

Coffee Addict

Chapter 9 - Firepower

“No special cameras, not even any small movie files. Luke just wanted to see how Rocky was progressing from harmless youngster, to problematic adult. Half a dozen pictures taken on Teresa’s expensive phone, were sent to Luke’s phone, simple as that.”

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Chad Hudson had only ever mentioned the super guns coming from an embassy contact. No mention of which country’s embassy, or a name for a contact. He knew the people from Canada thought he had Chilean connections, or even links to the Israelis. Both wrong, but false rumours could be useful. David Sullivan had seen the wisdom in never demanding answers, as that might dry up the source of what Kate called the pocket howitzers. Usually his contact came to him, but a request for enough weapons for an expedition to the high plateau.....That had required Chad to go to Bogotá. Two days, maybe three away from the plantation and David had signed off on it. Chad was currently sat in room in a basement of the South Korean embassy in Bogotá. As a sign of mutual friendship, Colombia had opened an embassy in Seoul.

“A group of mainly civilians, heading for a jungle rarely visited.” Said Chad. “You can see why I’m worried, Jung. A few extra guns could really make a difference.”

Jung had a long Korean name on his official business card and quite a long title. Like the Americans, every intelligence officer was officially a cultural attaché of some kind. Korea wished to enlarge its sphere of influence and a few super weapons must have seemed a relatively cheap way to do it. Of course, the Americans would be aware of what was going on.

“Our weapons tech people are quite excited, Chad.” Said Jung. “The unofficial title for the project is ‘Dinosaur.’ There is one huge problem with designing weapons to kill a dinosaur.”

“All the dinosaurs are dead.” Said Chad.

“Exactly.....These creatures at the plantation are really megafauna, but the problem about how to kill them, is much the same as trying to kill a dinosaur.” Said Jung. “No one knows how to do it, because we’ve never done it before.”

“The handguns work fine.....But the brutes take a while to die.” Said Chad.

“Yes.....Thank you for obtaining copies of reports from Luke Walsh.” Said Jung. “A very clever man, I can’t help feeling he’s wasted in his current job. Anyway, the killing of a creature by a hunting rifle, had our engineers working late into the night.”

“I’m hoping you’ve come up with a new pocket howitzer.” Said Chad.

“Funny enough, the person in charge of project Dinosaur, did mention the problem with mission creep.” Said Jung. “Easy to end up like Sci-Fi movies, with weapons almost too heavy to carry. Then they vaporise a city block when fired. Our people wanted to give you something staggeringly powerful, but also useable.”

Jung brought a gun out of a drawer, which wasn’t vastly different to the one Chad had used to kill one of the brutes. A gold coloured metal and the weapon had a certain style. Whoever had designed it, had added a lot of love into the mix. It looked to have been lavished with the kind of love a mother gives her children.

"Wow, that is impressive." Said Chad. "Not much bigger than the current supergun....I think it might even still fit my homemade shoulder holster."

No weapons were allowed in the Korean embassy and definitely no guns on the plane to Bogotá. Chad had worn his straps though, under his jacket. The new super weapon just about fitted, though it stuck out more. There'd be no concealed carry with the new version.

"The improvements are in tougher metal, a little extra loading in the round." Said Jung. "Mainly, we've gone from solid projectiles to a kind of hollow point. Each round will strike the creature and split into four separate parts. Our engineers are confident that two headshots should kill one of these brutes."

"I was so hoping you'd come up with something like this." Said Chad.

A little heavier, the gun would definitely need to be held in both hands to keep it steady. There was still one major question and now a date had been set for the expedition to the temple, it was an important question.

"You know the date we go to the plateau." Said Chad. "How many of these new guns can you have ready?"

He knew Jung well enough to read him now; the Korean intelligence officer would never have made a good poker player. Jung was going to disappoint him, but hopefully, not that badly.

"We're not asking you to return the two you have." Said Jung. "We'll give you ammunition for those and there's a prototype that uses the same rounds. As for the new guns.....We don't have a production line, Chad. Every gun is handmade and thoroughly tested."

"Give me a number.....How many new guns do I get?" Asked Chad.

"Six, and I'll get them delivered to you a few days before you leave for Gregory's plateau."

Chad pulled a face, it was probably expected. Six was alright though considering there'd be two of the older guns and a prototype. A dozen would have been better, but nine would do. It was a lot better than facing the things with shotguns.

