

Jungle Fever

- P1** “Stop shoving!” Indra growled, sending a scattering of birds up through the canopy. Her head snapped back around and she covered her mouth with both hands, shocked that she had been so irresponsible as to raise her voice in this place. Her eyes bulged and she whispered, “I’m so sorry.” The three explorers stood for a moment, as silent as death, while they waited. There was a distant, throaty, grumbling sound, but nothing that sounded too close. Collectively, they let out their held breath.
- P2** They had come to this jungle in southern Mexico in search of hidden treasures, said to have been lost to the jungle more than a thousand years ago. Instead, they had wandered too deep into the unknown and stumbled upon something none of them would ever forget – if they could get out of this place alive, that is.
- P3** Indra looked at her companions, worrying about the three deep gashes that Markus had across his upper arm. If they didn’t stop to clean it soon, it would likely become infected.



- P3** Who knows what kind of bacteria those claws were laced with. Indra reached towards her backpack for some gauze, but Markus grabbed her wrist sharply before she reached the zip. His eyes were wide and staring straight forward. He shook his head, almost imperceptibly.
- P4** Indra’s heartbeat accelerated as she dared to turn around to see what it was that had Markus so scared. Her eyes scanned the dense jungle around her, but she could see nothing but leaves and branches of greens and browns and an unusual spattering of yellow and black. She could hear the usual sounds of the jungle: insects buzzing, frogs croaking, birds singing and chirping, but nothing that sounded off.
- P5** The cacophony quickened, keeping pace with Indra’s bounding pulse. The noise rose to a manic crescendo. Bzzz, croak, caw, bzzz, croak, caw, caw. And then it stopped. Silence yawned out of the dissonance as if the jungle itself

P5 dare not make a noise.

P6 The hairs on the nape of Indra's neck stood to attention, despite the layer of sweat and grime that covered them. Something was watching them. She could feel it in her gut. It felt ancient and malevolent.

CRACK!

P7 Something snapped high up in the canopy. Another loud crack, then another and another. A huge branch came crashing through the trees, sending leaves and twigs flying in all directions.

P8 "Move!" shouted Indra, her instincts kicking in. They surged forward, swerving and dodging the rocks and trees as they went. Something was chasing them. It roared and growled; high pitched and menacing. It sounded livid, like it was determined to make a kill. Indra winced as twigs and leaves slapped her cheeks and bare arms, leaving thin lines of blood across her skin. In the back of her mind, hopes of getting out of this place alive were dwindling, yet she kept charging forward like a juggernaut. The pillowy ground, covered in moss and leaves, padded each footfall until her sole hit hard rock. Before her brain had time to register what had happened, Indra was mid-air, propelled forward by her need to escape. Her stomach did a somersault, and then, she dropped.

P9 Indra heard a scream behind her and she thought that her friends must have jumped too. She didn't have time to look back or worry about them. She could sense the ground rushing up to meet her like a freight train. It was water she was heading for, and she was vaguely aware that if the jump had been too high, the water would be like concrete and she would hit it like a bug on a windscreen.

P10 She gasped a desperate breath, and, a second later, hit the water with a splash. The dull, chasmic echo of being underwater and the whisper of air bubbles whizzing past her ears helped to usher in some kind of clarity. She collected herself, using her time suspended in the water as a chance to check that she was still in one piece. All of her limbs were still there and working; that was a good sign. Her eyes opened and she could see. Her heart, although thumping rapidly, was still beating its rhythm. She could also feel the wet-heavy weight of her backpack on her shoulders and the strap that gripped her belly tightly. She was okay. The crazy rush of the almost-encounter and the mad dash through the jungle washed away with the water as her face breached the surface. They were safe.

P11 Another second and another face broke through the water's surface, followed by a lot of coughing, spluttering and waving arms. It was Markus. It was clear that he was not feeling as calm as Indra was. His eyes were wild, spinning around, searching, trying to make sense of the situation.

- P12 “Shh... it’s okay. You’re fine. Look at me. Markus, look at me. Hey! Stop. You’re fine. We’re okay. Look,” shushed Indra, holding Markus’s flushed cheeks in her hands and treading water. His eyes scanned Indra’s, soaking in the calmness that she projected, until he finally gathered his own thoughts.
- P13 After wiping the thick tendrils of hair from his face, Markus scanned the surface of the water they had landed in. Other than the ripples that they themselves had created, it was placid. It was cool and fresh and was surrounded on all sides by thick jungle, save for the rocky cliff that they had moments ago been atop.
- P14 “Where’s Felix?” Indra whispered. He hadn’t surfaced yet, and it had been at least a couple of minutes since they hit the water. Indra tried not to panic as she glanced around.
- P15 She rapidly recounted the moments leading up to their fall, and she knew they were all running together. She had heard the heavy breathing, almost panting, of the group as they ran. Her adrenaline had been through the roof, but she could have sworn that they were running as a trio.
- P16 Craning her neck, Indra glanced skyward to the outcropping of rock where they had begun their descent, but saw only broken twigs and bent leaves. Small rocks and pebbles were still falling from the lip. They must have disturbed quite a lot of the ground as they jumped. It looked like they might have

