

Ruby V : Machu Picchu

Chapter 4 - Thiago

“A row of restaurants on a wide street, with parking on one side of the road. According to the tourist leaflets in the house, parking was infamously bad in Lima. Finding a bus sized gap was thrilling enough for them to bump knuckles.”

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“Can you give Ruby the news summary ?” Asked Sophie. “I did lots of notes, but my hair needs longer to dry.”

Caleb picked up her handwritten notes and gave her a cold look. He didn’t like the idea of having to report on work he hadn’t done, or fully understand. Sophie could understand, she felt the same way. “Your hair looks fine, black and glossy.” Said Caleb. “Can’t you go ? Supposing I get asked lots of questions.”

“No one will ask questions.” Said Sophie. “Please.....I’ll make it up to you later.”

That caught his interest; the cold stare became a smile. Her hair did look fine, but it really needed longer to dry out completely. No using a drier, she’d once had the frizz day from hell. Bribing him with hints of sex felt a bit low, but if it worked....

“Alright.....Your hand writing is easy to read.” Said Caleb.

“Being a free day, everyone can go where they choose.” Said Sophie. “Apart from Spider, who’s going to Callao with Lily, I have no idea where anyone is going. Generally.....There’s nothing on the radio news to worry about.”

“Is Sarah happy about that.....Spider and Lily going on a jaunt together ?” Asked Caleb.

“She must be, or Lily would be in traction by now. Anyway.....You’ve a fairly easy report to make. Nothing much happening in Lima and no real concerns about the port at Callao.”

Caleb kissed the top of her head and her still slightly damp hair.

“Still a no on using a drier ?”

“Go.....And bring me back a bowl of cereal.” She said.

After he’d gone, she gave her newly brunette hair a good look in the mirror. Her hair had never been perfectly straight, but now there was a definite curl. For a moment, she pondered nurturing the curl.

“No, I’m used to it being straight.”

There was a risk of frizz caused by heat, but she reached for her straighteners. After breakfast, just about everyone was heading out to enjoy a free day, an entire twenty four hours with no pre-planned events. Ruby wanted her to help with a spot of mild interrogation of Thiago. Nothing too heavy though, he was assumed to be harmless, whatever that might mean. Ruby and her delving into his mind and using seed words.....They’d be finished by eleven, maybe earlier. They’d end up knowing more about Thiago than he himself could probably remember. Gently done though, no risk of lobotomising him.

“Then we get a day of sightseeing.” Sophie muttered.

Spider and Lily had claimed the minibus on a first asked, gets, basis. That meant Caleb and her would have to use taxis, which actually pleased her. A bright yellow bus with red stripes.....Fine if you were one of a crowd, but downright embarrassing if there was just two of you. They were going to get a taxi to the cathedral and then spiral out from there and see where they ended up.

"I wouldn't mind another look at the museum." Sophie mumbled.

Caleb was back before her straighteners had got rid of that rogue curl. Her hair looked good though, better than after some of her attempts to colour it.

"I knew it, I damn well knew it." Said Caleb.

"Did Ruby ask you lots of questions?"

"No, not one.....But she volunteered me to help Sarah go through the documents we found at the house." Said Caleb. "It seems that Ruby thinks I might have some kind of insight that even I'm not aware of. Gobbledegook of course.....All nonsense."

"Would you like my advice?" Asked Sophie.

There was that cold look again. Sophie had to admit it; sometimes her advice wasn't well received, by quite a lot of people. Her logic was all about the quickest way to get something done. The feelings of those involved, rarely bothered her.

"Go on, tell me."

"Let Sarah know we want to go out no later than eleven." Said Sophie. "She'll have somewhere better to be than digging through musty files all day. I guarantee she'll be finished by eleven."

Caleb kissed her, a proper kiss on the lips.

"Sophie.....You're a genius."

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Caleb found Todd with Sarah, in the room set aside for them to work on the paperwork. Not hard to find a spare room, Alessia House was huge, though every room had at least a rug and a few chairs. Caleb did as Sophie had suggested.

