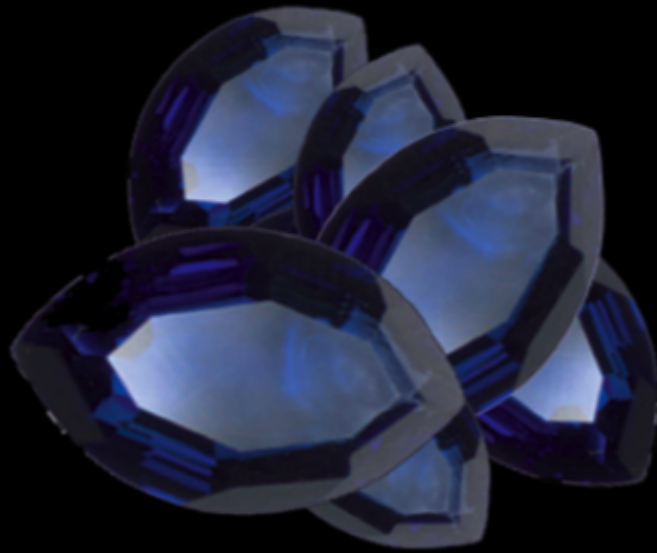


**MI7**

***THE STONES OF ARCHELIOS***



**NYE MARKS**

## **Prologue**

It was a small, aboriginal village in a secluded, fairy-tale-like part of the forest. It had small huts, with plumes of smoke coming from some of the small chimneys on the roof of each hut.

*Why is this happening? What is happening?* Davi's mind was rife with questions, but there seemed to be a shortage of answers.

101 people had fallen asleep in the last year. None of them would wake up, no matter how hard Davi, or any of his people tried. Now, however Davi was more determined than ever to cure his people. The number of people had risen to 102. His son, Thaigo was the latest victim. No one knew why this was happening. People entered the caves, came out and fell asleep, never to wake up again.

"Have there been any developments?" Davi called out to his best friend, Fillipe.

"No, nothing," Fillipe replied. "Thaigo won't wake up. None of them will."

"This is going to stop now!" Davi roared. He was determined to find the answer.

## Chapter 1

The rain beat down on Joe Johnson like needles from the sky. He was an agent for MI7 - the British secret service - that dealt with aliens. It was dangerous, but he loved it. He had been on 5 major missions in just two years, and *nearly* killed in all of them, bar one. Soon he *would be* killed and he was glad it wasn't on this one. He was doing a routine check on an alien crash site in Roswell, New Mexico, USA. He carried on running as the rain persisted and crashed down on him - typical London weather.

As he ran down the grey, rugged street he passed several street lamps. The ugly yellow-orange light made his striking facial features clear and plain for all to see. He was a tall bloke, with blue eyes whose nose stuck out a bit more than it should have done, and, his lips burnt a deep red. As he fought harder, and harder, his thick black hair billowed in the wind.

*Maybe I should have taken the taxi,* he thought.

"Hold on a second..." Joe said to himself. Two strange white lights had appeared out of the blackness. They were coming for him. Then there was another light - it was orange, and flashing next to the left light. The thing was so close to him now that it was in the yellow-orange light of the lamppost. It was a box shape and a truly vulgar red. It was a bus. It stopped for Joe; so, he paid the driver and went to sit on the top level in the front.

When Joe was little, he used to think that when he sat in that spot, and moved his hands, mimicking moving a steering wheel, he was actually driving the top part of the bus and that when he got off, the top part of the bus would slide off the bottom part. Since then, however, he had grown up.

The rain smashed against the windowpane, impacting several times a second creating what seemed more like a drum roll than harmless water.

He had arrived at his destination: MI7 Head Quarters. It was a lavishly designed building with tall, imposing columns reaching up so high that if you looked to the top, your eyes and neck begin hurt. Joe regretted coming in already. His boss, Alan Wade, was walking briskly towards him.

For a debriefing, no doubt. Joe hated debriefings, especially when he was as tired and weary as he was now.

"Joe, can I please have you come into my office?" Alan asked. "For a little chat."

"Look..." Joe began. " I'm really tired right now. I just want to register the fact that I'm still alive and go home. Can I please have my debriefing tomorrow?"

"I don't want you for a debriefing..." Alan said mysteriously.

"Oh, OK. So long as it doesn't take more than 5 minutes."

They advanced to Alan's office, which must have taken 5 minutes, let alone actually having this 'little chat'.

The office was a dismal affair. It was grey filing cabinets around three walls, a brown desk and one lonesome black lamp. All of it consisted of rather dull colours except one startlingly bright and colourful wedding photograph framed and sitting on the left hand side of the computer, on the desk.

"Please, sit down," Alan ushered, pulling out a seat in front of the desk, as he took a seat behind the desk.

"Hi," Joe said.

"Hi," returned Alan.

"What do you want me for?" Joe asked.

"We need you."

"For what?"

"A mission."

"Please, no," Joe groaned. "I want to go home."

"We're afraid this is quite important," Alan pointed out.

"*Quite* important...?" said Joe.

"OK then. *Very* important," countered Alan. "Because I've already found you a partner for this mission."

Alan pulled a microphone towards himself. "Will Sylvia please come to my office, please?"

A few minutes passed. To pass the time, Alan and Joe simply griped about EastEnders - a common resentment they both shared.

Eventually, a tall woman strode into the room. She clearly didn't care too much for her appearance, or at least not at work. When you work for MI7, your apparel is not the most important thing on your possessions list. Your life is. Chances are if someone decides to wear nice clothes to work, the clothes are going to get ripped, torn or spoilt in some way by whichever insane thing is happening.

"Yes?" The woman - Sylvia- asked.

"He's finally back. Which means it's time," Alan answered

"OK," Alan started. "Joe, this is Sylvia Swann. Sylvia this is Joe Johnson. Greetings over. Joe, will you go on this mission because, you see, it took ages to find someone who was willing to go on a mission at such short notice *and* at this time of the night."

"Fine," grunted Joe.

"Good, you will be leaving straight away."

"What?!" It was Sylvia who spoke this time. Her voice was soft and feminine, yet it had had a subtle dark side, which was hardly noticeable. "It's 2:30 in the morning. Can't we leave tomorrow?"

"No. Your flight is in 2 hours and the flight is 15 hours long. That should be enough time to sleep. It's all been booked, so you don't have a choice."

"OK, I'll go," sighed Joe, reluctantly.

Alan turned toward Sylvia.

"Fine. I'll go," she huffed.

"What's the problem?" Joe asked.

"The Stones of Archelios," Alan stated. "I don't know if you've heard of them."

"Wasn't that some alien entity which... was... special for some reason... not sure why... and you sent an agent to get them. Ravi, I think it was... in Dorking... that's where you said they were," Joe said vaguely.

"That was a bit vague. You don't get a point; and, Ravi is dead," said Alan.

"Oh," Joe exclaimed a little shocked. He quite liked Ravi. "Right."

"Are The Stones of Archelios really that dangerous?" Sylvia challenged.

"No. The poor guy couldn't find them. He got hit by a car on the way home."

"So, The Stones of Archelios aren't in Dorking, right?" asked Joe.

"No. They're in Brazil. We misunderstood the data. They're in the possession of a tribe who are unknown to the western world - and will stay that way," said Alan, almost threateningly.

Then Sylvia spoke: "But... why are these 'Stones of Archelios' so important?"

"Well, if you'd stop asking questions and let me finish, then maybe I'd actually be able to talk," said Alan, irritably. "The Stones of Archelios were fashioned by a race who are most probably the greatest artisans in the universe: The Archelians, from the planet Archelios.

"Why, are they planning to invade us or something?" demanded Joe.

"What did I just say about interrupting, Joe?" said Alan.

"Sorry."

"If you touch the Stones of Archelios, then, you will go insane; and if they encounter any sudden movement, any bang, or bump then they will explode... and wipe out this entire galaxy and the 63 closest galaxies to us. Boom. We'll be unpopular with our neighbours. Also, they can reverse certain things which happen around them, so that they never happened."

"So, if we find them, will they be able to undo that?" Joe asked.

"No idea. Hopefully not, though."

"So what were The Stones of Archelios designed for?" asked Sylvia.

"They were just an experiment, to see if they could create something of extreme beauty. And they did; but it was dangerous, so they chucked it into space and they landed here, on Earth. Somewhere within an area of land owned by some aboriginals."

"What like outer space pollution?" Joe asked. "They just did it; with no regret. That's a bit immoral considering how dangerous they are."

"Joe," began Alan, "have you ever thrown a bottle into the sea?"

"Yes," Joe answered.

"Well, that kills fish," stated Alan. "And I think I've explained

everything so... enjoy Terminal 5. They say it's working. Bye and good luck."



