

JUNGLE HAWK SERIES

7. Land of the Vampires



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LAND OF THE VAMPIRES

by

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SUMMARY

When a daring expedition sets out into the heart of the Amazon jungle, they're not just searching for a lost tribe, they're chasing legends. Led by the enigmatic Jungle Hawk, the team faces dangers that lurk in every shadow. Poisoned arrows, carnivorous piranhas, and an impenetrable wilderness are just the beginning. But the biggest threats might not come from the jungle itself.

A shadowy adversary follows in their wake, driven by greed and an obsession with gold. As the explorers edge closer to their goal, the mythical Land of the Vampires, they find themselves ensnared in a world where every ally could be an enemy, and every step could be their last. When the group is finally captured by the elusive tribe, they're faced with an impossible choice: stay forever or perish in a sacrificial rite. Just as hope dims, a shocking discovery changes everything, setting the stage for a high-stakes battle of wits, survival, and loyalty.

In a race against time and treachery, Jungle Hawk must summon every ounce of courage and skill to save his companions from a fate worse than death. But will his strength be enough when faced with ancient forces and unspeakable horrors? Step into a world of danger, mystery, and relentless adventure. Land of the Vampires will grip you from the first page and leave you breathless until the very last.

EXTRACT

Three canoes, with eight Indians in them, reached the side of the motorboat just before the boat could get away. A loud war cry burst from the barbarians' lips. The Hawk saw the red and black paint on their faces, with hatchets in their uplifted hands, their broad bodies, powerful and tough, their glowing dark eyes, and long, black hair.

The motorboat tilted sharply as three simultaneously jumped onto the deck of the boat. Jones clubbed the first one overboard with his rifle butt. Dr. Braun tried to stop a second's arm, but the hatchet tore open a gaping wound in his shoulder. He stumbled, and the Indian prepared to deliver the coup de grâce.

However, the Hawk was too quick for him. The Jungle Man's muscles contracted as he grabbed the Indian from behind, lifting him halfway up and then throwing him right onto one of the canoes. The remaining Indians in the canoe cried out in terror as the canoe capsized. Then they all ended up in the water.

After a short struggle, the last Indian who also managed to climb aboard disappeared overboard. Meanwhile, the motorboat had begun to get underway. Screaming and furious Indians were now rowing wildly with their paddles, trying to bring their canoes in line with the moving motorboat.

7. LAND OF THE VAMPIRES

Chapter 1

THE RIVER ROBBERS

“I want to warn you beforehand that this could be an expedition of death. We will have to go on foot and by rowboat through untamed, steaming jungles, which will even make those in Africa look like child’s play.”

The scholar sucked on his pipe and looked forcefully at the Jungle Hawk.

“It’s the land of man-eating fish and of Indian headhunters. A strange world where no white man has ever set foot and those who did scrape together the courage and tried it, are no longer alive to tell their story.”

Dr. Frank Braun suddenly leaned forward and pointed at the Hawk with his pipe stem. “Because we knew this, we came to ask you for help. Without you, we have no hope of getting out of that green hell alive. With your help, I would say the chances are maybe fifty-fifty, but that’s enough for us.”

He leaned back again. “If we fail.” He shrugged his shoulders and remained dead silent for a few moments. “If we fail, then that’s the end of it, but if we succeed, and it’s important that we succeed, it will be in the interest of science and civilization...”

Where they were sitting in the Hawk’s treehouse of the Matonga, in the heart of Africa, the Jungle Hawk suddenly smiled. “Dr. Braun, you can just say I am a member of your expedition. It’s an opportunity that I will certainly never let pass.”

Dr. Braun quickly stood up, grabbed the brown-tanned giant’s big hand and then began to babble as excited as a schoolboy.

From where they sit comfortably in the Dakota airplane, which rumbles high over the Brazilian highlands, the Hawk thinks back to his first meeting with Dr. Braun, the world-famous South African explorer and scientist.

It was two months ago. Since then, the organization for the dangerous expedition has switched to top gear. Everything is now virtually finalized... The journey through the green hell of South America can begin.

The Jungle Hawk leans back in his soft seat. He is dressed in a white summer suit, which had to be made especially for him, as well as the other Western clothes he brought with him. His attractive, brown-tanned face with the steel-gray eyes contrasts sharply against the light suit. His broad shoulders fill the entire seat back.

On the seat opposite him, Dr. Braun sits with a slight frown between his closed eyes. The man has a strong, open face and is strongly built. One cannot help but like him.

In front of Dr. Braun sits Alberto Solini, a slightly stout but still resilient Portuguese, and his daughter Petra Solini, a paragon of fiery Romanesque beauty...

The Solinis are part of the company and were responsible for the arrangements in Brazil. When they met Solini a few days ago in Rio de Janeiro, he said that his daughter would come along. He dismissed Dr. Braun's objections with the words. "Where Papa Solini goes, his daughter goes..."

And so it was. Dr. Braun then raised no further objections, just shrugged his shoulders and said. "You know what lies ahead Solini. If you want to put your daughter's life at stake, it is your business."

