

An excerpt from
BLACK BUSH

A novel

By Frederick Louis Richardson

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Part I: **“Invitation to a Vampire”**
Chapter Fifteen

Captain Joi Tamasi emerged like an aerospace athlete, impeccably devil-brow in black combat boots and olive green flight suit with billed cap. Her white skin beautifully tanned into buttery brown, she swaggered toward Moyamba with a warrior’s cocksuredness.

Through mirrored aviator sunglasses throwing off flashes of light, the captain took a fleeting glance at the unbridled vampire with that predatory look of hunger.

Noting that there were no proper restraints the captain advised:

“If you can’t control her, Moyamba, you’ll die.”

Remindful of the creature’s demonic power, always hidden but ready to be used, in heavy spirits he escorted Night to a black helicopter gunship where aboard she confronted a short eight-inch gun barrel with a bleak little snout.

An African-American dressed in military fatigues had the butt of the rifle anchored into the cup of his shoulder. One hand wrapped around the pistol grip, his naked prehensile shooting finger controlled the trigger.

Fitted with a suppressor, mounted with a telescopic sight, and sporting a curved magazine that supported six hundred rounds of hollow-point ammunition bulging from under the muzzle, the weapon was secured by his other hand around the front vertical foregrip.

And just like him, there were three other black men on board heavily armed with automatic weapons—all pointing at the vampire.

Together with Captain Tamasi, they constituted Moyamba's "special protection unit"—which at the moment he ignored to buckle Night securely into a harness for their flight to Herring Hill.

Climbing into the pilot seat Tamasi got behind the holographic controls of the automated cockpit studded with digital avionics and geometrically shaped buttons of bio-technical design.

Strapping herself into the aircraft's nerve center, she immediately got clearance and switched on the engines, and the vectoring nozzles of four turbo-jets belched toxic clouds of blue-gray smoke.

Wrapping her fist around the ergonomic handgrip, she manipulated the joystick and the chopper lifted off on a velvet vacuum of air—vibrating from the Olympian zeal of an amazing *zoom* climb.

With lightning-abandon and an unknown dimension of terror, the infinity of the sea suddenly appeared with all else that lay beneath.

Under the morning omnibus of cloudy skies, the airship flew through the mild turbulence of crosswinds on a heading of north by northeast along the outer banks.

An eagle-eye view revealed rocky waves and the loose wayward chain of islands forming the archipelago.

Keeping a loose hand on the throttle, the pilot sought the character of dry land. Moving inland toward the small constellation of rocky islets surrounded by clear water tides, air-to-ground radar presented on a moving map Mal-de-Mer as two Caribbean island nations.

The big island of Queensberry had obtained sparkling beaches, celestial gardens of green islets and the radiance of get-away touristy resorts.

However, north of the razzle-dazzle, a vomitous eruption of coral and a string of huge slabs and giant boulders regressively reached out to the shadowy presence of a mountainous volcanic rock.

Where the Africans Diaspora had historically struggled like schools of Atlantic herring, heedlessly spawning to conceive their young, this rock that was a mountain had been wryly christened *Herring Hill*.

Arisen from the ocean floor to dwell like a serpent in the sea, its forested slopes provided an anthill for black laborers shuttling across Prince Edward Sound to work for the tourist industry in Queensberry.

Spending their lives on the brink in a slum that slumbered on the edge of paradise, here black people were everywhere and white people were everywhere else.



Captain Tamasi flipped the speed brake and a muffled groan signaled deceleration, thrusting everyone against their harnesses, as the chopper banked left over the Green River.

Here, the town of New Afrika rose out of the flamboyance of mangoes amid the flora of palm trees.

Scrubbing off air speed while pulling toward the horizon, the chopper slanted away from the mountain, dumping altitude in coming to hover above the bare poles of a 40-foot schooner, the *Alpha Centauri* bristling in the bay.

Nudging the throttle the pilot guided the aircraft away from the boat toward a stretch of sand where the downwash swept incoming waves out to sea.

Hazing the waterline, Captain Tamasi set the skids with exquisite precision upon the foam in the heavy mist of ocean spray.





The captain kept the motor running as Moyamba de-boarded, shrinking from the flight deck and moving briskly toward a cobblestone jetty where the boat had thrown the hook.

The ship's new skipper, Police Commissioner Abram Oxbridge, greeted him with the indulgent air of a diplomat in search of détente.

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The vampire killer had joined the police commissioner on the sand, where an angler cast his line in the surf and a young boy on a sandbank untangled a net to see what the sea might yield.

Frighteningly, Oxbridge furrowed his brow. A barking dog groaning into a whimper, the commissioner in high dudgeon grouched, "There's a *vampire* on the loose."



Never willing to stand in awe of irrational fear inconsistent with the known facts, he reddened his large face into a huge slab of raw beef that conveyed uncertainty but ready to achieve some goal by coming to the point. "So far, we got the little girl who was eaten last week, that reporter Boyette yesterday—you know about Lone Bo Chin. And now Henry Cheek out there on Black Sands this morning. We need you to find this thing and kill it.

"But this little girl's death, this has got residents on the Hill worried about Manju Shabalala."

Twisting his head to one side, Moyamba peeked over his sunglasses at the helicopter gunship where the vampire under arrest had been cached aboard. He thought it doubtful that she had cannibalized the child, despite the resonance in that unsettling ring of truth. Although she had not confessed to anything, he knew that he would never ask.

“The real worry right now is Manju. That son of a bitch is on his own search and destroy mission. The Chamber of Commerce doesn’t need this shit. You can see what we’re dealing with. Here we got this bastard on the loose with his machete hacking up anything he thinks is a vampire...that *cocksucker*. We need you to stop him. He’s got the folks in New Afrika in a flying fit and all because of some Zweto immigrant—”

“The police report said the old woman was decapitated by an unknown assailant,” Moyamba said, half-hoping to drag the commissioner’s thinking into fitting some other method of reasoning.

“*Unknown*, my ass! It was *Manju*!”

“He thinks killing vampires is his job.”

“He enjoys it too much to be his job.”

“You know it could have been that this Zweto woman *was* a vampire.”

“Then who gave Henry Cheek the hickey? By the time he got bit, this old woman had lost her head. What—you think she came back from the dead?”

Dryly, the vampire killer submitted, “They can do that.”