



The Sacred Ruby of Quetzalcoatl - extract - Stephanie Jones

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Yucatan: 1718 AD

The explorer walked on the dusty hallway, his footsteps echoing loudly. He was tired, hurt and looked ready to collapse at any moment. He was walking with a slight limp, and many wounds were visible all over his body. He was the only one of his team left. It was true what the legend said. The riches in this temple came with a price of blood. But he was so close! He could feel it in his old bones! He was very close to the biggest jewel in the world and he had to have it. It would be the perfect gift for the king and the perfect way to make sure that all humanity remembers him forever.

Since his companions had gone, he felt his mind strained. Sometimes he had the feeling that he could hear voices, but he never paid attention to them being sure that it was just his imagination. He had been in the temple for almost two days now and he had run out of water hours ago. But he was sure that the prize was very close. He sat down to rest for a few minutes and thought about all that had happened since he arrived in the New World. First there were just normal hunts. When he arrived, the Maya people had already been enslaved. He didn't have to pretend to like them, he only had to catch as many, stuff them on a boat and send them out to Spain. Then he heard the rumours. The rumours about the two Temples of the Sun where no one had ever set foot. It was said that the two temples were full of unspeakable treasure, and he and his men were the only ones brave enough to set out through the harsh jungle in order to reach the place. He had set out with fifty men. When they reached the temple, he had only thirty left. Twenty men had died on the way. Many by jungle fever, others were attacked by animals and others simply disappeared. He entered the temple with thirty men. None were left now. They had all died falling into traps. He had never imagined there could be so many traps there. It only meant that the sacred jewel was bigger than he had imagined. But being alone scared

him. If he would fall into a trap now, it would be all over. That thought kept him on the cold stone floor. His thoughts were once again disturbed by voices. He tried to push them out of his head, but they only seemed to be getting louder. Suddenly it seemed as if who ever was talking was right next to him. The explorer looked up to see a large group of men standing in front of him. He wondered how they had gotten there, he would have heard their footsteps! In the lead was an old very skinny man with long silvery hair and beard and with steely gray eyes. He was wearing what looked like a jaguar skin, while the men behind him were taller than normal Maya people and had their faces covered. They were talking a language he could not understand but their intentions seemed pretty clear. He got up quick and pulled out his gun, but collapsed the very next second under the old man's gaze. When he woke up again he was in a small square room which only contained a rock bed and table. The door was made out of solid rock too and as much as he tried, it wouldn't budge. Sitting on the uncomfortable bed, all he could think about was the fact that he had been so close to the ruby. He was sure that those were it's guardians. Someone had to retrace his steps and find the stone. With that thought in mind, he quickly pulled a roll of parchment and a quill out of the inner pocket of his jacket. He had ink in the back pack that was now thrown in one corner of the room. He dipped the quill in the ink and thought for a second. The person who wanted to claim the jewel had to be wise. So he would not lay it all too clear. They would have to work to discover the mystery of the temple. With that thought in mind, he started writing.

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An adventure in the jungle



CHAPTER 1

Like father, unlike son

Chicago: present day

It was a cold rainy morning at the end of May. The sky was gray and heavy rain clouds were gathering up like huge quantities of lead above a melting pool. Sometimes lightning lit the sky for a few seconds leaving behind the roar of thunder. It had been raining all night over Chicago and tones of dust had disappeared under the refreshing shower. Now it was still early in the morning, but the day promised to be a sunny one.

The city had begun its daily rumble, but the suburbs were still quiet and peaceful. All the equally white and welcoming houses seemed to be sleeping except for one. Somebody was pacing on the front lawn of number 113. Number 113 had always been a bit different from all their neighbors and not just because of the number that could be interpreted as being an unlucky one, but because of the yard. Unlike the other yards, this one was more than just a perfectly mowed lawn. The grass was a little wilder and there were rosebushes all over the place, but what was exceptionally strange was that the backyard contained trees, lots of trees. And amongst these trees was an old massive oak tree that dominated the entire neighborhood.

However, in spite of the differences between this certain house and all the others, the people who lived in it were nice and friendly. Of course, they didn't mingle with their neighbors as much as the others, but every time they met up, they were very nice, friendly and respected everyone. But they had a reason to be a little distant, everybody knew that! They were both very busy people, working downtown.