"I need to be done by eleven." He said. "Sophie wants to go to the museum again."

"I'm not keen on doing this all day." Said Sarah.

Sarah looked at Todd, who looked at his shoes for a few seconds, as if deep in thought.

"It is supposed to be a free day." Said Todd. "Let's just scan all the documents onto the laptop. That should take a couple hours."

"Yes, then the documents can be backed up and kept safe." Added Caleb.

Sarah had the expression of a woman sentenced to life imprisonment, who's just heard a reprieve had come through.

"We can get that done by eleven, including the backup." Said Sarah.

Some prep work had been done; the documents had been laid out on an old dining room table. A really ancient piece of furniture, that could have seated a large family for Sunday lunch. There had also been an attempt to smooth out the severely crumpled papers.

"Who sorted this stuff out?" Asked Caleb.

"Ruby, at about three in the morning." Said Todd.

"Then we can't let her down." Said Sarah. "I'll use the scanner. We'll put a yellow highlighter mark on everything we scan.....Just to be sure we don't miss something."

"Sounds a plan." Said Caleb.

Like everything you don't do every day, it took them a few tries to become a scanning production line. Todd took the documents out of their files and flattened them as much as possible. Sarah ran a hand scanner over the documents, while making sure the image on the laptop looked alright. Caleb thought he had the hard part, though he often tended to feel like that. He put the documents back in their files, before putting the files into a cardboard storage box. Once they'd done a dozen files, they were getting through the documents very quickly. An hour into the job and they were all

running on autopilot. Caleb couldn't remember the last documents he'd bothered to look at. Sarah was awake though, even if only just.

"Hey, look at this." Said Sarah.

She pointed at a screen image, before picking the document up off the table. Whatever she'd found seemed to be troubling her.

"No, that's impossible.....Must be fake records." She mumbled.

Caleb expanded the image on the laptop's screen and understood why Sarah was upset. If it was true, it was huge. Actually, it was way beyond huge.

"Did they even do misinformation in the eighties?" Asked Caleb.

"Misinformation was invented when that kid ran into the village, shouting wolf." Said Todd.

"Can I see the original?" Asked Caleb.

The paper was old, as old as the papers either side of it in the file. It had all the right rubber stamps on it for the CIA in Langley. They seemed to have been into rubber stamps then, one said the document was to be destroyed after being actioned. Someone hadn't been focused that day though, probably someone way down on the food chain. The 'for destruction' document had gone into the file for Operation Forty Love. Why the weird tennis reference? Caleb had no idea, though he seemed to remember someone saying the CIA were big on tennis terms in the eighties.

"It definitely looks genuine." Said Caleb.

"Nonsense, it must be a fake." Said Todd.

"I don't know.....The Americans did some weird shit in the eighties." Said Sarah.

"Not that fucking weird." Added Todd.

It was all there on that single yellowing piece of A4 paper. There were even a few names, though only initials had been used by the senior people who'd authorised the orders. Someone would recognise those initials though. Written in the usual clinical terms, so beloved by the intelligence community. It was an order to assassinate the head of a friendly government, the president of a west leaning nation. Now the world had forgotten about that dreadful day, but no one had ever been caught for the murder. Caleb had been a child at the time, though weirdly, he had the memories of being an adult at the time. More weirdness done to his mind? Probably.

"This looks genuine." Said Caleb. "All I can say is, there must have been a damn good reason to take this guy out."

"Ohhh, that is the justification of every tyrant." Said Sarah. "It's fine, they deserved it."

"It has to be fake.....Misinformation." Said Todd.

"Left in a house where it was never likely to be found." Said Caleb. "A house quite likely to be set alight by kids, or some homeless guy. It doesn't make sense, Todd."

"I'm swinging over to the it's genuine frame of mind." Said Sarah.

"We need to finish scanning everything." Said Todd. "That has to be a priority. Then we can use the laptop to search for any mention of Operation Forty Love. Then.....and only then, we can bother Ruby with this."

