

Mayan Blood

Justin Swapp



Smashwords Edition

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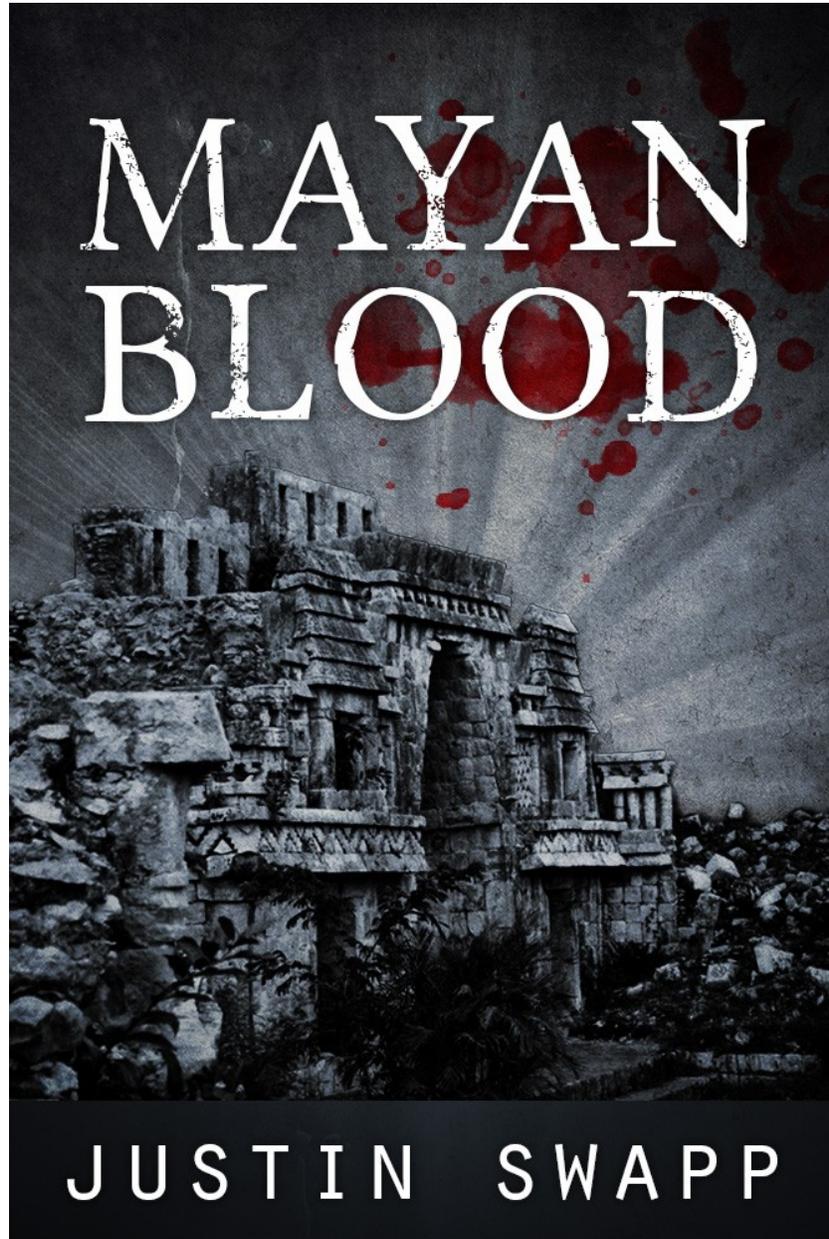
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MAYAN BLOOD

JUSTIN SWAPP

Mayan Blood



Ned wiped the sweat from his forehead with the back of his beefy hand. Unaccustomed to this level of activity, he trudged through the dirt and scrub grass anyway, pursuing his old Mayan guide and his young translator. The tour guides wore long hair, black, like obsidian, and had skin the color of desert making them easy to follow amidst the pasty North American tourists.