"We no longer mention Gregory, it upsets the locals." Said Chad. "Thank you for the guns.....They will save lives. I take it the Korean government will be picking up the tab?"

"As always, everything will be provided, free of charge." Said Jung. "The head of project Dinosaur is here in Bogotá. Here to see you actually.....You are a bit of a hero to the weapons people. You killed a Dinosaur, Chad; that makes you a bit special. There will be a meal to welcome Yoon to Bogotá. She was hoping you'd be there."

So, the head of the project was a woman. Yoon was an unknown and asking Jung about her, might be misunderstood. Chad was developing a thing about Kate, a very definite thing. The last thing he needed was a temptation called Yoon. Then again, the chances of them making a connection during an office outing to a restaurant, had to be pretty low.

"Yes, I'd love to come." Said Chad.

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Luke had been burning and burying the lizard like creature. The one Jaimie had managed to kill with a hunting rifle. It was a job that could have been given to someone else to supervise, but Luke wanted to make sure it was done properly. Plus there were quite a few journalists annoying people in the plantation. He didn't want them getting pictures of the new carcass disposal area. Luke had always viewed journalists as one of life's necessary evils. It looked like being a fairly boring, routine day....Until Jorge had called.....

"Trouble near the plateau, Kate." Luke had said. "Teenagers are involved and according to Olie, there have been fatalities. Bring a full medical kit.....You're going with me."

"Were they attacked by the creatures?" Kate had asked.

"Yes, one of the big ones." Luke had said. "Cesar actually killed it, but he was hurt pretty badly. Jorge is worried that Cesar might not make it."

The colonel's cops from Bogotá were hanging around, still unsure if the new commander would use them, or send them back to their base. Luke found it easy to get a few to go with him, and use their vehicles. They were bored and going to the red river near the plateau, must have sounded like a bit of an adventure. Plus, there was the chance of recruiting some plantation kids. Every cop secretly wants to be a hero, even the colonel's cynical gang from Bogotá. Luke was currently watching Captain Sánchez, as he loaded equipment into one of the trucks.

"Nice to have them with us, but their guns won't kill any of the creatures." Said Kate.

"Some of it appears to be a mixture of luck and a good aim." Said Luke. "Jorge told me that Cesar killed one with an ordinary service handgun."

"How did he manage that?" Asked Kate.

"Aimed at the eyes and kept firing.....Sounds like a very brave guy." Said Luke.

If the road went to anywhere that mattered, it might have been better maintained. The trucks weren't anything special, but they handled the bad roads far better than an ordinary police saloon car. It was a long way though and much of it driven through swamps and jungles. Luke felt grubby and tired by the time someone yelled they were there.

"The infamous red river.....I can smell it from here." Said Kate.

Iron compounds in the water, which made it fairly toxic to most living things. Luke had looked it up after being invited on the expedition to the high plateau.

"Only teenagers would come here to drink and make out." Said Luke.

Kate had plenty of help from the cops, to carry her medical equipment. Her first person to see was going to be Cesar. Luke had to be there, he was officially the doctor for the district. He wasn't heartless, but his first footsteps out of the truck, took him towards a very tired looking Julian.

"Where is the dead beast?" Luke asked. "No taking it back with us, we'll burn it here."

"Over there.....About twenty yards, or so." Said Julian, while pointing. "Actually.....I might as well show you where it is."

Behind some trees and lying on its side, but even in death, there was still something terrifying about the huge wolf like creature. The scale was all wrong, for how it looked. There was an odd smell too, which had nothing to do with decay. No wolf had ever been that large, or had claws that long. As for its teeth.....They were still covered in the blood of one of its victims.

"How many teenagers did it kill?" Asked Luke.

"Two.....The Carvalho's oldest girl and one of the Alves boys." Said Julian. "I have all their details and Jorge has arranged for their families to be informed."

"I don't envy whoever got that job." Said Luke.

Its blood was red, which made it look slightly less alien. Two streams of red blood came from its eyes. Destroyed eyes and going through the eyes, gave Cesar's bullets a way into the brute's brain. Just a theory, but it was the only one that explained a cop handgun killing such a huge creature. There needed to be samples taken, but after Luke had seen the dead and wounded.

"I know you must be shattered, Julian." Said Luke. "But.....Can you show me where Cesar is being treated?"

"Of course.....Easier than a pile of directions to follow." Said Julian.