"I think you and Sophie might be getting away a bit late." Said Sarah.

"Oh, I can't see her complaining, not when she sees this document." Said Caleb.

Everything was two sided in those days, or so it seemed. Most documents had needed turning over, to have both sides scanned. As Caleb held the paper, he saw the faded image of a rubber stamp on the reverse side, with a name he recognised.

"Look.....It's faded almost completely away, but held up to the light." Said Caleb.

"Fuck." Said Sarah.

It was a name they all knew, even though he'd been dead for close to a decade. A rubber stamp of course, with no signature. Rubber stamps had been like a signature in the eighties though, even some large corporations has used them.

"That's it.....It has to be a fake." Said Todd.

The port of Callao was a city in its own right, though the expansion of Lima had effectively joined the two cities together. The port was less than five kilometres from Alessia House. Walking distance if they were used to the city and knew the route better. Spider didn't fancy sitting around waiting for Sarah all day. He hadn't believed her insistence that they'd be away by lunchtime.

"Ruby will keep you busy all day." He'd told her. "She always does."

Lily seemed to enjoy driving the bus and hadn't needed much persuasion to join him on a trip to the coast.

"I've never seen the Pacific Ocean." She'd said. "Don't laugh, but throwing a pebble into the pacific, is high on my bucket list."

"I've seen it from the other side, Korea and the Sea of Japan." He'd replied. "Never thrown a pebble in, so we can do it together."

Lily not only knew how to drive their bus, she was also good at remembering roads. The route in from the airport was along the same route. No sooner had they seemed to leave the house, than Lily was looking for somewhere to park the bus. She'd taken them through the port and out to La Punta. They were just about as far west as it was possible to go in Lima, without ending up in the Pacific Ocean.

"There.....Lots of gaps." Said Spider. "Even for a large yellow bus."

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"Alright, you've obviously been planning this." Said Spider. "So..... You lead on and I'll follow."

"I have been planning." Said Lily. "One of the gardeners at the house, even recommended an authentic Peruvian restaurant, for lunch. I even brought a pebble from home, just in case."

Lily locked the bus and set off walking south, with Spider next to her.

"Across Ostolaza Park and there's a small beach." Said Lily. "I've done so much planning....I really hope it's all as I imagined it would be."

There were people in the park, some sat on the benches, enjoying a nice morning. Spider picked up a fair sized pebble, from a flower bed. He offered one to Lily, but she wanted to use the one that had come all the way from Southend. The beach was a minor disappointment. Just a few feet of bright red sand, but it was there in front of them, the Pacific Ocean. Lily would have made a good cricket bowler; her overarm throw sent her pebble out some way.

"There....Item four ticked off." Said Lily.

"I came; I saw.....I chucked a rock." Said Spider.

Another bumping of knuckles and of course, they were still too early for the restaurant to be open. The park was nice though, with a decent view of the sea and lots of empty benches. They sat for a while on a clean looking bench, while Lily consulted a brochure listing the must see tourist places. "There's a lot going on in De Mayo Street." Said Lily. "Not far and we're bound to find something interesting to do. Lots of little blue comments on the map, though we'd need Sarah to understand some of it."

"It's a nice day, with no sign of rain. We'll survive." Said Spider.

Spider had earned a living working for some fairly shady characters. Crap....He was a fairly shady character. Lily knew that, he wouldn't have a usable passport and driving license, if she hadn't pulled a few strings. He had what he called Spider senses, more to do with the movie than his name. Those senses were tingling, as he saw the two men sitting on a bench. Nondescript men, the perfect look if you wanted to watch someone, without causing attention to yourself. Not too thin, or fat, or short.....etc. If you'd wanted a picture in the dictionary to illustrate normal, you'd have happily used a picture of the two men.

"Don't look.....Two men about thirty yards back the way we came." Said Spider.

He knew Lily had done MI6 courses, she knew how to look at the sky, while really examining the two guys.

