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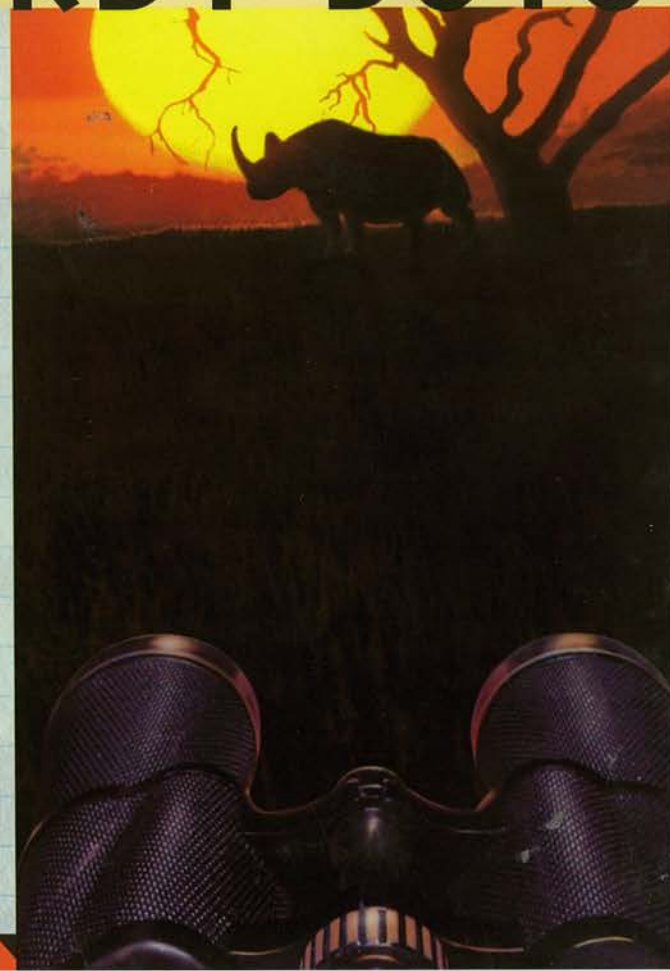
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#178 THE MYSTERY OF THE BLACK RHINO

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HUNTERS IN
NAIROBI ARE
THREATENING
MORE THAN A
FEW ANIMALS

FRANKLIN W.
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#178

THE MYSTERY OF THE BLACK RHINO

FRANKLIN W. DIXON

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New York London Toronto Sydney Singapore

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14 Death of the Black Rhino

Within fifteen minutes Dr. Malindi was in the lobby of the New Stanley Hotel.

Joe told him about seeing Harry Andrews and the man who called himself Dr. Douglas.

"We need to move at once," Dr. Malindi said. He looked at Frank and Joe. "I know you've been through quite an ordeal tonight. Are you sure you're up to this?"

The Hardy boys pronounced themselves ready for action.

"We want to catch these men as much as you do," Joe said. "The black rhino is not the only thing they're interested in killing."

A police car was waiting in front of the hotel.

Dr. Malindi got in the front seat with the driver, and Frank and Joe climbed into the back. The driver pulled out into Kimathi Street and headed toward the Hotel Zebra. Just as they turned onto River Road, the radio crackled, and a voice told Dr. Malindi that Room 37 in the hotel was vacant.

"Where could they have gone?" Dr. Malindi said.

The Hardy boys thought for a minute.

"I know someone who might know," Joe said. "The shopkeeper at Mombasa Curios."

The driver made a U-turn and drove back to Moi Avenue. There were no cars parked on the side of the street in front of Mombasa Curios, but the driver, at Dr. Malindi's request, parked several doors away.

"We don't want this car to alert them," Dr. Malindi said. "It is very important that we take them by surprise."

At this hour the shop was closed. The boys noticed lights in the windows above, which they thought might be where the shopkeeper and his wife lived.

Dr. Malindi suggested that the driver and Joe knock on the door and pretend to be frustrated tourists who had forgotten to buy some souvenirs and wouldn't have a chance tomorrow because of an early morning flight back to the United States.

