

Coffee Addict

Chapter 18 - Rocky

'Despite there being a saying about it never happening, people did tend to expect lightning to hit the same place, even multiple times. Someone in the family had been involved in a car crash; then everyone was concerned about their nearest and dearest being hurt in a similar way. It was the same with everything from burglary to serious illness.'

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By the time Kate Doyle reached her apartment, there was a pillar of flames rising from somewhere in the village. There was still the occasional explosion, which sounded like the military using grenade launchers.

"I really hope that isn't Café Loco going up in flames." Said Kate.

"The local TV station are bound to have rolling updates." Said Yoon.

Kate kept forgetting that Yoon Choi didn't know the area that well; it was just a matter of days since she'd arrived. Yoon had panicked a little, but had calmed down. Designing weapons was one thing, but seeing them used; were two very different things. Now though, Yoon was in her kitchen and looking far less stressed.

"We don't have local TV, but there is V-Boom radio." Said Kate. "They do a breakfast time show that we all listen to.....Because it's the only chance to hear local news. All about the plantation and avocado blight of course, but it grows on you."

Kate turned on the radio in her kitchen, which was permanently tuned to V-Boom, short for Village Boom. Run by several young people, it seemed to operate on very little money. It was still on air though and Kate recognised the voice.

"V-Boom here, Craig on air." Said Craig. "The police are still telling everyone to avoid the area around Café Loco."

"Oh, all my things are in my room there." Said Yoon.

"It might not be as bad as it sounds." Said Kate.

Craig had an accent that sounded like the American Deep South. She'd never seen him, but his accent didn't sound even slightly Colombian. He had a relaxing voice, which was perfect for the news he was delivering.

"Reina is up on our roof with binoculars." Said Craig. "It seems Café loco has suffered minor damage. The creature tried to go to ground in Village Hardware. Poor Don, his shop was destroyed by the military. Good news though, the creature is dead. I can repeat that.....The creature is dead."

"Sounds as if your bags should be alright." Said Kate. "I know Don's shop; it's down the road a couple of blocks from Café Loco."

Kate had met Reina, the girl up on V-Boom's roof. A local college girl, whose parents had donated money to the radio station. Kate wondered what her family were feeling at that moment; immense pride, or massive anxiety ?

"Another note from Reina." Said Craig. "The fire is spreading from Village Hardware. It appears to be heading our way. We'll continue to broadcast for as long as we're able to."

"Where are the fire department ?" Asked Yoon. "They should be there by now."

It was Yoon; forgetting again that the village was a small town, with few of the public services they probably took for granted in the city she called home. Not that it was the proper moment to tell her the village fire service consisted of one pump and half a dozen volunteers.

"I'm sure the fire service will arrive soon." Said Kate.

Despite the number of people probably trying to make calls to friends and loved ones, the phone service appeared to be coping. On a quiet Sunday it was famous for totally collapsing. Not a call from David Sullivan, he'd added her to a text message he'd sent to everyone in the village on the Tesserá Coffee payroll. There was also a specific question about Yoon.

'Kate, do you know the location of Yoon. Concerned because she's on her own and may need help.' The standard message he'd included asked for her location and if she needed assistance, in any way whatsoever. David's first huge problem in the village and he seemed to be coping pretty well. Rather than a text message, Kate decided to call him. After asking Yoon of course.

"David is worried about you, Yoon." Said Kate. "I'd like you to sleep here tonight; my sofa is more comfortable than it looks. Can I tell David you're staying here? Please say yes, it's not safe outside.....Not tonight."

Or maybe it would never be safe out there again? That was something else she didn't want to mention to a woman a long way from home, friends and family.

"Yes, please.....I'd like to stay here." Said Yoon.

Kate called David and got through to him on the first try. That alone was incredibly rare and the connection was as clear as if she was back home in Calgary.

"David, this is Kate."

"Great, someone saw you outside Café Loco.....Are you safe?" Asked David.

"I'm uninjured and safely at home." Said Kate. "Yoon is with me and she's sleeping on my sofa tonight. Are all the other Canadians safe?"