As the majority of the tour group approached the rubbled stones of the next site, the old tour guide stopped and began to recite the significance of its history in his native Mayan language. After some time the translator broke off, her jade eyes searching her guests, before finally settling on the lagging Ned. She waved a hand.

“Sir, please stay with the group,” she said with a heavy Spanish accent as she kicked a leg up on to a large stone and stretched. “It’s bad luck to keep the gods waiting.”

Ned snarled. She sounded too much like a bossy school teacher for his liking. He was out of breath, and tired of his wife’s vacation ideas. Fay meant well, but they still irritated him.

From behind the nearby remains of an ancient Toltec temple a tattered looking child approached the weary Ned as if on cue, hand outstretched.

“You give me some money Señor?” the scrawny boy said. “For food.” Ned had heard on the radio that Mexico was suffering from its longest heat wave in a decade. Crops were dying, and necessities were scarce. That wasn’t his problem, though.

“Shoo,” Ned said impatiently, waving his hand as if he were dismissing a frustrating fly. The ragged boy gaped at him. “Adios then,” Ned added, hoping some Spanish would do the trick. The boy scowled.

A few other boys appeared from behind the ruins laughing and dribbling a small rubber ball Ned had never seen before. One of them kicked the ball at the beggar boy, who instinctively returned it by deflecting it with his hip. The boys scurried off together promptly. “Pesky natives,” Ned said under his breath. Fay should have planned for this. Definitely the wrong time to vacation in the Yucatán.

“Ned, did you just send that bony little boy off without so much as a peso?” Fay said. His wife’s short steps clopped from the sound of her high heels on stony ground. She shook her head. “You ought to be ashamed of yourself, honey.” She turned after the boy. “Little boy. Come on back here little boy. Let me give you a little dinero.”

The boy returned promptly at the word of *dinero*. “Darlin’,” Fay said to Ned as she patted the boy on the head and sent him off a dollar richer, “pick it up a little, huh?” She pinched her tiger patterned blouse, and pulled at it several times to cool herself off. “If we’re going to get a good view of the ruins you’re going to have to get a move on.” Fay held her short strapped purse tightly under her arm. “I still want to see the one called cenote,” she added, fanning herself wildly with a trinket she bought from a local on the way to the tour.

Ned bent over with his hands on his knees, breathing heavily. “Ma’am,” he said as he pawed at the air, “what did you say your name was?”

The translator stopped, and turned to Ned. “Anacaona,” she said proudly. “It’s Mayan for golden flower.” Seeing the confusion on Ned’s sunburnt face she quickly added, “Just call me Ana.”

“There’s no flowers around here,” Fay chuckled, “except you I guess. Just a bunch of old rocks and dirt.”

“Well, Ana,” Ned sighed deeply, “couldn’t you just skip to the most interesting parts of the tour? We are really walking too much.”

“Perhaps,” Ana said, a shadow crossing her face as she turned back to address the group, “now that Señor...”

“Señor Ned,” Fay added quickly, waving her hand excitedly.

Ana squinted. “Now that Señor Ned has decided to accompany us, we can continue with the tour. Can anyone tell me what you think of when you see these ruins?” She stretched her hand out theatrically toward a large stepped pyramid.

“I see the remains of a marvelous and mysterious people,” one tourist replied as he pushed a pair of fashionable glasses up the bridge of his long nose. “The engineering for their time was amazing.”

“Mysterious?” Ana said giving the tourist a once over.

“A local newspaper, The Globe, has reported several missing tourists in this area over the last few weeks. I’d call that mysterious, wouldn’t you?”

“This is México, Señor,” Ana said, “People go missing all the time. Now, if you don’t mind, we’ll return to the historical facts.”

“Missin’ people?” Fay asked as she scanned the crowd of tourists and then the shadows behind the ruins. She hugged her purse. “How could the travel agency miss something like this?”

