. Rocky only knew her and Teresa though, and they both treated him, or her, as though she was their child. Lots of good food and bags of affection.....Rocky would be crazy if he wasn't friendly towards them. How might he be with strangers though, once he was older ? They still weren't sure if Rocky was a male, or a female.

"We really need to let Luke know we have Rocky." Said Michelle. "Supposing he hurts your parents as he gets bigger.....And then there are the wings. If he can fly, he could cause all sorts of mayhem."

Teresa was giving her the look.....The supposing Luke cuts him up to see how he works.....Look.

Michelle was worried too, but they really couldn't keep Rocky. Something living in the Hacienda, eventually the size of a flying horse, with sharp claws ! Julie Yago was smart, she'd notice that.

"We could keep him just a little longer." Said Teresa. "Rocky is friendly.....He'd never hurt anyone."

"He would, you know that, Teresa." Said Michelle. "We don't even have a cage he'll fit into. Luke can get one made in under a day. Leave Rocky here and I think we'll always be safe. He'll think of us as family, sort of honorary creatures. But everyone else.....When he's fully grown, they'll just be dinner."

The wings worried Michelle and she knew they'd worry Luke. Anything that walks over land is limited in where it can go, by rivers and oceans and even the fences at human borders. Once something could fly, it could spread right across the globe.

"Alright, but Luke has to promise not to hurt Rocky." Said Teresa.

"Yes, I was going to suggest the same thing." Said Michelle. "We'll both go to see Luke and we tell him straight. Swear by all he holds holy that Rocky won't be hurt, or we're keeping him."

"He might send the cops to search the hacienda." Muttered Teresa.

"And annoy your mum....I doubt it." Said Michelle. "Just in case though.....I can think of a few places where we can hide Rocky."

Rocky was such a gentle creature, at least with them. He was clambering all over Teresa's arm, while she pretended to fight him. Not one scratch had she ever had, from all his wicked looking claws and teeth like very sharp needles. Quiet too, apart from a rare chiming sound he made, when it was either dawn or dusk.

"What do you think he is ?" Asked Teresa.

"I think someone made him, probably in a laboratory." Said Michelle. "I think they were all created by the same people. Wolf like, or huge flying lizards.....I believe people made them. I wonder if they considered what might happen if a few of them escaped."

"You're scaring me, Michelle."

"I'm scaring myself."

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Only one of their trailers had been broken open and damaged. Luke Walsh still had two refrigerated trailers, capable of holding the dead creature found near Wilkins Farm. No one in Bogotá wanted it; the last one they'd been sent by airfreight had arrived stinking with decay. No one at the Calgary head office of Tessera Coffee Holdings, wanted it either. From being one of the most sought after dead creatures on the planet, things had changed. Everyone wanted eggs, or a young one, but no one wanted a stinking carcass that weighed a little over a ton.....

"I know it sounds like scientific heresy." Said Luke. "I think that from now on, we extract a few samples and get the carcass buried quite quickly."

"You're assuming we're going to find more of them ?" Asked David Sullivan.

Just the two of them, looking at the large and quickly decaying wolf like body. Colonel Hernandez was returning to Bogotá in disgrace, which was part of the problem. He'd been talking up their finds, making a ton of rotting flesh sound like something desirable to have. Now he was spending all his time dotting a few final I's and crossing a few T's.

"I'll gladly take a wager that we'll find a lot more of these creatures." Said Luke. "People are obtaining better weapons and that means.....More dead creatures."

Luke kept looking at the clock. Michelle and Teresa had asked to see him, on a very private matter. Michelle had made it sound very cloak and dagger. With luck, David would be gone before they arrived.

"So.....Where are we going to bury them ?" Asked David.

"Somewhere close.....just beyond the car park." Sid Luke. "I can actually requisition the land under my new wartime powers. Did you ever see news film of how the British dealt with cattle culled because of foot and mouth disease ?"

"Yeah.....Dig a hole, drop the carcass in the hole.....Burn the carcass and then bury it." Said David.

"And there you have it." Said Luke. "My plan to get rid of all the unwanted dead creatures."

"Just make sure you keep lots of samples." Said David.

"I will." Said Luke.

They already had the use of a mechanical digger, courtesy of Julie and the Yago Plantation. Add on a few strong backs borrowed from the plantation and the plan would work.

"I'm needed elsewhere." Said David. "If you run into any problems.....Give me a call."

By the time Michelle arrived with Teresa, Luke had already received permission to use the land just the far side of the car park. Permission from whom ? Julie Yago of course, in her role as leader of the town council. Luke often wished it was just as easy to organise things in Toronto. His visitors looked anxious and eager to get inside. Luke took them into the trailer which didn't have a large dead creature on the floor.