"Not sure about Luke." Said David. "Everyone else is fine, including Ana. She was with Jess and heard about it all on V-Boom. She's staying with Jess tonight."

"Great.....I'll keep my fingers crossed about Luke." Said Kate.

After the call to David, Yoon wanted to talk and they both wanted to listen to V-Boom. Reina seemed to go missing at one point, but turned up safe and unhurt. The fire threatening the V-Boom building seemed to run out of steam and it was likely the local radio station would live to broadcast another day. By the time Kate got to bed, it wasn't far off being time to get up again.

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"We're going door to door today, I can't be late." Said Lidia.

Despite the battle with a massive wolf creature in the centre of the village; Mateo Rodriguez wanted a full squad, nine special ops cops, knocking on doors not that far away from Doc's house. Every sighting of a creature was going to be followed up and acted on. Mateo's enthusiasm might not last, but while it did; it was likely to mess with their love life. She looked at Teresa, still half asleep, with that wonderful just got out of bed scent. She looked so gorgeous, but Mateo was cracking the whip a bit. There could be no arriving late, at least not for a while.

"But you're knocking on doors just around the corner." Said Teresa. "We could have another half an hour in bed."

Teresa looked so cute, but Lidia still felt an urge to shake the girl until she was properly awake.

"I can't just turn up on foot." Said Lidia. "I need to drive away from here for at least a couple of miles. Then I can drive back and arrive at the squad from the direction of my apartment."

"Yeah, yeah.....I get it now you put it like that." Muttered Teresa.

They hugged, even though Lidia knew her uniform would get covered in bed fluff and the scent of Teresa Correa. Not that it mattered; everyone knew they were in a relationship.

“Are you busy today ?” Asked Lidia. “I can be home by mid-afternoon. We really do need to talk about Rocky.”

“I’m going to see Jaimie; he owes me a favour, or two.” Said Teresa. “He has lots of barns and out houses he never uses. I’m fairly sure I can use one as a new home for Rocky. I should be home in time for dinner at Café Loco.”

“If the place is open for business.” Said Lidia. “If it isn’t.....I’ll make us dinner.”

“You don’t know Howard.” Said Teresa. “If a nuke dropped on the village, he’d find a way to open up and sell the survivors coffee and burgers.”

“Don’t tell Jaimie about Rocky.” Said Lidia. “Tell him whatever you think will get us a home for Rocky, but don’t tell him we have a pet creature.”

“Oh, give over sounding like my mum.” Said Teresa. “I’m not an idiot.....I won’t tell Jaimie why I really need one of his unused buildings.”

“Sorry.....I know you’re not stupid.” Said Lidia.

Lidia was stressed, as was Teresa. Everyone serving under Mateo was stressed. Two cops had died defending the village. Two guys, though Lidia didn’t know either of them that well. One was just a face in the coffee line a few times, at Café Loco. The other she didn’t recall at all. That was often the way it was, but he’d been a cop and she was a cop.

Everyone would be stressed, until they’d investigated every loose end, of every lead. At least five civilians had died too, local village residents in the wrong place at the wrong time. There might be more found dead, once they’d dug through the rubble that had once been a hardware store and two other shops.

Teresa had actually had a bit of good luck, to offset the bad luck of being spotted carrying Rocky in the woods. In a village where everyone and their dog knew Teresa Correa; she’d been spotted by a woman having a tough day. A row with her kids, a useless husband, her words. It all meant a lack of focus. The woman had reported seeing a girl carrying a creature that didn’t look right.

“It didn’t look natural.” The woman had said.

Rocky had to be moved and they needed a way of transporting her about, that meant no one could see their pet. A warehouse on Jaimie’s avocado plantation sounded ideal. As for moving her about.....Lidia had was thinking of buying a cheap, old but reliable van. Yes, they’d reached the point in their relationship where Lidia was likely to buy a van for Teresa and her pet.

“I must go.....We’ll try Café Loco tonight.” Said Lidia.

