

Coffee Addict

Chapter 11 – Final Preparations

“Ahhh, so you’ve decided.....Are you coming to the temple ?” Asked Julie.

She actually lowered her voice, as though the expedition was a huge secret. As far as Jaimie was aware, everyone in the village knew about the helicopters and the trip to the high plateau. A few had even heard about the army arriving to protect the plantation against hostile creatures.’

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Teresa Correa had friends who’d loved cats, puppies even hamsters that bit them when in a bad mood. Her school friend Dinah had once owned, and loved, a huge rabbit that was about as lively as a throw rug. Teresa had enjoyed boys more than pets, though she did tend to treat her boyfriends as pets; often changing them on a regular basis. As for a bit of an ugly bug like Rocky ? She’d have been offered to a friend to look after, or taken to the nearest animal shelter. Teresa was as amazed as Michelle Thorpe, when they both obviously loved the strange gender confusing creature, which Luke had christened Rocky.....

“She’s flapping her wings faster.” Said Teresa. “We need to take her outside. Rocky obviously wants to fly. You said her wing muscles were getting stronger.”

The whole gender thing still seemed weird. Called Rocky and their pet looked more like a boy, but Luke said the creature was definitely a girl. Teresa often referred to Rocky as a he.

Michelle was examining Rocky’s back muscles, which seemed to get bigger every day. Luke had asked for details on Rock’s flying ability. There had been instruction though, that Rocky was never to be taken outside of the Doc’s old office.

“Rocky flying around indoors is one thing.” Luke had said. “Rocky flying away over the horizon, is something else entirely. Never take her outside !”

Teresa was a contrarian, as her mother often told her. Now that Luke had told them to keep their pet indoors, she was determined to take her outside.

“You know Luke told us not to take her outside.” Said Michelle. “Neither of us want her to fly away.....We’ll never see her again.”

“Rocky knows us, we’re her family.” Said Teresa. “She won’t fly away and leave us.”

“I bet she will.” Said Michelle. “She’ll want to find others like her. Rocky will one day want to have little Rockies of her own.”

As if to show them she was now just about able to fly, Rocky flew out of Michelle’s hands and right across the room. She landed on a high shelf and began making bird like chirruping noises.

“See.....She can fly.” Said Teresa. “I bet you she won’t fly away, if we take her outside. I’ll bet you.....I can get you a date with Jaimie’s friend Matthew.”

“What would I be betting ?” Asked Michelle.

“Just a few hundred dollars, let’s say two hundred; nothing too much to lose.....You know me, I’m always short of cash.”

“But.....Your family are loaded.” Said Michelle.

“My mum is loaded.....I’m the poverty ridden black sheep of the family.” Said Teresa.

She knew Michelle had a thing about Matthew, since some guy had dumped her. There were rumours a friend of Jaimie had used and abused Michelle, but no one was sure. Teresa could tell that

Michelle was tempted. Matthew was a good looking guy and rumoured to be red hot between the sheets.

"If I win.....Can you really deliver a date with Matthew ?" Asked Michelle. "Lie to me and things could turn nasty, very quickly. I know a lot of things your mum would go ape shit about."

Being honest, Teresa was only about 70-30 certain she could deliver on the bet. Maybe 90-10; as Matthew had once mentioned liking Michelle. The odds were in her favour, so she reverted to the age old skill of lying.

"Hey, no need for threats." Said Teresa. "I can deliver.....No doubt about it."

"Alright, but let me down and your mum hears about your fun with Lidia." Said Michelle.

"So we're taking Rocky outside ?" Asked Teresa.

There was a look on Michelle's face, that said she might think it was the craziest idea known to mankind, but they were going to do it anyway.

"Yes, we're taking Rocky outside." Said Michelle. "If her scrawny arse vanishes into the clouds, we tell Luke she busted her way out during the night.....Agreed ?"

"Agreed, but she won't vanish.....You'll see." Said Teresa.