Cesar had been moved from a tent used by the kids as a party tent. He was now in the back of a cop truck. Someone had treated his wounds and used ripped up shirts as bandages. Kate was replacing old grubby bandages, with proper dressings.

"Don't expect anything out of him." Said Kate. "I just gave him a pain killer that'll leave him unconscious for hours. I'll get him comfortable and then he needs to go hospital.....A proper hospital in Manizales."

"Will he live ?" Asked Luke.

"I hope so.....But he's been badly hurt and lost a lot of blood."

Luke could see two huge bites, which might heal, but the muscle would never grow back. Cesar probably had a great future in the police, if he lived. At a desk though, he'd never be on the frontline of policing again. Luke could see Cesar being a PR guy for the cops in Bogotá. Live or die, he was going to be a genuine hero.

"Are there wounded teenagers ?" Asked Luke.

"Yes, but Cesar had to be treated first." Said Kate. "The kids seemed to avoid the claws and teeth. Most have just a few fairly shallow wounds. I'll treat them all.....It's going to be a long day, Luke."

"I heard two teenagers died." Said Luke.

"Yes, Julian knows where they are." Said Kate.

Luke had always thought he had good nerves. Maybe not nerves of steel, but he rarely got in a panic. Once when a girlfriend had fallen off his motorbike during an accident, but that was understandable. There was probably still a scar on her leg. Now he found his heart pounding, at every noise in the surrounding forest.

"I really hope the teenagers never come here again." Said Luke.

"They will, bound to.....They can party here, with no one bothering them." Said Julian.

Apart from huge creatures. Luke tried to get into his own teenage mind and failed. He must have been that stupid at one point, but his mind refused to acknowledge it. For teenagers it seemed, the terror of death took second place to the pleasures of booze and sex.

"Another party tent.....This one was cleaner than most." Said Julian. "Olie and I cleared out all the condoms.....Didn't seem respectful leaving them in there."

Both tent flaps had to be pulled right back, to see the bodies of the two youngsters. The girl had to be Iris Carvalho, a seventeen year old and still at school. The creature had eaten away her throat and had begun devouring her chest. The boy was Carlos Alves, one of many brothers, who were said to drive their poor mother crazy. Luke was sure his mother would have given anything, to have him back home and alive. Carlos had been almost torn in two by the creature's massive claws.

"Crap ! We can't let the journalists see them like this." Said Luke.

"Jorge said to wrap them in a tarpaulin or something." Said Julian.

"Anything is better than being able to these terrible wounds." Said Luke. "Wrap them in anything.....Their parents will understand."

There was a moment again, as Luke closed the tent flaps. A gust of wind moved a branch and Luke found himself looking around like a crazy person. He wasn't about to insult Julian by saying it out loud. But once he was home in Toronto, he'd never visit Colombia again.....Ever. Julian actually slapped him on the shoulder, in a friendly way.

"I was like that at the old Wilkins place." Said Julian. "It was after we'd found what was left of young Garcia, the explosives guy. A macaw flew past me, not even a big one. I drew my gun and wanted to kill it.....A harmless macaw. I went crazy for a few seconds. It gets easier and time is the cure.....A few weeks from now and you won't even think about today."

"I hope you're right, Julian.....I hope you're right." Said Luke.

"Could have been worse." Said Julian. "We could have been wrapping up a dozen kids. Cesar made the difference.....He deserves a medal, or something."

If he lived of course, which Kate couldn't guarantee. Luke decided to go and help Kate treat the kids who'd been wounded. He wasn't really that kind of doctor, but he was pretty good at stitches. Someone had once said he could stitch up a wound without it hurting like fuck. The kids would appreciate that.....With luck they might listen when he told them to never come to the red river again.....Ever.

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Michelle Thorpe would have probably joined Luke and his medical team at the stinking red river. She knew Chad was trying to persuade his contact to supply more and better weapons. By better, guns that might kill the creatures instantly, rather than bleeding out twenty four hours later. She had no idea which of the world's nation was supplying the guns, but she suspected South Korea. Chad's fault according to Kate, he had a Korean to English dictionary on the cupboard next to his side of their bed. Of course, Kate had told her about it the next day. Hardly conclusive, but Michelle had decided Korea sounded far more likely than Israel or Chile.

"I'm glad Luke decided that Rocky is a girl." Said Teresa.

"The lab in Calgary discovered something in her DNA." Said Michelle. "It seems our ever growing child, is definitely a female."

"Female sounds a bit biology one-oh-one." Said Teresa. "I prefer to think of Rocky as a girl."