Dr. Malindi and Frank would remain in the shadows, a few feet away, until the door was opened.

What if they don't open it? Frank thought.

After a few minutes a light went on in the shop, and someone started to unlatch the front door.

"We're closed," the shopkeeper's wife said. "What was it you wanted?"

The driver went into his act. His American accent would have fooled most people. The shopkeeper's wife let them know that letting tourists in was an imposition at this time of night. She told them they could come in, but she certainly hoped they made it worth her while.

When the shop door was fully opened, Dr. Malindi and Frank rushed out of the shadows and quickly followed the driver and Joe into the shop.

"What's the meaning of this?" the shopkeeper's wife demanded. "Who are you people?"

Dr. Malindi told her.

Now the woman was frightened. "No one is here. I don't know where they are. I have nothing to do with the hun—" Suddenly, she stopped, having realized that she had probably said too much already.

But one look from Dr. Malindi made her continue.

"They went to the Aberdares National Park," the woman said. "That's all I know. I won't say any more."

Dr. Malindi looked at Frank and Joe. "That's what we needed to know," he said. "That's one of the few places where black rhinos are left in Kenya."

They rushed out of the shop, leaving the woman staring after them.

"Do you think she'll contact them and tell them we're coming?" Joe asked as they ran toward the police car.

"This isn't America, Joe. Not everyone has a cell phone," Dr. Malindi said. "I doubt if anyone could reach them. They're probably in some old pickup truck that they borrowed from one of the locals. They'd be trying to look as unobtrusive as possible."

As they headed toward Wilson Airport to get a police helicopter to fly them north to the Aberdares National Park, Joe asked, "Why are there so few rhinos left?"

"Some foreigners think the rhino's horn has medicinal purposes," Dr. Malindi replied. "For one horn, they'll pay what most Kenyans would make in ten years of working at a regular job."

"I'm sure that's a big temptation for a lot of people," Frank said.

"It most certainly is," Dr. Malindi agreed. "The rhino population in Kenya in 1970 was twenty-two thousand. Today there are just a few hundred."

At Wilson Airport a member of Dr. Malindi's staff was waiting with the warm clothing and boots that the Hardy boys and Dr. Malindi would need for the Aberdares.

It took them only an hour by helicopter to reach the entrance to the park. They were met by Joshua Satima, one of the park officials. After introductions

Dr. Malindi and Frank and Joe got into Satima's Land Rover. They all headed into the park.

"Two men fitting the description you gave us were spotted in an old pickup at Tusk Hut, near Prince Charles Campsite," Satima told them. "Unfortunately our officers lost them in the darkness and the fog."

"Our luck," Dr. Malindi said.

"We're going to have our men stationed near the Ark and Treetops," Satima said. "That's where the black rhino are often seen in the early morning hours."

"There are only sixty black rhino in the park," Dr. Malindi added. "It's the largest indigenous population left in Kenya."

When they reached Tusk Hut, beyond Ruhuruini Gate, Satima turned right and headed toward Treetops.

Frank and Joe had heard about this famous "tree-hotel." Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip were staying there when Elizabeth's father died and she became queen. From the rooms, which were built above watering holes, guests could watch all kinds of animals in their natural habitats.

When they reached Treetops, Satima said, "There's no road between here and the Ark. We have men watching the approaches to both tree-hotels, but we're going to walk a line between here and the Ark in hopes of surprising the poachers somewhere along

the way. We think they'll follow the Thaara River—they're probably not all that familiar with the park, so they'll want to make sure they don't get lost."

Satima told everyone to keep conversation to a minimum. They wanted to make sure they could hear any animals—or humans—that were approaching.

Their trek took them through dense rain forest.

Two hours into the journey the sky above them began to show a lighter cast, signaling the approach of dawn.

An hour later they reached the Ark. They still hadn't seen either Andrews or the fake Dr. Douglas.