Freider Grant owned his own detective agency while his wife Maxi worked as a financial expert in one of the biggest banks in the city and their two children were busy with school. Not many people actually remembered that Freider and Maxi Grant actually had three children, but lately people had begun to notice that for the past year there had been three children living at number 113.

One of them was the one pacing in front of the house. Tall, well built with athletic features, the boy moved around with great agility though he was just walking around. He had emerald green eyes, at times covered by his messy black hair that sometimes seemed to be exploding all over the place, but that made him look even more handsome than he already was. And he was handsome. His face was a mixture of innocence, bravery, kindness, recklessness intelligence and sometimes even a stroke of evil. It was funny how all those could be expressed in just one look. Now it was obvious that the youngster was anxious because he kept checking his watch. His trainers were already starting to become soggy and the trim of his black jeans was soaking wet. Over his shirt, he was wearing a yellow raincoat that was however unable to protect his massive rucksack-like school bag.

He walked around for another minute after which he simply sat down on the ground between two rosebushes in a perfect imitation of someone going on strike. He kept looking at the led-like sky mumbling under his breath and for a few seconds it seemed as though her were singing, but soon he started to recite a long complicated sonnet. After he had repeated it three times, a huge black jeep pulled out of the garage and stopped on the street in front of the house. The boy got up and made for the car but stopped on the way and looked back at the house. For some reason he had the feeling that things would be somewhat different the next time he would set foot in his house. He turned his back on the house again feeling a little scared, but as he opened the front door of the car, all his fears seemed to have disappeared. His father was grinning at him from the driver's seat, but that didn't seem to impress the boy at all though mere moments ago he was desperately waiting for the car. But now that he was there, he didn't get in. He just looked at his father through the open door waiting for his father's reaction.

Freider Grant's grin disappeared. He wasn't a handsome man, nor had he been one when he had been younger, but he was kind and pleasant looking and seemed to have a sense of humor. It was probably his humor that had kept his son waiting for so long.

"Kyle is going to blow his proverbial top!" the boy said rather ironic not getting on the front seat.

“Yeah, well, it’s not my fault my old wreck broke down...again! I’ve been telling him to take it into service for weeks.” His father answered rather displeased.

“Why should he take it? It’s your car!”

“Sam, just shut up and get in the car! We’re already late!” Freider said losing his patience.

The youngest of his sons looked at him in a rather pitiful manner after which he just slammed the door closed and got on the back seat looking extremely bored and once again mumbling something under his breath. Freider looked back at him surprised and his anger seemed to have disappeared. He started the car again but turned back and looked at Sam instead of driving off.

“Now, why don’t you come and sit in the front seat ?” he asked kindly.

“Because I’m mad at you for keeping me out in the rain, that’s why!”

Sam answered bored but his eyes showed he was amused.

“Oh, come one! I didn’t really do it on purpose!” Freider started ready to continue his excuse, but Sam cut him off.

“Gees dad, relax! I was just kidding! I didn’t get on the front seat because it’s all wet as I kept the door open.”

“Oh, right! Thanks for telling me now!” Freider said annoyed taking his soaked files off the front seat.

Finally the car was on its way downtown. Sam looked out the window still mumbling something that sounded like the sonnet he had begun reciting earlier between the rosebushes. But soon he fell silent as his eyes were fixed on a certain cloud in the sky. He once again had the feeling that something was about to change.

The road to school was so boring that Sam took out a large book about hidden religious organizations and sank into it. He knew that in precisely ten minutes he would reach school being two hours early. He had no idea why his father insisted on taking him to school today, but he could go to the library and sink back into his book. So he didn’t really mind. He didn’t really understand why his dad insisted on taking him to school, because usually his big brother Kyle who had a car and a driver’s license would take him to school every morning. They both started school at the same hour, so it was no trouble for Kyle to drive him to school. Sometimes they would even leave early without having breakfast and stop by for some pizza and garlic bread. Kyle didn’t

