

## Hunted

Lanelle Johnson looked out past the entrance to the cave at a crisp new morning perfectly framed. She'd be sad to say goodbye to the cool shade it had offered for the past few nights. She knew that the enveloping humidity and oppressive heat of the rainforest would smother her as soon as she clambered down the rocks to the edge of the stream. She'd been following the running water for the past few weeks, heading for the mysterious city of Ciudad Perdida.

For years, Lanelle had been researching the ancient city deep in the heart of Colombia. It had been abandoned for hundreds of years—since the Spanish conquest in the 16th century. Since then, it had disappeared into obscurity, but Lanelle had done her own research. Somewhere hidden in the mountains was a pile of Spanish gold, left behind when they fled the area. Her work at the university had led her this far, but they had flat-out refused to fund the trip.

“There’s nothing there but trees and relics,” her professor had said when she’d raised the subject a few months before.

Lanelle hadn’t been deterred. There was something alluring about the idea of a lost city, something primal that drew her further into the tangled vines and towering trees of the Amazon. She was close now, she could tell. She could feel the ancient spirits beating on her soul like a tribal drumbeat.

Underfoot, the ground was soft and gave way easily beneath her stiff boots, but Lanelle pushed on. The ground sloped gently upwards, until eventually she emerged from the canopy of the lowest trees. Thick cloud clung to the treetops like candy floss, but the carved terraces of Ciudad Perdida stood out like diamonds in a mine. They broke through the trees maybe half a mile to the east. Lanelle pulled her hatchet from her pack and set to work clearing a path through the undergrowth.

Gradually, she descended back into the murky depths of the forest floor. Insects scuttled away and birds fled from her noisy progress. All the while, something played on Lanelle’s mind. She had the strongest feeling that she was being followed. Every time she spun around, the forest seemed



empty. And that didn't seem right, either. The forest was never empty. She'd grown used to sleeping with the howls and groans of the living forest surrounding her: now it seemed as silent as a crypt.

Behind her, she heard something rustle through the leaves. She spun, but now she heard it over to the left. Now the right. Sounds did strange things in the forest, bouncing from tree to tree until they came from all directions, but she knew that these were separate. She wasn't being followed at all. She was being hunted.

## RETRIEVAL FOCUS

1. Where had Lanelle stayed the previous night?
2. Where was Lanelle heading for?
3. In which direction did Lanelle see Ciudad Perdida?
4. Who did Lanelle ask to help her fund the trip?
5. When did the Spanish invade Colombia?

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

**V**

Find and copy a word from the text that means to be put off by something.

**S**

What did Lanelle do as soon as she saw Ciudad Perdida?

**V**

Find and copy a word in the text that describes how the insects moved through the forest.

**I**

What evidence is there that Lanelle is dedicated to her quest?

**P**

Who or what do you think is hunting Lanelle?