## Chapter 2

London Heathrow Airport - Terminal 5 departure's lounge was amazing.

"Whoa!" Silva gasped. "It's... It's..."

"Empty," Joe finished.

"That's bloomin' amazing!" gasped Sylvia.

In the normally bustling complex, there were but a few members of staff and about 200 other people who were all going on various other flights and there were 3 flights leaving that morning. Joe was completely gob-smacked and Sylvia was speechless. The two just stood there for a couple of minutes. They must have looked a sight because an elderly man who worked for WHSmiths trotted over to them.

"Can I help you?" The man asked.

"Um... no we're fine," Joe and Sylvia said simultaneously.

"Well, do you have something to do on the flight?"

"Sleep," groaned Sylvia.

"Actually..." began Joe reaching in to his pocket. "I did want to buy *The Kite Runner*..."

"Well, get it after security. Both WHSmiths sell the same things, but in the other one, you don't have to pay tax". With that, the man trotted off.

"You want to *read*." Sylvia said sternly. "It's 3 o'clock in the morning. Why don't you want to sleep?"

"I want to try and get accustomed to the Brazilian time zone," Joe explained. "And get a book I want and not pay tax." He added.

"Have you already touched the Stones of Archelios? Because I can tell you right now, you are mad," she said. "Just don't disturb me whilst *I* be

normal and try to sleep.

When they reached security, Joe and Sylvia were quite amused when a black-American security officer came up to them and said with a thick southern accent, "You two from MI7?"

"Er, yes... we are," Joe, said hesitantly. "How do you know about MI7? It's supposed to be top secret."

"I don't," he said bluntly. "But by your reaction, it's something to do with the government. I was just told to tell you that you have priority over all other passengers. You don't have to queue for security. And you've got your own private jet."

"Right, thanks for that," said Joe, a little confused.

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The plane was small but luxurious. It had proper beds, a shower - but you were only allowed 5 minutes to preserve water. It had a reasonable sized HDTV screens with a selection of films and TV shows, and an offline, archive version of YouTube. Not that Joe and Sylvia were actually using any of these decadent features. Sylvia was lying on the lower bunk trying to get to sleep and Joe was reading on the top bunk.

"Joe," Sylvia whispered up to Joe.

"Hmm..." he said, clearly paying more attention to the book than Sylvia.

"I can't get to sleep. Can I read a bit of your book?"

"It's the early morning, you must be mad if you want to read. Have you already been in contact with the Stones of Archelios? Why don't you watch something?"

"Because that gets me hyped up, so I definitely won't be able to get to sleep."

"Someone will have probably uploaded some audio books onto YouTube. See if you can listen to an audio book."

"Is that even legal?" Sylvia asked, propping herself up.

"No. But it's cheap," Joe replied.

Sylvia got up and went to the TV screen and clicked on the YouTube link. "What audio book do I search for?"

"I don't know," huffed Joe "Whatever interests you."

"I'm having a bit of a thinker's block," Sylvia whispered, limply.

"Whichever book you are reading right now."

Sylvia went quiet.

"Why don't you put it on?"

"I'll just go to sleep," Sylvia said, dismissing Joe's question.

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Joe and Sylvia only got another half an hour's sleep, until a loud beeping siren sound started coming through the cabin's speakers, waking both Sylvia and Joe with quite a start. Then a fizzling, cracking noise started an announcement:

"Um, hi. This is your pilot speaking, here. I don't know how to break this to you guys, but, er, we're out of fuel so we kinda have to land pretty soon. Or let me put it another way. We're going to land sooner or later, whether you like it or not and I'm going to try my best to make it a controlled one. There's an airport a few miles away. I'm going to try and get permission to land there. So here it goes."

Then the speaker went silent.

"Oh," puffed Sylvia. "That's nice."

Groggily, Joe got up and walked over to the wall at the front of their cabin. He pulled back a small panel and read some readings on what looked like a dashboard. He then replaced the panel.

"Don't worry," he said half cheerily and half scared. "We've got about half an hour's worth of fuel left," He paused. "But I wouldn't go back to sleep if I were you."

"Hang on, they've a gauge telling you how much fuel is left?"

"Yup," said Joe

"This is supposed to be a private jet. You're supposed to enjoy yourself on these things, but they've got a gauge telling how long it is till the plane runs out of fuel and you die. I don't know why people hire these things," she paused for a long time. "I'm scared. I really am scared. *Really, really* scared. I don't think I've ever been this scared before." She stomped over to the microphone that had a direct link to the pilot and yelled into the microphone. "Why are we out of fuel?"

"Well..." The pilot began. "It was kind of windy tonight so I had to turn the jet engines up to maximum to keep on schedule."

"Oh, well, I suppose that's fair enough," remarked Joe. "I meant to ask, what are you reading, because you didn't answer."

"My fiancé's manuscript. He wants to get it published. It's rubbish, and won't be on YouTube."

Just under 20 minutes later, the plane had made its emergency landing. This airport was just like every other building of its kind, dull, grey and made entirely of concrete. There was a sign right next to the building saying 'Welcome to Itabuna Airport, Brazil.' In several languages English was the third language down.

Joe strolled over to the microphone to talk to the pilot. "Hey, I thought we were running out of fuel and if we were, why are we in the airport we were *supposed* to land in?"

There was hysterical laughter coming from the other end. Then through his laughter the pilot spoke. "We weren't out of fuel," the laughing continued. "I can't believe you fell for it!" More laughter followed.

"But the gauge said we had 30 minutes left," shouted Joe.

"Nah," The pilot said. "That gauge is broken."

"But you woke us up, while we were sleeping," shouted Sylvia.

"That's on by default because we're about to land. It gives you enough time to wake up properly," explained the pilot.

"Why did you tell us that we were running out of fuel?" Sylvia fumed.

"Because it was funny!" The pilot replied "Oh and by the way, you can get off the aeroplane now." With that, he fizzled out.

"Right then," Joe breathed, deeply. "Let's go on our big adventure," he finished sarcastically.

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*That was hell*, thought Joe. Then he repeated his thought out loud. "That was hell."

Security had been hell. The security guards had accused them of being drug dealers and having forged passports. They had been at the airport for four hours, which had, eventually, been sorted out. Both Joe and Sylvia were exasperated.

"Let's see what's on the box then," Joe said as he slumped down onto a bed and turned on the massive TV

Their hotel room was the typical luxurious, small-roomed, cramped space with two double beds and a massive, old TV in front of them.

Sylvia hated hotels above two stars and she didn't know why. They all seemed the same and they had no character at all but this one was another story altogether. It was worst than any other hotel she had been in: the colour scheme was block colours and simple geometric shapes. As ever the beds were so soft and luxurious, and comfortable that she would wake up with a searing backache.

Joe picked up the TV remote and turned on the TV.

"Eu acho que preciso de lhe dizer isto. Eu te amo," the TV blurted at a tremendous speed.

"Let's find a tourist channel that *isn't* in Portuguese."

"Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva fez um movimento," the TV gabbled.

Joe switched channels.

"In other news, a bomb has gone off at Itabuna Airport. The bomb went off at about 3:25 this afternoon, killing eighty-seven people, including fi children, and injuring many more"

Joe turned off the TV. "That was *five* minutes after we left the airport."

### Chapter 3

Sylvia grabbed the remote and turned the TV back on.

"The bomber, who survived, has been captured and is being detained in a hospital for the criminally insane. The police are looking for two English military officials who caused a lot of havoc before the bomb went off.

"Wait, two military officials," gasped Sylvia. "They mean us!"

The TV screen flicked to the security guard who had accused them of being drug dealers. "They were trying to bide time for the bomber to arrive," he said dully. "I don't know, I think that Britain wants to go to war but we'll show them, we have a strong military force."

"There's definitely something wrong with him." Joe said, shaking his head. "I mean all this because he got confused by our passports. Honestly."

"We'll have to turn ourselves in," said Sylvia.

"What? Why?!"

"I dunno," said Sylvia, dumbly. "Maybe if we turn ourselves in, we'll have a better chance of being proved innocent."

"Why would they go lighter on us if we turn ourselves in?" asked Joe.

"Well, if you really did just kill 87 people, the last place you'd want to be is anywhere near a police station. We're going to try and prove our innocence. And you never know; we might get an interview with the bomber. Just because we're apparently in league with him," she said, and walked out of the room. So Joe followed.

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"I'm scared," said Joe, his voice shaking with fear.

They were outside the police station - about to get themselves arrested

- in order to prove themselves innocent and continue on their mission. Joe had never been arrested and he was quite glad because it was the most nerve-wrecking thing he had done. Considering he had survived many near-death experiences, that was saying something.

"OK, we'll step in together." Sylvia said bravely, "1... 2... 3..."

