



JEWEL OF THE AMAZON

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The bus kicked up a small dust cloud in its wake as it manoeuvred the tight corners of the barren road. On the right side, a slight hill separated the road from the jungle. On the left, the road fell away to the dense Amazon Jungle below with only a flimsy guard rail to stop vehicles running off the road. Shane Pierson thumbed through his latest manuscript, making notes in the margins with a green pen as he sat. The bus ran over a pothole, jolting the pen out of his hand. As Shane picked up his pen, he felt someone watching him. He twisted around in his seat and stared at his fellow passengers. Most of them held their luggage close and stared out the window while the rest were fast asleep. Shane's attention was drawn to one passenger at the back of the bus. In his loose shirt, jeans and jacket, Shane had dressed poorly for the South American jungle. This man at the back of the bus had made an even poorer choice. His cheap suit was covered in sweat and stuck to his body. It had been the man's height that drew Shane to him but it was the man's eyes that Shane would never forget. It was the thousand-yard stare that looked straight through him that scared him the most.

Shane turned back around and slid the manuscript into his satchel. His hands were shaking as he slid out of his seat and into the aisle. He made his way to the front of the bus, avoiding eye contact with Cheap Suit. He leant over and tapped the bus driver on the shoulder.

'Excuse me?' Shane asked. 'How long until we reach Jirau?' The driver ignored him. Shane tapped his shoulder again. 'Hey, do you know how long until we reach Jirau?' The bus driver turned towards him, irritated. He started yelling in Portuguese, gesturing wildly and pointing at Shane. Shane threw up his hands at the driver then glanced out the windscreen. His eyes widened as the bus closed in on a truck parked on the side of the road. Shane grabbed the wheel and yanked it to the right. The bus fishtailed, skidding sideways before crashing into the truck. The bus driver opened the door and Shane tumbled out the bus with a yelp, his satchel falling off his shoulder into the dirt. He lay on his back, struggling to breathe, as everyone else stepped over him. Shane watched as they sat down on their luggage, leaning against the bus. He climbed to his feet, dusting himself off. He was about to pick up his satchel when he noticed the truck.

The guardrail had caught the truck's rear end as it had flipped over, leaving it hanging precariously over the drop. Shane turned back around to see Cheap Suit rummaging through his satchel.

'Hey! What the hell are you doing?' Cheap Suit ignored him. He found Shane's manuscript, tossed it aside and kept searching through the satchel. Shane took a step towards Cheap Suit, who finally noticed him.

'Uh, uh, uh,' he said. 'That's close enough.'

Shane froze. An M9 Beretta had appeared in Cheap Suit's hand, aimed straight at his chest. Shane put his hands up and glanced at the people watching this play out. Cheap Suit turned to the people, keeping the gun trained on him.

'Saia aqui!' Cheap Suit snarled. Get out of here. The other passengers stood up, grabbed their luggage and walked down the road. Shane watched as they rounded a bend in the road and disappeared. Cheap Suit smiled and cocked the hammer of his pistol. Shane slowly raised his arms.

'Okay, Okay. Just take it easy.' He said.

All of a sudden, a twig snapped off to the right. Both men spun at the sound, Cheap Suit gun at the ready. A lone figure stood at the top of the hill. Their hand strayed towards the shotgun on their back. Cheap Suit drew a bead on the figure.

'Hold it right there!' he yelled. 'Hand away from the gun.' The figure's hand dropped to their waist. Cheap Suit motioned with the gun. 'Hands where I can see them.'

The figure slowly made their way down the hill, hands held up in the air. As they came closer, Shane realised that it was a woman. Her hair was tucked under her tattered hat in an almost tomboyish way. Her stunning green eyes flickered between the two men. Her clothes were sensible for the jungle. She looked incredible.

'Alright, just keep your hands away from that boomstick of yours and we'll all walk away.' Cheap Suit said. He kept the gun trained at the woman as he turned back to Shane. 'Now Mr Pierson, I need you to hand over those documents of yours right now.'

'What are you talking about?'

'The *documents*, the reason why you're here in this shithole, the reason why I'm stuck here in this godforsaken place.' Shane glanced sideways at the woman. She was watching the exchange with a detached interest. She seemed more focused on the gun pointed square at her chest.