A girl who might one day decide to see what people tasted like. By then she'd probably weigh over a ton and be ready to start laying eggs. Not that Michelle thought Teresa and her were likely to be on Rocky's menu. She was no expert, but she'd read a little about socialising wild creatures. Rocky would never be domesticated, but she'd think of the two humans who looked after her, as family.

"Look, she's flapping her wings again." Said Teresa. "I can't wait for her to fly.....Think of it, our Rocky flying around."

Which was a truly terrifying idea. Michelle had explained the dangers to Teresa, but she saw Rocky the way most women her age viewed kittens, or a pony. One day Rocky would fly away, as others of her kind had probably flown away from their mother's underground burrows. Or, which was even more terrifying. When Rocky reached puberty, a large flying male would find her.

"She is gorgeous." Said Michelle. "Be interesting to see her with adult feathers."

Michelle was glad she'd decided to go and see Rocky with Teresa, rather than the long drive out to the toxic red river. Luke was a good landlord, not expecting rent for using Doc's old office as accommodation for Rocky. Luke didn't expect much from them, but he did like his weekly pictures of Rocky.

"Come on, you can have Rocky climbing over you, while I take the pictures." Said Michelle.

No special cameras, not even any small movie files. Luke just wanted to see how Rocky was progressing from harmless youngster, to problematic adult. Half a dozen pictures taken on Teresa's expensive phone, were sent to Luke's phone, simple as that. The phone service was still a problem, but Luke would eventually get his pictures. Teresa was supposed to delete the pictures from her phone, but Michelle knew she was keeping them. Not that Michelle intended to make a huge thing about it.

"Look.....She kissed me again." Said Teresa. "You have to get a picture of it."

"I still think Rocky can taste what you had for breakfast." Said Michelle.

After the pictures, Rocky would go into a basket to be weighed. Luke said it was strange that Rocky was so heavy for a creature that flew. No lightweight bones, no limit on wingspan. Nothing normally associated with the flight of birds. Luke suspected Rocky would develop massively powerful wing muscles, which really seemed to interest him.

"Don't let her get caught up in your hair again." Said Michelle. "It'll take us forever to get her free." They were both laughing, as Rocky did get caught in Teresa's hair. Even Rocky seemed in on the game, as she let them ease her out of Teresa's very long hair. No signs of bad temper, definitely no biting or clawing. Michelle's parents had owned dogs who'd been far less well behaved.

"Oh, she's so good natured." Said Michelle.

Weighing her was easy, as their unofficial pet, was getting quite sleepy. They also measured her length and wingspan. Her weight and measurements went on a chart, which had a red line on it, drawn by Luke. Rocky was always in the area where it was supposed to be impossible for her to fly. Michelle would have bet a year's pay, that Rocky eventually took to the air like a pro.

"There's a party at Jaimie's on Friday night." Said Teresa. "You're invited.....Please come, my mum might not let me go on my own."

"I think the Yago family need to buy a Humvee, if this is going to be a regular thing." Said Michelle.

"I know you had a good time at Jaimie's." Said Teresa, with a grin.

There had been a guy she'd slept with, a bit more than just satisfying a need. Michelle had liked him and he'd been her type. He might not be there for the Friday party of course, or he might turn up with another woman. It was how casual sex at parties seemed to go. Worth a try though and if he didn't turn up, there'd be other men there.

"Alright.....We'll go." Said Michelle.

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Jess Fisher was pleased that a date had been agreed, for them to go to the temple on the high plateau. Julie Yago had hired pilots and chartered two massive helicopters, so the date was now carved in stone. There was even a brochure for the company which had come up with an especially good rate, for Julie Yago.

"I must say, these CH-47 Chinook helicopters are impressive." Said Jess.

"They look like something out of a Hollywood movie." Said Ana Moura.

The brochure said there were military and civilian versions, which had been in reliable service for decades. They definitely sounded like helicopters that could be trusted to get them to the temple and back.

"There's a picture of one carrying two Humvees underneath it." Said Jess.

"I'm just glad Julie is picking up the bill." Said Ana.

There had been talk of a kind of minimalist expedition, taking only what could be taken to the base of the high plateau in trucks and then moved by muscle power. Jess was pleased that plan was off the table; she wasn't at all muscly.

"We're going, we're really going." Muttered Jess.