"Close the door and we'll have complete privacy." Said Luke. "Your call made me curious. Have you found another one of the dead creatures ?"

"Easier to show you this." Said Teresa.

Strange that in a town with a truly awful phone service, that Teresa had an expensive iPhone. Then again, if money wasn't a problem, Luke would have probably owned one. Teresa pressed a button and gave him her phone. The screen was playing a recording of one of the lizard like creatures, which also had a few birdlike characteristics. The creature was clambering over Michelle, using her as a climbing frame. It had tiny wings and they were flapping. Still too small to lift it off the ground,

but given time. Everyone wanted a living specimen. Luke's head was spinning with all the possibilities of being able to research a live infant creature.

"Did you two find some eggs somewhere ?" Asked Luke.

"It's Rocky, the creature who bit the colonel." Said Michelle. "I intended to take him home for just that night. Then someone broke in and stole the eggs."

"So we hung onto him.....He's very friendly." Said Teresa.

"Where is he ?" Asked Luke.

"Somewhere safe.....Until we've come to some sort of agreement." Said Michelle.

"Agree not to harm Rocky and we'll give him to you." Added Teresa.

Did they realise there were unscrupulous laboratories who'd pay almost anything to get hold of Rocky ? Probably not, they didn't seem the sort to worry about things like that. They'd formed an attachment to the creature and didn't want him dissected, simple as that. Luke merely wanted the professional kudos from writing articles on a growing Rocky. Not all his Canadian colleagues would put science before cash.....Even Luke was slightly tempted.

"I give you my word, not to hurt Rocky, or give him to anyone who might harm him." Said Luke. "You have to realise that many will see Rocky as an opportunity to get very rich. He can't be kept here. I have the keys to Doc's surgery. Not that large, but it's not being used at the moment. Rocky can be kept there for now. If that meets with your approval ?"

"It does for me.....We will need a key." Said Michelle.

"We will need to feed him." Said Teresa. "I like the idea of Doc's place. No one will think of looking for him there. Not that we really know if he really is a he."

Luke was already planning how to look at the creature's DNA, to see if that revealed Rocky's gender. He took a spare set of keys out of his drawer and handed them to Michelle.

"These will get you into Doc's place." Said Luke. "You'll need to try them out, to see which key fits which door. I'd recommend keeping Rocky in the back room, where Doc has the sample freezer. I'll tell Julie you're helping me with Doc's chaotic paperwork."

Teresa hugged him, which was totally unexpected. Michelle mentioned trusting him at least three times, which meant she was still a little unsure of him. Rocky was probably worth one or two million US dollars to the right people, but Luke had no intention of selling him.

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Chad Hudson would have gone, even if Kate hadn't kept telling him how important it was. A meeting about the trip to Gregory's plateau, everyone was going to be around the large table in Ana's house. They were calling themselves the 'Committee,' and this was to be the first committee meeting. An evening meeting, Kate had said food would be provided.

"We're spreading out where we're parking.....Here will do." Said Kate.

He was getting to know the village; they were still a good ten minute walk from Ana's house, the house where Bea and her mother had lived. Chad retrieved his gun from the glovebox before leaving the car. He never went anywhere now, without the supergun under his jacket.

"Who will be there tonight ?" Asked Chad.

"The entire committee." Said Kate. "Jess of course, she's now deeply involved with Muisca. I'm not sure whether Julie Yago is a believer, but she'd fund the expedition."

"Julie Yago will be there, at Ana's house ?" Asked Chad.

"Yes, the whole committee." Said Kate. "One day you'll listen to what I tell you. Jorge the police chief will be there. David Sullivan has even promised to turn up. It's the entire committee.....Everyone."

Chad liked the older houses in the village, the ones built to house generations of plantation workers. Those who'd bought their homes, had added and improved to their homes. Ana's was in its original state though and Chad thought it looked just about perfect.

"All those people.....She must have a very big table." Said Chad.

"She has.....Famously large." Said Kate.

Jess opened the door and took them through to the back room. It seemed strange to see Julie Yago sat on a chair in a corner of the room. She was muttering something to Jorge Alvarez, the police chief. No sign of David Sullivan, but he'd once been late for the office Christmas Party in Calgary.

"I'm so pleased you both came." Said Ana Moura.

"Chad nearly organised his own expedition.....You're his hero." Said Kate.

"True.....I might be able to get you one of the super guns." Said Chad.

Jaimie Gosse arrived late, but he had experienced one hell of a day. It's not every day that you kill one of the creatures with a hunting rifle. Chad had met Jaimie a few times now and heard a lot about him. One of life's characters, the kind you're instinctively pleased to have around. Jorge had described Jaimie as the guy who was likely to survive anything.

"So.....Keep close to Jaimie and you're likely to survive too." Jorge had said.

