

# JUNGLE HAWK SERIES

## 4. Hunters of Zarsjata



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# HUNTERS OF ZARSJATA

*by*

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## HUNTERS OF ZARSJATA

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## HUNTERS OF ZARSJATA

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## SUMMARY

In the heart-pounding fourth installment of the Jungle Hawk series, *Hunters of Zarsjata*, the enigmatic Jungle Hawk finds himself trapped with a group of outsiders in a perilous primeval valley, a world teeming with ancient creatures and warring tribes. Their mission? To rescue Mimi Loloberg, a former film star, believed to be in the clutches of the fearsome Sjaloks of Zarsjata.

When a gang of treasure-hunters crash the valley in search of diamonds, chaos erupts, sparking confrontations between modern greed and ancient savagery. As alliances form and betrayals loom, the Jungle Hawk must navigate deadly beasts, unyielding tribal leaders, and relentless danger to bring peace and ensure survival.

Brimming with suspense, breathtaking action, and an evocative setting, *Hunters of Zarsjata* promises an unforgettable journey into a forgotten world where the stakes are as colossal as the valley's prehistoric inhabitants.

## EXTRACT

Loudly and urgently, the Hawk shouts out that the Sjoere must drop their weapons and surrender. In surprise, moving Sjoere everywhere come to a standstill and stare at the handful of Sjaloks who are threateningly approaching them. The new development leaves them speechless and completely surprised.

The slaves are too surprised to move as well. The Hawk shouts loudly at them and orders them to be ready to help if it should become necessary. Kajo notices the Hawk, screams his name in surprise, and begins to run quickly towards the Hawk. A Sjoer raises his spear and wants to pierce Kajo from behind, but an arrow from the Hawk's bow is much faster. With a terrible cry, he collapses with the arrow right through his chest.

That death cry suddenly brings life into the ranks of the Sjoere. They raise a battle cry and go on the attack. Arrows are now singing back and forth from all sides. Sjoer after Sjoer falls dead or wounded. Movement also gradually comes into the ranks of the slaves. Defying death, they storm at their Sjoer masters. Some die, but those who reach their hard and hated masters literally go wild like ravenous animals.

The Hawk, who had wanted it to be a bloodless battle, now degenerates into a cruel bloodbath. And he is completely powerless to stop it. Even he must take lives in the bitter battle in which no mercy is asked or given.

## 4. HUNTERS OF ZARSJATA

### Chapter 1

#### THE LOST VALLEY

The powerful helicopter's large propeller cuts through the warm tropical air in an eastward direction, a few hundred feet above the vast jungle.

In the spacious cockpit sit five people, four men and a girl. Below them, the landscape is gradually changing. A stratus cloud indicates a waterfall in one of the mighty Congo streams. Blue and hazy, a mountain range lies stretched out to the east.

"What does that map say... is it still far?" The bulky Baron Alberto Rossini, international swindler, smuggler, and robber leader, wipes the drops of sweat from his fat face with a handkerchief.

Adolf Schweiner, sinewy and blond, studies the yellowed map in front of him, makes hasty calculations with a pair of compasses and a ruler, and then sits back sighing in his seat.

"At least another fifty miles."

Baron Rossini curses. "Bring the beer. This heat will make one die a terrible death." The large silk handkerchief gets to work again.

"Don't upset yourself so, Papa. Rather think about the great riches... about all those beautiful diamonds and things..."

Clodia, beautiful daughter of Baron Rossini, leans forward and strokes her father's fat, brown hand. The baron's eyes soften as he looks at this darling of his heart, the only person on earth he truly loves.

"Open the helicopter's hatch," he commands Petro Sjepilof, an arch-thief and one of his lieutenants.

"It's already open, Baron." Sjepilof's voice is soft, almost tender.

"Here, Baron," says Peter Johnson, while holding out a glass of frothy drink to the baron.

Baron Rossini takes the glass and lets his eyes wander over his men. All trustworthy fellows and all in his service for many years already. He has high regard for them all.