They were in Ana's house, once again using the long table. Just them, though others had been there earlier. Whether David Sullivan liked it or not, the expedition was going to be all about visiting a Muisca site. Even though Julie Yago tried to deny it, she was a believer. Jess had read so much about the ancient religion of South America. That many believers visiting the temple.....She was sure something would happen, something holy and mystical. There was a series of taps on the window.

"Oh, who the hell.....I told people not to do that." Said Ana. "After the way mum was killed just outside.....I hate callers around the back of the house."

"Shall I see who it is ?" Asked Jess.

"Yes please.....Tell them we're in the middle of something." Said Ana.

Lighting in the back garden was almost non-existent, just a couple of dull lamps hanging outside the shed where the garden tools were kept. Jess took her phone to use as a flashlight. She began shouting, as soon as she had the backdoor open.

"Who is there ? Speak up or I'll call the police." Yelled Jess.

The light from her phone was small, but quite bright. Jess recognised the young woman instantly, although they'd never been friends. Jess had put out so many stories about Maria, while trying to keep them fair and balanced. It was Jess's job after all, trying to keep local news saying nice things about the plantation. Or, at least not making up nasty things to say. Jess had probably given out every significant detail of Maria's life, but that was how it was done. Maria was generally loved by the local population, even if it had meant losing her privacy. Maria was wearing a cream dress, which wasn't suited to the rather chilly evening.

"Maria.....What are you doing out here ?" Asked Jess.

"Sorry, I didn't want to startle anyone." Said Maria. "Kate told me about the expedition and I'm interested in going. You know what gossips can be like, so I decided to come around the back."

"Ahhh, another keen explorer." Said Jess. "You'd better come inside and talk to Ana."

"I heard.....Bring her in here." Shouted Ana.

Jess knew the girl was a minor. She might be keen on going, but there'd need to be permission from her mum. Was Maria's mum a believer in Muisca ? Jess had met quite a few, but she'd been told that just about everyone in the village, believed in the ancient Gods.

"You're welcome here, Maria." Said Ana. "I'll make extra food so that you can join us for a meal. I need to ask though, where does your mum think you are ?"

"Here, I told her where I was going." Said Maria. "My mum likes a quiet life, but I want to go with you to the temple. She won't stop me going."

Was Maria's mother a believer ? It definitely sounded as though she was. Who else would let a sixteen year old daughter, go to somewhere that dangerous ? Jess expected Ana to offer the girl a soft drink. Ana didn't ask, before giving Maria a glass of wine. As Maria lifted the glass to sip the contents, she made a sign with her index finger. Ana smiled and nodded at her.

"I see that Maria is known in the church." Said Jess.

"Soon you'll recognise us all." Said Ana.

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Jorge Alvarez would never claim his marriage was free of arguments. Gabi had her own views on the world and sometimes those views didn't coincide with his. On the whole though, their marriage seemed pretty solid. He looked forward to going home at the end of the day. One thing which had been causing a few differences of opinion, were the growing number of journalists in and around the plantation. They seemed to be growing in numbers and invading the village.

"It was the TV coverage." Said Jorge. "Now every reporter within driving distance is hoping to see one of the creatures. I've been offered bribes in return for pictures of the brutes."

"Two of them were pestering people outside the library." Said Gabi. "I get moaned at, because you seem to be encouraging them. I saw Kate at the store.....I know you're still organising trips to what's left of the old Wilkins place."

There were always rumours in the village. Every small community seemed to have more rumours than were healthy. When Olie and Julian suddenly had a little extra cash to splash about, it had to be coming from the journalists. Jorge had to be charging for trips to where the creatures had been seen

and the trainee cops were getting a cut. Gabi knew the cash had come from Julie Yago. It was a little bonus for all the hard work tidying and making safe at the Wilkins farm.

"Can I at least tell people why Olie and Julian are less broke than usual ?" Asked Gabi.

"No, that's their business and no one else's." Said Jorge.

His wife actually glared at him, which was a very rare event. He sat next to her on the sofa and put his hand on hers. Good, Gabi didn't pull her hand away. Further provocation was on the way. He'd promised two journalists a quick look at the Wilkins place. They'd be ringing the doorbell in a few minutes.

"Sorry, Gabi.....The woman from Manizales will be here soon." Said Jorge. "She has a photographer with her. I promised to take them to a few key places where the creatures have been seen."

"Why ? I thought you hated them being here." Said Gabi.