That interested Chad. Many people had used pretty much the same description about him, Chad Hudson. The food arrived a few minutes after they'd all found places at Ana's very long family table. The food arrived in boxes from somewhere and smelled wonderful. Paper plates were supplied and plastic cutlery. For the environment it was a disaster, but as Julie said....

"If I can eat off paper plates, you can all eat off paper plates."

Great food eaten as they talked. Mainly chicken and a selection of vegetables, but it was best food Chad had ever been offered at a committee meeting.

"There's wine somewhere.....Who has the wine ?" Asked Jess Fisher.

The wine was found, two boxes of it. The food and drink broke the ice, with everyone settling down with people they knew, but were likely to get to know a lot better. Ana was taking minutes and Julie had appointed herself chair of the committee. Fair enough, she was paying for just about everything.

"Alright.....We can make up the agenda as we go." Said Julie.

"An official thank you for the food." Said Jaimie.

They were being playful, nearly everyone thanked Julie for the food, which Ana duly recorded in the minutes. Chad hadn't realised the committee, really was going to be a committee.

"Alright, settle down." Said Julie. "Item one will be the equipment needed to get everyone onto the high plateau. I know the forbidden path, so there will be no spraying with defoliants."

"Oh.....I was looking forward to that." Said Jorge.

"I am quite willing to hire two twin rotor helicopters." Said Julie. "Enough space to get a platoon of marines to Gregory's plateau. We'll take enough supplies to have a really good look around the temple."

"Do we have to call it Gregory's plateau ?" Asked Ana. "He was a missionary, trying to convert those who believed in Muisca. Many of us find the use of his name to be offensive."

"Yes, I wasn't thinking." Said Julie. "No vote on that.....No further mention will be made of Gregory. From now on it is the temple on the high plateau."

"That is now in the minutes." Said Ana.

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Cesar's family really had been tailors for over a century. He was always truthful, or at least tried to be, it was one of his things. No police record at all, his past screamed honesty at anyone who might

look him up. Actually, not having any fines for anything minor, had worried one of the interviewers when he'd applied to join the Colombian police force.

"Everyone has something." The interviewer had said. "Even I've got two small fines on my record; both for very minor traffic offences."

Cesar had been tempted to ask for details, but he really wanted to join the police. Pissing off the interviewer probably wouldn't have helped him get his dream job. Some school kids dream of being a fireman, or a train driver. From about the age of ten, he'd wanted to be a cop. He still had no idea why, none of his family had ever been in the police. His grandfather had been in the army for a while, but he always said he'd hated it. In an attempt to be one of the gang, Cesar had accepted an invitation to go out in one of the vehicles with Olie and Julian. They had regular patrols around areas where the local kids were known to go to drink and make out.

"We tell them it's unsafe, we even put up signs." Julian had said. "But.....If they choose to ignore us and still go to unsafe areas to party.....We still have to try and protect them."

Those sounded like Jorge's words, but the two trainees seemed to genuinely want to keep the local teens safe. Not that any of them had guns capable of killing the creatures. The plan seemed to be full of holes like that, but at least they were doing something.....

"Did your grandfather really make suits for Pablo Escobar?" Asked Olie.

"It was an uncle, but yes, he did." Said Cesar. "Escobar was quite a well-dressed man, when he had the opportunity."

Dusk approaching and Cesar had decided the creatures were most active at dawn, or dusk.

Crepuscular it was called and the humble domestic cat was crepuscular. Julie had seen groups of kids near the river below the plateau. Olie and Julian had added it to their patrols and Cesar had, sort of, invited himself on their patrol that night.

"So.....Lidia has been seen out with Julie Yago's daughter." Sid Olie.

"Everyone to their own, I say." Added Julian.

There was a question in there somewhere, though Cesar was happy to ignore it. Become their source of gossip just once, and they'd be constantly pestering him. Cesar smiled at Julian and said nothing.

"We're there.....Look, some kids are already here." Said Olie.

"It doesn't look a nice place to drink and snog." Said Cesar.

"It isn't.....The water has a red tinge to it and stinks." Said Julian. "They get privacy here, their parents hate the place."

"Everyone hates it here." Said Olie.

"Apart from horny teens, by the look of things." Added Cesar.

Getting there by car was awkward too. It involved a few back roads that had been known to flood and a mile or two of swamp roads. Even so, the need for privacy, beer and the company of other teens, meant that the area was busy on a nice night. It seemed there was always someone who could borrow their dad's truck.

"I used to come here." Admitted Olie. "There was one particular girl.....I'd have waded through miles of mud to see her."

"What happened to her?" Asked Cesar. "Are you still together?"

"No, she married someone else." Said Olie.

"Oh, we've all been there, Olie." Said Julian.