Lidia left, hoping that she didn’t knock on the door of someone who knew Teresa and had seen her carrying one of the lizard like creatures. Even worse, they might have seen her with Teresa and Rocky. The odds were in their favour; anyone sure of what they’d seen would have contacted Julie Yago by now. Still, Lidia found herself trembling slightly, as she deliberately drove in the opposite direction from where she needed to be.

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Kate had been called by Chad as she’d been getting ready for work. She’d agreed to see him, but there was a problem. Despite vowing not to let him pull her strings; if she wanted to see him that day, she had to go to him.

“Can you come to V-Boom ?” He’d asked her. “I’ve been put here for the day and if I shift; I really think David might fire me. It seems they’re worried that lightning might strike twice in the same place.”

Despite there being a saying about it never happening, people did tend to expect lightning to hit the same place, even multiple times. Someone in the family had been involved in a car crash; then everyone was concerned about their nearest and dearest being hurt in a similar way. It was the same with everything from burglary to serious illness. It was hardly surprising that those who were deciding how to deploy their people, wanted Chad stationed at the V-Boom office. He not only had a supergun, he knew how to use it.

“Fine.....I have to see Luke.” She’d said. “Then I’ll be over there.....Late afternoon alright ?”

“Perfect.....Is Luke alright ?” Chad had asked. “The last I heard, he was still missing.”

“Driving like crazy to get to the village.” Kate had said. “Drifted on a corner and found a very solid tree stump. His car is a right off, or so I’m told. Luke will be alright.....I’m going over to see what work I need to take over for a while.”

Luke was still officially the town doctor, so things had the potential to get awkward. Kate had volunteered to help, as long as Luke still signed off on anything that might need signing off.

“Alright.....See you later.”

Chad had said to close the conversation. Kate too, had noticed that the phone networks tended to work better, when logic said it should be awful. Everyone had to be checking on relatives and assorted loved ones, but the connection had been perfect.

Kate saw Luke and ended up with a fairly long list of duties to take over for a while. Fine, as long as Luke signed everything and she wasn’t accepting any personal liability. Apart from a large bandage around his knee and wincing a lot when he moved, Luke seemed fine. By the time she arrived at the V-Boom office it was quite a late; late afternoon.

“Good.....I thought you might have changed your mind.” Said Chad.

“Yoon stayed at my place last night.” Said Kate. “I can see her becoming a good friend. We all have an interest in solving this mess in an amicable way.”

“It was just one kiss, Kate. I promise you, just a single kiss after a few drinks.” Said Chad.

“You took her back to your hotel room though, you idiot.”

“I know.....I know.” Said Chad. “I never intended for anything to happen. She was just someone I’d wanted to meet. She’d designed the supergun and built the prototypes.”

Kate had already decided to give their relationship another try. In a way she was just giving him well deserved emotional torture. His next comment shook her though; she definitely hadn’t seen it coming.

“I rarely say it, but I love you, Kate Doyle.” Said Chad. “I promise there will be no more asking women back to hotel rooms, no more rogue kisses. Move back in.....I hate your head not being on the pillow next to me.”

“Give me your word that I’ll be able to trust you.” Said Kate.

“Gladly.....I swear to you.....I can be trusted.” Said Chad.

Part of Kate still loved Chad, though telling him that would be a mistake. He’d have to work at hearing her use the L word again and she wasn’t going to rush into saying it. She hadn’t taken things slowly before; in a way fate had delivered her a second chance at that. Not that taking it slow, didn’t mean she wasn’t going to start sharing a bed with him again.

“Alright, we’re back together.” Said Kate. “I’ll let Yoon know and though you may need to talk to her about the supergun, there must be no more private talks in hotel rooms; or anywhere else. Is that agreed ?”

“Agreed.” Said Chad.

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Jess Fisher had sent a text to David, asking if there was any way she could help with the clear up after the creature attack on the village. Ana had offered to help too, though she'd looked relieved when David had told them to begin organising a local museum for the Raiments and the sword given to Julie Yago. The sword had been wiped clean and left with the reception desk at the Yago Plantation, where Tessera Coffee had office space. Julie had probably wiped the blade after using it to kill the huge wolf. She'd done a bad job of cleaning it, but Jess found the tiny spots of creature blood, were stimulating something inside her. It felt so wrong, yet the blood was exciting her. Keeping busy seemed the best way to handle it.

