

The Great Void

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Introduction

The plane touched down on a strip of red earth carved into the heart of a jungle so untouched, it felt as though world development had missed this place entirely. The air was thick and alive with the scent of rain-soaked soil and distant echoes of creatures unseen. I stepped out with a team of geologists bound for a remote corner of Mozambique, where the ground whispered promises of minerals and mystery. But I hadn't come for the minerals. I came to quiet the noise in my head. That relentless urge (the one that tells me I should be doing more, becoming more, achieving more) had become unbearable. Adventure, for me, has always been a way to escape. When the weight of the unspoken world presses too hard, I run. I chase new horizons, hoping the unfamiliar will fill the hollow spaces within. Out here, surrounded by wilderness and silence, I feel something close to peace.

We stood in anticipation, facing the great unknown. The Mozambique jungle stretched before us as a lush garden of tangled life, its air heavy with the scent of earth and promise. Every sound seemed to hold a secret; every echo hinted at discovery. The forest was not merely a place to be. It was an invitation to listen, to surrender, to uncover what hides beneath the noise of ordinary life. Our local guides led the way, their footsteps treading on soil that felt both sacred and foreign to us. As they spoke of spirits in the trees and the patience required to survive the wild, I realized this journey was as much an inward expedition into the hidden corridors of the mind as an outward adventure of an unexplored habitat. In that instant, while staring at the dense forest, I think about all the things we mustn't fear, which conveniently avoids the bigger question: How big are the spiders out here?

We finally arrived at camp. It was a small clearing, with a well-kept enclosure, the ground scraped clean of shrubs and deadwood. The air carried a poisonous, piney fragrance, thickened by the heat that clung to our bodies like steam in a jungle sauna. An uneasy stillness hovered over us, broken only by a distant clicking sound that was strange, rhythmic, and deliberate. The forest, it seemed, was becoming alive. Then the noise grew, as the insects began their nightly symphony, until the erratic percussion built into a violent crescendo that echoed through the trees and into my bones. It was both terrifying and exquisite, a reminder that nature doesn't perform for us; it simply exists, unapologetically.

By nightfall, the exhaustion wrapped around me like a heavy blanket. Every muscle ached, and yet, before I went to bed, I had to look up one last time at the nighttime sky. The camp was utterly dark, and the generators silent. Above me stretched an ocean of stars, unfiltered and eternal. I felt a million miles away from civilization, and for a moment, I understood what our ancestors meant when they spoke of silence as a teacher. In that stillness, I heard wisdom whisper through the leaves: “Still the mind and patterns appear.” “Silence brings clarity.” “Listening reveals the truth.” Perhaps breakthrough ideas are not found in noise or motion, but in the quiet pause between breaths. On that final thought, I slipped into my tent, zipped it shut, and lay down, thinking about all the beautiful things that come to mind when I listen to music. I wish I could tell you about them now, but you get punished in the jungle for not going to bed early (and it’s getting very late).



Week 1

I woke up at 7:00 a.m. The air was thick and sticky, and my body was still trying to negotiate the meaning of rest. The day opened like a painful wound. We spent most of it familiarizing ourselves with the landscape. The camp sits a few hundred meters from a winding river, its surface glinting like a strip of molten silver under the sun. It's beautiful from a distance, but we've been warned not to approach because of the crocodiles.

As the hours passed, I found myself listening more than speaking, while the others shared stories of discovery and some of loss, and between their words, I caught a glimpse of my own reflection. Out here, the jungle doesn't just surround you; it interrogates you. Every sound, every silence, becomes an invitation to look inward.

In solitude, the noise of modern life begins to fade. The work deadlines, the static of ambition, the endless notifications, all dissolve into the jungle's symphony. Crickets, birds, and the rustle of unseen creatures compose a rhythm that slows the pulse and stretches time. This place demands patience. It rewards stillness.

If there's one thing the jungle teaches quickly, it's this: avoid your discomfort, and it will only grow teeth. In the city, we escape through screens and schedules, pretending anxiety is productivity. But here, survival requires confrontation. The vines don't untangle themselves; fear doesn't either.

But let's be honest, revelation comes at a price because three truths are already apparent. First, the food is dreadful. Everything comes from a tin can, the vegetables are non-existent, and the only fruit is a single banana that might well become the most valuable currency in the camp. Second, the shower is a medieval invention: a black rubber bag of freezing water suspended overhead, turning every rinse into a small act of courage. And third, the toilet. I haven't yet mustered the bravery to investigate. I suspect it's less a facility and more an experience. God help me.