She went outside in her metal cage, which Teresa could still carry on her own. A larger version of the original metal cage. Luke knew people who could keep enlarging it; as needed. They went out into what had been Doc's back garden; it was still full of his much loved roses. There was a fence around it, which would give them more privacy than taking Rocky into the nearby woods. Teresa put Rocky's cage on the table they used to eat al fresco, when in the garden; if the weather was good enough.

"Alright, Rocky.....I love you, right ?" Said Teresa, as she stroked her through the bars of her cage.

"Yeah.....Fly away and she'll cry for months." Added Michelle.

"I really will.....I'm so fond of this little arsehole." Said Teresa.

"Make a sound like a tinned hotdog." Said Michelle. "Then she'll definitely come back."

Teresa took their much loved pet, out of its cage. Rocky seemed confused for a moment and clung to her hands.

"It's alright girl.....Go and fly around, if you want to." Said Michelle.

"She's trembling." Said Teresa.

"Is a big world out there, if you've spent your entire life in Doc's back room." Said Michelle.

Eventually Rocky got the idea and climbed up to the top of Teresa's head. No getting stuck in her hair, their pet wanted a vantage point.

"I thought she'd go for it.....Really quickly." Said Michelle.

Rocky didn't so much take off, as leap into the air and begin flapping her wings like crazy. Maybe her mum was supposed to show her how it was done ? She almost hit the ground, but just about managed to flap her way to the end of the garden.

"Oh.....I hope she doesn't collide with the fence." Said Teresa.

Over the fence and Rocky seemed to be getting the hang of flying. By the time she was at the edge of the woods, she was a dot against the sky. Soon she wasn't even a dot anymore. Teresa just hoped Rocky decided to return. The more she thought about it, the less likely was it that Matthew would simply agree to a date with Michelle.

"Her first time out in the world.....She'll be exploring." Said Michelle.

"She'll be back.....I know it." Said Teresa.

Michelle was already telling her about her ideal date with Matthew, when Rocky returned. Not from the trees where she'd vanished, she arrived with a squawking noise from right above their heads. Teresa ended up with a noisy Rocky in her arms.

"Yes.....You've seen a lot on your first adventure." Said Teresa.

"Damn.....No date." Said Michelle.

Not that Teresa thought that'd be easy to arrange, but she wasn't going to mention that. After a lot of bird like noises, Rocky went back into her cage on her own. It was probably home to her, the place where she felt safe.

"We need to tell Luke." Said Michelle.

"No way.....He'll make us keep her locked up." Said Teresa.

The argument went on, right into Doc's back room. Teresa was determined to keep Rocky's outings a secret from Luke, while Michelle wanted him to know. Teresa could see the promised date with Matthew, becoming useful again.

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Despite what many thought, Ana Moura wasn't head of the Muisca religion in the village. There were many senior people in their church and Ana was merely one of them. Muisca wasn't a religion that required a single leader. The basics of their religion were known to all the faithful in and around the plantation. It was the old religion of South America and there were rarely any squabbles about rules and the tenets of their faith. There had been many hundreds of years to achieve what seemed so hard for other, newer, religions.....Harmony. Of course, the occasional claims that Muisca deities were seen among them, also helped.....

"Sorry to call on you unannounced, Luke." Said Ana. "It's the idea of digging in the cemetery.....It can't be allowed. It would be so disrespectful to those buried there."

It was early and Ana knew Luke didn't like being disturbed at home. It might be a modest rented apartment, but Ana understood that once you'd lived somewhere for a while, anywhere starts to feel like home. Luke Walsh was dressed, but his expression was one of someone who wasn't pleased to see her. She knew it was early, much too early.

"You'd better come inside." Said Luke. "There's fresh coffee, if you'd like some?"

"That would be nice." Said Ana.

Just a few days before the helicopters were wheels up and heading for the high plateau and the ancient temple. The last thing Ana wanted to do was upset Luke. He was their science guy on the expedition and she needed to be able to work with him. She sat at the kitchen table, on the other side from where Luke seemed to be halfway through his breakfast.

"I was working late last night." Said Luke. "The creature killed in the cemetery is definitely something new. A few body parts similar to the other creatures, but otherwise.....Very different."