They both stepped into the police station. It was a grand building, similar to the MI7 building. It had tall, imposing columns, in a brown, green and white colour scheme. They walked over to a police officer behind a reinforced glass window.

"Look," Sylvia said to him as sweetly as possible. "I don't know how to say this we've, er, we're, er..."

"Trying to hand ourselves in," finished Joe. "We, er, are the two British military officials who have been *wrongly* accused of setting off a bomb in Itabuna airport."

The man was completely unresponsive and Sylvia and Joe both wondered if he understood them. "Come with me." he said in a sinister, flat tone. They followed him to a small, dark room in the back of the police station.

"You are suspected of aiding and abetting a bombing. Why are you here? You should be running."

"We're here to clear our names because we have no relationship with the bomber," Joe said.

"In fact, we would like to speak with the bomber," he added.

"Why?" The policeman asked, suspiciously. "Why do you want speak to him?"

Joe realised the mistake he'd made and tried to compensate for it. "Well," He hesitated. "We seem to have been caught up in a nasty bomb attack which was apparently perpetrated by him, so we want to find why



he did it and whether we have anything to do with it considering we are 'government officials'," he explained "Oh and by the way, from what we know, neither Britain nor NATO are planning on war."

"Very well," the police officer said. "You may do so."

They were escorted to a small police car and were driven to the mental institution in which the bomber was being detained.

"Hello," Joe whispered as he creaked open the door.

The bomber jumped up in surprise. The cell was dull, dank, dingy and smelt of urine.

"Who's there?" the bomber asked cautiously

"Just us," said Sylvia.

"You're still alive?" he quivered. " I thought you were dead. I killed you. Did my bomb not work? Did you not die?"

"Sorry, are you saying that your bomb was meant for us? You were trying to kill us!" Joe realised.

"Yes, Joe Johnson and Sylvia Swann, I was trying to kill you both. The answer will come in a flash of white light."

"What?" asked Joe.

"You mustn't!" The bomber shouted. "You mustn't! YOU MUSTN'T! Don't do it!" he shouted. He was clearly distressed but neither Joe nor Sylvia knew what to do for him.

Then Sylvia had an idea. She ran over to him and crouched down beside him.

"Excuse me... what's your name?" she asked carefully.

"Robert," he said, calming down "Robert Pilk."

"Are you American or something?" Sylvia asked.

"Canadian," Robert answered.

"Well, Robert Pilk, do you want to explain why you blew up an airport and how you knew our names?" Sylvia asked.

"I went... I was... I am... I am blessed. I am their servant. It will all end in tears. Don't do it. The answer... it will come in whiteness, bright whiteness! My master's, master's are coming."

"Who are your masters?" demanded Joe

"You know that already," said Robert. "The Stones of Archelios. They are my masters."

*Wait...* Joe thought.

"You both think I'm insane, don't you. They are in the blackest of black places."

"Oh my," realised Joe. "The Stones of Archelios! Of course!"

"What? What is it?" asked Sylvia.

"The Stones of Archelios. You turn mad if you touch them! He has been in contact with The Stones of Archelios. So he knows where they are."

"That's brilliant!" exclaimed Sylvia

"I know," agreed Joe.

Now Joe walked over to Robert and whispered, "Have you touched The Stones of Archelios?"

There was a long pause.

"Yes," answered Robert.

"Can you tell us where they are, Robert?"

"Your mission is to find and recover the Stones of Archelios. Mine is to stop you."

Sylvia cleared her throat, "Yes...but why *do* you want to stop us?"

"Because it will all end in tears - I've told you that already."

"How will it 'all end in tears'?" asked Sylvia.

"It will all go wrong." Robert said.

"Yes, " Joe shouted. He was getting angry now "But how will it all go wrong

"You will find out soon enough considering you won't heed my warning and give up. The Stones of Archelios don't want to move and they know it will go wrong, but you choose to ignore them."

The policeman who took them to the hospital walked into the cell. "Your time is over and I'm sorry, I don't agree with it but you." The sentence cut off. "Both of you," he continued. "You're being tried, for aiding and abetting."

## Chapter 4

"Well, who's our defence lawyer?" demanded Sylvia.

"You," stated the police officer.

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The courtroom was a stereotypical wood panelled room, but on closer inspection, it was clearly just varnished plastic. This was obviously considered to be a huge case because there were twenty-four people on the jury.

*2 juries, fancy that. At least, they might be the jury.* Sylvia thought.

Joe had thought going into a police station to turn himself in for a crime he didn't commit was scary, but the amount of fear he was experiencing right now required a whole new unit of measurement. He was being put on trial for the crime he didn't even commit! Until now to Joe, this was the sort of thing that happened on the news. Now, however it was happening for real - to him.

Sylvia realised the twenty-four people that she was looking at after all, weren't the jury, but rather the witnesses, who had all, for some reason, been thrown into one little box. It turned out that the twelve people who were on the other side of the room were actually the Jury. One of the jury members happened to glance in her direction. She smiled her sweetest smile she could manage, considering her situation. Maybe by smiling she could win the Jury's heart, or at least spread some happiness so maybe they'd decide they wouldn't condemn two innocent Brits to life in prison. What was she being tried for? Mass murder? ... Or was it genocide? Sylvia wasn't sure on the difference but she was sure genocide was a lot worse than mass murder. Genocide must have been killing people in their thousands or millions. Also, didn't all the victims have to be from one ethnic group for it to be genocide?

Suddenly, Sylvia didn't care about what she was being charged for, which, if she remembered, was actually aiding and abetting. All she cared about now was whether Brazil had the death penalty.

The Judge stood up. He was a short, stumpy, and fat figure. In fact no one would have noticed him standing up unless they were watching him when he did it.

"Ahem," he cleared his throat and began talking in Portuguese.

The man underneath the box the Judge was in began to talk when the Judge had finished. "We are here today for the trial of Mrs Sylvia Swann, and Mr Joe Johnson." He was undoubtedly a translator.

"*Miss Swann.*" Sylvia corrected him. "I'm not married."

The translator repeated her words in Portuguese "Sra. Swann. Eu não sou casado."

The Judge gave Sylvia a filthy look for correcting him. She could see him much clearer now. He had small brown eyes and he was wearing golden half moon glasses, which had to stretch to fit around his face and his wig didn't fit him properly. This was most probably the *most* ugly person she had ever seen. An astonishing feat.

"Essa é uma peça de informação irrelevante. O que é relevante é: como você se defenderá?" The Judge shouted.

"That is an irrelevant piece of information. What is relevant is; how do you plead?" asked the translator, not nearly as loudly as the Judge did.

"Um, Not guilty," said Joe.

"Not guilty or innocent," said Sylvia, not too sure which one was the correct term to use in court.

The translator turned to the Judge "Não é culpado."

The Judge grunted. He seemed disappointed and clearly wanted this to be a short trial. "Que evidência existe para apoiar a inocência do Sr. Joe Johnson e Sra. Sylvia Swann?"

"What evidence is there to support the innocence of Mister Joe Johnson and Miss Sylvia Swann?" asked the translator.

At least the judge had respected Sylvia's wishes. She was glad of it. Then again, it may have been the translator who added in the 'miss'.

Joe stood up. "We, er, there is no actual evidence to prove our innocence. Could we please hear the evidence against us first?"

"Não há nenhuma evidência real para provar nossa inocência. Poderíamos, por favor ouvir as provas contra nós em primeiro lugar?"

"Será que a acusação por favor fale," the Judge asked.

"Will the prosecution please speak," said the translator.

The security guard who started this whole charade stood up. "Estes dois funcionários do governo britânico estão aqui para iniciar uma guerra. Eu sei disso. Eles estavam usando o bombardeio de mostrar o dano que eles podem fazer, e forçar-nos para a guerra."

"These two military officials-" began the translator.

"We're not technically military officials," interrupted Joe. "Although, we are not representing Britain," Joe realised how stupid he was going to sound, "We're representing the entire planet."

"Eles alegam não oficiais militares. Ele diz que eles representam o planeta." The translator said to the Judge, mockingly. *They claim not to be military officials. He says they represent the planet.*

The Judge just looked at Joe, bemused.

"He is accusing you two of using the bombing to show us Brazilians your military power and to force us into war."

"Mas que provas existem para sustentar sua acusação?" asked the

Judge, getting a little irritable."

"But what evidence is there to support his accusation?" repeated the translator for Joe and Sylvia

The security guard didn't utter a word; he just stood staring into space, transfixed by whatever he was looking at.

"Pode por favor responder a pergunta antes de você?" The Judge demanded after a while.

"Can you please answer the question put before you?" Asked the translator.

"Você não entende o que está em jogo aqui?" asked the security guard loudly, to no one in particular but Sylvia assumed it was directed at the Judge.