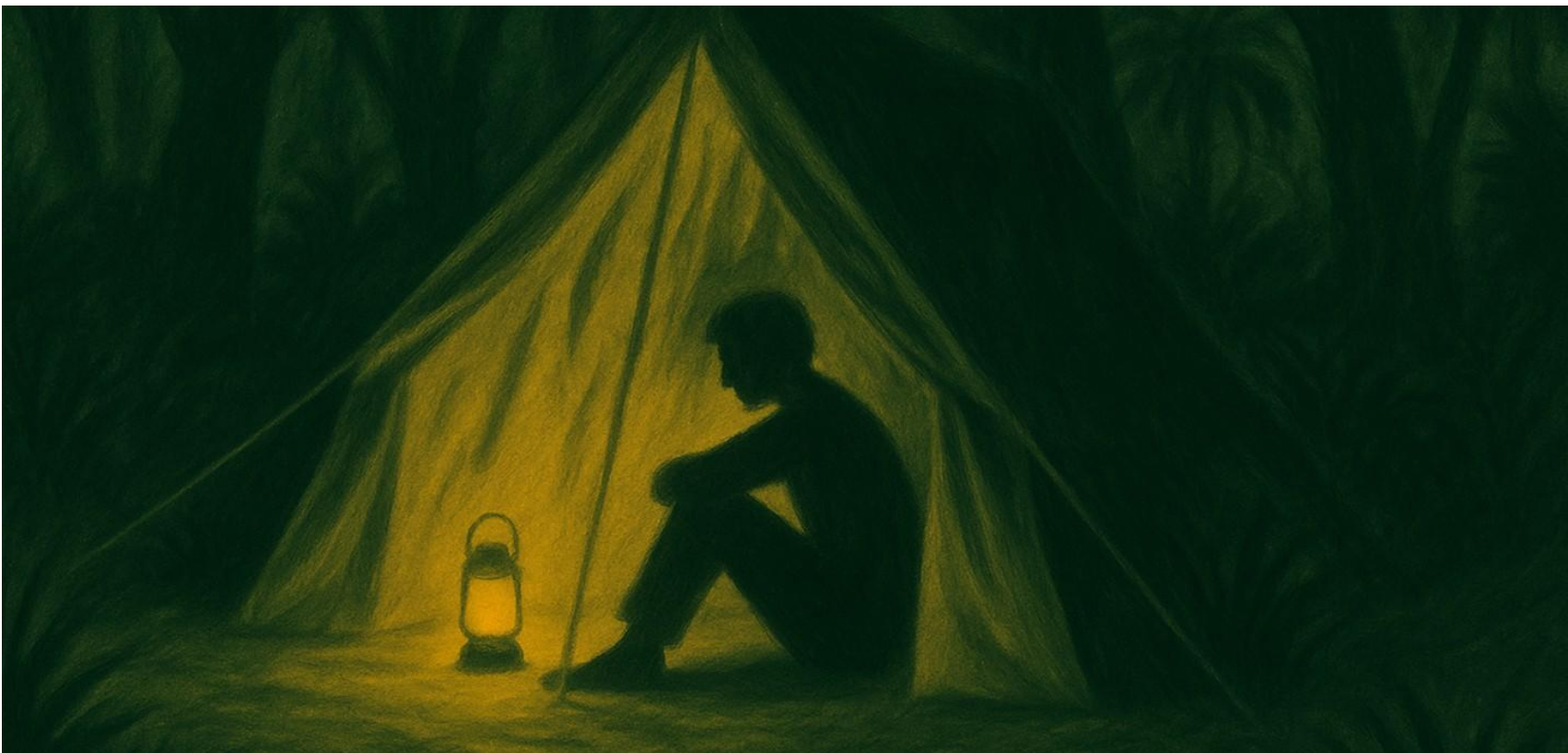


Week 2

It's past midnight, and I'm alone in my tent. The camp has fallen into an eerie silence that only the deep wilderness can produce (dense, absolute, and alive). Everyone else is asleep, but for some reason, I can't close my eyes because I am so scared. Maybe it's because of dinner. Tonight was "Comesa Night," where the team indulges in the ritual of recounting jungle horrors. There were stories of snakes that slither into boots, of big cats whose eyes gleam from the tree line, of crocodiles that wander from the river under the cover of darkness. We laugh while we tell them, as if laughter could keep the monsters at bay. But later, when the fire dies and the laughter fades, the stories start breathing on their own.

Somewhere near the foot of the camp, I hear movement. A crunch of twigs. A slow drag through the leaves. It could be an animal, or it could be my imagination, now sharpened into paranoia. I tell myself courage isn't the absence of fear; it's acting despite it. But courage feels theoretical when you're lying beneath a thin sheet of canvas, and something outside decides to move. Out here, the mind amplifies everything. Thoughts echo in the vast emptiness, bouncing between the trees until they return louder than before. It's unsettling how easily the wilderness turns inward. How quickly the fear of what's out there becomes a mirror for what's inside.