In truth he'd sort of drifted into helping the journalists. Then there had been Julie Yago, who wanted them to, her words, go away smiling. She claimed a little exposure in the press was good for the village and the plantation. Jorge tended to agree, though he'd never get Gabi to agree.

"Better if they get taken around by me." Said Jorge. "The alternative is them pestering people at the library. I saw one of them trying to talk to the kids at Maria's school. Better.....Far better if I give them the unofficial tour."

Gabi kissed him on the cheek.

"You're a good man, Jorge Alvarez." Said Gabi. "I hope you're going to boot them out of town, if they keep pestering school kids ?"

"Oh, I will.....You have my word on it."

The doorbell sent his wife heading upstairs, to stay away from unwelcome guests. Jorge opened the door and managed a smile.

"Come in.....I just need you to sign a waiver." Said Jorge.

Elena Alvarez was a feature writer from a well know paper in Manizales. She put her hand out to be shaken and Jorge gladly obliged. Elena looked to be in her late forties, but Jorge was useless at guessing women's ages. Her photographer was a man in his early twenties. Jorge was better at estimating the ages of men. Elena called her photographer Wires, though Jorge had no idea why. Wires was carrying a large camera bag over his shoulder. Jorge had already seen them briefly at Hacienda Yago. Julie knew Elena, but Julie seemed to know everyone.

"Nice house, Jorge." Said Elena.

"Yeah, nice place." Added Wires.

Somewhere in Jorge's mind, there was the realisation that Teresa would like Wires. She'd end up eating him alive of course. The journalist and her photographer signed waivers. Basically they were giving up any claims for death or injury, in the event of being attacked by the creatures. There were a lot more long legal words on the waiver, to say the same thing.

"We'll be going out in the oldest truck we use." Said Jorge. "Old but tough and very heavy. One of the really big creatures actually charged at it and came off worse."

"I like the sound of that. Exactly what I was hoping to see." Said Elena.

"Oh yes, something I can aim a camera at." Said Wires.

Out to the ancient truck, which was rumoured to have been around since the Clinton era. Someone, probably Olie, had put splodges of green and brown paint over the truck, to look like camouflage. A bullseye had been painted over the dent on the front, where a creature had head butted the police vehicle.

"This screams for a few pictures.....If we have time ?" Asked Wires.

"Yes, do what you need to do." Said Elena.

Jorge was asked to stand pointing at the bullseye, while Wires took a lot of pictures of the old, battered truck. It was all surreal, though Gabi was bound to see the pictures somewhere. Then there'd be another row about the infestation of journalists. Eventually they did get out of the village and on the way out to the old Wilkins place.

"Alright, a few basic rules to keep you safe." Said Jorge. "Rule one...If in doubt run back to the truck. It will take a huge amount of damage. Rule two....I have one of the super guns. It will kill these things and they do run away when shot. Trust me.....I can keep you safe as long as you follow rule one."

"No arguments from me." Said Wires.

"Can I see the super gun?" Asked Elena.

Hard to drive a heavy truck with power steering from the Clinton era; while trying to hold a heavy handgun. Jorge brought out the gun from under his jacket and waived it in Elena's general direction.

"Can I hold it?" Asked Elena.

It was all getting a bit too weird for Jorge.

"No." He said.

The gun went back under his jacket, as Jorge drove towards the old Wilkins farm. The road felt worse in the old truck than in the modern ones with decent shocks. It was heading towards night, which was bad for photography, but good for watching monsters in the dark. For a few days, there had been what looked like the same creature at the derelict farm. A reliable beast that turned up every night, rain or fine. He wasn't sure if Elena really believed him.

"So, Jorge.....You guarantee we'll see this creature?" Asked Elena.

"Guarantee.....No." Said Jorge. "But it has appeared several nights in a row."

"Is it really big?" Asked Wires.

"Oh yes, it's huge and scary." Said Jorge.

Things that would scare the crap out of most people, seemed to delight the journalists from Manizales. Elena was looking out of the window, as if expecting the Loch Ness monster to make an appearance. Wires had dug a Nikon out of his camera bag. It had the widest and longest lens Jorge had ever seen.

"Not far now.....Just the other side of this hill." Said Jorge.

The huge metal sign across the road was still there. Olie had predicted it would only last a couple of days, but there it was. Jorge drove around the sign and headed for what was left of the large barn, which wasn't much.

"Are we going to the burrow?" Asked Wires.

"No, that's gone.....Just a hole in the ground full of rubble." Said Jorge. "We're heading for the woods at the far side of the farm."