Solini just snorted and lit a thick Portuguese cigar. Solini, who will accompany them as an interpreter and expert on the jungles of Brazil. Solini, the man with the consuming quest for action and adventure...

The Hawk's eyes wander further. Two benches in front of him, with only the backs of their heads visible, sit Len Jones, an American millionaire's son, and also Anita Strauss, a beautiful American blonde of German descent.

It is Len Jones who actually finances this expedition.

It is he who wants to drag the frail city damsel on the extremely dangerous journey. Here too, Dr. Braun's objections fell on deaf ears.

"Look Braun, I'm paying for the business. I'm taking her with me. I need some company, dang it..."

Jones stretched his body to its full six foot three, pushed out his large chest and looked impressive in his open shirt and shorts.

Braun frowned, looked once at the Jungle Hawk and internally swore. This temperamental Portuguese and the conceited American are making things extremely difficult for him.

Then he shrugged his shoulders and said. “Okay Jones, but I’ve warned you, and you too young lady...”

Anita Strauss’s blue eyes laughed at him. She put her slender, white fingers in her pants pockets, just shrugged her shoulders and said. “Don’t worry about me, Frankie. Len will protect me. He is big and strong. He was Mr. America last year, you know?”

Aside, Jones coughed complacently. “I’ll protect her, yes...”

Behind Braun, the Hawk frowned, but said nothing. It was clear that the scholar was at that moment in the middle of the world and that his choice of companions on the world’s most dangerous journey had filled him with disappointment and tension.

But there was nothing to be done. Solini had the knowledge of inland dialects and Jones the money that made the expedition possible. The Hawk’s thoughts wander back to his immediate surroundings. Below them lies a sea of trees, interspersed with glittering streams of water. His thoughts wander back to his own Africa’s jungles, a thought that makes his blood rush faster through his veins and awakens a strange excitement in him. A feeling that he is finally home, home in a world that he loves with all his heart and soul.

So this is the Amazon jungle, the largest in the whole world, he thinks. It is in this dense, steaming forest landscape where the British explorer, Col. Falcett and two other whites disappeared in 1925 when they wanted to search for a lost white race... the race that they are now also going to try to track down...

The Hawk’s thoughts are interrupted when Dr. Braun coughs next to him. He looks at the man who has woken up from his slumber and is now looking out of the porthole.

“We should land within half an hour. After that, a long boat trip awaits us...” He looks at the Jungle Hawk, his face now brightened by a broad smile.

“A journey like none of us have ever experienced before. Savage barbaric Indians, the land of the feared headhunters and steaming jungles with their legion of lurking dangers. Then the River of Death and after that...” Dr. Braun pauses for a moment, his face now serious. “After that, the lost white race..., the so-called Land of the Vampires.” The scholar spoke to the Hawk in Afrikaans. The sound of his voice

now makes Jones and Anita look around.

“What are you gossiping about back there?” asks the young millionaire in his characteristic American accent.

“We’re just talking about our final destination... the Land of the Vampires,” says Dr. Braun.

“Vampires? Oh yes, that lost white race... the one we’re going to discover. My word, just think how the newspapermen are going to overwhelm us when they hear of our courage... not to mention the television...”

“Slow down, Jones, you must remember that people may not even exist. And even if they do exist, the possibility is very, very high that we will not survive to proclaim their existence to the outside world.” Braun frowns again.

“Poor old Frankie,” Anita interjects. “One would swear you are already ancient! Of course we will get out of here to tell the story, won’t we Lennie?”

Aside, Alberto snorts. “Looks like you think everything is a big joke, Anita. Look at the world below you... do you see? Just bushes and rivers. But that’s not all... oh no little girl, that’s nothing yet! You have to walk between them or sail on the rivers, then you will see...”

“Your daughter is also going, grandpa. You think in vain that you know everything,” the blonde beauty retorts.

“Yes, Petra is coming along... but you must remember that she knows this world. She grew up here and has been living here with me since she was ten years old.”

Braun opens his mouth to speak, but Jones speaks first. “Don’t worry, old man, everything you can do, Anita and I can also do...”

At that moment the pilot’s voice comes over the loudspeaker to them. “Fasten your seat belts for a while. We will be landing soon.”

Alberto’s value to the expedition became very clear to the Hawk shortly after the Dakota landed on the airstrip of the small hamlet. After a lot of haggling in a language, of which he, the Hawk, could make neither head nor tail, he handed a thick roll of banknotes to a sun and wind-tanned half-Portuguese, half-Indian and then took delivery of a sturdy motorboat. He critically observed a bunch of Indians who were lounging lazily on the quay along the mighty Amazon River, while

thick clouds of smoke swirled from his mouth and nose, and then walked towards two of them.

They talked long and seriously. The Indians' faces remained expressionless, but their eyes still showed a deeper glint, especially when he once took a bunch of notes out of his pocket.