Speak much but hanging out with him was great fun all the same. It was quite weird but before Kyle came back home almost one year ago, Sam had never seen his oldest brother. They never had the time to fly down to Texas and Kyle never came home during the holidays. He found that situation normal back then, but now he found it remotely stupid. He had kept in touch with Kyle through email, but never thought that his brother was the silent type. He always thought of Kyle as being the rebellious type cool guy, giving a damn about what people thought and making the most out of life. But when Kyle came home, it wasn't like that at all. Sam didn't see him as a disappointment. It seemed to him that his brother was hurting— bad! He seemed to be the ghost of who he once used to be. And somehow that made Sam love him even more. They never had even one single fight, though they were both fighting Jerry most of the time. Jerry never seemed to see beyond what he had been taught and that was the main reason he was so annoying. He thought about Jerry and wished he could understand his brother. Though he was younger than Kyle, Jerry always acted bossy towards him fact which really pissed Kyle off. There hadn't been a single day without a fight between them and Sam felt sorry because he knew that neither Jerry nor Kyle were as bad as the other one thought. And Sam was always piggy-in-the-middle.

He was suddenly woken up from his daydreaming when the car took a sudden turn. An unexpected turn. A wrong turn.

“Aaah, dad, where exactly are we going?” Sam asked having the feeling that he already knew the answer to that question.

“We're going to the office of course.” Freider asked merrily. “I thought you'd have learned the way by now.”

“I've noticed we're going to the office, but the Sam part of 'we' has to go to school.”

“You're two hours early. Does it remotely bother you if we stop at the office for an hour after which I will take you to school as promised?”

“Well— not really.” Sam said cautiously because he knew the way his father felt about his work. “I was just making plans...”

“Then cancel them. I need your help for an hour or so!”

“Oh no!” Sam exclaimed as low as he could so that his father couldn't make out what he had said. It was not that he didn't like helping people, but his father's idea of help was a thoroughly understanding of

the company's administrative system. It was nice that his father wanted to teach him everything he needed to know about the business, but Sam didn't really care about all that. He found detective work neither interesting nor fulfilling. He preferred looking for missing puzzle pieces or investigating some historical mystery. He wanted to become an archeologist, not a detective. He did like math too, quite a lot actually, but wanted to use his extensive math knowledge for historical statistics and for studying cryptography to unlock ancient codes. He was already secretly taking some cryptography classes, because he was sure that his dad wouldn't approve if he found out. He had always shown signs of wanting to leave the company to Sam and Sam had always wondered why because it was Kyle who was going to the police academy. But it was maybe Sam's passion for mysteries that had influenced his father's decision. Either way, he didn't feel thrilled about going to his father's office, though his father seemed to be at a little distance from wetting himself with excitement.

They reached the office quite soon. It was a huge building which housed many offices. His father's agency took up about one quarter of a story on the seventh floor. Freider was very proud of his agency and looked at the building with a loving smile on his face. Sam didn't really understand why. It was a building.

The two headed towards the elevators and went up silently. Freider had tried to start a conversation many times, but Sam's mood-less answers put him off quick. Sam wasn't deliberately mean to his father, but he preferred to take advantage of the time in the elevator to get himself into a great mood. He knew how much it meant to his father for his employees to see Sam extremely happy to be there. So as the doors opened, Sam hopped out and looked around satisfied. Freider stared at him bewildered. He could have sworn that mere seconds ago Sam had been extremely grumpy. But now he seemed thrilled to be there. That caused Freider to lighten up instantly.

The two saluted everyone on the way to Freider's office and stopped in front of his secretary's desk for a little chat. Freider's secretary was really young and quite beautiful with dark hair and hazel eyes. She was a careful dresser and wore whatever was in fashion at the moment. That day she was wearing blue jeans carefully tucked in her high, almost reaching the knee, black leather boots with extremely high heels and a

white shirt with chains on the sides. Her hair was tied up carefully and while sitting down, she looked quite presentable as long as no one paid attention to her jeans and boots. Freider shot a glance at her while picking up his morning paper.

“I would prefer you in trousers and shoes.” He said in a low voice.

“And lose the chains!”

After saying so, he entered his office leaving Sam about thirty seconds to talk to her.

“Hi, Alice! You look great today. Don’t mind dad, he’s a bit feisty.

Soggy files and all!” he said very quickly and ran in after Freider.

“Thanks Sam!” she called after him. “Lose the chains! Wear trousers and shoes! Yadda, yadda, yadda!” Alice mocked Freider when finally left on her own.

