

# The Leaf Peepers



Bob whacked one last thick vine out of his way with his machete and tumbled into the clearing, exhausted. He'd been bushwhacking through dense jungle underbrush for hours now and he needed a breather. Uncorking his canteen, he eagerly drank half of its contents. As he wiped his lips and gazed at his surroundings, the hairs on the back of his neck stood up. Again! Bob couldn't shake the feeling that he was being watched, that he wasn't alone in the jungle. And yet, as he scrutinized the abundant flora around him, he could see nothing but trees, leafy shrubs and monochromatic flowers. There must be wind, too, for the shrubbery waved as if in response to a gentle breeze. But he was simply too tired to feel it. However, he *wasn't* too tired to detect a new odor in the air. It smelled [*sniff sniff*] like ginkgo. Either that or a bunch of guys who hadn't bathed in a couple weeks. Suddenly, there was another noise, a kind of nervous murmuring. "Who's there?" cried Bob, his heart pounding like a Venusian cement mixer. But there was no reply. Just the insistent rustling of windswept leaves. Uneasily, the intrepid explorer packed up his rucksack, picked up his machete and plunged back into the jungle. Almost at once, a startled yelp issued from the thick vegetation, followed by the sounds of a struggle, followed by ... silence. And although his canteen popped up on eBay a month later, Bob was never heard from again.