That evening at dusk, Alberto turned to Dr. Braun and said in Portuguese. "We can leave now."

That evening they linger in a small hotel made only of wood. Early the next morning, Dr. Braun, the Hawk, Alberto and Petra are already at the quay, where they begin to load their equipment into the boat. There are large supplies of canned food, coffee and tea, ammunition and weapons, medical equipment and large quantities of fuel on a flat raft, which Alberto has also bought in the meantime.

The vessel's powerful machine has already been tested and Alberto has assured them that it is fine.

After this, Dr. Braun and the Hawk return to the small hotel to fetch their personal belongings, while Alberto and his daughter stay behind to look after the supplies.

"Looks like the American and his girlfriend are still sleeping," says Dr. Braun, as they reach the creaking plank stoop of the hotel.

"They will have to learn to get up earlier," says the Hawk. He is dressed in his jungle attire again. A loincloth of leopard skin, his long, blond hair tied in his neck with a pigskin thong and a hunting knife at his side. They walk into the hotel. In front of the room where Petra and Anita slept, Dr. Braun stops. He knocks on the door. A little while later they hear Anita's sleepy voice.

"Get up Anita, we want to go," says Dr. Braun.

A bed creaks inside. "But it's not even properly light yet..."

"It's the best time, Anita. Here from around eleven o'clock it will be so hot..."

Before he can speak further, Len Jones's voice sounds behind them. The American, dressed only in shorts, his hair disheveled, stands in the door of the room where the four men slept.

"Well, what are you doing at Anita's room?" His voice sounds suspicious.

A frown appears on his forehead as he notices the Hawk. "And you?"

Are you going to ride like that?"

"Of course."

Jones grins.

"Jones, we have to go." Dr. Braun's voice sounds firm. "You and Anita will have to hurry or you will stay behind."

From the room, Anita calls out. "Lennie, is that you outside?"

"Yes darling..."

"Lennie, this nasty Dr. Frank wants me to get up already... but it's still dark..."

"Are you still in bed then?"

Of course Lennie, but the mosquitoes were very annoying last night. One couldn't sleep the way they carried on."

Dr. Braun interjects, his voice slightly harsh. "Anita, you must get up immediately, otherwise we will not get away from here. Well, you two, hurry up."

He and the Hawk pass Jones, into the room. Aside on a dilapidated bamboo table, a lantern burns smoky red. The Hawk picks up a long object in a knitted fur bag.

"What is that?" asks Jones, as he sits on the edge of the bed looking for his shoes.

"That?" The Hawk looks at the long object.

"Yes."

"A bow with arrows."

"Bow and arrow?" Jones looks at him in surprise, his eyes on the Jungle Man's powerful body, brown-tanned by the tropical sun of Africa.

"Yes, bow and arrow."

Jones lifts his arms above his head and flexes his arm muscles.

"But what do you want to do with that?"

"Those are his weapons, the bow and knife," says Dr. Braun, while putting his hat on his head.

Jones bursts out laughing. "I'm starting to like you, fella." Then he continues. "Your sense of humor is excellent."

"I think you should hurry now. We're in a hurry." The Hawk's voice is calm, but his eyes glow dangerously.

Jones wants to get angry first, but then thinks again. "Alright man, I'm getting dressed." He fastens one shoe.

A little later he asks again. "You're serious about that bow and arrow of yours, aren't you?"

"Deadly serious."

"I have a couple of guns. I'll lend you one."

"My weapons are good enough, thank you."

Jones's mouth hangs open in surprise. "You don't want a gun? Do you realize that we are entering a dangerous world and that we will have to shoot at times if we want to stay alive?"

"Maybe better than you."

Dr. Braun interjects again. "Mr. Rossouw," he gestures towards the Hawk, grew up in the jungle, Jones. He knows it better than any of us."

"You mean he's a kind of Tarzan?"

"You can put it that way, yes. There is only one difference. Tarzan is fiction, Mr. Rossouw is not. In Africa, everyone knows him as the Jungle Hawk.

Jones now looks at the Hawk with new interest. "Anita will like this story, I can assure you." His eyes wander again over the man in front of him's resilient body. Again he flexes his upper arm muscles. "Look here, Jungle Hawk... are your muscles as powerful as this?"

"You're being childish now, Jones."

The American smiles complacently. "These muscles are the most beautiful in the whole of America. They call me America's strongest man, remember that."

He picks up his other shoe and pulls it over his sock. "And you, Frankie, remember too. It is my money that makes this undertaking possible. So I take no orders from anyone, not me and not Anita either."

The scholar frowns, but says nothing. He turns to the Hawk and they leave the room. Outside in the hallway they notice that light is shining under Anita's bedroom door.

Outside, the Hawk says. "Those two are going to cause big trouble. The young American's success in the power world has gone to his empty head. For him, the beginning and end of everything is mere muscles and shows of strength."

"I'm afraid I have to agree with you to my regret." Dr. Braun shrugs his shoulders. "But there's nothing to be done about it now. We'll just have to hope for the best."