Sam closed the door feeling himself amused. Alice was the only person in the company whom Freider criticized, mainly because of her fashion tastes. He especially criticized her whenever he or his brothers came over. Unknown to Freider, Alice seemed to have a secret crush on Jerry, but he never noticed. Jerry wasn’t exactly the ‘heartbreaker’ type and often ignored girls. Reason for which he never had a girlfriend, but he didn’t seem to long for one either. Come to think of it, Kyle didn’t have a girlfriend either, but Sam was sure he once had one because he could remember seeing the picture of a gorgeous blonde in Kyle’s room. He never said anything about her, but Sam liked to believe that she was Kyle’s long lost love. Actually he never had a proper girlfriend either. There was this one girl at school whom liked to pretend she was his girlfriend, but he didn’t really feel like going out with her. Then there was this other girl, the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. He didn’t know her name or where she lived. He only ran into her in the park every morning when he went jogging. She was always in a hurry, probably running to school though it was very early in the morning. Even though they saw each other almost every morning, they never so much as exchanged one word. Lately things had changed. Sam had been extremely busy with his exams and for the past two weeks gave up jogging using the time to study. He hadn’t seen her since. But it didn’t really bother him because she was just a stranger like all the others. But how come he was thinking about her now?

“Sam, are you listening?” his father demanded rhythmically hitting his fingers to the desk. “I have a little administrative work to do and I want you to sit in for me for an hour or so. Can you do that?”

“Sure, go right ahead!” Sam said waving Freider away not really taking in what he had said as his mind was still on other things.

“Fine! I’ll come and pick you up later.” Freider said and went out with his soggy files.

Sam dropped on the comfy leather chair and started spinning around on it until he became dizzy. He kept thinking how he could tell his father that he hated his office, hated his job and anything that had to do with it. He wanted something else from life, work in the open field, excitement, adventures. But he could almost hear his father saying ‘Grow up, Sam!’. Though his family was very rich, he didn’t want to live off their backs just to fulfill his dreams. He wanted to win his own money and make his own fortune. He wanted to do something worthwhile, something for everyone in the world. Something he could be proud of. And detective work was not it. It annoyed him so much that his father was too blind to see that he had other aspirations, other dreams. Sam sometimes wished for this building to just catch fire one day and free him of the torment. But the fire alarm was very efficient. He had checked.

It was quite sad that no one in the family seemed to share his father’s dreams and ambitions. Jerry was interested in science and spent his entire day in his room which looked pretty much like a NASA laboratory. Kyle on the other hand had other preoccupations: he like playing his guitar, training for the academy and, as Jerry put it, it seemed that his hobby was fighting. But Sam knew that Kyle was the kind of person who given a computer, could make it work wonders. But what really bugged Sam was that Freider never insisted that Jerry or Kyle learn the administrative system. He didn’t want anything to do with the company. He wanted to travel all over the world, discover new things, crack codes, save people... ‘Dream on Sam!’ he said to himself waking up as the phone started ringing. He looked at it for a second wondering if he should pick up or just let it ring as he was in no mood to talk to anyone. But he could almost see Freider’s face looking down at him reproachfully. Without really wanting to, he reached out

for the speaker button and pressed it praying that the client on the line won't be too hysterical.

"Hello, you've reached Freider Grant's answering machine!" Sam said with an even voice getting a brilliant idea. "I'm not in right now as I am probably dealing with an administrative problem like I usually do, and no one wants to sit in for me. If you want to leave a message, you will be connected with the secretary after the beep." After finishing the message, Sam waited for a few seconds before beeping and transferring the call to Alice, but the voice on the other end of the line stopped him. "Is this Sam Grant?" it asked leaving Sam speechless. He wasn't sure if he should just beep and transfer the call to Alice or answer it. After all, the call was for him so it meant it wasn't one of his father's boring clients. But who knew he was there? He had never come to the office this early in the morning before and he hadn't told anyone he would be there as he himself didn't know he would end up at the office that morning. This was weird. It was actually... interesting. His spirits rose and he decided to answer though he felt he had to be really careful.

"Who wants to know?" he asked getting up and going behind the chair looking at the telephone as though it were a snake ready to jump at him and tare him to pieces.

