



Destination Truth: Memoirs of a Monster Hunter

By Josh Gates

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Truth is stranger than legend . . . and your journey into both begins here.

World adventurer and international monster hunter Josh Gates has careened through nearly 100 countries, investigating frightening myths, chilling cryptozoological legends, and terrifying paranormal phenomena. Now, he invites fans to get a behind-the-scenes look at these breathtaking expeditions.

Follow Gates from the inception of the groundbreaking hit show (at the summit of Kilimanjaro) to his hair-raising encounters with dangerous creatures in the most treacherous locations on earth. Among his many adventures, he unearths the flesh-crawling reality of the Mongolian Death Worm, challenges an ancient curse by spending the night in King Tut's tomb, descends into a centuries-old mine to search for an alien entity in subterranean darkness, pursues ghosts in the radioactive shadow of Chernobyl, and explores sightings of Bigfoot from the leech-infested rain forests of Malaysia to the dizzying heights of the Himalayas.

Part journey into the unexplained, part hilarious travelogue, part fascinating look at the making of a reality-based TV show—and featuring never-before-published photographs—this *Destination Truth* companion takes readers on the supernatural expedition of a lifetime.

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Editorial Review

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1: "We Must Go Back"

Cluj, Romania, 2009

Wind is suddenly screaming into the cockpit of this aging Antonov biplane. Charts and a half-assed, handwritten flight plan whip by my face and through the cockpit door into the main cabin. In the rear of the plane our director of photography, Evan, who has been filming out the open door, is suddenly thrust forward toward the edge of open space, only to be yanked to a stop by his four-point harness. Documents eject past him and into oblivion.

The sound is deafening and the pressure change so abrupt that I try to brace my arm against the roof to steady myself. Instead, my hand is forcefully bent back by what feels like icicles slicing through my fingers, and I instinctively retract.

Open air. I'm immediately overwhelmed by a terrible realization. *The cockpit ceiling is gone.*

Our audio engineer, Mike, has the common sense to kick the pilot's door shut from his first-row seat behind me, closing off the wind tunnel coursing through the interior of the plane and sealing me into the roofless cockpit.

Moments ago I was actually bored, fiddling with a camcorder to get a close-up of the plane's antiquated controls and weathered gauges, the altimeter needle quivering from the vibration of the plane's beleaguered engine. The pilot, a stout Russian in a thick wool sweater, was languidly operating the stick. Now I'm craning back to get a view of the tail stabilizer through the gaping maw above me, praying the debris from the roof hasn't clipped it on the way by. I think twice about unbuckling my harness for a better look and instead concentrate on the ground below, which is getting closer by the second.

I probably shouldn't be surprised by any of this, of course. As the host of the Syfy Channel's *Destination Truth*, I've spent the last four years traveling to far-flung locales following reports of cryptozoological creatures and paranormal phenomena. Since there aren't exactly nonstop commercial flights leading directly to the doorsteps of the world's most enduring mysteries, I've made a career, such as it is, out of flying on board the planet's most laughably derelict aircraft.

But even by my admittedly lax standards, this plane is a piece of shit. I arrived at the airfield (and I do mean field) after two straight days of begging our field producer, Allison, to procure a plane—any plane—that could take us up and over the purportedly haunted Hoia Baci Forest, the subject of our current episode. After exhausting every possible charter from here to Bucharest, she managed to find this flying Russian coffin and offered a few bucks to a local pilot to coax it back into active service.

The Antonov An-2 is not the sort of plane most people would agree to climb aboard in the first place. Basically unchanged since its design in 1946, it has wings covered in fabric, not metal. The plane is a flying dinosaur, originally intended for agricultural use. A function it might still fulfill as it threatens to fertilize nearby farms with the remains of my crew.

It is common in moments of potentially fatal catastrophe for the world to close in around us and become

much smaller. Disaster is often countermanded by an intense focus, even if it happens to resolve on strange and seemingly arbitrary details. Looking over at the captain, I'm suddenly engrossed by his bald head. Where once there was a comical comb-over, there is now this emancipated ribbon of hair dancing in the vortex and joyfully reaching up to the heavens. It looks like one of those inflatable noodles outside a used-car dealership. Like any pilot worth his salt, though, he seems utterly unfazed by his new coif or by our circumstances in general. Where can one buy a little of that *Right Stuff* bravado required to shrug off the fact that your airplane is now a convertible?

When Captain Chesley Sullenberger famously ditched that crippled US Airways jet in the Hudson River after a flock of geese turned themselves into engine-flavored pâté, it barely seemed to raise his pulse. He casually noted to air traffic control, "We're gonna be in the Hudson," as though he was stopping off there for a cup of coffee. My distress call would have consisted of a jumbled litany of swearwords arranged in no particular order followed by an ecstatic, "*Holy JESUS we're going to crash into a river! MOMMY!*" During this particular aviation mishap, I do my best to stay calm and not soil my pants. This is the best I can muster under the circumstances, and I'm feeling fairly heroic about it.

The pilot adjusts the flaps and begins to bank around toward an open field. Time continues to slow down, and I think about the circumstances that brought me to this moment.

How did it come to this? How on earth did I end up here, plummeting in a partially disassembled biplane toward some anonymous field in Romania? A few years ago this would have been inconceivable. But now it's just another day at the office. I manage to catch the pilot's gaze for only a moment; above the din he leans over and yells, "We must go back."

Indeed. We must. Five years, to be exact.

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