

H Y P E R I O N



# Jaguar



Someone is out to sabotage an expedition in the Amazon . . .

Roland Smith

# BEFORE . . .

I walked into the den. Pinned up on the wall was a huge map of the Amazon Basin in South America. On the floor were stacks of books, scientific journals, and my father—a field biologist named Robert Lansa, Ph.D., also known as Doc to his friends and to his only son.

Doc sat in front of a laptop computer, staring intently at the screen. He didn't notice I was there. I was used to this.

"What's going on?" I asked.

He grunted and didn't look up.

"What's with the map and stuff?"

"Brazil, field project, preserve, jaguars," he mumbled.

When my mom was alive, she called this kind of response, "Lansa Latin." It had been awhile since I had heard this language. My mom's technique for dealing with it was to leave my father alone and wait for him to snap out of it. I left the room.

I went into the kitchen and opened the refrigerator.



## Jaguar

Inside was a carton of sour milk, a block of cheddar cheese with splotches of green fuzz colonizing it, and a new item—a half-empty jug of orange juice. My father must have decided to go on a health kick. I grabbed the OJ and rinsed out a cup from the sink, which we were using as a cupboard.

Translating my father's mumbling was easy. He was looking at a field project that had something to do with a jaguar preserve in Brazil.

The only thing that surprised me about this was the timing. We had only been back in the States for a few months, and the tan I got in Kenya hadn't totally faded yet. We had rented a small house in Poughkeepsie, New York, near my grandfather's retirement home. His name is Tawapu, but we call him Taw. He's a Hopi Indian who spent most of his life riveting steel girders together high above the streets of New York City.

The plan was to stay in Poughkeepsie for at least a year while my father wrote up his research notes on elephants and got them published. It looked as if the plan might change, which was fine with me. Poughkeepsie was an okay city, and I liked the high school I was going to, but after my trip to Kenya, life was a little too tame for my liking. A trip to Brazil would be fantastic!

I waited a couple of hours, then went back into the den. My father was on the phone talking to someone. When he saw me, he covered the mouthpiece.

## J a g u a r

"Hey, Jake," he said. "I'm going to be hung up here for a while getting this together. I'll tell you all about it when I have it figured out."

This was polite Lansa Latin for "Get out of the den and don't bother me." I nodded and closed the door.

I didn't see my father for several days, but he left signs that he was still alive. I'd get home from school and find human spoor like pizza boxes and coffee grounds on the counter, and every once in a while I'd hear him talking on the phone behind the closed door.

Late on the fourth night he finally emerged from his den. I had just put away my homework and was getting ready to go to bed.

"Hey, Jake," he said. "Shouldn't you be in school?"

"I don't go to night school, Doc."

He wandered over to the window and opened the blind.

"Wow, I really lost track of time."

That wasn't all he had lost track of. His long black hair hung down to his shoulders without the benefit of the usual ponytail, and he hadn't shaved for a week. I couldn't tell if he had changed his clothes, because he always wore jeans and denim shirts. He had at least a dozen sets exactly alike.

He turned back from the window.

"You remember Bill Brewster?"

"Sure." Bill was one of my father's oldest friends. They



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# Boat ride into danger

**W**hen Jacob Lansa joined his father in Brazil, his biggest worry was whether Doc would let him stay or send him back to Poughkeepsie. But he soon realizes he has bigger problems. His father's expedition to create a jaguar preserve is beset with violence—a massive explosion destroys their boat, and Jake is viciously attacked before their journey even begins.



More danger is ahead. Before the voyage upriver is complete, Jacob will witness firsthand the havoc man has wrought on a fragile environment, and come face-to-face with those who will stop at nothing to gain what they want.

"A first-rate adventure about greed, mutual dependence, and family."—*Kirkus Reviews*

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