"Do you not understand what is at stake here?" said the translator.

"OK," The Judge said, "Não qualquer uma das testemunhas tem nada a dizer além de "Eu estava esperando o meu avião, em seguida, ouvi um estrondo e depois muitos gritos e então eu fugi?"

None of the witnesses moved a muscle.

"Do any of the witnesses have anything to say apart from 'I was waiting for my plane then I heard a loud bang and then lots of screaming and then I ran away?" said the translator.

"Bem, considerando nem acusação nem defesa tem muito a dizer, acho que o Júri deve considerar todas as provas fornecidas. Que não é uma grande quantidade, se assim posso dizer a mim mesmo." The Judge said, clearly not sure what to do in this predicament.

"Considering neither prosecution nor defence have much to say, I think the Jury should consider all the evidence supplied. Which isn't a great amount, if I may say so myself," finished the translator

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About fifteen minutes later, the Jury came out of their little room and as they did, Joe couldn't help but remember the film *12 Angry Men*. He just hoped this Jury gave the same verdict as the one in *12 Angry Men*.

"Encontramos Joe Johnson e Sylvia Swann..." The man who was delivering the verdict began.

"We find Joe Johnson and Sylvia Swann..." The translator began.

The man who was delivering news had clearly watched too many talent shows and waited a ridiculously long time before delivering the verdict. There may as well have been stupidly dramatic music in the background.

"Não Culpado" He finally announced.

"Not Guilty," the translator repeated, not nearly as enthusiastically as the man delivering the verdict.

"What?! No!" boomed the security guard who all of a sudden could now speak fluent English. "They're going to do it, you know."

"Eles vão fazer isso, você sabe."

"O quê? O que eles vão fazer?" demanded the Judge.

The translator turned to Joe and Sylvia. "What? What are they going to do?"

"They are going to destroy the local cosmos!"

"Eles vão destruir o cosmos local!" The translator said for the Judge.

"Isto está ficando ridículo agora." The Judge shouted. "O veredicto foi dado. Ambos são inocentes. Nós não temos tempo para essas acusações



estúpidas."

"We do not have time for these stupid accusations."

"No," shouted the security guard desperately "They are going to find The Stones of Archelios!"

## Chapter 5

"How do you even know what The Stones of Archelios are?" asked a perplexed Joe.

"Quais são os Stones de Archelios?" demanded the Judge.

The translator repeated. "What are the Stones of Archelios?"

"They are the reason we are in Brazil," answered Joe. "They're this entity which can turn you insane if you touch them. Also, if they get handled too roughly then that's it: they wipe out 64 galaxies, including the Milky Way," Joe thought for a moment. "Why did I tell you that?"

The translator stared at Joe. He obviously didn't want translate all that. But, he sighed and continued. "Eles são a razão de estarmos no Brasil. Eles são desta entidade, que pode transformá-lo louco se você tocá-los. Além disso, se eles se manuseado demasiado aproximadamente então é isso: eles acabar com 64 galáxias, incluindo a Via Láctea."

The Judge clearly didn't believe him. "Eu só tenho você palavra," he said, sceptically.

"I've only got your word on that," said the translator, who was growing bored.

"Well, don't believe me then," said Joe.

The translator just turned toward the Judge and shrugged.

He turned to the security guard. "How do you know about the Stones of Archelios?" he asked.

"They are my masters," the security guard said.

"Why aren't I surprised?" sighed Sylvia.

"What have you been ordered to do?" asked Joe loudly.

"To stop you," the security guard stated. "And I know you don't believe this, but it will all go horribly wrong."

"How will it go wrong?" asked Sylvia.

"I don't repeat things," said the security guard, and with that he got up and left the room.

"I think we ought to be going, don't you think?" said Joe

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"How do you set up tents?" asked Joe.

"You didn't bring the instructions with you?" said Sylvia, disbelievingly.

They were in the flattest part of a nameless forest they were camping in, or at least neither Sylvia nor Joe, knew the name of the forest.

"Nope," returned Joe

"Why not? They were vital to our survival in the forest!"

"It was excess weight," said Joe.

"Yes, but why did you have to throw out such *important* excess weight?" complained Sylvia.

"Why didn't you get rid of some of the..." His voice trailed off.  
"Anyway,"

"It can't be that hard," she said. "Oh come on, this is the most basic tent ever. It's the one you see in cartoons. Triangular prisms are the easiest tents ever. They are all assembled the same. This pole goes through these two sleeves and the same for this one, but on the other side, then this one goes through here then we do the bottom poles and we're done."

Joe gaped at her.

"Did you not pay attention in training?" she teased.

"Uh... what am I supposed to answer to that?"

"No idea. You work it out. Hang on, what time is it? 'Cause I'm knackered."

"9 o'clock. Why, what time is it in England?" he asked.

"Um, 11 o'clock," Sylvia replied.

"Oh. Should get some sleep then," said Joe

"Tired now," Sylvia yawned, as she entered the tent. "It's a bit small."

"It's all I could afford," Joe called. He entered the tent, and climbed in to his sleeping bag.

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There was a crack from outside. It was the sound of a twig cracking. Joe moved to the tent mouth to investigate what had made that noise. He hoped, hope against hope that it wasn't a dangerous animal. *What kinds of animals live around here?* He peeped outside, at first there was nothing except blackness but then there was a light. It seemed like it was coming from a torch. Whoever was holding the torch had put it down and now it illuminated his face. Joe tried to remember the face. He decided to wake Sylvia up, even if she did kill him for it.

He prodded her. Nothing happened. He prodded her again. No developments. He grabbed her by the shoulders and shook her. She woke up.

"Wha...?" she groaned blearily.

Joe shushed her.

"What?" she mouthed.

*Over there*, he mouthed, pointing to the mouth of the tent.

They both crawled over to the mouth of the tent. Joe opened it, just a crack so Sylvia could see through. She gasped.

"Did you see his face?" he whispered as quietly as he could.

She nodded and closed the tent

"What's he doing?" Sylvia whispered.

Joe shrugged his shoulders. Then they heard a banging noise. Like the sound of a woodpecker, but much slower.

Neither Joe nor Sylvia dared to even breathe. For no apparent reason they both were terribly scared of the man outside. Neither of them wanted to disturb him, because whatever he was doing, it was meant for them. After a few minutes of waiting, they fell asleep. The jet lag had finally caught up with them.

\*\*\*

Joe and Sylvia both woke up at about the same time, which was accompanied by the rising of the sun and the birds singing. It was like they were living in a fairy tale - apart from being kept up a fair proportion of the night by a strange man. In fact, that was probably one of *the* best night's sleep Sylvia had ever had.

"D'you know what?" Joe said, as he yawned. "I had a really weird dream last night. I dreamt that there was a man outside keeping us awake." He said - just to see what Sylvia's reaction would be.

"That wasn't a dream you dunce. That was real," Sylvia said sarcastically. "But d'you know what? I had a dream that you were the Dragon and I was St George and I was about to kill you but then you

woke me up. It was really nice until you woke me," said Sylvia.

"Thank you," Joe said, unsure what else to say.

Sylvia got out of the tent so Joe could get dressed.

"Joe..." she began, sounding worried. "Come and see this..."

Joe went outside to see what the fuss was about. Pinned to the trunk of every tree was a piece of paper with two words written in red ink on each sheet: 'GO AWAY'.

## Chapter 6

"That's must be what that man was doing last night!" exclaimed Sylvia.

"Hmm, I know. It's a bit obvious," Joe pointed out. "They weren't there last night. The only thing that was there last night between going to bed, and waking up, was that man. So that is why pinning up these signs must have been what he was doing!" Joe joked.

"Oh really. That's fascinating... and I actually can't think of something to say. This feels weird."

"Is that because you woke up and there are lots of signs saying 'GO AWAY', or because you are speechless?"

"Both, really. I think."

Oh, look Sylvia Swann *cannot* find anything to say to put Joe Johnson down!"

"Shut up." Sylvia snapped, "I think we need to ignore that and find out why exactly that man has done this and who he is."

"I can answer the first one for you," said Joe "At least what the most probable answer is. I think the man was another servant of The Stones of Archelios. At a guess. I think his way of stopping us is to give us a nagging fear that will eat us from the inside out." Joe explained. "One servant tries to kill us, another tries to lock us up and this one wants to scares us away."

"Did it work on you?" Sylvia asked.

"Nah, not really. Did it work on you?"

"I'm a bit freaked out, but then again, I've been in court; this isn't really scary. This guy failed dramatically... - ish." said Sylvia, mesmerised by the signs.

"Well, we better get going." said Joe. "I'll go and finish getting

dressed."

Sylvia looked at him. "Oh my God, that is so disgusting, Joe! Get in the tent."