"We seem to be here for the day." Said Jess. "We may as well use our time to give the Raiments a thorough clean."

"To think.....We'll be polishing armour worn by angels." Said Ana.

While Ana began looking over the sets of armour, Jess read the note left for them with the sword. There was the promise of enough funds to get the museum started, and according to David; Julie always kept promises about providing funding. The note ended with a bit of a puzzle.

'Call Dusty, who will probably have premises you can use.'

No clue as to whether Dusty was a man or a woman. Jess had never heard a Dusty mentioned by Julie and if they'd been included in the expedition to the high plateau; Jess was sure she'd have seen their name mentioned somewhere. It was mystery.

"Julie says Dusty may have somewhere we can use for the museum." Said Jess. "Any idea who she means?"

"Dusty.....Let me think, Jess." Said Ana. "I do remember something, one of Julie's little things. She loves to mess with names, to make them more memorable."

"Does she do that with all our names?" Asked Jess.

"Probably, best not to ask." Said Ana. "Dusty....Yes, that'll be Dulce Styles. Julie knew her at school, many years ago. Her family are said to own half the shops on Main Street in the village. If anyone has somewhere we can use, in a decent location, it'll be Dulce Styles."

"Did she go with us on the expedition?" Asked Jess.

"Oh no.....She might have damaged her nails." Said Ana. "I have her number; she's found the church temporary venues for various events. Give her a call."

"I will.....No time like the present." Said Jess.

Jess called Dulce and within a minute, she understood the break a nail comment. She was nice, but sounded like a character out of Mean Girls. She knew just about everyone in the village and the up to date gossip about them. Full of energy, she sounded quite young on the phone. If she was a school friend of Julie's, she had to be in her mid-fifties. Dulce was the letting agent for her family's various properties, though she'd have probably killed anyone daring to call her a realtor. She was doing favours, matching friends with just the right property, at just the right rent.

"Oh yes, Jess....I have just the right place." Said Dulce. "And as it's for Julie, I can be very flexible on the monthly rental. If Julie wants to buy.....I can get her a really amazing deal."

Dulce was good at her job, she had an infectious energy. By the times Jess had her coat on and was picking up her car keys, she was already sold on the shop front Dulce had explained was perfect for her needs. Jess did ask Ana if she wanted to come, but she preferred to stay in the office and polish the silver armour.

"Be careful of Dulce, she could sell freezers to Eskimos." Said Ana.

"I won't sign anything until I've slept on it." Said Jess.

For some reason, Jess touched the sword on the way out. Her hand began to gently glow; a glow that seemed to be coming out of her flesh. David seemed to think the glow signified the awakening of some kind of power within her. If it did, Jess wasn't feeling particularly special. No sense of power, or any deeper understanding of the Raiments.

"I'll take the sword with me." Said Jess. "There's someone I want to show it too."

"Ok." Said Ana, without even looking up.

A lie of course, Jess simply felt a need to have the sword with her. It went on the back seat of her car, with a rug placed over it. Every time her hand touched the hilt, her hand glowed with a deep red glow.

"I have to work out what's happening, before it drives me crazy." She muttered.

It wasn't far to the end of Main Street and even then it merged into Fore Street. It seemed that whoever had named that part of the village, wanted people know it was the centre, the part of town where the important things went on. Not that far from the V-Boom office and just a block or two from Café Loco. Jess deliberately drove past Howard's Café Loco and despite rumours; it hadn't been badly damaged by the military, or the huge creature they'd been fighting. Unlike the wrecked hardware store, Café Loco had replaced the broken windows and appeared to be open for business.

"Good.....The village wouldn't be the same without Café Loco." She muttered.

It wouldn't be the last creature attack on the village, only a complete fool wouldn't realise that.

There were more creatures being seen, who seemed less worried about their own survival. Soon they'd arrive in force, working as a team.

"Then.....God help us all." She mumbled.

Few of the shops had street numbers, the village tended to use business names to deliver the post and the various local tax demands. The empty shop front had been Abigail's Interiors for years.