"Good, so it is you!" the voice answered ignoring Sam's question.

"Listen, I can't tell you much because this is a public line, it's not safe. One of my men is on his way to the office. I hope you will be alone to meet him."

"Wait a minute! Who do you think you are telling me what to do without any explanations?!" but Sam's indignation vanished almost instantly buried by the need to know more. "One of your men? I don't understand!"

"He will explain everything. All I can tell you is that we could help you live your dreams. All your answers will come soon. I thought you liked the suspense!"

"I..." Sam started taken aback. How did this man know what he liked? If it hadn't been for the last phrase he would have thought the man to be a drug dealer, but now he wondered if this man actually knew what he had been thinking earlier.

"Wait and see. You will not be disappointed. Good luck Sam Grant! You will need it..." and the man on the other end of the line hung up.

Sam didn't move from his position and listened to the busy tone. What was going on? Mere minutes ago he was just sitting in that chair bored, thinking about how to escape the agency, but now he had a feeling that it was now the last of his worries. In just two minutes everything had changed.

"And things will never be the same again..." he found himself saying. He thought about the man's last words and felt something he had never felt before, it was like a huge pain in his chest though he realized it wasn't real. The feeling of imminent danger! Realizing what he felt, Sam pulled back from the chair shocked and piled up on an armchair in the corner feeling extremely scared. Why did he have the feeling that something awful was about to happen? Maybe the man who was supposed to come and see him was dangerous. He wondered if he should just grab his schoolbag and go to school. Forget everything! But he was sure they were going to find him anyway. Maybe the man was outside that very minute.

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Alice had looked around carefully before dropping her work and turning on her messenger to chat to one of her girlfriends. She simply loved it when Freider left the office to solve some other problem because it gave her the freedom to do something else than his boring declarations. She was happy to chat with one of her friends who worked in a much more interesting place. Alice hated her job, but as she was fresh out of college, this was a pretty good place to start as she had a pretty decent pay. She was just writing this down when a voice from above interrupted her.

"You've made a spelling mistake."

Alice jerked back, scared that it Freider had returned early. Instead, a man in a gray rain coat, which was carelessly dripping on the carpet, stood in front of her desk. He wore an old fashioned hat making it quite impossible for anyone to see his face. She looked at him curiously waiting for him to speak again.

"I'm here to see Sam Grant." The man said after a few moments of silence in which he seemed to consider Alice. "He is waiting for me. I'm expecting that he is alone right now."

“Yes, indeed he is!” Alice rushed to answer the question to prove herself useful. “Mr. Grant, his father, has left about twenty minutes ago and will be missing for another half an hour, at least.”

“Good.” The man simply said and made for the door leading to the office but stopped just as Alice had lifted the telephone’s receiver.

“I’m here to give Sam a case. It will be a lot of work, so I think it wise for you to come along and help him.”

“A lot of work?” Alice asked forgetting all about the telephone. “I’m not sure I’m really into that.”

“No, you don’t understand. It will be a lot of work for him and he might need you to safe guard his things while he is away. Not all five star resorts are safe...” the man added and seemed to be smiling.

“Five star resorts?” Alice asked pushing the phone away completely.

“Yes, sand, see, swimming pools and free food. Luxurious rooms and fun filled activities... I wish I could sit back, but I have to work. Well, anyway, if you don’t want to come...” he turned his back on her shrewdly and started walking towards the office again.

“No, wait! I want to come!” Alice said quickly getting up and running after the man. “I mean, what’s a little work if you can relax afterwards?” she added smiling a little ashamed.

“Perfect! I’ll call to book a ticket for you too. There’s only one favor I want to ask you...”

“Sure, anything!” Alice said smiling happily.

“This has to be a secret so that the man we’re after won’t find out and escape. I’d be really grateful if you don’t tell anyone where we’re going. You can tell them afterwards, ok?”

“Sure, no problem, the least I can do!” Alice said quickly resuming her seat at the desk and pushing the phone away as though it might jump at her and force her to break the silence.

The man threw her an amused look and entered the office. He was surprised to see it empty and the window wide open letting the rain wet the carpet. Without giving it much thought, the stranger rushed to the window and looked down, but couldn’t make out anything because of the fog. All he could see were the lights of the cars passing on the street. He looked up next but there was nothing there.