"What?"

"You could have finished the getting dressed *before* you came out."

"But you sounded upset." protested Joe. "I was just doing what you told me to do. Which was come outside."

"Look, just get in the tent, Joe" she shouted.

Joe went into the tent and nearly rolled it over as he struggled with his trousers and a difficult to use belt. When he was done, he crawled out of the tent.

"I'm done," he said.

"Thank you. Now it's my turn. Can you please move out the way as I cannot enter the tent when there is a solid, inert, brainless barrier in front of it."

"Sorry," Joe said, flatly as he moved away from the tent.

"Joe, you *actually* responded to that." Sylvia said as she climbed inside the tent.

"Ah," Joe said. "I'm never going to hear the end of that, am I?"

"Nope."

"Oh, Brilliant.

Sylvia came out of the tent. She smiled. "Come on then. We've got some stones to find."



\*\*\*

Several days passed and Joe and Sylvia were growing more, and more weary. It seemed like they were making no progress at all, the only thing telling they were making progress was the map and who is to say they weren't reading it wrong, or that it was out of date. Every time they cut past one set of trees, there were only more trees.

Joe was wondering whether another servant of The Stones of Archelios had somehow set up trap so that everyday they were going past the same set of trees so that they got bored and went home.

Eventually, after about a weeks worth of walking they realise that something was happening. Which meant so all the tree they seen so far must have actually been different trees, not the same ones repeating themselves. The terrain was slanting which meant they were going up, as the map said they should be.

"Wow," grunted Joe, bitterly. "A change in terrain".

They had been walking for an amount of time which neither Joe nor Sylvia wassure of. They just slept when they were tired and continued when they were both awake.

They finally reached their destination: a small, aboriginal village in secluded, fairy-tale-like part of the forest. It had small huts, with plumes of smoke coming from some of the small chimneys on the roof of each hut. They had reached the home of the tribe who had possession of The Stones of Archelios.

Joe and Sylvia were standing in the middle of an arc of huts wondering what to do next. Should they just knock on one of the doors and say hi, or wait until one of them left their home. What if they didn't speak English? Well, what was the likelihood of that? If anything, they were most likely to speak Portuguese. The thing that was really bugging Joe was whether these people were cannibalistic.

A man came out of the hut directly in front of them. "Quem é você?" he

said.

"Oh, erm, sorry," Sylvia began. "We came here to get some stones." She said slowly miming the words with her hands.

"You speak English?" He asked.

"Oh, Thank god." said Joe, breathing a sigh of relief. "You speak English."

"What do you want? What stones?" He asked. "I sorry if I sound rude. My English not...er... " He paused, thinking hard about what he was going to say next. "Excellent." he finished.

"We've been told that you are in possession of the Stones of Archelios...?" Sylvia asked.

"No, no, I do not know these 'Archelios' " he said.

"We have been travelling for quite a while and we believe them to be quite dangerous. People can turn insane if you touch them. We want to recover them and put them somewhere they can do no harm." Joe explained, a little loudly.

"Come with me," the man said mysteriously.

He led them to a huge hall behind the huts. It was a basic room with plain walls and a high ceiling. On floor there were rows and rows of beds. Each bed held one person. Not a single empty bed.

"This is our hospital." The man said. "All of these people are insane. 102 of them altogether. They just sleep. They don't move. We don't know what to do with them. Maybe they did touch this... Archelios, what you looking for."

They stopped in front of one bed. The man turned to face it so Joe did to and ushered Sylvia to do the same. Joe saw the man had a tear in his eye.

The man spoke. "I am the peoples leader."

"Oh, you're the Tribe Leader," realised Joe. "Aren't you?"

"Call us what you wish, Tribe or People, we prefer People, but yes I am their leader."

Sylvia shot Joe a filthy glance; just enough to make him regret saying what he did and leave a funny feeling in his stomach.

"This is my son, Thaigo," The Tribe leader declared.

Joe and Sylvia stared down at the body in the bed. It was the man who had pinned up all the signs telling them to go away.

## Chapter 7

"That's... is it him?" Sylvia asked, confused.

"Yes. That's him all right. That is definitely him. Most definitely him. I think," said Joe.

"Who is he? He my son. Who else is he?" asked the Tribe Leader.

"He tried to stop us from getting here. A couple of weeks ago he tried to scare us away. He pinned up signs telling us to go away. Several have done that, claiming to be servants of the Stones of Archelios. He's the third person," Joe said.

"No," the Tribe leader said.

"Sorry?" asked Sylvia. "It is true. We saw him a couple of weeks ago."

"No... He's been like this for past five month."

"Oh," Sylvia said. "I'm sure that's him."

"It cannot be. Five months he hasn't moved. Not once. We would notice if any of these people move a little bit," the Tribe Leader remarked and as he did, a small tear came to his eye.

Suddenly, the Tribe Leader's son jumped up and grabbed Sylvia's arm. She let out an ear-piercing scream.

"GO AWAY!" he boomed. "I've told you before, and I'll tell you again. GO AWAY!"

"Why should we go away? Hmm?" asked Sylvia, softly.

"My masters, they told me you will ruin it all. They know all, you see," he said.

"And, who are your masters, exactly?" asked Sylvia, curiously. Then she turned to Joe "Ten quid that it'll be The Stones of Archelios."

"Bugger off," Joe whispered.

"My masters are the Stones of Archelios."

"That's my ten quid," Sylvia said to Joe.

"I did not agree to that bet!" Joe snorted, pushing her away.

"What *are the* Stones of Archelios?" asked the Tribe Leader.

"Alien entity. Which are going to kill us all. Unless we recover them," stated Joe baldly.

The entire room full of servants of the Stones of Archelios suddenly rose up from their beds as if strings from the ceiling were pulling them up. Of course, there was nothing there.

"We serve the Stones of Archelios. We serve the Stones of Archelios. We serve the Stones of Archelios," the servants chanted, over and over again. "We serve the Stones of Archelios. We serve the Stones of Archelios."

*This is weird.* Thought Sylvia. But what was even weirder was when the servants calmed down. They gently sat them selves down, and tucked themselves into bed, all in unison, at exactly the same time.

"What just happened?" asked the Tribe Leader. "I am quite perplexed."

"No idea," answered Joe. "But I've got a hunch that they would all be perfectly willing to kill us at any given moment. We should go. Right now."

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The Tribe Leader welcomed Joe and Sylvia as honoured guests, at which point they both turned a little red, smiled and thanked him. It turned out the Tribe Leader's name was Davi and his son's name was

Thaigo.

Sylvia was rewarded with another marvellous night's sleep. She always preferred camping to hotels due to her back problems. She hated hotels above two stars, or was it three stars? She could never remember. She just detested hotels.

When the morning eventually came, Joe and Sylvia arrived in another hut where a grand feast had been prepared for breakfast; or so they thought. It turned out that this was *normal* breakfast for them.

During breakfast, Joe decided to ask Davi the question he needed to ask him so he and Sylvia could go home as soon as possible. "Do you know anywhere which is dark, slightly secluded and would be a really good hiding place for something really dangerous? But a place where all the insane people have been?"

Davi thought for a while. In fact it was a couple of minutes. "Maybe... the caves?" he said hesitantly.

"OK, Thanks for that, I really appreciate everything. The food and the answer. Thanks. Thank you so much."

"Why you want to know these informations?" Davi demanded.

"So that we can find and destroy The Stones of Archelios." Joe replied "And if at all possible, reverse all it's effects. We can't make any promises, but if there's any speck of a chance that they can be cured, then we will lunge for it." Joe answered.

Davi just stared into space for a while.

Joe didn't know why, but he really wanted Davi's support in this, not just so that he'd give them the permission to go traipsing around their property to find the Stones of Archelios, but he felt Davi's moral support, which was actually meant from the heart would be needed.

"You may go into the caves this afternoon," Davi said.

Joe thanked him, and breathed a sigh of relief. They were finally going to be able to fulfil their mission.

"But I will come with you," Davi said.

"Why?" asked Joe, hoping Davi wasn't becoming suspicious of them.

"There are creatures in the caves, called Gloes. They can survive several years without food and water, so when they find you, they are hungry."

"How do they know we are even there? I mean, it must be pretty dark in there."

"They have no eyes. They use sound to navigate. That is why they never come out here, too many wide-open spaces. They won't know where they are so they don't come."

Joe just nodded his head. He did not know how to respond to all of this. Why can nothing ever be easy? You'd expect this in a book or a film but really, this was the real world, yet they were still getting weird obstacles like this.

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The caves were dark. You could sort of see about three meters in, then every thing went black. You couldn't see a thing. Davi had brought a Tribe member who didn't speak English at all called Fillipe.

"Who wants to go first?" asked Sylvia to all of her fellow peoples who were too scared of death to move.