"I need to know.....Do you still intend to start digging in the village cemetery?" Asked Ana.

Luke gave her a cup of coffee, a cereal bowl and then pointed at the packets on the table. His face said he was still annoyed at her, but that wasn't going to stop him being polite.

"We should be digging of course." Said Luke. "There should be soldiers digging there, looking for these brutes and their burrows. In a way, I've stopped that happening. I contacted the Colombian military and after being fairly disinterested, they're now banning any digging at the cemetery."

"Obviously I'm pleased, but they must have given a reason?" Asked Ana

"I suppose someone high up in the Military Forces of Colombia; finally saw the wisdom in keeping the public happy." Said Luke. "The stories about our monsters have reached the global news media. Now there are unhappy locals who insist their graveyard mustn't be disturbed. It'd take a very brave general to arrive and begin digging."

"Good.....I won't take up any more of your morning." Said Ana.

She looked up and Luke was actually smiling. He refilled her coffee and shoved the cereal at her, and the jug of milk.

"Eat Ana.....Drink more coffee." Said Luke. "Leave now and you'll miss the best bit of news. Well....I consider it to be the best part."

Ana put a good helping of cereal in her bowl and covered it in milk. It actually felt nice not be hurried out of the door. She'd already called on Julie that morning and the welcome had been far less hospitable. Julie was actually quite keen on digging up the strange creatures under the cemetery.

"I originally called the military, in the hope of them assisting in the protection of the plantation. This was just after Colonel Hernandez had been out of favour." Said Luke. "He may have been a hero of the people, but he couldn't survive the death of Officer Garcia. To the senior military officers, we must have looked like a career killing posting."

"I'm assuming their attitude has changed ?" Asked Ana.

There was something about someone else's food. Ana noticed that Luke bought the same cereal as her, but his seemed to taste better.

"Oh, it has definitely changed." Said Luke. "Someone has told them it's important to keep the people of the plantation happy. I imagine Julie called a friend, or it might have been Gustavo. I'm assuming the military have banned digging in the cemetery, to keep everyone happy.....Or at least most of the people."

"You're probably right.....Gustavo knows people, important people." Said Ana.

It was irresistible.....Ana refilled her bowl from the cereal box and poured in a little more milk.

"Anyway, coming full circle.....They agreed to the reason I'd first called Bogotá." Said Luke. "The military are suddenly very keen on protecting the population of the area. They will be here in some force, while everyone in authority is exploring the temple. Properly trained soldiers with decent weapons. Not as good as the superguns of course, but better than the shotguns Olie and Julian carry around in their cars."

Her coffee cup was empty, as was the jug in the coffee machine. Ana looked at her cup, before pointedly looking at the machine. No response, Luke's hospitality seemed to have run out for the day. Or had it ?

"More coffee, Ana ?" Asked Luke. "I can easily make another pot."

"Thank you, that would be really nice." Said Ana.

The quick argument had become a leisurely breakfast with someone who might well become a genuine friend. Maybe not her best ever start to a day, but it had to be up there, in the top five.

"Is this official ? In other words.....Can I tell everyone ?" Asked Ana.

"Yes, it's totally official." Said Luke. "Tell anyone you want to tell.....The army will be here for up to three months if required and their leader is.....Oh, where did I put the note ? Ahh....Here..... Mateo Rodriguez is his name, a middle aged man from Bogotá. Used to be a full general I'm told, but there was a scandal. I've been told it's no use asking about the scandal."

"I love a mystery.....I'll ask a few friends if they know what he did." Said Ana.

"Try, but I can't see anyone telling you." Said Luke.

"I'll try.....It'd be really nice to know."

"That it would, Ana.....That it would." Said Luke.