'I don't even know what you're talking about.' Cheap Suit sighed and swung the gun back around to Shane.

'Mr Pierson, this is a matter of national security and I don't have time for this. Goodbye.'

Shane dove behind the bus as Cheap Suit fired. He landed with a groan as a string of bullets slammed into the bus chassis. Shane rolled under the bus as a bullet landed in the dirt next to him. He watched as Cheap Suit's feet casually walked toward him.

A shot boomed out and Cheap Suit's feet stopped. It was silent before a second shot sounded and Cheap Suit's feet took off running. Another set of feet appeared as Shane lay in the dirt. They stopped next to his face and the woman's face appeared. She gave him an amused grin.

'You wanna crawl on up out of there or are you happy just rolling around in the dirt?' She asked drily. Shane crawled out from under the bus and clambered to his feet, dusting himself off. He slid his manuscript into his satchel and slung it over his shoulder.

'Jesus, I'm lucky you were here. A couple more seconds and I was a sitting duck, although I guess here a lying duck would be a better analogy.' He said. The woman rolled her eyes and holstered the shotgun. She walked around the front of the bus and stopped dead in her tracks.

'What the hell...' she breathed. 'What the hell happened to my truck?' She spun around to face Shane. He looked away and rubbed the back of his neck nervously.

'Well, the bus would be at fault for that.' He said. The woman pointed to the dent in the side of the bus.

'And how, may I ask, did that happen?' Shane kicked at a loose rock on the road, avoiding eye contact.

'Well, I was asking the driver how long it would take for us to reach Jirau and-'

'Jirau? Why would someone like you need to get to that backwater?' she asked. Shane looked up.

'This cartographer has a map I'm after.' Shane pointed at her. 'You know where it is, you could take me there.'

'Well if we can get a winch attached to the bus, that should be enough to-' The sound of tearing metal cut her off as the guardrail gave way and the truck dropped off the edge. Shane walked over to the edge just as the truck disappeared below the tree line. They both stared at the space where the truck had been. Shane turned to the woman.

'So... you want me to get the winch set up?'

The woman turned her back to him and started walking down the road in silence. Shane caught up and walked side by side with her. 'Wait we haven't even introduced ourselves,' He stuck out his hand. 'Shane Pierson.' The woman raised an eyebrow and shook it.

'Krystle Fowler.'

'Well Krystle, I have two hundred bucks on me at the moment. You take me to Jirau and it's yours.' Krystle rounded on him.

'Listen here. That truck had an entire year and a half's worth of maps and treasure that's just been pissed away. If you want my help, you're going to have to do better than that!' She went to keep walking but Shane grabbed a hold of her arm.

'Okay, you know what? Five hundred bucks. That's the best I can do.' he said. Krystle stared at him for a moment, her stunning green eyes evaluating every part of him.

'It's a start, not much, but it's a start.' She started walking again, calling over her shoulder. 'Come on. We got a way to go from here to Jirau.'

Dark clouds rolled in overhead and they had not seen anyone else on the road for the past couple of hours. Shane trudged behind Krystle, who seemed to enjoy watching him struggle. His satchel strap dug into his shoulder, his feet were killing him and he was not coping with the humidity well at all. For her part, Krystle kept up a constant pace and was all too eager to let Shane know just how much he was slowing them down. Shane, out of breath, bent over and coughed. Krystle glanced over her shoulder at him.

'You better not die on me.'

'Wouldn't dream of it.' Shane muttered as he stood back up. Krystle rolled her eyes and kept walking. They stayed silent until thunder sounded and without warning, rain began pelting down. A wall of water fell on them and they were both drenched in seconds. Shane could hardly see two feet in front of him. He jumped as Krystle appeared from the water wall right in front of him. She had to shout to be heard over the rain and thunder.

'We're gonna keep going. I'm going to tie our waists together, so we don't get lost.' She pulled out a length of rope and tied around both their waists. Shane tugged the rope then gave her a thumbs up. Suddenly, a pair of headlights cut through the rain. Shane grabbed Krystle and dove out of the way as a car sped past them. They looked at each and let out a small laugh. As Shane went to stand back up, Krystle dropped out of view with a cry of surprise and he felt the rope go taut.