Joe breathed a deep breath. He stepped into the cave then so did Davi, and Fillipe. Sylvia closed her eyes, took a deep breath and jumped into the cave. The walking was long, tedious, and ridiculously scary. Every little click one person heard, made the rest jump around in surprise. The torches seemed to be dying which freaked the hell out of Sylvia.

They continued walking, which seemed to take forever until Joe jumped, followed by everyone else, but the sound that Joe had heard was different.

A huge, pale brown tusked; pig-nosed creature came out of the shadows. The Gloe was huge and it was coming for Joe, Sylvia, Davi and Fillipe.



## Chapter 8

"Oh my God!" Joe bellowed. "What the hell is that?"

"What d'ya think it is?" Sylvia shrieked, grabbing his hand and yanking him away from a hot, slimy piece of drool, which was on its descent from the Gloe's mouth to Joe's shoulder.

"Euw," Joe moaned, distastefully. "That is disgusting."

"I know, now run!" Sylvia screamed.

"OK!" yelled Joe.

They pelted forward, sprinting as fast as they possibly could. Despite everything, Joe was loving this. He loved running. This was why he had joined MI7. The adrenaline rush was amazing when you were this close to death. It scared the wits off of him, yes. However, this sort of excitement was something you didn't get in any other job. Not even the army.

The Gloe roared several times, exposing its huge, yellow, bent tusks. Joe didn't want to find himself caught between two of those things.

Joe was wondering whether all this running was emitting so many sounds that the Gloe knew exactly where they were, but for some reason the Gloe didn't charge straight for them. Then it struck him: *If a human experiences too much light at any one time, they will quite obviously, be temporarily blinded or, failing that be in deep distress, so if you take a creature which depends on sound, then if that creature experiences too much sound at any one time, then, surely that creature could be deafened or if not, put in deep distress.*

Joe shouted to everyone else, "Everyone, shout, shout as loud as you possibly can!"

"What? Why?" whispered Sylvia.

"Too much noise confuses it. It's like if a room is too bright you can't see. Well, if it's too loud, it can't hear properly!" Joe explained. "Tell

Davi."

Sylvia obeyed, and Davi relayed the information onto Fillipe in Portuguese.

They all made the weirdest and loudest noises they possibly could. The Gloe seemed to be enraged. It swung its body and its limbs around in several different directions.

One of its limbs was flying directly at Joe, Sylvia, Davi and Fillipe. It swung down on Fillipe. Its huge paw pulverized him. Everyone stopped. Fillipe was clearly dead. Everyone went silent. They didn't know what to say or do; it was almost as if they were paying a minute's silence.

Silence. That was all the Gloe needed. It regained its senses, let out a one solitary click and charged.

Joe and Sylvia ran as fast as they possibly could. But Davi didn't. He was still crouched over the body of Fillipe. He was crying, the tears streamed down his face, like a small waterfall. Joe suddenly felt a pang of guilt, which hit him like a brick. The tribe must have been a pretty tight community as there can't have been more than a couple of hundred of them. One person lost would forge a huge hole in every one's hearts.

"Davi, you need to come with us or else the Gloe will get you too and you can't let that happen, because, I swear we *will* find a cure for your son. You want to see him again?"

"You cannot promise that", he cried. "My friend is dead. My best friend is dead. Do you know what it is like to experience death? You do not, but *my* son is as good as dead and so is *my* friend. What is the point in living?"

The Gloe was closing in on Davi now. It was going slowly, probably because it was recovering from its distress mere seconds beforehand.

"We will pay our respects later, but for now we need to be strong, otherwise there will be nobody to take Fillipe out of the caves, and into

daylight so everyone can pay their respects"

The Gloe was so close to Davi, it was literally on top of him.

Joe was scared for Davi's life. He wasn't going to have another person die in front of him with little chance of ever leaving the caves.

Davi closed Fillipe's eyes and whispered something in Portuguese. "Descanse em paz, meu amigo. Descanse em paz. Eu te amo."

The Gloe was lifting up one of its limbs and was about to pounce on Davi.

Joe didn't know what to do but then he had an idea. "Sylvia," he shouted. "Scream as high as you possibly can!"

Sylvia screamed shrilly.

Joe wasn't sure about Gloes, but he definitely hated really high-pitched sounds, especially screams.

The Gloe dropped to the floor only narrowly missing Davi and Fillipe.

Was it dead? Joe certainly hoped so. Or at least permanently deaf.

"You were right," Davi stated. We should go find the Stones of Archelios. In the hope of a cure. We will carry Fillipe's body back once we have found them."

Sylvia nodded.

"We will have to be careful. There are more Gloes in these caves." Davi said.

They ventured further into the caves. Every single little crack was more painful than before because every time they heard something, it reminded them of the pain of a man being killed right in front of them.

They were getting more, and more lost, as they went further, and further into the caves. They had no idea where they were going. Every time they reached a fork in the caves, they just took whichever route looked the least scary. When trying to decide in a place which is pitch black and you've only got a torch to see, that isn't the easiest thing in the world. That was the pattern until they reached one particular three-way fork, when Joe was adamant they go down the left one. So they did, as everyone was extremely weary by this time.

"Why this one in particular?" groaned Sylvia.

"Gut instinct," Joe responded.

"OK. What have we got to lose? We've been in here for hours now and we have no idea on how to get out. So I am agreeing with you only because we are probably about to die."

"How did all the other people get out?" pondered Joe.

"I dunno, lets just carry on," Sylvia said.

The path Joe had taken was long and seemed to go on forever in a straight line.

When they had first entered the cave, they were optimistic, now they were miserable and pessimistic.

They carried on, and on, and on, and on, until something eventually arrived. Sylvia tripped over something on the floor, a rock or something, but this wasn't a rock. They all stared at the glistening, beautiful crystals lying on the floor.

"Are they...?" Joe began.

"I think so." Davi said.

"The Stones of Archelios," Sylvia finished. "We've found them. They're

beautiful."

"How do we pick them up?" Joe asked, hoping Sylvia knew the answer, because he didn't.

"I don't know," Sylvia gasped, panic-stricken. Had they really trekked all this way to find The Stones of Archelios and not be able to pick them up?

"Here," Davi said. "Try this." He pulled out a piece of fabric from one of his pockets. "It might help protect us."

"We put it on The Stones Of Archelios together, right?" Sylvia said.

There was a loud grunting noise in the background. A Gloe was rampaging toward them.

"Yeah," agreed Joe. "1...2...3..."

They placed the fabric on The Stones of Archelios. Everything went blurry and there was a flash of bright light, then a breath of fresh air. They were at the mouth of the caves. They had been teleported or something but that wasn't possible? Was it? Sylvia tripped over something. It was Fillipe. The Stones of Archelios had reversed his death... somehow. But that didn't matter. All that mattered was that they were all safe, and they had The Stones of Archelios.

## Chapter 9

They set off for London. Joe and Sylvia had a long flight ahead of them. Joe was becoming more optimistic about his entire experience in Brazil. The flight back to London was definitely ten times smoother than it was to Brazil. Once again, they promised Davi they would find a cure if at all possible.

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"There you are!" Alan exclaimed, cheerily. "I was beginning to get worried. But listen here, Joe what is this on the news of you declaring war on Brazil, eh?"

"Look, please..." Joe said, groggily. "No debriefing we're both stupendously tired. Can we please go to the beds upstairs please?"

"No," Alan stated. His voice had darkened. "We need the Stones of Archelios. Have you got them?"

"Yes," Joe answered. "We have. Sylvia was the one who found them."

She pulled a handbag off her shoulder, which she had bought in the duty free section of the closest airport to Itabuna - that wasn't Itabuna Airport.

"They're in a piece of cloth, in a plastic bag, in a plastic bag, in a plastic bag, in this handbag."

"OK I'll remember that. Are you sure these are The Stones of Archelios?" asked Alan.

"Well they did kind of teleport us out of being killed... so we're fairly sure whatever is in that bag is not from Earth," Sylvia reported.

"Good. They probably are the Stones of Archelios, then. I'll just take them off you so we can analyse them."

Sylvia handed the handbag over to Alan. There was a childish glee in

his eyes.

Alan called a scientist in so the Stones of Archelios could be taken to the labs and analysed.

"Anyway," he said quickly. "How are you both?"

"Tired," they replied simultaneously.

"No, I mean like... physically and emotionally. Did you have to fist fight with a ten-foot alien? Did you see anything disturbing? Mutilated bodies? Piles of dead people?"

"Not really, no." Sylvia said wearily. She just wanted to get to sleep now.

"There was nothing." Joe finished off Sylvia's sentence.

"Wait," Joe said. "Fist fight with a ten foot alien?"