Abigail had specialised in imported Italian furniture for those who could afford it. She'd done well until age and a bad winter had put her in the ground.

Some of her family had tried to run the place, but eventually.....The shop was now white washed windows, with a large 'For Rent' sign hanging from the first floor. Of course it would officially be known as Abigail's Interiors until a new tenant came along. It was a nice part of town. Jess thought the next tenant might well be The Village Cultural Museum.

She parked right outside the empty shop and waved at Dulce Styles; who was leaning against the shop door. The right age, well dressed and smiling at her; it had to be Dulce. As Jess left her car, she carefully grabbed the sword. The blade didn't look razor sharp, but Julie complained that she'd cut herself half a dozen times; just wiping creature blood off the blade. Jess showed off the longsword to Dulce, by sweeping it around a little.

"I hadn't intended to bring the now famous sword." Said Jess. "But this is the kind of thing the museum is intended for. I can see the place being busy all day. The local people will want to see their history, their heritage."

"Hey, I'm the one who left college with a marketing diploma." Said Dulce. "I'm assuming you must be Jess Fisher?"

"I am, sorry for my over enthusiasm." Said Jess.

"No need for the social commentary." Said Dulce. "I'd already decided to offer you the place on the lowest rent I can. Basically to cover the costs and a tiny bit of profit.....Really tiny."

"Great.....But I'd still like to get a good look at the place."

"Of course.....I'm yours for as long as you need me." Said Dulce.

There was something strange going on, but Jess had no idea what. The sword was in her right hand and the wrist on that hand was itching. No, worse than simply itching, it was hurting. Not hurting enough to make her drop the sword, but she wanted the itchy, hurting to stop.

“Are you alright ?” Asked Dulce.

“Yes, ignore my grunts.” Said Jess. “I swung the sword about.....I think I’ve sprained my wrist.”

Dulce unlocked the shop door and swung it open. There it was, the reason Jess had been sensing trouble. At first it looked like a man sitting on the hallway floor, but Jess knew what it was. When the man like creature stood up, it was easily six feet tall. Sharp teeth and claws on its hands. She’d have known it was one of the creatures, even if it hadn’t been screeching at her and naked.

“Keep back, Dulce.” Shouted Jess. “Keep out of its way.....It’s me it’s after.”

A test for her, or a test for the creature ? Jess wasn’t certain, but she was leaning towards killing her being a test for the humanoid creature. Dulce had a gun in her hand, which was a surprise. Even more of a surprise when she fired it at the creature. Dulce emptied the gun at the brute. Even allowing for a few misses, a good dozen bullets must have hit the beast. Mind you, Jess remembered that traditional bullets didn’t do well against the creatures.

“Your gun won’t kill it.” Yelled Jess. “Keep back and leave it to me.....I’m sure the sword will kill the brute.”

It came at Jess, with swinging clawed hands and that deafening screech. It was hard to stand her ground, every instinct was telling her to run away. As it ran at her, she could see it was well muscled, but didn’t have the bulk of a human body builder. It was bleeding from several bullet wounds in its chest, but the wounds didn’t seem to be slowing it down.

“Get out of its way !” Shouted Dulce.

There was nowhere to hide, or anywhere to run to. If there had been, Jess would have probably stood her ground. She was certain the human like creature was a test, a test she had to win. There was also a certainty in her mind that the sword would kill it. She drew back the sword, holding it straight at the brute. When it was close enough, she was going to stab it with the sword, the blade once used by an angel.

“Come on.....Rush to your death.” Yelled Jess.

Failing would be embarrassing, even if she was dead. Jess wouldn’t allow herself to fail, the creature had to die. When it was close enough for her to smell its foetid breath; she stabbed it hard in the chest. The sword went straight through the creature’s breastbone and went in deep, very deep. There could be no mercy. Jess twisted the blade around, hopefully slicing into its heart and lungs. In her mind the blade was divine and capable of doing what no traditional bullets could achieve. The brute wailed with pain and there was a look in its eyes. It knew it was dying.

“Die !” shouted Jess.