"What's there?" Asked Elena.

"Wait and see.....I'm really hoping you won't be disappointed." Said Jorge.

It was close to darkness, but still quite dusky. In theory it should have been the perfect time to see it. Like many people, Jorge thought the universe was out to get him, or make him look an idiot. The brute might not turn up, just to make him look an arse. Jorge turned the truck's engine off and killed all the lights.

"No joking, this is a massive creature." Said Jorge. "So far, it's ignored me and gone about its business. That doesn't mean it won't attack tonight. Go outside if you must, but stay close to the truck."

"I get the idea that your wife doesn't like me." Said Elena.

It was such a fast ball from left field. Jorge just looked at her and blinked a few times. It took him a few seconds to get back the ability to speak.

"Did she say something ?.....No, Gabi is just a little wary of all journalists." Said Jorge.

Not that Jorge intended to stop him, but Wires had got out of the truck and was already fifteen feet closer to the woods.

"I might be wrong, but it feels personal." Said Elena. "She blanked me when I spoke to her at the store in the village."

"I can assure you that Gabi.....Where is he going ? Shout at Wires, he's too far away." Said Jorge.

Elena yelled at her photographer, but he was a good fifty feet away. Too far to run quickly back to the truck, in the gathering darkness.

"Wires.....Get the fuck back here." Shouted Elena.

A bit later than dusk, but the creature arrived. It was a huge wolf like monster and while some never seemed to change, this one was like a massive shape changing chameleon. It was constantly changing its skin to match the background. It also kept changing the length of its legs. Why ? Jorge had watched it a lot and there seemed no good reason for it.

"There'll be a reason." Luke had told him. "Nature has a reason and purpose for everything."

Jorge left the truck, which wasn't actually that crazy. Or at least it wasn't as crazy as Elena seemed to think.

"Where are you going ?" Yelled Elena. "It'll kill you.....Stay in here."

"I should be alright; it seems to have a job to do." Said Jorge.

Jorge left the truck and walked straight towards where Wires was knelt on the ground. The photographer had been taking pictures, but now he seemed rooted to the spot by fear. The creature was there, right in front of poor Wires; less than ten feet away. It roared, but Jorge had heard it roar before.

"Be calm, Wires." Yelled Jorge. "I know it sounds weird, but this brute has a purpose, I'm sure of it."

It was all an experiment really; Jorge had never gone out to face the beast before. He knelt next to Wires and put his hands on his shoulders. At least if they were about to die, they'd die together.

"This one has things to do.....Stay still and I think it'll leave us alone." Said Jorge.

The creature came closer and roared at them again. It then turned and walked back towards the woods. Jorge felt Wires trying to get up. Jorge held onto him, keeping him on his knees.

"No, Wires.....Not yet." Said Jorge. "When it starts to dig, we'll slowly go back to the truck."

Jorge was basing their survival on the past behaviour of a beast that had to weigh close to two tons, had razor sharp claws, rows of nasty looking teeth; and the ability to match its skin to the background. He was trembling, so he was sure Wires was still terrified. When the creature began digging at the edge of the wood, Jorge decided it was time to move.

"Now.....No running." Said Jorge. "Grab your camera bag and walk back to Elena."

Wires didn't run, though Jorge had been expecting him to take off like a startled rabbit. He left the bag though, the one full of expensive camera equipment. Jorge picked it up and briefly watched the creature digging ever deeper into the ground.

"It's either got a task to do, or something wrong with its brain." Luke had said.

Not that Luke really knew, but he did like updates on what 'the worker,' was doing. It just dug and kept on digging for hours. It then walked into the woods and effectively, vanished. It had to have a burrow somewhere. Jorge returned to the truck and dropped the camera bag on the floor.

"You forgot these, Wires." Said Jorge.

A week later in a bar in Manizales, Wires would probably be telling everyone about the night he faced down a two ton wolf. He currently looked as though he wanted to run away, to anywhere, very quickly.

“That thing.....What is it doing ?” Asked Elena.

“Digging, Luke and I call it the worker.” Said Jorge. “It may keep digging until it finds something, or it might have brain damage. So far, it’s never attempted to eat me.....Too busy I guess.”

“You could have told us.” Said Elena.” But.....It’ll make a great story. Of course, Wires needs to take a few decent pictures to go with the story.....Are you alright, Wires ?”

“I’ll get a few decent shots.....From inside the truck.” Said Wires.

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