“No! I can’t have lost him!” he said punching the wooden edge of the window.

“Who, me?” Sam asked finally getting up from the armchair he had crawled into. “No, I’m still here. I just opened the window to get some fresh air. Now, who are you and why are you here?”

The man looked at Sam surprised from under his hat not knowing what to say at first for two main reasons. First of all, he hadn’t expected Sam to be there after seeing the office empty. Second, he realized that the mission would be harder than he had imagined because Sam was neither excited nor scared, but quite lucid which meant that he was ready and willing to think things through, so he would have to resort to plan B. Sam, however, didn’t seem willing to waste his time.

“What have you got to tell me? Who sent you and how come you know so much about me? First of all, how did you know I was here because I had no idea I was going to end up here? And please, do take that retarded hat off!”

The man instinctively took his hat off taken by surprise by Sam’s behavior. He had expected anything but this. This wasn’t the first time he had to pay a visit like this, but he had never expected being yelled at or being given orders. It was probably the feeling of surprise and insecurity that caused him to follow Sam’s order without really thinking.

Sam looked at the man pleased. He had a pleasant figure with kind brown eyes, black hair and moustache and niceness written all over his face. Seeing his face made Sam regret that he had yelled at him, but he had spent the few minutes it took the man to arrive thinking how he should react. He felt scared but somehow excited too. And he was dying to find out what that man had to say, but he also knew that his visitor had a speech prepared for him and he wanted none of that. He had to many questions to ask to be able to sit by and wait for the stranger to make his speech. So he decided to do what his brain had been telling him to do: be furious because of the lack of information. Somehow the pain in his chest made it easier for him to just shout out his frustration, especially because the man stood quiet and had a cornered look on his face. The silence lasted for a few seconds that seemed like hours to both of them.

“My name...is Herrison Jones.” The man finally spoke in a calm even voice. Sam frowned hearing the name. His best friend’s name was

The Sacred Ruby of Quetzalcoatl - extract - Stephanie Jones

Harrison Jones, but it was a pretty common name, so he got over that aspect.

“I’m Sam Grant, but you probably know that already.” Sam replied crossing his arms over his chest in an attitude that showed clearly that he wasn’t about to let himself be pushed around.

“Yes, indeed,” the man answered. “You probably wonder what I’m doing here. I will tell you that right now.” He hesitated for a minute wanting to ask Sam to sit down, but he realized that he was in no position to give orders so he continued. “We have been studying American youth for generations, but we have not been satisfied with the results until recently. We are trying to gather up a team to retrieve a very important artifact. And we found you Sam.”

“Me?” Sam asked surprised forgetting all about his anger. His frustration had also disappeared given the fact that he was receiving all this information.

“Yes, you! We’ve been watching your evolution in school for the past three years and we couldn’t help but notice that you have all it takes to be part of the team. You love history you’re obsessed with mysteries and forgotten religions, not to mention you are hardworking and a pretty good cryptograph. So the reason for my visit is to ask you to join our quest.”

Sam stared at the man not knowing what to say. That man on the phone, whoever it was, had been right. This man, Herrison Jones, was sent there to make all his dreams come true. He felt just like a young journalist who had received an offer to work at the best paper in the country for a lot of money. He knew it wasn’t quite the same as this was a lot more dangerous than writing an article, but he couldn’t help but feel that his aspirations and dreams counted for somebody. He so wanted to say yes, but he knew that it wasn’t that easy.

“What is this quest about?” Sam answered using a question. He needed to know more before taking a decision. The man looked at Sam with a defeated face and took off his raincoat to reveal an impeccable suit and recently shined shoes.

“I guessed this would be a little harder than I thought. Sam, I’m going to be honest with you. I expected to find an overexcited boy being more than eager to say yes once I’ve told him about the quest. But I was wrong, and that confuses me. Will you sit down, please?”

Sam sat down without a word looking at the man with even more curiosity than before. He knew that deep inside he really was the overexcited boy.

“We’ve been trying to gather another team for twenty years. We have discovered that there is an alternative power source that could rid the world of all pollution and nuclear energy and other such deadly things. This power source is a jewel. It is found in Mexico, in the Yucatan peninsula in one of the temples that were left unexplored. We count on you to retrieve it.”