She drew the blade back and stabbed again, this time aiming just below its breastbone. Again, the sword went in deep. Jess twisted the blade and the creature went down. It collapsed into a heap on the ground. Jess knew it was dead.

“Fuck !” Yelled Dulce. “That was.....Incredible.”

Dulce called the police, while Jess looked over the humanoid creature. It had sharp teeth and even sharper claws on its fingers. Its muscles might not have impressed Schwarzenegger, but they were still impressive. If the sword hadn’t worked so well, the beast would have probably easily killed her.

“Jorge Alvarez is on his way.” Said Dulce. “He said we shouldn’t move the body.”

“Sounds like I’ll need to view the property another time.” Said Jess.

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Lidia Fernandez found herself paired up with Sebastián, an experienced cop who usually worked in Bogotá. Sebastián was a bit of mouthful, but luckily he liked to be called Seb. He had a good dry sense of humour. One thing going door to door required, was a damn good sense of humour. One person in fifty just might know something useful, but you had to work for it. Every door you knocked on tended to mean someone wanting a friendly ear. Lidia had heard so much gossip over the years, usually about wayward grandchildren and lonely peoples' aches and pains. So far, the main topic of conversation was how difficult it was to see a doctor, now that Doc Perez had retired to Barranquilla. "Your turn, Seb." Said Lidia. "Try to keep this one off the subject of Doc Perez."

"Not easy, he seems to have been a popular doctor." Said Seb.

"Yeah, from what I've heard, he was generally well liked." Said Lidia.

There had been complaints about the Doc, or so Lidia had heard. Then again, lots of cops had complaints about their behaviour. Mention complaints and most serving cops tended to go very quiet for a while. So, Lidia wasn't going to judge Doc Perez; most seemed to think he was a good doctor. Seb looked for a doorbell and ended up thumping his fist on the door. A bald man who looked in his late fifties, opened the door.

"About time, I heard you were in the area." Said the man. "I know what's happening; I've seen her a few times. Come inside."

Usually over eager members of the public were bad news. Lidia was cringing a little, just in case the man had seen Teresa carrying Rocky into the woods. Or even worse, that he'd seen her in the vicinity of the terrier Rocky had killed. They followed the man into his lounge, where he pointed at the sofa and invited them to sit. Lidia's mother had an expression for the generally low level grubbiness of the room; not bad for a guy living on his own, her mum would have said.

"Do you want coffee ? I'm told I make good coffee." Said the man.

"That'd be nice.....We need your details." Said Seb.

"Public records for this area are a bit sketchy." Added Lidia. "Do you mind telling us your full name ?"

No one ever minded, but she had to ask the question. Everyone pays local taxes, so the records were pretty good. The main reason to ask was to see that, if given the opportunity; he lied. Only people with something to hide, gave fake names. Mateo Rodriguez had told them to trust no one. Everything was being verified.

"No problem, I'm Carlos.....Carlos Garcia. There's only me living here, since my wife passed away."

Lidia noted the name in her notebook and Seb nodded at her; which meant the name agreed with public records for the area. There was a growing suspicion that the creatures were weapons, constructed by an unknown enemy. That was why everything was being verified.

"So, Carlos.....You mentioned seeing someone." Said Seb. "Could you tell us about that ?"

"I'll get that coffee." Said Carlos.

Alone since his wife had passed, he wasn't going to let them leave in a hurry. Some loners said almost nothing, but Carlos was likely to tell them a good chunk of his life story. Lidia smiled at him; it was all part of the job. The coffee arrived on a tray, along with biscuits. The coffee actually did taste pretty good.

"Well Mr Garcia.....You do make great coffee." Said Lidia.

"I told you.....Carlos, call me Carlos."

Now it was coming, the exact description of Teresa, as she carried a young creature in her arms. Lidia didn't need to start the tale from Carlos Garcia, Seb did that.

“You mentioned seeing ‘her’ a few times.” Said Seb. “Who do you mean ? Is it someone you know in the area ?”

Here it came.....

“It’s his daughter.....I know her, I’ve lived here most of my life.” Said Carlos. “They said she was dead, the Doc told me she’d died. I remember her as clear as day. She’s over there, still living in the house.”