I remind myself to breathe. To acknowledge the fear, not fight it. Because the jungle feeds off the very thing you wish to silence, anxiety grows in denial, but it shrinks in recognition. The trick is to observe without judgment and to turn panic into presence. Still, I can't help but wonder, as the night deepens and the forest whispers with invisible life: is something really out there, or is it only the darkness within me, waiting to be seen?



Week 3

This place wears you down until everything you do can only be accomplished in slow motion. However, some things have certainly improved, such as the adventure we went on yesterday.

There's a river 12 kilometers from our camp. I went with two local guides to collect water samples, a task that sounded simple until we realized there was no road to the site. Only bush. Only uncertainty. So we loaded up the Unimog, which is a beast of a truck, and set off into the unknown. What followed was three hours of chaos disguised as progress. The underbrush rose higher than a man's shoulders, and the trees seemed to conspire against us. The guides slashed and cleared, leading us through a green labyrinth. We moved a few meters at a time.

The journey was a model of the ten plagues of Egypt (although I cannot remember all of them, I am sure we experienced most of them here). Heat poured down like molten glass. The truck's front windows were removed (which is possible in a Unimog), partly to prevent them from shattering, partly because the cabin had become as hot as an oven. But with that small mercy came a greater curse as we ended up inviting every living creature in the jungle into the vehicle.

To mention a few, I saw fearless red ants with claws as big as, well, a cuticle cutter. There were countless varieties of spiders, some as small as a pea and some as large as an apple. Then there were centipedes and millipedes. They had more legs than you could count. Then there were unrecognizable bugs. They had all the colors in a rainbow and tentacles longer than their bodies. The only joy (if there was one) was a curious type of frog. It was white and the size of a fingernail. Unfortunately, I had no time to admire its cuteness. Firstly, for all I knew, it could eat a cow, and secondly, I was preoccupied with removing all the nightmarish creatures from every part of my body! It was hell (it's funny how hell is often perceived as a hot place; I think the real reason is that heat would serve as a conductor, breeding all these wild insects).

This place was absurd. It was brutal. It was magnificent.



When the jungle grew too thick for the truck, we continued on foot. Every step through the bush felt like trespassing into something ancient and unwelcoming. The guides moved cautiously, scanning the forest for snakes, muttering to themselves in quiet tones as if negotiating safe passage. And then, after what felt like a lifetime, the trees parted. I cannot describe what happened next. It was as if God felt pity and gave us a little peek of heaven: A river that flowed into a beautiful canvas, creating a mosaic of colors and life. Since it was the dry season, the water was clear and only a few feet deep. After consulting with the guides and upon their assurance that the river was safe, I stripped down and stepped into the lukewarm water, which wrapped around me like silk. It washed away the exhaustion, the heat, the fear. For the first time in weeks, my mind felt weightless. I lay back, half-floating, watching the sun scatter light across the rippling surface.

I took a coconut out of my backpack, cooled it in the water, made a small hole, and drank slowly. The sweetness was divine; nature's own communion. For a moment, I imagined building a small house out here and planting a garden. This place could be a perfect life. But paradise never lasts. Just as I contemplated the location of my dream house and farm, a voice came from behind me. It was time to leave. We had to return to camp before dark. We headed to the vehicle and set out on our journey back. God was again merciful. But worn down from exhaustion, I slept the whole way home.



Week 4

We're leaving tomorrow.

The thought feels strange, almost unreal. After weeks of heat, exhaustion, and awe, I've grown used to this peculiar way of survival. The jungle has worn me down, reshaped my senses, and slowed my heartbeat to match its own. My body is bruised, my clothes are torn, and yet, beneath the fatigue, there's a strange clarity in the form of a lightness that only comes when the unnecessary has been stripped away.

We accomplished what we came here to do. Samples collected, data logged, objectives met. Yet none of that feels like the real achievement. What I've gained can't be measured, only felt. I came here seeking escape, but what I found was immersion, not away from life, but deep within it. Places like this don't stay with you in pictures; they remain in the way you think, the way you see, the way you breathe.

The jungle taught me that control is an illusion. Out here, nothing bends to your will or schedule. You either move with the rhythm of nature or you are undone by it. I used to think progress meant pushing forward, faster, harder, more. But here, I learned that growth often implies surrender. It means letting life unfold as it must, allowing nature to take its course.

As I sit by the campfire one last time, the air humming with the night's invisible orchestra, I feel a quiet sense of gratitude. The jungle doesn't teach in words; it teaches through experience, those silent, unfiltered moments of truth.

Tomorrow, I'll return to civilization. But I'll carry this place with me. Out here, I didn't just survive. I remembered how to live.



The End