

PERK UP YOUR POINTED LITTLE EARS, *MERRY MONSTERS*, HEAR THE SOUNDS? THE CHATTER AND SCREECH OF TROPICAL BIRDS... THE SWISHING STROKE AND HACK OF MACHETES... THE WHINE AND BUZZING OF GNATS AND MOSQUITOS... THE LOW MUTTERING AND CURSING OF DESPERATE MEN ABOUT TO BE PITTED AGAINST ENGULFING *HORROR* IN...

THE JUNGLE



Al Williamson

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE IT, LEO! WHY'D YOU HAFTA SHOOT THE WITCH DOCTOR? HE WAS READY TO BARGAIN...

DUTCH'S RIGHT! THEM CHAVANTES AIN'T GONNA LET US GET OUTTA THIS JUNGLE! YOU AN' YOUR TEMPER...

SHUDDUP, WYATT! WE'VE GOT A GOOD START! NO INDIAN'S HOOKIN' ME OUTTA THE PRICE THESE SHRUNKEN HEADS WILL BRING IN THE CITY!

THE AMAZON JUNGLE! AMID ITS DENSITY OF UNEXPLORED GREENNESS, THE PROUD, PRIMITIVE CHAVANTES FISH, HUNT, BATTLE AND, SOMETIMES, MOURN...

THE WHITE MEN MUST PAY! YOU WILL BE AVENGED... OUR HUNTING PARTIES BAR THEIR FLIGHT TO THE RIVER AND THEIR BOAT!

BUT THEY FLEE NORTH ON FOOT...

IT DOES NOT MATTER! I STILL DIE IN PEACE... FOR IF OUR WARRIORS CANNOT GET THEM...



...THE JUNGLE SHALL!

@!M*!! BUGS! IT'S MADNESS! WE CAN'T HACK OUR WAY OUTTA HERE! NOT CLEAR INTO COLOMBIA!

YOU HEAR ME, LEO? WE CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS! AT LEAST WE GOTTA STOP... REST...

AND WIND UP WITH OUR HEADS ON A CHAVANTES SPEAR, SHRIVELED LIKE THE ONES IN THIS BAG? LET GO AND KEEP MOVIN', WYATT!

YOU HEAR ME? I SAID LET GO!

WHONK!





THE JUNGLE'S VASTNESS SWALLOWED THE SOUND OF THE SHOT... BIRDS SETTLED BACK ON THEIR PERCHES AND RESUMED THEIR WHISTLES AND CALLS... LEO PUSHED FORWARD, NOT LOOKING BACK...



NO! IN THE JUNGLE, ONE MISTAKE AND YOU'RE FINISHED! WATTA YOU THINK THEM INDIANS ARE TAKIN' THEIR TIME FOR? ONLY THIS JUNGLE AIN'T GETTIN' ME!



THE MOCKING CHATTER OF MONKEYS ACCOMPANIED EACH MUSCLE-TORTURING SWING OF THEIR MACHETES ... HOURS DRAINED BY AS THEY INCHED THROUGH THE DARK UNDERGROWTH, UNTIL...

WHAT NOW? TOO WIDE TO JUMP...

DOESN'T LOOK SWIFT... START ACROSS... WE CAN WADE IT!



NOT LIKELY, LEO! BEEN THINKIN' ON WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT THE JUNGLE... LET'S SEE HOW IT WORKS OUT WITH YOU GOING FIRST...

NEVER WERE TOO TRUSTIN', EH, DUTCH? AWRIGHT! HERE GOES...



...NOTHIN'!



AS DUTCH HIT THE SURFACE OF THE WATER, THE STREAM AROUND HIM SEEMED TO COME TO LIFE ... FROTHING, BOILING, SEETHING WITH FRANTIC, TERRIBLE MOTION...

THE VICIOUS TIDE OF CANNIBAL FISH SWEEP OVER THEIR PREY TURNING THE FOAMING WATER INTO A FOUNTAIN OF CRIMSON...



PIRANHAS! OUGHTTA LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP, DUTCH... THEY'LL STRIP A MAN CLEAN OF FLESH IN MINUTES!

EEE-A HHHHHH!!

GOOD OL' DUTCH! KEPT 'EM BUSY LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO MAKE IT ACROSS ... AIN'T NOTHIN' STOPPIN' ME NOW!



SOMEWHERE ABOVE THE OCEAN OF TREES AND PLANTS SURROUNDING LEO, THE AFTERNOON SUN PULSED BRIGHTLY, IT'S HEAT FILTERING DOWN THROUGH LAYERS OF LEAVES AND SHADE...



HEE, HEE...
GOT IT MADE!
JUST KEEP CHOPPIN'
AWAY, I'LL BE IN
THE CLEAR IN
NO TIME!

THE DANKNESS GREW MORE INTENSE...
A CLOUD OF MOSQUITOS HOVERED CON-
STANTLY AROUND LEO'S HEAD, THEIR
NEVER-ENDING BUZZING GRADUALLY BE-
COMING MORE AND MORE ACUTE TO HIS
EARS...



BLASTED
VINES SEEM TO
GET TOUGHER...
THICKER...
HARD TO CHOP
THROUGH...

PERSPIRATION BEADED THICK ON HIS FORE-
HEAD, THEN RUSHED IN STICKY RIVULETS
DOWN HIS FACE, SPLASHING AT HIS EYES,
AND ONTO HIS ALREADY SOAKED, WRETCH-
EDLY CLINGING SHIRT...

☆m*!!@w!!! IT!
NEVER SAW ANY-
THING LIKE THIS
RUINED MY
W*!@!!!
MACHETE!



EACH STEP BECAME TORTUROUS AND DIFFICULT...
THE FOLIAGE TWISTED AND CLUNG, SNAGGING AND
PULLING...CAPTURING NOW A FOOT, NOW A LEG, NOW
AN ARM...



CAN HARDLY
MOVE IN THIS STUFF...
BETTER BACK UP...
FIND THE TRAIL
THROUGH...

LEO TURNED TO GO BACK, PULLING MORE VINES CONSTRICTINGLY TIGHT...EACH TWIST, EACH PULL SEEMED TO BRING HIM IN CONTACT WITH ONE MORE GRASPING VERDANT RUNNER...

ICAN'T MOVE!
LET GO! LEMME
OUT OF HERE!
LET ME OUT!

THE SACK DROPPED FROM HIS HAND AS LEO FOUGHT AND FLAILED AT THE ENTANGLING GREEN TENDRILS, HOPELESSLY PULLING THE WEB OF VEGETATION TIGHTER...TIGHTER...

N-NOOOO...
CHOKING...
CAN'T BREATHE...
GAGHHHHH...

ONE HOUR LATER, A CHAVANTES HUNTING PARTY STARED IN SILENCE AT LEO... A SLIGHT BREEZE CAUSED THE VINES TO STIR THE BODY PUPPET-LIKE...SOMEWHERE, THE WITCH DOCTOR COULD BE SATISFIED...THE JUNGLE HAD NOT FAILED HIM!

POOR LEO! SHOULDN'T LET HIS PERSONAL-LIFE GET SO ENTANGLED...I'VE HEARD OF GUYS BEING STUCK WITH *CLINGING VINES*, BUT THIS IS RIDICULOUS! OH WELL, SINCE LEO'S ALL TIED UP, BETTER TAKE YOUR MACHETE AND CHOP INTO MY NEXT *TERROR-TALE*!