“This is El Castillo, isn’t it?” another tourist said as she folded up a brochure she had gotten at the information booth.

“Si Señorita,” Ana said, happy to change subjects. “El Castillo, or the castle, was named by Spanish conquistadores in the 16th century. It is known to the natives as the Temple of Kukulkán, and is widely regarded as the crown jewel of the ruins here. In fact, during the spring equinox—”

“Look,” one of the tourists said pointing at the ruined temple. The setting sun cast a new shadow against the pyramid steps. The outline that formed started at the top of the pyramid and crept its way to its base, ending at a stone serpent’s head. The tourists’ mouths gaped. The effect was stone animated; a rolling shadow that made the giant snake seem as though it had a slithering body, working its way toward them.

Ana smiled pridefully, a distant gaze in her eyes. “Kukulkán was known as the feathered serpent. The Mayans believed that this god descended from heaven with a message that the harvest season had arrived.”

“More like season of famine,” Ned said. “I’ll tell you what I see when I look at these ruins, Ana,” Ned said. “I see a racket. I see piles of rubble that you think you can turn into piles of gold. People are spending their hard earned money to see this? It’s nothing but a sham; on par with selling insurance or bottled water.”

Ana straightened her neck and cleared her throat as she pulled on the bottom of her shirt calmly with both hands. “Would you like me to conclude the tour, Señor?”

“Like hell. I haven’t gotten anything but a good workout from this tour, and that’s not what I paid for, mind you.”

“Then, silencio,” she said sharply.

Ned turned a confused face to a nearby tourist. “It means silence,” the woman said. “And if I might add...”

“Don’t,” he said dismissively.

“Can we climb to the top of El Castillo?” another tourist asked.

“No, Señor,” Ana said quickly. “Tourists are no longer allowed to climb to the top. Only the elder priests and priestesses may climb it for maintenance.”

“They let the women up there?” Ned said sardonically.

“Por favor, Señor,” Ana said, raising her eyebrows and clasping her hands together. “So we can finish.” She waved an arm for them to follow as she walked a few minutes to their next destination, a long field with a very tall, adjacent wall. “Señores, this is the ball court arena, my personal favorite,” she said with a majestic tone.

It would seem that Ned couldn’t help himself. “You mean to tell me that these Neanderthals had sports?” He wagged a finger and shook his head. “Only civilized societies have sports.”

“Excuse me,” the tourist said pushing up his glasses again, “but, are you calling this people, the same people that built cities, astronomy towers, and devised their own hieroglyphic-style writing system, a bunch of cretins?”

“You can’t honestly expect me to believe that these idiots accomplished all of that,” Ned said indignantly. “Do I look like I was born yesterday?”

“I wouldn’t know if it weren’t for the Maya, would I,” the tourist said, “seeing as how they invented the calendar?”

“Enough, Señores,” Ana said as she raised her hands to settle the dispute.

“What Señor...” Ana said, waiting for the tourist.

“Anderson,” he said.

“Señor Anderson’s comment is true,” Ana said. “This was a great civilization of educated people and—”

“That may be, but I find it hard to believe that these people had sports,” Ned said.

“Bueno, Señor. The Maya did have sports. The only difference was that these warriors had much more at stake than your American money.”

“Like what?” Ned said incredulously.

“Their lives,” Ana said, “and the well being of their people.”

A quiet came over the group as Ana went on to explain the rules of their game. It was something like basketball in that there was a ball that had to be sent through hoops placed high on the walls above the players. One major difference was that they couldn’t use their

hands or their feet. They used their hips. Unlike American sports, if they won, they would die.

“Die?” Ned said. “Please...”

“It is said that the winning team’s captain would present himself to the losing team’s captain for... decapitation,” Ana said.

“That makes no sense,” Ned said. “The winners are supposed to win, not die. Whatever happened to women and riches?”

“You must understand; this death represented a great honor for them, and a shorter path to heaven. Their spilt blood satisfied the Gods so the weather would be kind, and so the Earth would bear fruit for another season.”