"Adolf, you are still sure that our information is accurate, eh? That simple fellow didn't just talk rubbish, did he..."

Adolf smiles. His teeth are surprisingly regular and strong. Quite an

attractive kind of fellow, the baron thinks. But, well, you also need attractive and refined people in his large organization. People who can make a good impression on others. Adolf Schweiner is such a man.

“The story and the testimony sounded very genuine, Baron. And the details on this map have matched the landscape so far.”

Baron Rossini nods contentedly, takes a deep swig from his glass, and revels in the cool moisture that flows down his throat. He thinks about the thin and scruffy fellow that one of his men had brought to his Italian palace, just outside Rome, two months ago. He was the only remaining one of a group of four, who had discovered a strange valley in Africa ten years ago, he had said. Two members of the group had died there, the other two had fled. They had then taken many diamonds with them. For six years, they had lived like kings, he and his comrade. However, they had continually kept the secret of the valley to themselves. In the back of their minds, there was always the plan to visit the valley again one day and then take back even more treasures with them. But unfortunately, his comrade had died in a street fight before they could do it. He himself had squandered all his money. For a year, so he said, he had been living on handouts. Then he wanted to hear if the great Baron Alberto Rossini was perhaps interested in helping him. Of course, everyone would get their share.

The fat Italian now clicks his tongue contemptuously. After his own men had confirmed that the map and details were completely clear and that they could more or less determine the location of the valley on the maps, he had entrusted that fellow to the sea one night.

Then they had started making preparations eagerly. At first, he was not very interested, but his own underhanded affairs had later started to get heated for him, and he had to “lie low” for a few months, as he himself put it.

And now, he, Clodia, and three of his most reliable men are flying over the Congo jungles here, looking for that strange valley with its strange inhabitants and its priceless riches.

Baron Rossini smiles. His fat cheeks press against his eyelids and reduce his dark brown, almost black, eyes. Baron Rossini had indeed lived very comfortably for years, and even grown accustomed to the luxury that he could afford with his fantastic treasures.

But Baron Rossini had also suffered hardship in his life. Bitterly hard. And his life was full of adventure, adventure that he was extremely fond of. The thought of a strange valley and strange animals had reawakened that adventurous spirit in him. Hence the trip in question...

He leans further back in his comfortable seat and looks out of the large windows at the thin clouds, which hang quite low above the ground here.

They are well equipped for the venture. In the secret cockpit, there are rapid-fire rifles and plenty of ammunition. The helicopter has two additional fuel tanks, and there is enough medicine for any eventuality. They have also all been injected and pre-treated against the known dangerous tropical diseases.

Sjepilof, the baron's executioner, who has already had to get rid of many of his enemies, gradually increases the craft's altitude. Right in front of them, with deep, mysterious ravines and barren, weathered cliffs, lies the huge mountain range.

"We're not far anymore, Baron." Adolf Schweiner's voice sounds slightly excited as he looks up from the map. Clodia, with her short, raven-black hair, leans forward and revels in the great natural splendor before her.

The helicopter is now climbing almost vertically. Higher and higher it climbs. Then forward again to where the next mountain range shoots even higher into the air. Later, they are between clouds and mist. Water droplets stream down against the windows of the helicopter. The wind tugs the fragile craft back and forth. Still, they climb. Later, they are so surrounded by the dense mist that they can no longer see anything.

Sjepilof keeps a tense watch on the radar screen in front of him. Around them, but now completely invisible, dark cliff masses are hanging in the air, and deep valleys and fissures are gaping. And still, the wind howls and plays with the craft as if it is little more than a feather.

They reach fifteen thousand feet and still, they are flying higher. Around them is dense mist that is churned into eddies by the large fan propeller. Mist fingers cling to the windows, and water is constantly streaming down the sides of the craft.

It has suddenly become cold in the craft, despite the built-in heating system. Above the howl of the wind, the roar of the helicopter's engine



breaks through from time to time.