Lidia exchanged a look with Seb; they’d have both interviewed members of the public with issues. With the way the world was, it was amazing that everyone didn’t have issues. For all Lidia knew Teresa might be the image of the Doc’s dead daughter. A lot of time had gone by though; if she was alive, she’d be about the same age as Carlos, maybe older. The interview needed to carry on, at least for a while. Carlos might have seen something important and simply not realised it.

“How often have you seen her ?” Asked Lidia.

“Several times.....It’s them, the creatures.” Said Carlos. “They kept her alive all those years to serve them. I’ve seen it.....I’ve seen her talk to them.”

Teresa talking to Rocky, they definitely needed to find a new home for Rocky. There was a look in the eyes of Carlos Garcia, he’d been on his own for too long, much too long. If he’d been just a little more stable, Teresa might have been in trouble. It was time to end the interview.

“We have lots of other people to see.” Said Lidia. “Thank you for the wonderful coffee.”

“You will report what I’ve seen ?”

“Yes, of course we will, Carlos.” Said Seb.

There was no time to feel guilty about putting disturbed and delusional against his name, in her notebook. As they left the house, everyone was being called back to the village. It seemed Jess Fisher had fought one of the human like creatures. Not only fought it with Julie Yago’s sword, she’d won the fight. The creature was lying dead on the sidewalk in Main Street.

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David Sullivan hadn’t expected a call on his satellite phone from the CEO of Tessera, Jacob P Wilson. The CEO wasn’t a recluse; he just seemed to always be busy, looking for more deals and opportunities. It had to be something important though, or one of the CEO’s admin staff would have called, or maybe someone from human resources.

“David.....How is that problem in Colombia progressing ?” Asked Jacob.

“Being honest, sir.....It’s one step forward and two backwards, at the moment.” Said David. “But we are making progress. We have information that points to the megafauna being manmade; created in a laboratory somewhere.”

David could hear the CEO scribbling, he was known for keeping notes during phone calls. The worry was that the great man might ask him for a source for the information. Most of it had come from Julie Yago. Fine, until she might mention being given the information by an angel of Muisca.

“Did you realise that eighty percent of the beans used in instant coffee, come from Vietnam ?”

A question hurtling in from left field; the great man was famous for those. David knew the figure was now closer to eighty five percent, but Jacob P Wilson probably didn’t like being corrected.

“Yes, I am aware of that.” Said David.

“Of course you are.....It’s your job to know these things.” Said Jacob. “Your current assignment seems to be developing into something best dealt with by the military. All that violence and using experimental weapons. Not the best use of your talents and.....We have a problem in Vietnam.”

Colombia mattered to the Tessera Coffee empire, but Vietnam mattered more. Vietnamese coffee wasn’t the best, but they grew a lot of it. Just about all instant coffee beans came from that part of

Southeast Asia. Jacob was going to pull him out of the plantation and send him to Vietnam; David could feel it coming.

“What is the nature of the problem ?” Asked David.

“Cross pollination.....That old favourite.” Said Jacob. “Just the sort of thing you could sort out wearing a blindfold. We can send one of our ex-military types to watch the Colombian military destroy the megafauna.....Would you love the move to Vietnam, or hate it ?”

David’s official title was Head of Group security and he had done his time in the Canadian military. Had Jacob forgotten that ? No, he was just choosing to ignore it. David had made cross pollination issues his thing.

“I go where I’m needed, sir.” Said David. “But.....I never like to leave a job half finished. Given a choice, I’d stay here in Colombia. They’re a good team sir, some of the best.”

More scribbling, the CEO probably had HB pencils on constant order from the stationery department.

“We’ll give you a whole new team in Vietnam, though we might give you Luke Walsh to take with you. We’re hearing good things about Luke. Anyway.....I have to talk to the full board. My next call might be to say you’re on the next plane to Nội Bài International Airport. I’m hoping that wouldn’t create a problem for you ?”

“No, sir.....I go where I’m needed.” Said David.

“Good.....Good to hear that.” Said Jacob P Wilson.

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