'Shit.'

Shane was yanked off his feet after her. A wave of mud assaulted him. It blinded him as he followed Krystle down the hill. Shane was spun around by the mudslide until he was completely disorientated. He felt himself lift off the ground and float before landing face-first in a massive puddle. He spluttered as he wiped the mud off his face with his sleeve before crawling out of the puddle and rolling onto his back, letting the rain wash over him. Krystle stood over him, smiling at him as he gasped for air.

'Whoo! Ha-ha! What a rush.' she said. Shane retched, coughing up mud and water. Krystle looked back up the hill they had slid down. 'This is turning out to be one hell of a day.' She helped Shane to his feet as he coughed up more water. 'You alright?' she asked. Shane coughed up even more water. 'Hey, are you alright?'

'Never better.' Shane wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and looked around him. They were in a canopy, with trees and foliage all around them. The rain wasn't as heavy down here, so Shane untied the rope from around his waist. Krystle had already done the same and she tucked it back into her pack. She was covered in mud and had lost her hat, her brown hair plastered to her face. She flicked it off her face and burst out laughing when she saw Shane.

'You look like the Creature from the Black Lagoon,' she composed herself and struggled out of the mud. 'Come on, let's get moving. We'd better find somewhere to dry off.' She turned her back on him and walked off into the jungle. Shane glanced skyward.

'What the hell did I do to deserve this?' With a sigh of resignation, he followed Krystle into the jungle.

Darkness was beginning to set in when they stumbled upon it. Shane had been walking with his head down and hadn't noticed Krystle had stopped. He bumped into her, stumbling back.

'Hey, what are you stopping...?' He trailed off as he saw it. It was a massive plane, or what was left of it anyway. The entire rear of the plane was gone, crates and panels were strewn all around the wreckage. The left-wing was torn off and was stuck in the ground nearby. The nose of the plane was crumpled, and the front windows were shattered. As they made their way closer, Shane could see the paint was faded and peeling, revealing the rusted metal beneath it. The inside of the plane fuselage was empty and, more importantly, dry.

'What the hell is this doing here?' Krystle asked. Shane noticed a faded American flag on the side of the plane.

'This is an American cargo plane, probably from the late nineties.' he said. Looking at the wing stuck in the ground, he saw two propellers attached to its underside. 'Why the hell would it be in a jungle in Brazil?' Krystle began searching the crates.

'Whatever the reason, it's here now and it's the only form of shelter for miles around.' She said. 'Now we just have to find something to keep us warm.' They both went from crate to crate before Krystle found a crate full of military survival kits. 'Jackpot!' She tossed one to Shane and grabbed another one for herself.

They used the matches and fire starters in the kit to get a fire going and wrapped themselves in the tactical survival blankets also in the kits while their clothes dried. They ate

food rations that they found crammed into another crate. As Shane ate, he looked across the fire at Krystle. She smiled at him.

'So, Shane, what's your story?' she asked. He took a bite from his rations before answering.

'Well, I'm a writer, have been for a while now.'

'That's pretty cool. What sort of stuff do you write? Not sappy romance novels, I hope. That genre's so predictable.' Shane laughed.

'Oh god no. I can't stand that sort of stuff as well. I write more thriller, action-adventure sort of stuff. Something that grabs the reader and keeps them hooked through the whole book.'

'Did you always want to be a writer?' Krystle asked.

Shane shrugged. 'I had no idea what I wanted to do. Writing came naturally to me and gives me an excuse to explore all these crazy places around the world.' Krystle raised an eyebrow.

'So, what about writing brings you out to this sunny South America?' Shane shifted and cleared his throat.

'Research.' Krystle looked unconvinced.

'Oh yeah? What kind of research?' Shane opened his backpack and pulled out a sheet of paper and handed it across to her. It was a sketch of an orb. The orb was matte black with shiny flecks of light blue ore swirling inside it. It entranced you, seeming to draw you deeper the longer you looked at it.