“Are you sure?” Ned said, examining the crowd, hopeful some historian was touring with them. “That’s nonsense, Neanderthal or not. It would be suicide.”

“Perhaps, but they didn’t see their life as you do,” Ana said.

“You sure you have your facts straight, ma’am?” Fay asked.

“How long have you been doing this anyway, golden flower?” Ned questioned.

“Off and on my whole life,” she said indignantly.

“Off and on?” Ned said as he lifted his hat to scratch his head. “Sounds suspect.”

Ana clasped her hands together, and produced a big smile. “Well Señores, that concludes the tour for today,” she said. “We hope to see most of you again very soon. Buenas tardes.” Ana made eye contact with all the tourists except Ned and Fay who stood staring at her as the crowd shuffled off. Ana’s eyes passed from one tourist to the next as they trickled through the exit. Finally her gaze settled on Ned and his wife.

Ana peered over her shoulder, and then approached the dissatisfied-looking couple quietly. “Is there some kind of problem?” she said hesitantly.

“I want my money back,” Ned said turning red in the face. “This tour was a charade.”

Ana said something to the tour guide in another language. Ned hated it when he couldn’t understand. “Señor. I will prove to you that what I said is true. I will give you the special tour. That way you get more than the other tourists.”

“You mean you’ve been holding out on us?” Ned said.

“No Señor, you just get the special version of the tour.”

“I want my damn money’s worth,” he said with a grimace. “You got at least one thing right tonight.”

Fay swung her purse at Ned. “How many times have I told you not to speak to a lady that way?”

Ana raised an eyebrow as Ned scowled at Fay. “Lead the way,” Ned said to Ana without taking his expectant eyes off his wife’s handbag.

Ana and the tour guide climbed the first few stairs of the pyramid.

“Hold your horses,” Fay said, hands on her hips. “I don’t want to climb that pyramid, we already saw it. I want to see this cenote thing.” She pointed to a picture on the pamphlet she held up for all to see. “It’s supposed to be beautiful.”

“We are seeing the pyramid, Fay,” Ned said, stomping his foot. “Ana said it was the crown jewel of the tour, and she is even going to show us the part at the top where people aren’t allowed to go. That has to be much more exciting than that simple pool of water you’re pointing at. If it’s that important to you, you can do some laps back at the hotel.”

Ana read her watch and frowned. “I only have time for one more site, and no more,” Ana said regretfully. The tour guide behind her furrowed his brow, and then spoke to Ana in his native tongue. She paused a moment to listen and to glimpse at the sky, and then nodded. When she turned back to them, Ned thought she seemed different somehow.

With a sigh, Ana said, “Señor Lohan offers a suggestion. He says that he will take your husband to the top of the pyramid, and that I should accompany you to the cenote.”

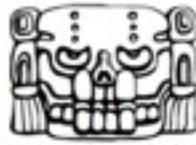
“You mean we’re splittin’ up?” Fay said.

“This way you can visit both locations in the time we have,” Ana said. “It’s a good idea, no?”

“Done,” Ned said, starting up the stone steps.

“But honey,” Fay said, reaching out to Ned slightly, “I thought we could see this one together.

Ned kept climbing the ruins. “I’m sure you’ll tell me all about it later,” Ned said with a breathless chortle. “It will be just like I had been there. Besides, this way we both get what we want.” Fay watched him for them for a moment, and then nodded at Ana, and they left for the cenote.



The setting sun highlighted the pyramid in glorious oranges and reds as they made their way up the ruins. The tour guide was surprisingly agile for his age. It wasn't long before he had caught up with Ned, and then passed him by. A third of the way up the steps, Ned started to lag. It seemed as though hundreds of stairs awaited him. Parched, he stopped for a moment and rotated his fanny pack around to remove what turned out to be an empty water bottle.