"Yeah, that was a strange day. I don't think my knuckles ever did recover."

"OK, well, you two can go up to bed in a couple of minutes when your beds are made."

"No, really it's OK after how long we spent in a tiny tent, anything will be fine," remarked Joe.

"And I'm going to be sleeping on the floor tonight. I don't like the beds here. They're too soft," added Sylvia.

"Ah, right." Alan said. "Fair enough. You're in number twenty-one. Sorry it's the only vacant. I hope you don't mind spending another night together."

Joe groaned. He *did*.

\*\*\*

Sylvia flung the door open and stepped inside. The room was practically identical to the hotel room she had had when they arrived in Brazil and every single other hotel room she'd been in. The door opened onto a small passageway with a closet on one side and the bathroom on the other. The passageway led onto a bigger room with one huge bed in the middle facing another really huge old TV screen with nothing but crap telly on it. As you entered the bathroom door, the bath was directly on front of you. The basin is directly to your left and the toilet is right next to it. However, some hoteliers like to put a bidet in between the bath and the toilet.

Joe staggered right over to the bed, almost tripping over Sylvia on the way and collapsed on to the bed and was asleep almost instantly.

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Someone had set the alarm clock off for 5:59. It beeped away, reviving Joe and Sylvia up from a sleep they didn't want to end.

"Argh..." Sylvia groaned as her world wobbled in to existence. "Why'd you put the alarm on?"

"I didn't," Joe let out a lengthy groan. "God, I'm tired."

"Who did then?"

There was silence. Joe had swung his arm on the clock and probably broken it, but he didn't care. There was about two more minutes of silence in which both Joe and Sylvia dozed off.

"Right," A voice said. It was Alan "Joe and Sylvia, I'm sorry I woke you, however I do need to ask you a really important question."

"Yes?" Joe asked.

"Did you handle The Stones of Archelios violently? Because they're



going to explode in ninety minutes, and they will destroy our galaxy and the sixty-three of our surrounding galaxies!"

## Chapter 10

"What?!" Joe exclaimed. "How did that happen?"

"I don't know. Did you drop the bag on the flight home?"

"Um, no. There was no turbulence on the flight. We didn't drop it," said Joe.

"Hang on." Sylvia groaned, try to think about such a complex theory when she was still half-asleep. "I might have... um, found it when I, er, I need to go to sleep. When I found the Stones of Archelios, I tripped over them and I moved them so that might be it."

"Right," Alan said solemnly, "There is also an object flying at a phenomenal speed towards the Earth. Possibly a meteor. Whatever it is, it's going to destroy the Earth. So this may be the end for humankind." He left the room.

"We need to go. Get dressed," said Sylvia, struggling to get herself out of bed.

"You're already dressed," Joe stated.

"So are you!" Sylvia retaliated.

They both stared at themselves - and groaned.

"Still need to get changed though," Sylvia said.

"Yeah, but there isn't enough time for a shower," said Joe.

"We need to hurry up." Sylvia said. "Go into the bathroom and get changed. I'm going to change here."

Joe nodded, picked up a change of clothes

They left their room, and set off for Alan's office.

\*\*\*

"OK, the Stones of Archelios have been activated on a scale of one to ten, how bad is that?"

"Ten." Answered Joe.

"Correct. There is a very big, mysterious, object heading for Earth, possibly a meteor. On a scale of one to ten, how bad is that?"

"Ten." Sylvia answered.

"Actually forget that; start again."

He paused to think.

"OK, sorry, I was panicking. I need to think *straight*," The pressure was getting to Alan already.

If Alan panicked then Earth was definitely going to end.

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Did Jane just hear that correctly? Surely not. This was her first day working for MI7 and she didn't expect to be eaves-dropping on her superior and she certainly didn't expect there to be a meteor coming to Earth. She thought her first day was going to somehow be normal, meeting everyone and getting to know her workspace. This was colossal; she needed to tell her friend, Marie, she knew practically everything there was to know about MI7 so she would know how to react.

The news of the meteor spread around MI7 like a wildfire. Within five minutes, the entire building knew about it, causing mass panic inside a contained area, that was until Eunice, Alan's secretary phoned home. An entire neighbourhood then knew about it. Including a freelance journalist.

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"Now on BBC Breakfast, I've just had this coming and... oh. A meteor or at least some UFO is flying toward the Earth at an estimated, quite phenomenal forty kilometres a second. Wow."

Practically the entire of the United Kingdom knew about it. It was getting worse; nobody was supposed to know about it, except Alan, Sylvia and Joe.

With the news now in the hand of the greater public, it soon travelled to the rest of the world. Everyone knew.

"And another really weird Sci-Fi story..." The newsreader continued. "Is a second sun has apparently appeared in the sky. Honestly, this is supposed to be a news program not a place where you can panic the nation with stupid stories." The newsreader stormed out. Everyone in the studio was quiet.

About 2 minutes passed.

The newsreader walked back into the studio, and addressed the camera: "Ladies and gentleman. I'm sorry, but it is true. There *is* a second sun in the sky!"

## Chapter 11

Eunice knocked gently on the door unsure what to do and whether this was a good idea and what she would say when she actually got in to the room.

"Enter," Alan's stern voice echoed from behind the thick, brown door.

Eunice entered; her legs were shaking violently, especially her knees, which were banging together like conkers.

"Um, sir, I just wanted to...er," she hesitated.

"Yes?" Alan prompted.

"It just that... is it true that there's a meteor coming for Earth?"

"How on Earth did you know that?!" demanded Alan.

"It's just that... it's on the news. BBC. It's national. Well, the news has also reached *other* news networks. International ones too."

"What?" Alan roared. "This was supposed to be secret, so that if everyone dies, we won't be there to get blame, and they'll be doing what they normally should be doing."

Eunice was shocked. Was this a telling off? It wasn't her fault, was it? She was just scared. She had no idea what to do. She just wanted to go into a corner and cry.

"Sorry," Alan apologised. "It's just that I'm stressed. Sorry, please go."

Eunice obeyed. She trotted out of the room, head down, trying to hide her tears. She exited the room and closed the door behind her.

For Alan, only one thing was now sure. The world's press are going to want to know what is going on.

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"From what we know, we can safely say that there is nothing to worry about. We have calculated the size of the meteor and it will just burn up in the atmosphere. As for the second sun in the sky. It is not another star but a rare occurrence which happens roughly every 2000 years when the alignment of Earth, the Sun and Jupiter is exactly right so that Jupiter reflects the Sun's light with unprecedented intensity," of course, all of this was a lie. It was propaganda disseminated by Alan Smith-Jones, a fictional scientist at CERN.

Alan wasn't going have his *real* name on international news station when the planet - and sixty-four galaxies are about to explode.

Alan turned to his fellow scientists, Joe Johnson and Sylvia Swann. "We're going be here till the end of the world."

He turned back to the mass media. "This occurrence only happens every 2000 years. Now, if we may continue to study it because it will only be like this for a couple of hours at most."

Alan, Sylvia and Joe all turned backwards to go back inside MI7 and try and figure out what the second sun was, how to stop the meteor and stop the Stones of Archelios from exploding.

The journalists started making a lot of noise. Too many questions at one time. Joe, Sylvia and Alan had to spend *more* time with the media rather than concentrate on other more important matters.

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They were coming. They were nearly at their destination. Earth, on the somewhat less intelligent spiral arm of the spiral galaxy, which has been called the Milky Way by the inhabitants of the planet Earth.

They were on board a sleek, silver and shiny but most importantly a *fast* deep-spacer, The fastest developed by the race who were controlling it: The Archelians, of the planet Archelios.

One of the ship's pilots, Jour'Ma'Hula was getting stressed. A piece of junk had been activated on the planet Earth by its dumb, undeveloped inhabitants. A deadly piece of junk that was. The Stones of Archelios, the junk had been called. It was stupid and patriotic name. If there was one type of person Jour'Ma'Hula hated, it was a patriot. Especially as she was *supposed* to be co-piloting this spaceship with one. But of course, her husband, just like every other male that ever lived, was idle, lazy and ignorant. Apparently, this was true of Earth males, too.

His name was Sik'Mral, and he was currently lazing in his bed, knowing full well that a small quantity of the universe was about to be wiped out. And they were in that small quantity. And so was their home planet.

Earth was nearing. They should be visible to its inhabitants, so they should try to choose human sounding names. She picked up a small, but hard piece of metal and tossed it at her useless husband. That woke it up.

"Look," she shouted irritably, to Sik'Mral, "Everyone is going to die if you don't wake up. So I'm telling you this now, we need to get some human sounding names, because humans are such a cretinous and destructive race, if they take us the wrong way, we will be killed. They have primitive, but highly effective weaponry."

"Urh..." Sik'Mral groaned, blearily, exiting his bed.