'They call it the Wormhole,' Shane said. 'It was an Ancient Mayan legend that everyone thought was a myth. That was until it was discovered back in 1936. But many don't believe it exists as it's only been found once in over a hundred years of expeditions. The team who found it disappeared but-' Shane noticed Krystle looked confused. 'What's wrong?' Krystle looked up at him.

'What does this have to do with writing a novel?' she asked. Shane ran his hand through his hair and looked out at the jungle.

'The person that finds that would be famous,' he said sheepishly. 'And at the very least I might get a good story out of it.' Shane cleared his throat. 'We've talked plenty about me, but what about you? What're *you* doing out here?' Krystle finished off the last of her rations, crumpled the packaging and tossed it away.

'I suppose they're both fair questions. I was born in West London, my parents divorced when I was ten so I haven't seen them in a long time. Dad took me around the world, looking for ancient treasures and I guess his love for that stuff just rubbed off on me.'

'You're from England?' Shane asked. Krystle nodded. 'Wouldn't have guessed that in a million years.' she sighed.

'When you live in a different country every week, accents, friends they all just kinda get lost and meld together.' She said. Shane shovelled food into his mouth and motioned for her to continue.

'Well, after Dad passed, I decided to get back home to try and reconnect with Mum. We didn't have anything to say to each other so I decided not to waste my time. I left England, haven't been back since. I went back to the only thing I've ever known so I went back to travelling the world looking for treasure. I've been looking for treasure here in South America for the past year and a half. Always looking but never finding anything,' She looked back down at the sketch in her hand. 'But this'll change everything.' Shane choked on his food, coughing.

'What?' He spluttered. Krystle turned the sketch around, so he could see it.

'This jewel hasn't been found in a couple hundred years, right? Well, that'd fetch a pretty high price from the right buyer,' she said. 'Think about it, you get the fame of finding it and I get a nice chunk of change for my troubles. Tell you what, we find this thing and I'll even give you your five hundred bucks back.' She handed the sketch back to Shane. 'Everyone wins.' Shane thought about it, she did make a good argument, and he certainly wouldn't complain about having to spend more time with her.

'You've got yourself a deal, Krystle Fowler.' He stuck out his hand. Krystle smiled slyly at him as she shook his hand.

'Pleasure doing business with you, Shane Pierson.'

They arrived at Jirau the following day, just after midday. The two of them walked down the town's main street. It was flanked by rows of single-storey houses. They were all white brick plastered a dusty orange colour with rough wooden doors. One of the doors was open and a man leant against the doorway. He was licking a cigarette as he watched them approach. As they passed, Krystle nodded a greeting. The man kept staring as he put the cigarette in his mouth and lit it. They kept walking before Krystle hazarded a glance behind her. The man had stepped out from the doorway and was following behind them. They kept walking and more doors opened. More men came out onto the street and fell in step behind the smoking man. Shane went to look behind him, but Krystle grabbed his arm.

'Don't. Just look forward and keep walking.' She said.

'Hey! Senorita!' A voice behind them called out. Krystle turned around. The smoking man was standing a few feet away with the other men behind him. She flashed them a smile.

'Excuse me, we are looking for a cartographer. Could any of you... lovely gentlemen help us?' The smoking man held up a hand.

'Valente, the village's cartographer.' The man said. He pointed up a side road towards an enormous gated mansion at the top of the hill. Krystle nodded her thanks. She grabbed Shane by the arm and dragged him up the road.

'This seems a little expensive for someone on a cartographer's pay,' Shane said. 'Especially in a place like this.'

'Rumour has it, this Valente guy's been taking foreign aid from the US and pocketing it for himself. All those guys following us are on his payroll.'

'You mean he's an embezzler-' Krystle shushed him.

'Not so loud,' she whispered. 'These people get antsy about that sort of talk.' As they drew closer to the mansion, Shane looked behind him. An army had shadowed them up the hill.

Their armaments were a mixed bag of different time periods. Old school revolvers, pump-action shotguns and hunting rifles were all loaded and ready. Shane gulped and turned back around. Krystle opened the mansion's gate and walked straight in with Shane following close behind. They walked up the front steps onto the verandah and Krystle knocked on the front door. She turned to Shane.