Satima had just suggested breakfast in the compound dining room when suddenly there was shouting on the north side of the compound.

Dr. Malindi, Mr. Satima, and the Hardy boys rushed north. They found some of the Ark staff trying to untie three uniformed park officials.

"This doesn't look good," Frank said to Dr. Malindi.

"I agree," Dr. Malindi said.

The three officials told a visibly angry Joshua Satima about how they'd been surprised by two men driving a dirty old pickup. It hadn't come from the south, as they had thought it would; it had come from the north, probably through the forest by way of Wanderis Gate.

"It never occurred to me that they'd come in that direction. It's out of the way," Satima said. "I thought

they'd come in through Ruhuruini Gate."

"You were obviously wrong," Dr. Malindi said. Joe noticed the tension in the air. "Get on the radio, Satima, and have your men count the black rhinos."

Satima swallowed hard and did as Dr. Malindi asked. In the meantime Dr. Malindi took the Hardy boys to breakfast. Joshua Satima didn't accompany them. Just as they were finishing, Satima came into the dining room.

Dr. Malindi looked up. "Well?" he said, scarcely hiding the disdain in his voice.

"My men reported that there are fifty-nine rhinos, Dr. Malindi," Satima said.

"Fifty-nine," Dr. Malinda said. "Fifty-nine," he repeated after a minute. "That means one of them is missing. I'd venture a guess that it's in a dirty old pickup, headed for a secret slaughterhouse."

Joshua Satima hung his head.

Frank and Joe were devastated. They had been unable to save the black rhino.

When they finally got back to their hotel, Fenton Hardy was waiting for them in the lobby. He had been informed of their trip to the Aberdares National Park, but didn't know about the loss of the black rhino until Frank and Joe told him.

"I'm sorry, boys," he said. "You did everything you could to save it."

"I just want to go to bed," Joe said.

"Me, too," Frank agreed.

"Well, boys, I'm afraid that's out of the question. I got a telephone call early this morning. I'm needed on a case back in Bayport immediately," Mr. Hardy said. "I've already packed your suitcases. All of your clothes will need a good washing after being in all that smoke—I heard what happened. You boys never cease to amaze me with your bravery. Anyway, our flight leaves Nairobi in an hour."

With heavy hearts, the boys followed their father upstairs, picked up their suitcases, and headed toward the elevator.

"This is the first case we've ever lost," Joe said.

"I know," Frank said. "It's not a good feeling."

15 Watson's Surprise

Unlike the flight *to* Kenya, the flight back to John F. Kennedy International Airport was pretty uneventful. In fact, Frank and Joe slept most of the way.

The Hardy boys' van was out of the shop, so Callie Shaw and Iola Morton drove it to New York to pick up the Hardys.

"I'm looking forward to seeing Iola," Joe said as they headed toward the customs area. "We may go to a movie tonight."

"Do you want to double date?" Frank asked. "I was thinking about asking Callie if she wanted to go to one, too."

"Sure. Let's make a night out of it," Joe said. "We

can try that new Mexican restaurant in town."

The Hardys cleared customs without any trouble and made their way into the waiting area. Callie and Iola were there, jumping up and down and waving.

"It's so good to see you!" Callie told Frank. She gave him a big hug. "It seems like you've been gone for months!"

Iola hugged Joe and said, "More like years!"

"In a way," Frank said, "we've had the adventure of a lifetime."

Joe nodded.

As they all headed toward the parking garage, Frank and Joe started to fill the girls in on everything that had happened to them in Kenya.

When they reached the van, Mr. Hardy looked at his watch and said, "Let's make a detour, guys. We've got some time."

"Where to, Dad?" Frank asked. He was surprised at how much he wanted to get home to see the rest of their family and friends.

"Fifth Avenue Africana. I want to return Mr. Watson's books," Mr. Hardy replied. "They're rare. In fact, I didn't realize how rare they were until I had several people in Nairobi offer to pay me a fortune for them. I told the people to contact Mr. Watson, to see if he'd be interested in selling them. He needs to have them, in case he does decide to take the best offer."