Angry, Ned threw his bottle to the ground. "Do you have any water?" he asked Lohan. The tour guide stared at him blankly. Ned waved the old man off in frustration. A moment later, Ned raised a hand and made a drinking motion in front of his mouth. A flash of understanding passed over Lohan's face. He nodded, and bellowed up the pyramid steps in his native Mayan.

Embarrassed, Ned looked around, but found no one in sight. Then he continued climbing the stairs.

Suddenly a boy appeared out of the mouth of the top of the pyramid. He came down the steps warily, carrying something with great care. When he reached the tour guide, Ned recognized him immediately. It's that bony beggar, Ned thought. The one I shooed off earlier.

The boy handed Lohan an ornate, wooden cup, and gave Ned a sharp scowl, apparently recognizing him as well. Ned noted the workmanship of the cup, adorned with inlaid turquoise and jade stones. The tour guide bowed slightly to the young boy, who stood ceremoniously. Turning to Ned, Lohan extended the unique cup.

Surprised, Ned shook his head and pushed the cup away slightly. Sweat trailed down his temples. He had heard rumors about Mexican water. He was strictly instructed to only drink bottled water.

Lohan appeared confused. He repeated the same drinking gesture with his own hand that Ned had shown him earlier.

The tour guide extended the cup again. Ned clasped the outside of Lohan's hands. Ned examined the water in the cup that they now both held. The liquid was clear, and the inside of the cup did appear clean, despite being made of wood.

Ned pursed parched lips. Despite the setting sun, it did not feel any cooler. It couldn't hurt to have some water this once, Ned thought. Besides, he rarely got sick, and his immune system had seemed strong enough over the years.

Ned nodded, and forced a slight smile as he pulled the cup away from Lohan, raised it to his lips, and drained it straight away. The tour guide smiled for the first time that day, and bowed at the young boy, then at Ned.

Ned didn't know why, but this water had dispelled all rumors he had ever heard about the water here. It tasted wonderful. He smacked his lips. The sun suddenly seemed brighter than before, and the shadows on the ancient temple on which he stood seemed to stir. His eyes darted from object to object seeking the cause of the motion. His eyes met with the same serpent-like shadow that he had seen earlier that day, though now, it seemed to really descend from the top of the pyramid down to the earth below. Instinctively Ned followed the shadow to the temple's base where a stone serpent's mouth opened to a restless crowd, watching him. He stepped back, surprised. It had appeared from nowhere, and the people began to murmur. They were all Mayan, just as they had been described to him earlier that day. Scantly clad bodies, headdresses of plumage, painted-faced, and ornate jade and turquoise jewelry. He didn't know where they had come from. Surely with such a multitude, he would have heard them coming.

He turned to face Lohan for an explanation, but Ned tottered as the man he knew as the tour guide was now dressed in traditional Mayan garb, like he had seen in the pamphlets. The boy next to him wore an ornate headdress and blue paint on his face. He bowed before Ned, and then extended his arm toward the top of the pyramid. Ned saw a row of natives lining the steps ascending to the top of the pyramid. They regarded him, longingly.

Ned's bewildered eyes fell on the pathetic boy that he had turned away earlier that day. Now, the boy was the most ornately dressed of them all. His face intricately colored with Mayan patterns of black and pale blue. At the base of the bright plumage of his headdress was a bony white skull. The boy breathed heavily; sweat glistened from his face and body as if he had just won a race.

Ned observed the empty cup, the only thing that seemed to have kept its original appearance, the only link to what he had known to be real just moments ago. He felt light headed, and confused. Beyond the cup, Ned saw bare feet where he had had shoes earlier. He continued up his body and observed that he too was dressed differently – dressed like the sweaty boy in front of him. Ned gasped, dropping the cup with a loud thud. It spring from step to step until finally it landed at the pyramid's base, and rolled in front of the stone serpent's open mouth.