Cesar had been dumped a few times in his life. To him one of the most depressing statements in the world was.....Then she married someone else. Not that he was going to tell that to his two new buddies. Well, not until he knew them far better.

"Another truck has arrived." Said Olie.

"It's as though they've been given a free pass to Disneyland." Said Cesar.

A stinking river and a few dead animals had been found near there. One deer was suspected to have been hunted and killed by the creatures. Yet there they were with their beers, what looked like half the teenagers employed by the plantation.

"We need to talk to Julie again. She has to stop them doing this." Said Julian.

"Yeah, good luck with that." Said Olie.

Was it just coincidence that the creature chose that night to hunt the kids near the river ? Another night and there might well have been no adults within miles. Cesar's mother believed that everything was for a purpose. Some of that had rubbed off on Cesar, when he'd been quite young. A few things had happened to him that seemed fated to happen. He firmly believed that everything happened for reason, even if it didn't make sense to him. When he heard the kids begin to scream, he wasn't as surprised at his two colleagues. He asked the question, but had already guessed the answer.

"Got any better weapons than the shotguns ?" Asked Cesar.

Hard to stay calm, when he could hear the kids screaming among the trees along the edge of the polluted river. There had to be a plan though, or a lot of people looked likely to die before the sun rose in the morning.

"No.....All we've got are the shotguns." Said Julian. "And our phones won't work here.....No phones ever work here."

"And I've got a service issue automatic." Said Cesar. "Not much, but it might sting it a little."

"We don't even know what it is." Said Olie.

"Hmmm.....It'll be huge and probably look like a wolf on steroids." Said Cesar.

"Fuck.....Have you got a plan ?" Asked Julian.

Cesar did, but they weren't going to like it. There were a lot of teens out among the trees and probably a few in their early twenties. They'd all have parents who probably thought they were drinking beer, somewhere close to home. Cesar's plan was to have no crying mothers the next morning, or at least very few of them.

"You won't like it." Said Cesar. "We make a lot of noise and yell at the kids to get in their cars and trucks. We shout at them to head for home, as quickly as they can. Meanwhile we annoy the creature, or creatures..... We do that by shooting them with our fairly useless weapons."

"We'll get killed." Said Olie.

"Maybe.....But we might save a few kids." Said Cesar. "Less crying mums in the morning."

"Alright, let's do it." Said Julian.

At least they had flashlights, so they weren't running between trees in the dark. Cesar saw a mass of back fur and realised he'd been right. The creature was one of the wolf like beasts. Very big, it had to weigh well over a ton. There really had been no way to guarantee none of the kids dying that night, but it was still depressing to see blood on its massive jaws.

"Bastard !" Yelled Cesar.

He fired three times, straight into its cruel looking face. It didn't seem to like it, but there was no way to know how badly it had been hurt. An eye; maybe if he could hit one of its huge yellow and green eyes. Cesar stood his ground as the creature ran at him. Three shots, but he missed the eye. It was

hurt and annoyed though, it was definitely hurt. It swung around to avoid being stung again, by his service handgun. It hit a tree head on and unlike in the swamp, there were thick heavy trees near the river. The ceiba tree had been there for decades, maybe centuries. It didn't even budge, as the creature was brought to a stop. Somewhere to his right, Cesar could hear Olie, telling the kids to get in their vehicles.

".....and fuck off back to the village." Olie was yelling.

Cesar would have felt happy at a minor triumph, but the creature was pulling itself back from the very solid looking ceiba tree. To finish off his feeling of despair, he caught a glimpse of the teenage girl with short dark hair. She'd been killed and partially eaten by the brute.

".....no slowing down.....Get back to the village." Julian was shouting, somewhere nearby.

Cesar reloaded his gun and like many modern automatics, its clips held a lot of rounds. Twenty four bullets he had and he was going to aim them all at its eyes. It was the only course of action that might see him surviving the night. Cesar was going to aim carefully and blind the brute.

"Come on then.....Ignore the kids." Cesar shouted. "Come and get the nasty guy who stung you with his bullets."

The ceiba tree had left its mark; there was a wound on the left side of its face. Not deep, but the gash from the tree was bleeding.

"Come on.....I'm the one you want." Shouted Cesar.

He was risking his life for about the same salary as a decent primary school teacher. Not that he was too worried about that. If he died protecting the kids, his family would be very proud of him. His picture might even end up on the mantelpiece at home, next to his father's. The creature ran at Cesar and it was already very close. Olie or Julian had to be close; he could hear their shotguns firing somewhere. The beast in front of him, really did seem to only care about killing him. Its dreadful greenish yellow eyes were staring at him, as it ran.

"If I'm to die.....Let it be quick."

Cesar began firing, aiming first at one eye, then the other.

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