"I see them....What have they done?"

"They were across the road when we left the bus, I'd swear to it." Said Spider. "One coincidence I might live with, but I'm sure they were behind us when we crossed the road into the park."

"Alright, what do we do about them? We have no useful contacts here; I couldn't even get us off a parking ticket."

"I know you ended up in the top five of the MI6 tough guy courses."

"Top three actually." Said Lily.

"Sorry, top three.....And I've been known to be spontaneously violent, when the need arises."

There was a gleeful grin on Lily's face.

"Spider, you villain." Said Lily. "Are you suggesting we lure them somewhere quiet and thump them until they talk?"

"We'll never get a better chance and I don't fancy simply ignoring them."

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Cal had been disappointed when Monique and Nazili hadn't spotted anyone watching her, during their first night in the apartment.

"Don't worry. We'll be back tomorrow night." Nazili had said.

"Yeah, who needs sleep anyway." Monique had muttered.

They believed her, Monique had even sensed that someone had been watching Ruby's flat, from across the street. When no one showed up to watch her that night, Cal had begun to worry that they might think the watcher was gone, or worse, she'd imagined it all. Her thoughts could be a little chaotic at times, Cal knew that. She now had a large kitchen knife in the drawer of the bedside cabinet, just in case. If it came to it, she was quite capable of using the long, serrated blade. She'd dealt with gang members in Baku, with a much smaller knife. Cal was actually a little surprised when Monique called to her through the door that evening. They really did believe her and that mattered.

"Cal....It's us.....We brought pizza and wine."

The smell of hot pizza in the hallway was wonderful. She was hungry and couldn't remember if she'd eaten since having a slice of toast for breakfast. Cal hugged Monique as soon as she'd opened the door, followed by a hug for Nazili.

"I'm so glad you came back."

"We said we would." Said Nazili.

"We'll be back every night if we have to." Added Monique.

They'd arrived with treats for Constanze too and a couple of paperback books to freshen up Ruby's collection of books. By the time Cal was halfway down a glass of Muscadet, it was all beginning to feel like a party.

“You can’t keep living here if you feel unsafe.” Said Monique. “We’ll walk through the neighbourhood for another two or three nights. If we still haven’t spotted your watcher, you should come and live with us.”

“There is a spare room.....It’s very nice.” Added Nazili.

Cal didn’t want to be scared and alone, but Ruby had left her in charge of her flat. Plus there was the cat to worry about.

“Can Constanze come too ?” Cal asked.

“She might be happier downstairs, with Angie.” Said Monique.

“Angie doesn’t like her anymore.”

“We can decide about Constanze later.” Said Nazili. “Hopefully.....We’ll find your stalker tonight, or tomorrow night.”

The pizza was good and Cal settled on the sofa to watch a movie DVD, which Monique had brought with her. An old black and white classic, according to Monique. Cal drifted off into a deep sleep, with the cat on her lap. What really worried her, was being woken by Monique. She hadn’t sensed the watcher and neither, so it seemed, had the cat. Monique was rubbing her shoulder.

“Wake up Cal, Nazili and I are going hunting.”

“I saw something.....They won’t escape this time.” Said Nazili.

Both of them told her not to leave the flat and then they were gone. Cal heard them go down the stairs; the third step down had a squeak that could wake the dead. Ruby referred to that step as her anti-burglar device. It took Cal half a minute to fully wake up. Then Constanze was being tetchy about being lifted off her lap. By the time Cal was at the kitchen window, Monique and Nazili were nowhere to be seen.

“They’re out there, hunting.” She muttered.

The clock on the microwave worked to its own ideas of time, she’d stopped bothering to set it to the correct time. It said half eleven, though it could have easily been one in the morning. Not many people out on the street, which meant it had to be pretty late. Constanze arrived, clambering over the kitchen units, as though she had a perfect right to be there.

“I bet they catch them this time, Constanze.”