- P16 even broken a chunk of the cliff’s top away.
- P17 Markus’s voice came loud and hurried, “Over here! I’ve found something!”
- P18 Indra swam closer to the edge of the pool where Markus was waiting for her, letting the refreshing water wash away the blood and grime. Despite the sticky situation, Indra couldn’t help but appreciate the beauty of the spot in which they’d found themselves; even though it was still the same jungle that had almost claimed their lives, and home to the same creature that had stalked them. Surely, it couldn’t be what she had feared: the Nagual? It was only a myth. A tale in Mayan culture of a human that could shapeshift into animal form. They were supposed to protect people, but legend said that one man had grown evil, and with him, so too had his spiritual jaguar. Now, fiercely protective of the treasure hidden somewhere in this very area, the Nagual roams the jungle in jaguar form: an impossible fast cat-like creature with razor-sharp claws. But it was only a myth...
- P19 Indra reached the bank where Markus was sitting. His face was pale white and he shivered uncontrollably. He grasped a backpack tightly in his hands. It had two letters sewn into the fabric: F. D. It belonged to Felix. One of the straps was torn off and the zip had bust open. Markus turned it over to reveal the part where the arm straps would meet at the top. A dark red patch spread from the top to the middle. It was blood.

Vocabulary

1. Find a word in paragraph 1 that means ‘altogether’.
2. What does ‘Indra’s heartbeat accelerated’ mean?
3. What does the word ‘malevolent’ in paragraph 6 tell us about the thing watching the group?
4. What image does the word ‘chasmic’ in paragraph 10 help to give?
5. Find a word that means ‘calm’.
6. What does ‘sticky situation’ mean?

Summarise

1. What do we learn in paragraph 2?
2. Briefly explain the events of the first five paragraphs.
3. What happened in paragraph 8?
4. Give a summary of Indra’s character. Use evidence from the text.
5. Summarise what happened after the explorers landed in the water.
6. Give a brief summary of the legend of the Nagual.

Retrieve

1. Why had the group come to the jungle in the first place?
2. What three usual things can Indra hear in the jungle?
3. In paragraph 7, what is the danger to the group?
4. Which simile is used to show that Indra is falling quickly?
5. Who didn’t land in the water?
6. What does Indra suspect is stalking the group?

Infer

1. Give two pieces of evidence to show that Indra is the leader.
2. In paragraph 4, what does Indra see that suggests something is out of place in the jungle?
3. Look at paragraph 8. Do you think the chase went on for a long time? Why?
4. Find three pieces of evidence that suggest the story takes place during the day.
5. Had the explorers prepared well for their trip to the jungle?
6. Why might Indra and Markus believe that Felix has been caught by the thing chasing the group?

Predict

1. Use the events of the first page to predict what could have happened to the explorers before this.
2. Having read paragraphs 1 to 5, what do you think will happen next? Give evidence from the text.
3. What could be chasing the group? Give evidence.
4. After reading paragraph 11, what do you think Markus will do next?
5. Do you think Felix survived the chase and fall? Explain why.
6. What do you think will happen after paragraph 19?

Effect of Language

1. Why has the author used 'silent as death' in paragraph 1?
2. Markus shakes his head 'almost imperceptibly'. What does this mean and why has he done this?
3. 'She kept charging forward like a juggernaut'. What does this sentence tell you about the way Indra moved?
4. In paragraph 9, what effect do similes have on the reader?
5. How does the text show that Markus is struggling to calm down?
6. Explain how the use of short sentences in paragraph 19 make the reader feel.

Link Ideas

1. In paragraph 2, the group 'stumbled upon something'. What does this tell us about the purpose of their trip?
2. The jungle noise reached a crescendo and then stopped. How might this be connected to Markus's actions in paragraph 3?
3. What theme or idea connects paragraph 6 with the first sentence of paragraph 8?
4. In paragraph 10, why does Indra reassure herself that she's ok?
5. What do you think the 'panting' in paragraph 15 might be?
6. How can paragraph 18 help to explain the event of paragraph 7?

Compare

1. Indra's mood changes quickly in paragraph 1. Explain why.
2. In paragraph 5, how does the noise of the jungle change?
3. Compare how Indra felt jumping off the cliff to how she might have felt if she hadn't jumped.
4. Compare how Indra felt before she jumped, as she was falling, and how she felt at the end of paragraph 10.
5. What is the same and what is different about Markus and Indra's feelings and emotions after landing in the water?
6. From the beginning to the end of the text, does your impression of Markus change? Give evidence to explain why.

Jungle Fever

1. 'The hairs on the nape of Indra's neck stood to attention.'
What emotion might Indra be experiencing here?

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1 mark

2. Find and copy one word in paragraph 8 that shows that the thing chasing the explorers is angry.

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1 mark

3. In paragraph 9, Indra hears screams just after she jumps.
What might Indra have been thinking as she fell?

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1 mark

4. Indra thinks that the creature in the jungle could be the jaguar Nagual from the local legend. Using evidence from the text, give two examples that prove she might be correct.

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3 marks