Frank drove the van toward Manhattan. He decided to take I-495 to the Queens-Midtown Tunnel, which would put him just a few blocks south of Fifth Avenue Africana. They found a parking lot two blocks away from the shop.

"Let's all go. I want to thank Mr. Watson personally for the use of his books," Mr. Hardy said. "Then I think we should find an ice-cream shop. For the last few hours I've been thinking about nothing but milkshakes."

Everybody laughed.

They all walked the two blocks over to Fifth Avenue Africana. A sign on the door said that the shop would be closed for a few days.

"That's too bad," Mr. Hardy said. "We'll try to come down sometime next week."

"Wait, Dad! According to the dates on this sign, the shop is supposed to open again today," Joe said. "The first day it was closed was three days ago."

"Joe's right, Dad," Frank said. He suddenly had an idea. "Maybe Mr. Watson just got back and is working in his office." Frank started knocking heavily on the door. "I'm sure he won't mind getting his books back, especially if there are people who are willing to pay a lot of money for them."

After several hard knocks, which the Hardy boys were sure could have been heard in Mr. Watson's stockroom, there was still no answer. Mr. Hardy

suggested that Frank and Joe return next week with the books.

Just then Iola said, "I think somebody's coming!"

The Hardy boys cupped their eyes with their hands and peered into the shop window.

"It's Mr. Watson," Joe said.

Mr. Watson looked out, smiled when he recognized the Hardys, and opened the door.

"Well, this is a pleasant surprise," he said.

"We just got back from Kenya," Joe said. "Dad wanted to return your books in person."

"Oh, well, that's very nice of you," Mr. Watson said. "I've always wanted to meet the famous Fenton Hardy." He held out his hands to receive the books. "I hope they helped."

"Yes, they did, very much," Mr. Hardy said. When Mr. Watson continued to remain where he was, Mr. Hardy added, "If it's not an imposition, I'd like to see your shop. The boys were impressed with your stock."

"Oh, of course. I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking," Mr. Watson said. He stepped away from the door to let them all come inside. "I just got back from a long trip myself, and I was trying to get some paperwork taken care of before I actually opened the shop for business."

"Well, we appreciate your accommodating us," Fenton Hardy said.

"Oh, I love this stuff!" Callie cried, browsing through the shelves.

"Me, too," Iola agreed. "It's so different from what we see in the stores in our mall."

Mr. Hardy told Mr. Watson about the offers he had had for the books that Mr. Watson had lent him. "I wanted to return them, in case some of the officials in Nairobi actually called you."

"Well, that's very kind of you," Mr. Watson said.

"Would you mind if my sons and I saw the rest of your book collection?" Mr. Hardy asked. "I'm thinking about starting my own."

"Oh, well, no, I wouldn't mind," Mr. Watson said. "I keep the rarest books in my office. It's this way."

While Callie and Iola looked around the shop, Mr. Hardy and the boys followed Mr. Watson to his office.

Mr. Watson opened the door and turned on the light. They all went inside.

Suddenly Joe stopped in his tracks. He looked at Frank and nodded toward an old-fashioned coatrack in the corner of the room. There were three things hanging on it: a sweat-stained pith helmet, a safari jacket, and a wooden cane with a carved baboon head.

The Hardy boys looked at each other and nodded. They knew what they had to do.

"Uh, Dr. Douglas, how is your research in Swahili dialects going?" Joe said.

Watson whirled around, a look of total surprise on his face. "How did you . . ." He stopped and looked at the coatrack in the corner. He turned to Mr. Hardy. "I can explain that," he stammered.

"Can you explain the death of the black rhino?" Frank demanded. "What have you done with the parts?"

"What are you talking about?" Watson demanded. "We didn't kill the black rhino. There were too many park police in the area. Somebody must have tipped them off."

For some reason Frank and Joe believed what Watson was saying—but they had to know for sure.

"Do you have Dr. Malindi's telephone number, Dad?" Frank asked. "I want to call him. There's something I need to ask."