There was a shout from the street, which wasn’t unusual in Hackney. None of the few passers-by seemed at all worried. Constanze began purring in her ear, which was comforting. The yell came again, from somewhere close by.

“I wish we knew what’s going on out there.” Cal muttered.

Close to half an hour later, there was the squeak on the stairs. Cal opened the door to find Nazili and Monique holding a woman between them. They were holding her the way police held suspects in cop shows. All three of them looked a little bruised and worse for wear. One of them had probably used one of their gifts on the woman, she looked half asleep. They carried her over to the sofa and propped her up with a few cushions.

“Keep back Cal; she can be a little.....Boisterous.” Said Monique.

“A woman.....I always assumed it’d be a man.” Said Cal.

“She’s Christine Bull, according to the credit card in her wallet.” Said Nazili. “No photo ID on her to confirm that, but we’ll know more once we interrogate her.”

“Are you going to hurt her ?” Asked Cal.

“No, though she might have a bad migraine headache for a few days.” Said Monique.

They didn’t duct tape her, or tie the woman up. Monique put her hand on Christine’s head and muttered something.

“That will bring her round, though I can already confirm that she is indeed Mrs Christine Bull.” Nazili emptied a pocket of his obligatory long swirly coat, onto the coffee table. Probably what Christine had been carrying. The usual rather worn brown wallet, a set of door keys, about two pounds in coins and.....A rather nasty looking knife. The blade was out of place, it looked military. “Oh, have you been a bad girl, Mrs Bull ?” Muttered Nazili.

Cal could tell when the woman was really there, out of whatever half slumber they’d put her in. It was the eyes and the way they looked at Monique. That look made Cal take the blade off the coffee table and open it up. A razor sharp curved blade. Cal held it up, as if daring the woman to try and hurt her.

“You won’t believe it, but you can’t lie to us.” Said Monique.

“We can read your mind.” Added Nazili.

As the woman went to say something, Monique slapped her across the face, making her nose bleed a little.

“I can read your mind.....You were going to scream.” Said Monique. “Do that again and I can create a world of pain and dump you in it for hours. Do you understand ?”

“Yes. I understand you.”

Christine’s first words, in a voice with a definite London accent. A voice similar to Sarah’s, but harsher.

“You said you wouldn’t hurt her.” Said Cal.

“That wasn’t hurting her; it was just a love tap.” Said Monique.

Cal moved back a little, but she still held onto the wicked looking knife. Monique went into a routine they’d either used a lot, or discussed in the hope of catching Cal’s stalker.

“Tell us your full name ?” Asked Monique.

“You know it, I’m Chris Bull.”

“Hmmm you’re still using the name Mrs Christine Bull, yet you’ve been divorced for several years.” Said Nazili. “You had a child with your ex-husband, though you tell everyone you’re childless.”

“Did your husband get custody ?” Asked Monique. “I’m picking up quite a few.....Personal issues.”

“Get out of my head.” Yelled Christine.

Nazili smiled at Monique, they’d obviously succeeded in getting into her stalker’s head.

“Answer our questions quickly and accurately and this will all soon be over.” Said Nazili.

“Are you going to kill me afterwards ?”

“No, we’re not like that.” Said Cal.

No one had told her not to talk and no one was telling her off. Best of all, no one was contradicting her. Cal had killed two men, close up and with a blade. If nothing else, that night had given her an increased respect for life.

“Alright, let’s begin.” Said Monique. “Did you lose custody of your daughter ?”

“Yes.”

“What was your job at that time ?” Asked Nazili.

“You probably already know.”

“It’ll all be far easier if you answer our questions.” Said Monique.

“I was a police officer, an undercover office with the Met.” Said Chris.

Monique actually slapped her own thigh, which seemed a weird thing to do.

“Yes, I see it.....There’s a danger of becoming too attached.” Said Monique. “You had an affair with the woman you were supposed to be investigating. You effectively changed sides.....No wonder I picked up a few personal issues.”