Ned examined himself further. He, too, was sweating, and breathing heavily. He flexed his fingers, and extended his arms. His body was different too. His appearance was firm, and muscular. Instead of the chalky white skin he had known all his life, it was a rusty color, like something belonging to someone who had spent his life in the sun. He felt faint.

Lohan rattled something off in Mayan. The boy nodded, and took the next several steps up the pyramid stopping. With a wave of his arm he invited Ned to continue. Ned stepped

forward to follow. Cheers and expectant faces erupted across the multitude. Lohan followed. Despite feeling slightly jarred, Ned continued, and the three men climbed the pyramid to the top.

A hush passed over the crowd. Several natives waited at the pyramid's apex to receive them. Where Ned had seen rubble and ruin before, he now saw smooth stonework and level planes. The pyramid had somehow been made whole.

Lohan turned slightly to face the multitude, and raised his hands above his head. "We are here today to pay tribute to the gods," he said ceremoniously. Ned couldn't believe his ears. As he watched Lohan's lips, he didn't recognize the word patterns, but somehow he understood what he was saying.

"The gods give us life, that we may give our lives to the Gods. They sustain us, and we must sustain them. This is our way. It is one eternal round," Lohan said. He turned to present the young boy. "The Gods have chosen their champion." The young boy stepped forward with pride, filling his lungs with the air of victory, and then spoke.

"The Gods have smiled on us today, brothers and sisters. They have sacrificed much for us, and we will sacrifice much for them." He turned to Ned and held out his hand. "The Gods require penance, a life worth more to them than to us. This brother has offered his service to us all."

Ned didn't know why, but he felt compelled to kneel at that moment. His breathing became heavy, and his pulse quickened. The boy that towered over him now seemed a man, and he held out his palm. From the shadows behind them a servant stepped forward and placed a wooden sword in his hand. It was shaped like a long paddle, and its edges bore embedded shards of sharp obsidian.

"Please," Ned said, lifting his arm as if to shield himself. "Please." He closed his eyes, and bowed his head.

The boy lifted the wooden sword, its encrusted stones glinting in the remainder of the sunlight. "Adios then," the boy said, as a shadow passed over his face. A shimmering black flash fell down on Ned, and the crowd erupted joyously. The noise produced was so loud that no one heard Ned's dead weight strike the stone, or his head's dull thud on each step as it traveled the same path as the cup, finally coming to rest by the serpent's tongue at the pyramid's base.



The dirt path leading to the cenote was flanked by shrubs and small trees. The sky slowly changed colors, and broke onto the path in swaying patches of light and shadows. Ana lead the way, faster and younger than Fay.

“This way,” Ana said, a wide smile showing her brilliantly white teeth. “It’s not too far.”

“The pamphlet didn’t say that the cenote was so far away from the other ruins,” Fay said as she pushed a branch to one side, confused. “What is a cenote, anyway?”

“This city was built here because of the water. Mayans believe that water is sacred. It gives life to the people, like Mother Earth’s milk to her children. You don’t see flowing rivers above ground like in other countries, but here the water is plentiful, only below the ground, not above it. The cenote is a sink-hole, or a well, and a way for the people to gain access to water. There are many cenotes we could visit,” she added quickly, “But I say I give you the special tour, so we go to the sacred cenote.”

“Sacred cenote?” Fay said, no less confused than before.

“It is the most wonderful, and the most especial cenote we have in these ruins. Its story is as rich as its waters are beautiful.”

As Ana said these words, the path opened to a small clearing that exposed a large hole in the earth. As they drew closer Fay noticed yellow cord had been placed around the perimeter.

“What’s that for?” Fay said, pointing to the cord.

“There have been accidents here. Tourists wander too close, and they slip and fall. We are trying to keep them safe by showing them the proper distance to keep from the sacred cenote.”

