



Dou rotate the rings into their final position, scribbling down the final part of the buried message in your ally's ancient Mayan artifacts - but you can't make sense of the message.

Your fellow detective grabs the paper from your hand. "I know where this is. Chichen Itza, in Central America. Come on, we have to get back to your helicopter!"

You're relieved, but nevertheless shake your head. "It'll never get us there in time." But you can think of a craft that might...

Hale's amused chuckling rings out over the loudspeakers on the ferris wheel. "Chichen Itza? Definitely not. But you're welcome to try."

You're not sure why Hale - the Decoder - is letting you escape, but you can't pass up the chance. You start running for the helicopter, with the old detective close behind. "Commander Joseph," you pant into the communicator on your collar, "I need you to get a message out to Lamar Benson. He needs to meet us at Istanbul."

Lamar's new rocket-powered submersible is ready and waiting when the helicopter arrives hours later. Precious hours. You're surprised to see Penny Earhart and Cosmo Snake sitting in the seats behind the old sky pirate.

Lamar grins as he points to the fancy new pilot's goggles on his head. "Official Devil's Triangle, Inc. goggles," he explains. "Lamar's their newest pilot and black market dealer. Penny and me were just rescuing this slimy hacker from his own stupidity on Easter Island. Looked like a bunch of SWAT guys were there to take over."

"E.V.I.L. rogues," adds Penny. "In any case, I'm intrigued by this apocalypse of yours, Detective Xyzzy. You'll have to explain on the way."

Cosmo looks sour. "No intrigue here. No choice for me. Just get in already."



It's a tight squeeze in the four-person submarine, but you and the black-coated detective - who still refuses to reveal his name - join the other three in a jaunt across the Atlantic. The sun is setting by the time the five of you arrive at the Yucatan peninsula and commandeer a four-wheel drive to take you to the ancient Mayan city, Chichen Itza. The old detective guides you to the right place.

"The Sacred Cenote," he announces majestically as you arrive. "An ancient sacrificial well. And, it seems, the starting point of the apocalypse."

The cenote is a large circular pool, surrounding by trees and stone. It is deathly still and silent in the darkness.

"When does apocalypse start?" pipes up Cosmo.

"Soon," says a familiar voice. Sergeant Hale steps out behind you, clad in her grey techno-suit sans skull mask. Her long, dark hair streams down her back. "My natural assumption was that the apocalypse would start in this city. Teleporting here was easy. It was just a matter of following you to the exact location when you arrived. Now, time for you to leave. To a place deep, deep underwater, I think." She holds up a hand threateningly, and digits start flowing across the readout on her chest.

"Wait!" says the old detective, and his voice is commanding enough to give Hale pause. "Do you feel that?"

A slow, deep pulsing is shaking the ground, like a great drum somewhere far below. The water in the cenote is rippling hypotically. Gradually, the booming becomes louder - or closer.

"Perhaps coming here wasn't the greatest idea," says Lamar dryly. "What exactly was the plan?"

"The goggled man has a point," says Hale, lowering her arm. "You should be thanking me for the project at Pripyat. Surely a world under my dominion is better than no world at all."

You're barely listening, for the water in the sacrificial well has been rising, and stops just at the rim of the pool. The drumming stops, and is replaced by a tense silence. No one speaks.

Then, the well explodes, and the world goes crazy.



A myriad of bizarre car-sized creatures burst from the well, which is now a shimmering, multicoloured portal. They screech and take off into the night. You stare into the portal, and catch glimpses of incomprehensible horrors. Hale was the biggest fool of all, you think. No human device can tame this. It's truly the end of the world.

Masses of groping giant tentacles protrude from the portal's surface, followed by a great, demonic head. You meet its eye, and feel your mind slipping away...

Air. Precious air.

You climb towards the disc of light above, clambering over a star-spawn. The portal's brilliance pierces through the black mask on your face. The air streaming through it smells of home.

Of all the Mayan sacrifices to Chaac - which, you soon discovered, was a mistranslation of Chaat, the shape-shifting water god - you were the strongest. For thousands of ageless years you survived, dark mask seared over your eyes, protecting you from the mind-destroying visions of what lay within Chaat's well.

You kick the groping star-spawn away, and place a hand on its horrific face, draining it of all thoughts. Its endless memories pour into your head, disjointed images and sounds that you make no attempt to piece together. Soon, you pull yourself up over the edge of the Sacred Cenote, open both ways since the end of the last Long Count, giving the entities trapped inside Chaat's formless, watery body the rare chance of escape.

You recall your destiny. A girl, chosen at birth to be one of those cast into the Sacred Cenote. Destined to spend an eternity in that pit - to blind herself with a mask, and survive among the Elder Things until the portal reopened. To climb out, and close it before the Elder Things could escape and cause the end of the world.

You can sense six humans near the well. Three are staring at you: a short woman with a strong will, an older man with something covering his eyes, and a thin man who reeks of fear. They are both yelling in a language you do not understand. Two others are struggling for control of some sort of arcane device: a tall woman shrouded in powerful auras, and an old man who has seen much. You recognise something familiar about him, but before you can do anything, the device they are fighting for makes a noise, and the two of them disappear without a trace.



The sixth human is kneeling dangerously close to the edge of the portal. You shudder - his mind is slipping away, piece by piece, as he stares into the heart of Dead Cthulhu. You were too late then: one of the Great Old Ones is already free.

You hear hurried footsteps on stone, as the thin, fearful man tries to flee. There is a horrible sucking sound as he runs into the waiting maw of an invisible star-spawn, soul devoured in an instant. It reminds you of what you must do. But first, you lay a hand on the forehead of the kneeling man, and drain what little remains of his mind and memories, learning his language in the process. This man's name was Xyzy.

Without a second thought, you kick him into the portal. Chaat accepts the sacrifice willingly, and the portal snaps shut. The horrors that had already escaped, including Dead Cthulhu, vanish. Your destiny will not be complete until Cthulhu is returned to the pit.

“Who are you?”

You turn your head, sightless masked eyes moving over the young woman standing next to the older man with the covered eyes, now the only two other people left in the Mayan city. You remove the black mask, thankful that it is night, and your dark, tangled hair falls to your naked shoulders. You tell them the name you were given at birth.

“Death.”