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Jaimie had intended to confirm with Ana, that he was definitely joining them on the expedition to the high plateau. Most of his friends seemed to be going and having all that space on two large helicopters.....No one could describe the trip as slumming it. There were rumours that Julie and

Gustavo were taking two of their house staff with them, mainly as cooks. If people were taking servants, Jaimie knew it would be more like a five star holiday, than an outing by the Boy Scouts of Colombia. People kept assuming he was going. After all, he had killed one of the brutes, with just a fairly standard hunting rifle. Jaimie still might have driven to the other side of the village, to see Ana in person. Seeing Julie's car outside the store, made up his mind. Supposedly Ana was running the expedition. On the other hand, Julie was paying for just about everything. He was going to tell Julie he was joining her little soirée, as Gustavo kept calling it. Julie hadn't replaced her run around yet, something to replace the ill-fated Range Rover. It was her red Mercedes Sports outside the store; a car that rarely saw the outside of the family garage.

"Perfect timing.....I need a few things." Jaimie muttered.

He put his car next to hers. She'd see it if she came out before him. Good old fashioned curiosity would make her find him before leaving. Jaimie grabbed a basket and headed towards the cheese section. No matter what he might grow, or domesticate; he still needed the store when it came to cheese. He'd also look for a treat for Yolana, his rather huge dog. Julie spotted him, before he spotted her.

"Jaimie Gosse.....What brings you to the village ?" Julie asked.

"Proper cheese, something for Yolana.....Mainly, to see Ana." Said Jaimie.

"Ahhh, so you've decided.....Are you coming to the temple ?" Asked Julie.

She actually lowered her voice, as though the expedition was a huge secret. As far as Jaimie was aware, everyone in the village knew about the helicopters and the trip to the high plateau. A few had even heard about the army arriving to protect the plantation against hostile creatures.

"I have and seeing you will save me a drive across the village." Said Jaimie.

"Fine, you can tell me and I'll tell her." Said Julie. "Are you going ?"

"Yes, I am."

There was a hug, a quick hug. Julie moved towards him and for a second or so, Jaimie remembered a trip to Paris one autumn. Of course, they'd both been younger in those days. There was a flicker of something in Julie's eyes, which was nice.

"I'm so pleased you're going." Said Julie.

"I don't suppose I could bring Yolana ?" He asked.

"No, sorry.....We've drawn the line at family pets." Said Julie.

And with that, the flicker of something left the eyes of his one-time lover. A bit more than just a lover, there had been talk of marriage, maybe children too. Sometimes Jaimie envied Gustavo, but not all the time. Julie could be famously grumpy on a bad day.

"At least the army will be here.....To look after everyone when Jorge is away." Said Jaimie.

"I think all the police are coming with us, including Olie and Julian." Said Julie. "It seems overkill to replace them with well trained, well-armed soldiers. But.....I can see a lot of people liking them being around."

He was tempted to mention Teresa enjoying about twenty young soldiers defending the plantation. Julie could get a little unpredictable about such jokes. Teresa was her daughter after all.

"I've heard of Mateo Rodriguez.....He'll do a good job." Said Jaimie.

"Do you know what he did.....to not be a general anymore ?" Asked Julie.

Jaimie knew and it was something personal, that was no one's business really, apart from Mateo's. Telling Julie would make her happy, but she'd tell everyone she'd ever met, in her entire life. That might make the new guy a lot less efficient at his job.

"No, I never did find out." He lied.

"Anyway.....I'll let Ana know you're with us on the expedition." Said Julie.

Jaimie still had the cheese to find of course and something for Yolana. Her food was delivered every week and his dog seemed to love it. To Jaimie, it looked like uninspiring gunk in a tin. Even the smell of the stuff, was fairly bland. Every so often, he treated his pet to something a bit more exciting. Expensive of course, but he could afford it.

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Maria had a strange relationship with her mother, or at least Maria thought it was strange. Nothing Maria ever did was quite good enough for her mum. Nothing ever really met with her satisfaction. There was love and affection; her mum had hugged her for hours after her boyfriend had been killed. Some of her friends had mums who gave them praise, even though often it wasn't deserved. Maria didn't want a mum like that, but a little appreciation would have been nice. One good thing about a mum like that though, Maria had grown up fast and tended to look after herself. Her mum had driven her to Ana's house and would be back after doing a little shopping. Her mum was religious in a way, but not a believer in Muisca. That had been a huge part of the problem after Maria had been accepted into the local faith. Her mum had recited Hail Mary's for several hours, on the night Maria had been accepted into the church of Muisca.