“But you can hardly see it,” Fay said, approaching the caution cord. She peered over the edge of the cenote. Foliage and branches surrounded the well, and lined the inside of its walls. The water reflected a deep jade color, transparent and peaceful. Many objects lay buried at the bottom of the cenote. Fay squinted, but couldn’t make out exactly what they were.

“It’s beautiful,” she said, placing her hand on her chest. “What’s all that?” Fay pointed at the bed of the water.

“The other reason for the caution cord. This sacred well holds all the offerings of many generations at its depths. There are enough artifacts at the bottom of this well to fill a museum. As you can imagine, thieves have tried to steal the treasure many times.”

“So why haven’t they managed to take it all?” Fay said, surprised. “It would seem easy to do.”

“The locals say that the spirits of those who have died here still rest in the waters. Thieves don’t dare go near the water.”

“Are you trying to say that the folks who slipped and fell here haunt this place?” Fay said, folding her arms tightly.

“Not exactly, Señorita. Many years before the accidents, our ancestors performed rituals here. Men, women, and children were brought here and offered as sacrifices to the rain god Chac. In the early 1900’s some anthropologists dove into the waters to explore its treasures. Not only did they make it out alive but they discovered at least fifty human skeletons, and various artifacts made of ceramic, gold, jade, and obsidian.”

“Sacrifices?” Fay said, nervously. Her gaze fell on the cenote. The place had had a quiet air about it, but now that she had heard what had gone on here, the water seemed deeper and darker somehow. As Ana spoke, Fay thought she could see some of the bones now too, though she couldn’t be sure. Fay folded arms, and rubbed her shoulders.

“It’s hard to see, I know,” Ana said. She moved several paces toward a natural portion of the cenote that jutted out over the water. “You can get a better view from over here.”

Fay managed a polite smile, and approached Ana by the earthy platform. “Some say you can see the hidden treasures from here. At least you can see your reflection in the water.” Ana extended her hand, and lifted up the caution cord as Fay moved slowly across the threshold.

Fay paused for a moment. “Are you sure?” She winced as she tucked a lock of hair behind her ear.

“You don’t have to go, but if it makes you more comfortable, I will accompany you,” Ana said with a broad smile. “I never grow tired of seeing the cenote. It’s magical.”

“Well,” Fay said, “I wouldn’t want to miss out on that, would I? After all, I have come a long way.” Ana nodded.

They ducked beneath the caution cord and made their way along the natural platform. Fay gazed over the edge into the sheer water. She saw her reflection clearly in the water. Ana’s face appeared in the water behind her, and her hands appeared on Fay’s shoulders.

“What a reflection you have,” Ana said. Fay ran a lock of hair through her fingers. “The water looks beautiful with you in it, don’t you think?”

Then, something changed.

Fay saw movement in the water. Perhaps it was a trick of light, or maybe nothing at all. In the reflection, Fay thought she saw something appear over her head, long and wooden; its edges glimmering with the remaining light of the day.

“Watch out!” came a low voice from somewhere behind her.

Fay had no time to think. Her reflexes took over. Reacting instantly, she dropped to a crouch as Ana’s leg connected with her back. Ana’s momentum caused her to stumble forward.

Fay watched the rest of the dreadful image play out in the water.

Ana’s head struck the platform’s rocky edge, sending her spiraling toward the well. Her falling reflection grew larger and larger until finally colliding with her flesh in a loud clap. Red tendrils rippled across the green water.

Fay gaped at the turbulent water that had been peaceful just moments ago, trying to understand. Fay sat on the platform, pulled her knees in close, and rocked herself.

“Hey, are you okay?” The low voice belonged to a familiar man who ran to her, but stopped at the caution cord. Fay recognized him as the man that had asked Ana about the disappearances during the tour.

“I’m Anderson,” he said, extending a hand, “Chuck Anderson. What happened?”

“I’m not sure,” Fay said, her eyes darting from Anderson, back to the cenote. Ana floated on her back, eyes open, with a deep gash on her forehead, and a frightened, wide-eyed look frozen forever on her face. Fay hadn’t noticed it before, but Ana’s jade colored eyes were the same color as the water, almost as if they had always belonged there.