Clodia shivers slightly. The baron's eyes glint where he sits with a filled glass of drink in his hand. Sjepilof, assisted by Schweiner, is speechless. Their eyes wander alternately to the yellow-white mist fingers, the water streaks against the windows, and the instruments on the dashboard. After about fifteen thousand feet, the helicopter begins to move horizontally. Still the mountain range lies below them, but they can no longer see it now.

On one side sits Peter Johnson, the thin Brit with his pale face and large eyes. He is looking quietly outside. Sweat of anxiety glistens on his narrow forehead. In his heart burns the fear, no actually more than that. It is a knowing that he will not return, that he will not see Europe, his nightclubs, and his life again.

Peter Johnson knows this as an unavoidable fact, because they have said that he was born with the caul and that he sees premonitions. Even that he and the devil are friends.

The craft is now gradually beginning to reduce altitude. Still, there is only the churning, eddying, fleeing mist, wet fingers that sweep over the windows, and the howl of the icy mountain wind.

The sweat streams off Sjepilof's body. He doesn't even feel the cold. His whole body is tense because this strange world in which he cannot see anything and is only relying on his radar equipment and compass is demanding all his extraordinary flying skill. Next to him, the German is sitting and making calculations. Behind them sits the fat Italian, seemingly calm and undisturbed. Now and then, he sips from the liquid in his glass that he is holding. Next to him sits Clodia, who has put on a sweater in the meantime. She is quiet, and her eyes are wide open. The strange world, the fear of what lies behind the mist, has also gripped her.

They are moving eastward again, very slowly and almost feeling their way. The Brit is sucking on a cigar, a silent figure with his face at the window.

"How does it look, Adolf? Are we still on course?" The baron rummages in his pocket and also lights a cigar.

The German nods affirmatively. "I have a feeling that our destination may be very close."

Clodia suddenly exclaims. “The mist... look, it’s lessening!” The baron sits forward. Johnson moves for the first time in minutes, and Sjepilof sighs with relief. Schweiner smiles and strokes through his luxuriant forelock with his long fingers. In front of them, long tunnels are forming in the mist.

“Could it perhaps be the valley?” The baron blows out a dense cloud of smoke. In his dark eyes glitters expectation.

“Very possible, Baron. That fellow spoke of high mountains and cliffs, covered in mist, and which surround the entire valley.” Schweiner looks into Clodia’s eyes and smiles. He likes the baron’s daughter. She likes him too, she once told him so herself.

Sjepilof makes the helicopter rapidly reduce altitude. The altimeter needle drops to ten thousand feet, nine thousand, eight thousand... The mist is gradually becoming thinner and thinner. Dimly, they distinguish gray, wet cliffs. Four thousand feet, and still they descend.

And then, they finally distinguish land far below them. They distinguish green vegetation and various water streams. The thugs begin to babble excitedly. They talk of riches and glittering jewels. All danger is now forgotten for the time being. Greedy eyes wander over the vast landscape below them. Sjepilof has the helicopter move slowly, about a thousand feet above the jungle. His eyes are searching for a suitable landing place. They move into a broad patch of shimmering sunlight. Nowhere do they notice any signs of life. There is only the brooding jungle with its thin layers of steam over the vegetation, marshy parts in places, broad water streams, and a mighty cliff wall visible far away.

“The lost valley, my children, and the end of our journey.” Baron Alberto Rossini sounds almost touched.

Even Johnson has lost some of his pallor. His heavy, dark thoughts are also a thing of the past. Greed glitters in his eyes, and his heart beats excitedly inside him. If he gets enough gemstones, he will be able to say farewell to the dangerous work that he has been doing for years. He will go and look for himself a beautiful Spanish woman, buy a picturesque villa somewhere near the French Riviera, and live like a millionaire. No more opium or gold smuggling for him. No more fear that the police might pounce on you at any moment. Just peacefulness and rest... A beautiful woman and children. That’s what he has always

wanted. But circumstances were against him...