“Don’t blame her for following her heart....Look at us.” Said Nazili.

“I’d never been with a woman before.” Said Chris.

“No one wanted a scandal, so you agreed to resign, provided no criminal charges were brought against you.” Said Monique.

“But.....There are always bills to be paid.” Said Nazili. “A police officer trained in surveillance is useful to some, even one with a dubious past. You were sectioned for attempted suicide, twice.”

“Yes, I’m crap at that too.” Said Chris.

Cal laughed before realising it wasn’t really a joke. Chris smiled at her and laughed too.

“More like blackmail than a job offer.” Said Monique. “A gang you’d been inserted into some years before. They knew all about you.”

“And they offered me a lot of money.” Said Chris. “You’re right; there are always bills to pay.”

“So, Chris.” Said Nazili. “That brings us up to date. Now tell us about who paid you to use all those surveillance skills, against our friend ?”

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When Sophie had entered Thiago’s room, she was surprised to see Todd there. As far as she knew, just Ruby and her were going to talk to the young man. She sensed his agitation and realised he was there as Ruby’s unofficial bodyguard. Thio was young, small and wiry, but that didn’t mean he was harmless. Sophie instinctively trusted him, but that didn’t mean Todd would instantly accept him as one of the group. Ruby obviously knew about it, when she entered the room; she wasn’t surprised to find Todd sat by the window. Someone had brought a full jug of coffee and several cups into the room. Ruby poured herself some coffee, before saying a word.

“Alright, we’re here to decide if Thio is telling us the truth, or full of crap.” Said Ruby.

Ruby sat on the bed, looking at Thio, who was kind of leaning on a dressing table.

“I agreed to this, I have nothing to hide.” Said Thio.

Ruby had agreed a course of action if Thio did turn out to be a fraud. They’d wipe his memory of anything to do with them, before leaving him outside the restaurant where Sarah had found him. Hopefully the restaurant would take him in, but it wasn’t really their problem.

“I want you to lie on the floor, Thio.” Said Ruby. “Stretch yourself out and get comfortable. Above all, try and relax....Resist and you’ll end up with a headache that lasts a week.”

Ruby threw a pillow on the floor and waited for Thio to get comfortable. He didn’t look very relaxed, which wasn’t really surprising. Sophie sat on the floor next to Thio, though she resisted the urge to hold his hand. She liked the guy, but Ruby wouldn’t approve.

“We all want him to be genuine.” Ruby had told her the previous evening. “We have to be sure though.....No liking him because Sarah found him and he looks sad most of the time.”

Hurt puppy syndrome, Spider had called it. Everyone liked Thio, because he looked lost and as though he’d been through some bad times. Of course, a good fraud would look like that too. There was an agreed list of questions and topics, though things could easily drift off topic.

“Close your eyes, Thio.” Said Sophie. “We’ve all heard the story, but we need to hear it from you. Tell us exactly what you said to Sarah in the restaurant ?”

It was the big story, the epic which everyone had heard, or at least heard a version of it. No one believed it of course, it was impossible. Sophie didn’t want to admit it to anyone, but she hoped it was true.

“A man talked to me when I was at the market.” Said Thio. “A real man.....It wasn’t a ghost, though Sarah keeps saying I saw a ghost. I know what I saw I’m not stupid.”

“Please....Just tell us what you told Sarah ?”

Thio's English was perfect, though he spoke with a strong local accent. The statistics on the numbers speaking English were unclear, but it wasn't a huge number. Thio's spoken English was probably better than Spider's, which fuelled the idea that he was a fake.

"A man came to me in the market about three months ago." Said Thio. "I have no idea why or how, but I knew I had to listen to him. He said his name was Serge and that some of his family would soon be in Peru."

At that moment, Sophie finally understood why Todd was there and looking so agitated. There was a miniscule chance that Ruby's soul mate, the love of her life, was still alive.

"What did he look like?" Asked Ruby.