Fay took Anderson’s hand as he helped her up. “How did you find me?” she said, “The tour had ended, and everyone had left.”

“I’m a reporter for the Globe,” he said as he straightened his glasses. “For some time now we’ve been investigating the disappearance of random tourists near these ruins.” Fay placed her hand over her heart. “So, when I realized that the most obnoxious couple of the group wasn’t back at the buses with the rest of us, I hurried back, just in case.”

“Thank you so much,” Fay said, her lip quivering. “But I don’t understand. Who would do this?”

“Well, we’ve received various reports,” Anderson paused as if he wasn’t sure if he should continue.

“Reports of what?”

“A certain Mayan cult is rumored to have surfaced since the great drought this year.”

“A cult?”

“Legend has it that the same cult appears in Mexico every ten years, when drought overtakes the land. According to these people the gods require human sacrifice to suspend the drought for another decade. Thus, the missing tourists.”

Suddenly Fay felt a pit in her stomach. “Ned,” she said.

At that moment Fay heard a rustle down the path, and the sound of feet and voices. Anderson pulled her to his side.

“Anacaona,” shouted the old voice of Lohan, the tour guide. The small boy who accompanied him ran up to the edge of the cenote, and came to an abrupt stop a few yards from Chuck and Fay. The natives stared down into their precious cenote for a long moment, their faces expressionless.

“Where’s my husband?” Fay shouted.

The natives ignored her momentarily. The boy reached out toward the cenote, only to meet Lohan’s hand slowly pushing it away. Lohan’s fiery, amber eyes locked on Fay. He clenched his fists, and gritted teeth and advanced.

Chuck swept Fay behind him with one arm as he prepared to fight. His eyes traced Lohan and the boy. Then, all at once, thick, dark clouds gathered above them, casting a solemn shadow over the sacred cenote.

In a flash, something strange happened. Lohan halted his advance as if he had collided with an invisible wall. At once they all gaped at the heavens as drops of fresh water spotted their faces, and speckled the ground around them.

Rain.

Fay saw a trickling pattern forming around Ana. Minutes ago there had been just one tragic ripple. It could have been Fay. Even so, it was Ana who lay there, floating, tears of rain welling up in her wide-open eyes.

As if she had come out of a trance, Fay blinked hard. She thought she saw Ana start to sink. She turned to the others expecting some kind of reaction, but got none. They simply stared skyward. Fay squinted down at the cenote again, and then recoiled.

Frail, bony hands silently breached the water, and clasped on to Ana's body, one limb at a time. The skeletal hands pulled her down slowly, burying her feet first, then her waist, and finally, the last thing Fay saw was jade on jade, and then she was gone. Fay shut her eyes tightly, and turned away.

Lohan lifted his head and arms to the sky, and closed his eyes for a long time. He spoke in Mayan, then began repeating himself again and again. His words resembled a chant. Next to him, the young boy bowed his head and cried.

Fay looked at Chuck, and then back at the boy. "What's he sayin'?" Fay asked.

"He said," the boy paused and sighed deeply through quivering lips, still staring at the ground, "He said, 'I'm so sorry my golden flower. I didn't know. But now, I understand. It had to be Mayan. It had to be Mayan blood.'"

The End

About the Author

Justin was born with an active imagination on a naval base in Spain, but has spent most of his life in the shadows of the Rocky Mountains of Utah. He is bilingual, and has lived all over the world. He has four children; two boys, and two girls, and an enduring wife. He doesn't have any pets that he's aware of, but his children have been known to hide things under his bed.

In his free time Justin loves to read, write, and play games. He enjoys his close friends, and loves to make people laugh. To learn more about Justin, or his work, you can visit him at www.justinswapp.com



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Cigars for Sawyer

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The Codex

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