The helicopter hangs like a giant dragonfly over a wide stream that shimmers sharply in the sunlight.

Johnson suddenly sits upright. He looks and looks again. Then his mouth opens, he wants to speak, but his vocal cords refuse. When he finally forms words, they are hoarse, indistinct, and barely audible.

Because diagonally below them, the water is rippling in giant waves, away from the enormous animal or thing that is trying to flee from the noise above it. Its long neck and small head are stretched comically far forward. Its broad back and long tail shine from the water that is splashing over it.

“Look... heaven... what is... what is it?” Johnson gasps, his face paler than ever before in his life.

Clodia is the first after Johnson to notice the fleeing animal. She screams, swallows, and then indicates that the others should also look. Exclamations of total disbelief follow. Sjepilof steers the helicopter in the direction of the fleeing animal. It spurs it on to greater speed. The thing is moving towards the edge of the bank.

“A primeval beast!” Baron Rossini sounds excited. “An animal from millions of years ago. But look how fast such a thing runs...” His big belly shakes properly with laughter. Schweiner also begins to enjoy the commotion now. Sjepilof has the craft dive straight at the primeval beast. Clodia screams a warning.

“Don’t be mad, man!” yells Johnson, now again with a strong voice.

“Do you want to crash us? That thing can trample us into dust...”

“Look, people... there are more of the things!” Schweiner points to where two more of the lumbering animals are speeding through the water with their large bodies.

“Bring a rapid-fire rifle, quick!” orders the baron. Schweiner obeys immediately. He presses a button that makes the door of the secret weapons cockpit swing open. He grabs two rapid-fire rifles and cartridges and hands one to the baron. He also hands one to Johnson. He himself hastily loads the third powerful rifle.

“Steer so that we can get it nicely from the side under fire,” yells the baron to Sjepilof, who is also starting to enjoy the game now. Schweiner opens one of the cockpit doors. His eyes are fixed on the broad back

here just below them. The small beak of the animal is gaping open. He imagines that he can see fear in the thing's eyes.

The baron is next to him. He raises the rifle. But then something else draws his attention...

Quite close to them, a large bird is hanging in the air. Its wings easily span over twenty feet wide. Its long beak is open, and he can even see the rows of teeth in it. The bird monster has a peculiar long back of its head, which tapers to a point.

"Wait!" warns the robber leader. "What is that?" He points diagonally upwards. Schweiner looks and becomes quiet. Clodia, Johnson, and Sjepilof are also looking now. They notice more of the monsters above them... just further away.

"It's a... primeval bird, Papa..." Clodia's voice is a faint whisper.

Something in Sjepilof warns him against the monsters. But he stares as if hypnotized at the thing diagonally above them, which is likewise viewing the strange craft below it distrustfully. Then, the warning breaks through in Sjepilof's brain. The realization makes him shiver. If that monster should hit the large propeller, they are lost! They will simply crash into the water and be swallowed up immediately.

With trembling hands, he reaches for a lever. Just at that moment, the primeval bird decides to attack. Behind and above them, much closer this time, more of the terrifying monsters come diving down at them.

The helicopter begins to move away from the approaching monsters hopelessly too slowly for their liking. "Shoot, Baron, shoot!" Sjepilof's voice cracks. His jaws clamp together with tension. He wants to say many things at the same time. Why aren't they shooting? Don't they realize the danger? Then he finally stammers it out.

"Shoot, Baron, Schweiner, Johnson, you must shoot..."

The helicopter is now moving faster and climbing slightly higher. The leading primeval monster is barely thirty paces away from them.

The baron's hands are trembling slightly as he sends the first stream of steel bullets out of his rapid-fire rifle. However, they whistle harmlessly past the primeval bird. Schweiner's rifle jerks next to him. The primeval bird tilts and squawks audibly above the helicopter's drone. One of its wings hangs suddenly limply. It crashes down the next moment, plummets into the water after several seconds, and then floats on the