"You could come with me.....Ana will have coffee ready." Said Maria.

"I can't come with you into that house, but I know Ana is a good woman."

Maria was out of the car, when her mum came around to her side and hugged her.

"I do wish you well on this expedition." Said her mum. "Tell Ana that and that I hope everything goes well. I've never been against the Old Religion.....It just isn't for everyone. Ana will understand that."

"I'm sure she does." Said Maria.

Maria walked slowly towards Ana's front door. It was the letter that had brought her there. Ana had said that knowing her mother had approved her going wasn't enough. There needed to be a letter from her mum, saying she gave permission for her daughter to go. That would make Ana responsible for her, until they returned from the expedition. In loco parentis it was called, making decisions and taking actions in place of the parent. The letter was safely in her pocket. Maria rang the doorbell and Ana was there very quickly.

"I saw you arrive.....Your mum could have come in." Said Ana.

"She'll be back for me after doing her shopping."

Into the back room, with the famously long table. Maria gave the letter to Ana, who read it immediately. There was a lot of quiet muttering and a few audible sighs, but Ana seemed happy with it.

"Perfect.....You'll be going with us to the temple." Said Ana.

"It all seemed unreal, until now." Said Maria. "Now.....I know I'm going."

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Luke Walsh usually called his wife from where he lived, but his routine had been upset recently. Actually, just about everyone's routine had been upset. The deaths of the kids near the red river and then an attack at the cemetery. The only people guaranteed to smile at him these days, were Michelle and Teresa. They were becoming far too fond of Rocky. Eventually he'd have to do something about that, but there was no urgency. Once he was back from the temple, he'd go and have a look at their weird and potentially dangerous pet.

"They have to realise.....Rocky isn't a kitten." Luke mumbled.

He was at the trailers late, mainly to make sure the dead creature was burned and then buried. He had helpers, but liked to be there when the dead beast was covered in soil and rocks. It was the new

creature from the cemetery and he didn't want anyone being tempted to take home a few souvenirs. Once it was burned and buried, it'd be no use to anyone.

"Burns well.....They all burn well when they're dead." Said one of guys from the plantation.

Covered in an accelerant and quite a lot of petrol, it'd be amazing if it didn't burn well. Once the borrowed staff from the plantation were using a digger to bury the smouldering body of the brute, Luke usually went home. Today was different though, he was going to call Lisa from an office in one of the trailers. David had agreed to him making personal calls at the company's expense.

"I'll be here for a while." Said Luke. "Any problems.....Come and get me."

"Will do, boss."

It was later than usual, though not by a lot. Lisa liked to get their son to bed at the same time every night. Anyone with a disabled child, knows that a fixed routine is essential. Walter was twenty, which seemed to increase the need for a routine. Luke made sure the line sounded clear, before dialling the Toronto number for home.

"Lisa.....So good to hear your voice." Said Luke.

"I know things are stressful there." Said Lisa. "The attack at the cemetery made top spot on the TV news. I suspect Tessera being a Canadian company had something to do with that."

"Good old CTV news." Said Luke. "We should have soldiers digging these things out of the ground. Instead any digging in the cemetery has been stopped. It's behaviour likely to offend those with loved ones buried there. They have a point of course.....But we should be going after these things." Just having his wife on the line made him feel better than he'd felt for days. Luke was thinking of calling Lisa every night for a while. If David wouldn't approve the calls, he'd pay the bills himself. He could hear the rustle of paper, as Lisa did something at her end.

"The local papers are going crazy." Said Lisa. "I'm saving everything and Walter is helping to get it all in a scrap book. The Toronto Star is calling you a local whizz kid; as in local whizz kid is achieving wonders at the Yago Plantation in Colombia. There are lots of maps to show where you are."