'Just hang back, I'll handle this.' A small hatch opened in the door and a man's face appeared. He had a thick pencil moustache and he took in the two people standing in front of him. Krystle gave him a winning smile.

'Senor, buenos dias.' She said. The man looked her up and down.

'What do you want?' He snarled.

'We understand that you're a cartographer. My associate here is looking to purchase some of your quality maps from you.' Krystle explained.

'Get lost.'

'Please sir, we've travelled a long way to get here.'

'I said hit the road!' Multiple guns cocked behind them. They both spun around to see every single gun trained on them.

'Nice job handling it.' Shane muttered.

'Shut up,' Krystle snapped. She looked at the men in front of her. 'This ever come up in your novels, Shane?' she asked.

'Well, this is kinda like a part in *Last Fight*.'

'How did it end?'

'Lot of people died.'

'That's comforting.' Krystle's hand inched towards her shotgun.

Suddenly, the front door opened and the man stepped onto the verandah. 'You have read *Last Fight*?' he asked. Shane looked him up and down and nodded.

'I wrote it.'

The man's eyes widened and he took Shane's hand in his own, shaking it. 'It is an honour to meet you! I've read all your books.' He waved his hand at the group of men and they holstered their weapons. The man motioned for Shane and Krystle to enter. 'Come in. Come in. Welcome to my humble home. I am Valente.' He followed them in and closed the door, spreading his arms wide. 'Well, what do you think?'

The room was as opulent as the mansion's exterior. A giant tiger skin rug covered the room's floor with white leather armchairs set next to panoramic windows overlooking a perfectly curated courtyard garden. A massive chandelier hung from the ceiling. The room led to a dining room with yet another chandelier and regal dining table and chairs. The entire back wall had a bookshelf lined with books. Shane looked closer at the bookshelf. A single row was dedicated to his novels, all of them first edition.

'I can't believe you are here. I've been reading your books for years.' Valente said. He grabbed a pile of books and handed them over to Shane. 'Would you please do me the honour of signing these for me?' Shane ran his eyes over the pile. Their spines were well worn and the pages had turned brown.

'Sure. Happy to.' While Shane was signing the pile, he watched Krystle wander over to the bookshelf. She picked up one of his books and started flicking through it. He felt his heart racing as she chuckled to herself. Valente appeared by her side.

'You are enjoying *In the Shadows*?' he asked. Krystle snapped the book shut and looked up at him.

'Oh yeah, it's not bad.' She went to place the book back on the shelf. Valente stopped her.

'Keep it. I have multiple copies.' Shane finished signing the last book and cleared his throat.

'So, about that map of yours?' he asked. Valente smiled warmly at him.

'Please, first you must stay for the night. I will hold a massive celebration. You and your beautiful companion will be my guests of honour.' Shane blushed and glanced at Krystle.

'Now how could we possibly refuse such a generous offer?' She winked at Shane. 'So where are we staying?' Valente swept his arm towards the next room.

'Why here of course,' he said. 'We have plenty of space. Follow me.' They exchanged a glance and followed Valente out of the room.

Shane pulled his tie loose for the twelfth time and had another go at it. Valente had let him pick out a suit from his extensive private collection. He'd chosen a nice grey suit with a maroon tie that paired with it rather well. He hardly ever wore suits and the tie was always the hardest part for him. Laughter floated in through the window of his room. Shane walked over, tie in hand. People were dancing in the street as festive music played.

'Hey, you clean up pretty nice.' A voice said. Shane turned around to see Krystle leaning against the door. She wore a dark green dress that accentuated her figure perfectly. With her long brown hair flowing down to her back, Shane couldn't take his eyes off her.

'You don't look half bad either. Especially now that you're not covered in mud.' Krystle gave him a sly smile.

'And not carrying a shotgun?' she asked. Shane laughed and turned back to the mirror.

'Yeah, that too.' He put the tie back around his neck and tried tying it. He fumbled with the knot and grumbled in frustration. Krystle strode over to him and took the tie in her hands.

'Here, let me do it otherwise we'll be here all night.' She wrapped the two ends around each other before tightening the knot and slightly adjusting it. 'There, perfect. Now we'd better get down there. Wouldn't want to make Valente wait any longer to show you off.' She held out her arm and Shane took it in his own as they left the room.