“Wait a minute! Something really bothers me... how come you’re gathering a team of ‘youngsters’ when your agency is probably full of overqualified people?” Sam asked frowning slightly.

“The truth is, it’s not. The agency doesn’t have many members, but it’s not safe to tell you anymore right now. The thing is, we need you right now, and bad!” Herrison answered turning away from Sam and looking out the window. “You have no idea how difficult things are right now. Not only for this country, but for the whole world. I have a feeling, and I’m not the only one, that World War Three is just waiting to start. And we have to stop that.”

”I think you’re going a bit far with this World War Three thing. Things are indeed hard, but we’ll figure a way around it.”

“That’s what we’re trying to do. Figure a way around it! You have to understand Sam that we’re recruiting you because you are the future. We can’t count on our old talents. It’s time for the new generation to take over...”

“Will I get some help with it if I say yes?” Sam asked having the face of a man who wouldn’t say yes in a million years.

“Of course,” Herrison said feeling that for the first time he had failed. “I’ll be coming along with the other recruits.”

“All right! I’m in!” Sam yelled happily jumping off his chair. “Tell me what I have to research. When are we leaving?”

“You accept?” Herrison babbled amazed by Sam’s sudden change of heart. “All right, then! You have to find information about the twin temples of the sun. We’ll be leaving in about two weeks. The jewel we’re looking for is a ruby. We do not know if it has a name or not, this is something else you’ll have to find out.” He continued calmly getting up too putting his raincoat back on and picking up his hat.

“Great, school will be over by then. I can’t wait!” Sam said running around and finally stopping in front of the window. “Here’s my chance to do something worthwhile.” He whispered to himself.

“There is one more thing Sam.” Herrison said from the door not sounding happy anymore. “You have to keep all of this a secret. No one must know about the quest. That’s why I’ve recruited your secretary. I believe that leaving her here endangers the mission. She doesn’t know where we’re going and I suggest you don’t tell her.”

“Sure, no problem! But I guess you’re lucky my parents are leaving if I can’t tell them.”

“Yeah, lucky!” Herrison said skeptically and looked at Sam’s excited face. “There is one more thing...”

“What?” Sam asked losing his smile this time and frowning.

“Your brothers are in this too. You have to tell them about your mission and ask them to come and join you without them knowing that they have to.”

“Sure, no problem.” Sam answered smiling again. “Don’t worry about a thing.”

“I’ll contact you again soon to give you more details.” Herrison said seeming relieved and walked out of the office.

Sam turned back to the window and his smile faded away. He was so happy and excited at the moment, but there was one huge cloud shadowing his happiness. He was going to join the quest, he was going to do something worthwhile, but his brothers were never going to know. He wasn’t going to endanger them for anything in the world. He just had to make sure they wouldn’t find out about anything.

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Herrison Jones stepped into the crowd and walked as fast as possible away from the office building that housed the agency. He felt miserable with himself as he hurried along avoiding people. His cell phone started ringing but he tried to ignore it. He very much felt like running back to Sam to tell him it was all a joke and that he should forget it and go back to his normal life. He didn’t have to risk his life at all, he could easily refuse. But he knew he couldn’t go back and save the child; because to him Sam was nothing but a child, too smart for his own good. Whoever was calling was insisting so Herrison had no choice but to answer.

“Took you long enough!” the voice on the other end said sarcastically. “You very well know I hate these assignments. He is just a child! He didn’t even realize what he was agreeing to! Why do you have to kill innocent children?”

“I’m not killing innocent children. You survived. Perhaps he will, too. He is superior to all the others, I think you’ve noticed that yourself.”

“Yes, right up to the point when he started running around like a ten-year-old.” Herrison muffled. “He, however, will not tell his brothers. I sensed it, even if he said he would.”

“I’ve already taken care of that aspect.” The voice said calmly. “Now, off you go to the airport. You have other things to do.”

“Yeah, other people to kill.” Herrison answered sarcastically. “Why won’t you just leave the Grants alone?”

“It’s the Grants who don’t want to be left alone.”

Herrison closed his phone and changed direction heading for a cab. He might as well get it over with.