"Wow.....I don't think I've been called a whizz kid before." Said Luke.

"I know.....Your old College have put up a page about you on their website." Said Lisa. "Like it or not dear husband.....You're famous in Toronto."

When he'd got on the plane to Colombia, Luke had felt a little worried about Lisa. He'd also felt quite guilty about leaving her, in the lurch. They loved Walter, but he was getting older and sometimes difficult to handle. Now she sounded more like her old self.

"Two days and we're wheels up for our expedition." Said Luke. "You have the satellite phone's number. Any problems don't hesitate to call. If David answers it, tell him I deserve a pay rise."

"But.....You do deserve a pay rise."

No Walter waiting to talk to him, their son had routines and one of them was a strict bedtime. They'd kept him up before and it could make him cranky for days. More money would help of course. Money couldn't cure the incurable, but it would make their lives a little easier. Lisa really needed someone to help with Walter on a full time basis.

"Did you get one of the superguns?" Asked Lisa.

"Yes, one of the new design." Said Luke. "I've had a little practise with it, but not as much as I'd hoped. We're so busy at the moment. Chad was impressed with my gun skills. He said if I aim at something; I always seem to hit it."

"Praise indeed from Chad Hudson."

It had to be asked, though he hoped the answer was positive. If it wasn't, he was close to three thousand miles from home and about to fly to one of the most remote places in Colombia. It was definitely the most remote place Luke had ever been.

"Is Walter being good for you?" Asked Luke.

"Yes, very good.....He promised me and he's kept that promise." Said Lisa. "There was one tantrum, but that was all over very quickly. I know I always look for miracles, but our son does seem to understand more of what's going on around him."

"Good.....When I get home, I'll spend more time with him." Said Luke.

The conversation drifted towards family and friends, which it usually did. Her family liked Luke, but thought he didn't do enough for Walter. Not that Lisa ever mentioned that, but he knew the usual vibe she had to deal with. The call ended late and he still wasn't sure if he should be getting on a helicopter and going to the high plateau.

"Be honest.....Would you like me to drop out of the expedition?" He asked.

"No.....Go, make them realise you're the whizz kid I married. Then ask them for a huge pay rise."

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Julie Yago could have said the decision had nothing to do with her. She was definitely tempted, as she saw Elena Alvarez stomping through Café Loco, with her photographer in tow. Wires seemed to go everywhere with her. The look on the face of the top reporter in Manizales said it all. A quick nothing to do with me and Julie could have fled to her car. Easy as that, but Julie had a thing about not being bullied and definitely never being a victim. Besides, it hadn't been her decision, but she'd gone along with it.

"I need a word with you." Said Elena.

Elena Alvarez had done well out of the story, with the help of a few key people from the plantation. Without Jorge, Wires would never have got the best pictures and without those pictures; Elena would have had no story. Alright, they were now leaving her high and dry, but no one had promised her a seat on the helicopter. Julie steered the angry reporter to a quiet section of the café.

"I know, it's about the no journalists decision." Said Julie. "There was a vote and it was agreed by a massive majority. No journalists will be going with us to the temple."

"Who proposed the idea to be voted on?" Asked Elena.

"It's how we earn a living you know.....I was promised a place on the expedition." Said Wires.

Whoever had started inviting reporters, had done it without approval. Julie was paying for everything, so she'd reserved the right to bring people, or veto those she didn't fancy being with at the temple. In the end it had been David Sullivan who'd suggested a blanket ban on journalists. The vote had been just about unanimously in favour.

"I can't tell you details of our committee meetings." Said Julie. "All such meetings are considered to be confidential."

"You've never liked me.....That's what it is." Said Elena. "Admit it; you didn't want me at the Muisca temple."

People in the café could tell things were getting tense. Elena had barely raised her voice, but there was tension there. Several coffee drinkers were now looking at them.

"That's ridiculous.....No journalists are going with us." Said Julie. "Not everything is about you, Elena."

"About me.....You're still holding a grudge about the Gustavo business." Yelled Elena.