Valente dragged Shane away from Krystle as soon as they stepped outside. After lots of handshaking and polite conversation with Valente's associates, Shane made his excuses and found Krystle sitting alone at a table, people watching. He had just sat down when a waiter appeared with plates full of food and handed it to them. They both ate in silence, listening to music and watching people dance. After they had finished, Krystle stood up and offered her hand to Shane.

'You gonna dance with me or should we just sit in silence all night?' she asked. Shane took her hand and rose to his feet. Krystle put her hand on his shoulder while Shane let his hand slide down to her hip. They stepped closer to each other and moved as one. They looked into each other's eyes as they spun slowly around.

'I like your dress. It makes your eyes pop.' Shane said. He twirled Krystle around, her dress catching the light as she spun. Krystle gave him a shy smile.

'Aw, thank you. I like green but I really love a nice maroon.'

'I picked well, then didn't I?'

'You certainly did.' Krystle rested her head on his shoulder. 'By the way, I finished your book.' She said. Shane stared at the ground, enjoying feeling her body against his.

'What did you think of it?'

'I enjoyed it. Couldn't put it down. The ending almost made me cry. *Almost.*' They swayed together in silence until Krystle whispered in his ear. 'You know, I'm really glad that bus crashed into my truck.'

'Yeah, me too.' Krystle smiled and wrapped her arms around his neck. She pulled him towards her and kissed him. Hours later, Shane could still feel her soft lips against his as he fell into a deep sleep.

'So, we're here... and the wormhole was first discovered here...' Shane and Krystle were poring over maps that Valente had dug out of storage for them. The maps included Jirau and the surrounding area for thirty kilometres. Shane had circled Jirau and was surveying the north-west section of the map. Krystle pursed her lips as she sat across from him.

'What are you looking for?' She asked. Shane looked up at her.

'All the historical texts state that the wormhole jewel was found in a cave under Haddock Hill, named after the expedition's leader, J.P Haddock, in 1936. Those texts never stated if they took the jewel from the cave or not, many historians believed they did for a long time.' He said. He passed a faded piece of paper to Krystle.

'What's this?' Krystle asked. As Shane looked at her, she read the note aloud. 'That cave holds the biggest regret of my life. I wish I had never found it.'

'That's Haddock's final letter to his family, recovered in 1971. It was dated October 23, 1936. I think the expedition found the jewel, but never took it out of the cave. I think if we find the cave, we find the jewel.' Shane looked back down at the map. 'But it seems to have disappeared.' Valente suddenly appeared over his shoulder.

'What disappeared?' he asked. Shane jumped in fright, shooting Valente a dirty look.

'Haddock Hill. It should be just past the Madeira River.' Valente shook his head and pointed at the Jirau dam.

'They demolished that hill to make the dam.' He stroked his chin. 'I heard the workers found an incredible jewel with a spiral pattern. I think they used it as the decorative centrepiece for the bridge running over the dam.' Shane looked back to the map and circled the dam. It looked like two separate bridges joined together to connect both sides of the river.

'Valente, we're gonna need your car.'

The car was an old 1999 Land Rover Discovery. The paintwork was faded and the chassis was dented but Valente had assured them the car was in perfect working order. Shane was relieved to find he was right. The car ride was smooth on the dirt roads and negotiated the bumps reasonably well. It wasn't as fast or as comfortable as later models but it beat walking.

It took them little over an hour to reach the dam. They got to where the north and south bridge converged and skidded to a halt. Shane patted the car door as they got out of the car.

'Not bad for a car from twenty years ago,' he said. 'Not a big fan of the colour though.'

Krystle crossed over to the edge of the bridge and looked down. The dam was entirely concrete, forming a shallow curve across the river. Tonnes of water poured from the outlet at a speed that anyone who fell in would be sucked under and drown long before they made it to the surface. The water was a light brown colour from the mud dredged up from the riverbed. Above the outlet was a large crest of a bare-chested man lifting a shining star to the sky. The star had a round gem embedded in its centre and looking closer, she realised it was the wormhole jewel.