"Tall, with dark black hair, though it was grey at the sides." Said Thio. "A fit man, but definitely not young. He had a long scar on his right cheek, a nasty looking scar."

"That fits Serge." Said Sophie.

"What did he sound like?" Asked Ruby.

"He had an accent from somewhere. I have no idea where he was from."

"Was it a French accent?" Asked Todd.

"I have no idea." Said Thio. "We get a lot of America tourists in the restaurant, but I've never met a Frenchman."

"What do you think Sophie?" Asked Ruby. "We've both been probing his mind, did you find any lies?"

"No, not one, though that is suspicious." Said Sophie. "Everyone lies, often about the small things that are almost irrelevant."

"I don't lie." Snapped Thio.

"I believe you, I too found no lies." Said Ruby. "Explain it to me though, how is it that your English is so good?"

"I am good at languages and as I said.....We get a lot of American tourists."

No deep probing of Ruby's mind, Sophie had learned that lesson. Ruby had to be considering doing a memory wipe on Thio. The idea of Serge being alive was absurd. On the other hand, an organisation trying to insert a mole in the group, would know that. Ruby was looking at Thio with an intensity that bordered on an angry glare.

"I was in the hospital room when Serge died." Said Ruby. "I felt the moment when he was no longer there. If I find out this is a trick of some kind.....You'll wish you'd never met me."

"I'm not lying."

"Alright.....So what is supposed to happen next?" Asked Ruby.

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Ruby had hoped to get away for a while, even if just for a walk around the local park that was visible from the front of the house. So much had happened and the debriefing of Thio had taken far too long.

"The way I see it." Said Sophie. "Is that if Max or Kallina had been seen by someone, we'd never question it. We'd assume they'd come back in some way, returned from the dead. It's just that we were all so hurt by Serge dying, especially you."

"I know Sophie, I know." Said Ruby. "If by some miracle he is back.....But I'm not going to allow myself the luxury of believing it, not yet."

Spider and Lily chose that moment to enter the main hallway, where Ruby was talking to Sophie. They weren't alone; Spider was holding the front door open for someone else. Two men followed them in, two bruised and slightly battered looking men. Strangely, Lily was sharing a joke with one of

them. Now she could see them properly, Ruby noticed that Lily and Spider also looked as though they'd been dragged through a hedge, backwards.

"I have to give it to you; your training has to be as good as mine." Said Lily.

"The DINI as good as MI6, I bet they aren't." Said Spider.

"I still think we won the fight." Said the taller of the two men.

"Never." Yelled Lily.

Not just bruised, all four of them sounded drunk. Ruby had been briefed on the DINI by Foxy, though she had no official contact number for them. The Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia was the Peruvian equivalent of MI6. They also looked after police intelligence, which meant they had a very broad brief. Ruby could guess what had occurred; though she was determined the four drunks were going to have to explain it.

"I see you've made some new friends, Spider." Said Ruby.

Spider had his arm around the waist of the taller of the two men.

"This is Sebastian, Ruby, though he likes to be called Seb." Said Spider. "His friend is called Mateo."

"We're not friends, I hate the guy." Said Mateo, while laughing.

Perfect English, it seemed to be the universal language of intelligence and espionage. Ruby had once met an FSB trained assassin, who'd sounded as though he'd been to Eton.

"Someone in London asked them to look after us." Said Lily. "We thought they were bad guys.....So we had a bit of a scrap out near the harbour."

"We won." Said Mateo.

"Do you want a second round?" Asked Spider.

"Any time." Said Seb.

It was nice that Foxy had pulled a few strings to get them a little help from DINI. On the other hand, brawling in the street wasn't exactly clandestine behaviour, or the usual way for tourists to behave.

"No more fighting." Said Ruby. "Show our new friends some hospitality; get some food and wine delivered. At some time though, I'd appreciate a quiet word with our friends from DINI."

"No problem." Said Seb.

That voice was so British, it wouldn't have surprised her to find out Seb had been to Oxbridge.

"Yep, whenever you're ready." Added Mateo.

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