"Computer." Jour'Ma'Hula called. "We need Earth names which are somewhat similar to the first section of our name."

"Processing." The computer whirred for a couple of minutes. Jour'Ma'Hula broke a sweat, every second, the Stones of Archelios were coming closer to destruction, and they *had* to stop them.

"The following titles should be of satisfaction. Name similar to Sik'Mral: Seth. Name similar to Jour'Ma'Hula: Joan."

"*Joan*." Jour'Ma'Hula repeated, unsure of the title. "Are you sure?"

"Yes it is a common name in western English-speaking cultures on

planet Earth. The reason they are called western cultures is unknown, as they are not necessarily in the west of the planet. West: A direction used by humans that is opposite to East."

"Oh, shut up! You're getting away from the point. Humans definitely have some really *weird* names."

"I wish to bring to your attention. We will be landing shortly. In the area known on Earth as the United States of America, USA for short - New Mexico - Roswell."

"No, Europe - United Kingdom - Britain - England - London. That is where The Stones of Archelios are. We need to go *there*."

"Not possible, only known safe-to-land co-ordinates on Earth is United States of America, USA for short - New Mexico - Roswell."

"OK we'll teleport but we must prepare the Reversal Chamber, so that if we have any delays, we won't have to struggle with that blasted thing. Get to it, Sik'Mral."

"Yes." Sik'Mral huffed, as he strode off.

"Attention, we are about to land." The computer stated blankly.

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"How is 'Operation destroy the cosmos' going?" queried Alan, as casually as possible.

"The second sun has disappeared. The meteorite is about to land in Roswell, and The Stones of Archelios are about to explode in the next 5 minutes." Joe was more pessimistic than ever. They were all going to die. "I'm scared," he admitted. "I don't want to die. And everyone's going to die. 6 billion people at the very least will die in the next five minutes."

"We're all scared," agreed Alan.



They had spent all of their 85 minutes trying to calm the public down rather than save them. Then, how much time did they waste answering some stupid journalists questions.

*Why did the world have to know? Why did the BBC have to broadcast it? Worst of all they had to pretend they were from CERN. It was just more lying to the public and it had worn, Joe, Sylvia and Alan down*

\*\*\*

"Ouch," a guard said as he flinched. He had a strong southern-American accent. "That's the meteor? It's shiny. That ain't no meteor."

"No," agreed another guard, "definitely not."

A shiny, almost flat sphere was flying to the earth at an incredible speed.

The guards braced themselves. This was the day they died.

But they didn't die. The silver object stopped five metres above the ground and slowly glided to the ground. A door opened in the ship. Jour'Ma'Hula and Sik'Mral stepped out of the sleek and polished silver ship.

"Greetings Humans!" Jour'Ma'Hula smiled cheerily while Sik'Mral continued out of the vessel. "Is this United States of America, USA for short - New Mexico - Roswell?"

"Uhh, yeah," answered a gobsmacked guard.

"We're off to a place called Europe - United Kingdom - Britain - England - London. Bye." She and Sik'Mral vanished in a dazzling white and blue light.

\*\*\*

Joe's mouth was dropped in amazement. Sylvia's mouth was dropped in

amazement. Alan's mouth was dropped in amazement. Out of the blue, two weird looking, things, which were possibly aliens, had appeared in Alan's office.

"Hello. My name is Joan. I'm from the planet Archelios. This is my husband, Seth." Jour'Ma'Hula reported.

"Your name's Joan..." Joe said. "From the planet Archelios? So you're Joan of Archelios!" exclaimed Joe excitably.

"Yes that is me." Jour'Ma'Hula said bluntly.

Neither Alan nor Sylvia uttered a sound.

"Don't you get it? Joan of Archelios. Get it?"

"Yes, Joe we get it. " Sylvia grunted irascibly.

"We need the Stones of Archelios, how much time is there till they explode?" Jour'Ma'Hula asked, urgently.

Joe looked at the clock. "Two minutes," he gasped, exasperated.

"Where are the Stones of Archelios?" Sik'Mral demanded.

"In the labs," Sylvia shouted.

"We need them!" shouted Jour'Ma'Hula.

Joe raced down seven flights of stairs. The scientists had put them in the securest place they could build. He turned the crank and opened the chamber and stuffed the Stones of Archelios into his T-shirt, and hoped it didn't have any holes and that it was thick enough to protect him from going mad.

He noticed that a lift was ready take a passenger, so he dashed for it and he made it. This was one of the faster lifts at MI7 so he was glad it was there for him when he needed it. The lift stopped after about ten

seconds of running. *Had it stopped? Was he stuck between floors?* It certainly seemed like it. Two seconds passed. The lift doors opened. Joe sprinted for Alan's door and he smashed it down. "Here, I've got them," He panted to 'Joan'.

"We have 22.65972642 seconds till they explode. We will take them to the ship where we will insert them into the Reversal Chamber, which will cause them to implode rather than explode. No galaxies will be harmed.

Sylvia expected just Joan and Seth, to disappear, but instead, all five of them disappeared. They landed in the interior of a silver ship.

"Whoa..." Joe inhaled in awe.

Alan strode over to what was probably the spaceship equivalent of a windscreen. "Guys..." He murmured. "I don't think we need to worry about the meteor *or* the second sun."

"Why?" asked Sylvia

"We're in Roswell. The second sun was this ship; this ship is shiny on the outside. I mean *really* shiny. It's not even chrome. It's like SuperChrome. The ship just reflected the sun's rays and it's about the size of the meteor and when the second sun disappeared... it was heading for America."

The two Archelians were hurrying towards the back of the ship. They acquired the Stones of Archelios and embedded them into a small, black hole in the wall. There was still another 2.3 seconds till The Stones of Archelios would explode.

'Seth' started pulling a couple of levers.

"I thought you prepared it!" Jour'Ma'Hula shrieked.

*VWOOMPH!*

The Stones of Archelios had gone off. They had imploded. The cosmos

was safe. They had done it.

For a while, nobody spoke.

"You will have to go. We will deposit the remains of the Stones of Archelios on Earth. You will need them," Jour'Ma'Hula stated.

Alan, Sylvia and Joe were hit by an immense wind and they suddenly found themselves outside the spaceship. It was night time in America. The spaceship rocketed up in the sky. The Archelians had left. It was all over.

A white light appeared in the sky. It started to shimmer, then it fell to Earth, like a shooting star.

"The answer will come in a flash of white light!" realised Joe.

"What?" Sylvia asked.

"That's what Robert Pilk said. "It means the shooting star will cure all the insane! Think about it. He also said 'they are in the darkest of dark places,' meaning the Stones of Archelios are in the caves. So, by saying 'the answer will come in a flash of white light,' he means the remnants of the Stones of Archelios!"

Sylvia suddenly understood Joe's reasoning. He was probably right. "Well, come on then, we've got a Mister Davi to help," laughed Sylvia. They were off to Brazil.

## **Epilogue**

It was a small, aboriginal village in secluded, fairy-tale-like part of the forest. It had small huts, with plumes of smoke coming from some of the small chimneys on the roof of each hut.

A helicopter glided overhead. Everyone looked up. The helicopter stopped over the village.

The promise had been kept.

Joe Johnson, and Sylvia Swann were lowered from the helicopter by a rope. They landed.

"We've got the cure." Sylvia called to Davi, who had exited his home to find out what the commotion was about.

A massive smile broke out across Davi's face. He turned to the villagers and announced that Joe and Sylvia had the cure. "Eles encontraram a cura para o nosso povo dormir!"

The crowd erupted into applause and cheering.

Davi led Joe and Sylvia into the hospital where all the people who had touched the Stones of Archelios were.

"Thank you both so much. We cannot thank you enough," He began crying with happiness. "Thank you."

"It's our pleasure," Sylvia replied.

"And our job," Joe muttered under his breath.

Joe added water to the now-powder that *was* The Stones of Archelios. He poured the mixture into a small metal teapot. He poured a small drop into Thaigo's mouth. He was the first person they were going to try and cure.

Nothing happened. Maybe this wasn't going to work. So, what did Robert Pilk mean by 'the answer will come in a flash of white light?' "

Robert

He added another couple of drops.

Thaigo's eyes opened. He sat up and smiled. He was back.

Thaigo had been cured. Just a security guard, Pilk and the 102 people in the hospital to go.

# MI7

When returning home from a routine check on the alien crash site in Roswell, Joe Johnson, an agent for MI7 gets thrown into a new mission to find the mystical Stones of Archelios. Joined with Sylvia Swann, an MI7 agent with a grudge for soft beds, they must find the Stones before it is too late. But with the mad servants of the Stones of Archelios trying to stop them at every opportunity, Joe and Sylvia soon realise that this mission will be harder than they expected.



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