'Hey Shane, come here.' She said. Shane strode over to her and looked over the side. He let out a low whistle as he noticed the crest.

'There it is.'

'Yep.' Before Shane could react, Krystle had leant over the railing. He grabbed her ankles and slowly lowered her down until she was hanging next to the jewel.

'What the hell is wrong with you?' Krystle twisted round to look up at him.

'What are you complaining about? You get to stare at my ass some more.' She twisted back around. 'Just don't let me fall.' Krystle grabbed the jewel with both hands and tried to pull it free. It wouldn't budge. She motioned to Shane and he pulled her back up over the railing.

'What happened?' he asked.

'Just need something to loosen it.' Krystle replied. She went over to the car and rummaged through her pack. Pulling out a small hand chisel, she slipped it into her belt and went back to the railing. Shane held onto her ankles and he lowered her back down to the jewel. As Krystle pulled out the chisel and went about getting the jewel free, a car door

slammed shut. Shane looked up to see a man in a dark suit and sunglasses approaching him. The man flashed his badge.

'Shane Pierson? Agent Johnson, CIA,' Johnson put his badge away. 'Show me your hands, now.'

'I'm a bit preoccupied at the moment.'

'Show me your hands right now Mr Pierson.' Agent Johnson's hand rested at the holster on his hip. Krystle heard this and almost dropped the chisel.

'Don't you fucking drop me!' She had chipped away at the concrete around the jewel, loosening it enough to grab it. Tucking the chisel back in her waistband, she gripped the jewel with both hands and pulled it free. She tucked it under her arm and called for Shane to pull her up. Krystle handed it off to Shane as she clambered back over the rail and her feet touched the ground.

The jewel was breathtaking. It was the size of a basketball and the colours combined in such a way that Shane thought he would be sucked in by it. Agent Johnson watched both of them.

'That jewel is a matter of national security and I am going to need you to hand it over right now.'

'What do you mean a matter of national security?' Shane asked.

'That isn't your concern, son. Just hand it over and I promise you, you and your lady friend can walk away.' Shane stayed where he was. Agent Johnson sighed and turned back to the van. The passenger door opened, and a second man got out. Krystle let out a gasp as he recognised the man. It was Cheap Suit. He stood next to Johnson with his thousand-yard stare fixed on Krystle.

'What the fuck is going on here? That bastard tried to kill us!' she said. Johnson smiled at her.

'I believe you've met my partner, Agent Mitchell.'

'Yeah, he's a real class act.' Krystle spat at his feet.

'We only want the jewel ma'am. If you had handed it over, I wouldn't need to do this,' Cheap Suit drew his weapon and levelled it at Krystle's head as Johnson continued. 'This can go one of two ways Mr Pierson. You either hand us the jewel and everyone goes their separate ways or Agent Mitchell here puts a bullet in your heads.' Cheap Suit smiled at this. 'Now, I would prefer not to kill you. I have enough paperwork as it is. Agent Mitchell however, loves paperwork.'

Shane glanced at Krystle. She was staring at Cheap Suit and wouldn't look at him. He sighed and admired the jewel one last time, marvelling how it reflected the light.

Shane let his shoulder slump and he handed the jewel over to Agent Johnson. Johnson grabbed it and snapped his fingers. Cheap Suit holstered his weapon and the two of them headed back to their van. Shane and Krystle both watched as the van turned around and sped off along the northern bridge. Without a word, they headed back towards the car.

'We had it in our hands and just gave it away. One of the most valuable treasures in history!' Shane buried his head in his hands. His head shot up as Krystle started laughing.

'What're you so happy about?' he asked.

'That was fake.'

'How the hell could you possibly know that?'

'In your sketch, it showed the Jewel with a matte finish. If that was the real Wormhole, it wouldn't have reflected the sunlight.' she said. Shane leant against the car's roof to look at Krystle.

'So, the real one's still out there?'

'Yeah,' Krystle gave a cheeky grin. 'So, are you gonna help me find it or do you wanna hang around here and wait for them to realise they fucked up?'

'What are we waiting for?' Shane asked.

Smiling, they both climbed into the car and with a tire squeal, they sped off back into the jungle in search of their next adventure.

THE END