Mr. Hardy withdrew Dr. Malindi's card from his wallet and handed it to Frank. Frank calculated the time difference between New York and Nairobi. "It's not too late," he said. "He should still be up."

Fenton Hardy handed Frank his cell phone, since it was enabled to make international calls.

Dr. Malindi answered on the third ring. Frank identified himself and then said that he had some good news—but that he needed to ask Dr. Malindi a question first.

"By any chance have the authorities recounted the black rhino herd in the Aberdares National Park?" Frank said.

He listened for several minutes, smiled, then said, "Good. That's what I was hoping to hear. Oh, by the way, we've caught 'Dr. Douglas.' Yes, that's right. I'm sure the police here will be in touch with you." Frank listened for a couple of minutes, then ended the conversation with, "We appreciate all you did for us, too."

"Well," Joe said. "Let's hear it."

"There are still sixty black rhino in the Aberdares National Park," Frank reported. "The missing one was found several hours later, after we had already left Kenya, hiding in some thick undergrowth."

"They're obviously smarter than most people give them credit for," Joe said. "That rhino probably knew what was in store for him if he didn't do something like that."

"See! Andrews and I didn't do anything wrong," Watson said. "Now, I think you need to leave my shop."

"Not so fast, Watson," Fenton Hardy said.

"I guess you've forgotten about murder and attempted murder," Frank said. "It's because of you and Harry Andrews that somebody pulled the life-support plugs on our friend Robert Namanga at the hospital in Nairobi."

"And Frank and I could have died from smoke inhalation in the New Stanley Hotel, too. That was your doing," Joe added. "Dr. Malindi said that the police have already closed down Mombasa Curios and have taken the shopkeeper and his wife into custody, and now they want to talk to you and Andrews. They're going to have you extradited to Kenya after the New York police have finished with their investigation."

Watson paled. "What investigation?"

"I'm sure that if the police looked around this shop, they'd find some illegal animal parts," Frank said.

Joe dialed a number on his cell phone. "And there's no telling what they'll find when they visit Harry Andrews at his house in Long Island City, either," he added.

"Who are you calling?" Watson demanded.

"A friend of mine in the New York City Police Department," Joe replied. "Officer Al Fielding."

"Al Fielding!" Fenton Hardy exclaimed.

"Not the Al Fielding you worked with, Dad. It's his son," Frank explained. "We forgot to tell you that we ran into him the other day."

Fenton Hardy raised an eyebrow. "You did?"

Frank nodded. "We'll tell you all about it on the way back to Bayport."

While Mr. Hardy kept watch over Watson until

the police arrived, Frank and Joe went into the shop to see how Callie and Iola were doing.

"Oh, Frank!" Callie said. "These carved animals are beautiful!"

"Callie and I have made a decision, Joe. We're all going to Africa together on a safari next year!" Iola said. "That way, we can see all of the *real* wild animals—and even sleep out under the stars."

Frank and Joe groaned.

"Sorry, Iola. The closest I'm getting to Africa anytime soon is at the movies," Joe said, and yawned. "In fact, there's a new one set in Kenya that opens tonight. I saw it advertised on a billboard near the airport. I'll take you to that."

Iola sighed. "Well, okay. It's not exactly the same thing," she said, "but I guess it's better than nothing."

Callie looked at Frank. "What about us?"

"You want to go, too?" Frank said. He let out a big yawn. "Joe and I are both still on Kenya time. If we're together, we can keep each other awake. I don't want to suffer any more jet lag than I need to."

"Oooh, this is going to be a *really* exciting date," Iola said, smirking. "I can already tell!"

"I have a better idea," Callie said. "Iola, why don't we go to the movie by ourselves and *pretend* the guys are there?"

"Okay, okay, we get it," Frank said. "We promise to stay awake!"

"Sounds good. And who knows?" Iola nudged Joe in the arm. "If you keep your eyes open, you might find another mystery to solve on the way to the theater."

Frank and Joe looked at each other and smiled. That was a definite possibility.