No one yelled in Café Loco, it was a kind of unwritten rule of the plantation. Kids might infuriate you, lovers might betray you and husbands might like a bit on the side. No mentioned of it in Café Loco

and they definitely never yelled about it. Elena Alvarez had business cards which never mentioned being a reporter, or a journalist. She was a self-proclaimed feature writer, another type of animal entirely, from a journalist. On the whole, journalism required honesty and a little integrity. Elena was a feature writer, which she obviously considered gave her permission to make stories up as she went along.

"I should have punched you on the nose then." Shouted Julie. "Your lies could have ended my marriage and Gustavo is a good man. You're a liar, Elena.....A plain old fashioned crooked reporter." Julie had never resented Elena making up nonsense about her family. It was how the woman made her living after all, how she put food on the table.

"Now ladies, calm down.....We're getting a lot of attention." Said Wires.

"Oh, shut up !" Yelled Julie.

Julie had resented it and held a grudge, after Elena had made up a story about Gustavo being unfaithful. Not just unfaithful, but a man who did it often and with great enthusiasm. All lies of course, Julie had hired a private detective to look into it. Gustavo was faithful and as far as Julie knew, deeply in love with her. Yes, Julie Yago would hold a grudge forever, about the lies that might have ended her marriage.

"Don't you tell me to shut up." Shouted Elena.

"I was talking to Wires, but you need to shut up too." Yelled Julie.

They were the big thing to come and see, people were calling friends on their phones. Of course the phone service was perfect; it always was at the worst possible times. The Café Loco had never been so full; Julie thought she might be due a little commission.

"Don't you dare tell my photographer to shut up." Shouted Elena.

It was becoming annoying, all the pointless arguing, often about misunderstandings. Julie did what she'd wanted to do, all those years before. She drew back her arm, clenched her fist and hit Elena hard on the nose. Really hard, there was the sound of something breaking.

"I've owed you that for a very long time." Yelled Julie.

Lots of blood from a broken nose, the sound of a great many people calling every friend they had in the plantation. Julie was waiting for retaliation, but the feature writer had fled. Elena had shrieked something about the police. She'd have trouble getting the local police interested; Julie paid most of them. Wires was still there, grinning at her.

"I've been waiting for someone to break her nose for years." Said Wires. "It was an inevitable certainty."

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Kate Doyle was stood next to Chad Hudson, the company security guy who was fast becoming a fixture in her life. They were both looking south east, the direction the helicopters were due to arrive from. The field around them was part of Hacienda Yago and currently looked like a military operation was going on. Chad kept referring to it as the Berlin airlift, but only when no one else was within earshot. Lots of trucks with crates in the back, with people waiting to load up the two twin rotor helicopters. Not just trucks, some small local suppliers had stacked crates and boxes on trailers; being pulled by their cars. There were people there of course, lots and lots of them; all looking into the sky to the south east.....

"So much preparation." Said Kate. "I still can't quite believe we're going there.....To the temple."

"Good weather too.....No unloading in the rain." Said Chad.

"Oh yes, the unloading.....There seems to be a lot of hard work associated with our expedition."

It was Ana who probably saw them first. She was fifty yards away, stood next to a truck loaded with their tents; their accommodation for the duration of the trip. Ana was pointing at the sky to the south and yelling, very loudly.

"They're here.....I can see them." Yelled Ana, while pointing.

"Yes.....I can hear them now." Said Chad.

They were coming in over the plantation and for a while they were just dots in the distance. Noisy dots, the sound grew faster than their presence in the sky. Like two angry hornets, the sound of the twin rotor aircraft, dominated everything.

"Wow, they're huge." Said Kate.

"What ?"

"I said.....They're huge." Yelled Kate.

It was a relief when they were landed and the engines were shut down. They looked like something out of a war film and definitely not something Julie had hired for a trip to the high plateau. Two massive weapons of war, landed on the field Julie and Gustavo used for picnics and social events. Doors opened on the helicopters. People looked out, as if expecting something to happen.

"Come on, everyone." Shouted David Sullivan. "Start loading up the supplies."

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