

Copal Jenness – A Prologue [Part 4]

By: FastWinger

The elven-sorceress rode well and fast with Copal, but no rider on a dappled roan could be found on the trail as it ran down to the coast.

And so, there on the edge of the port of Tamarind, the five riders struck their hands together in solidarity, and nodding to Copal, rode out in five directions, indicating that they would return at dusk. And so the Five Questors searched all the town while Copal walked the quays and docks; asking, looking and not finding.

It was a dejected group they made indeed at the Inn of Tamarind; Copal Jenness and the Questors, as they came in one-by-one. They called for supper and sat at the table by the window overlooking the docks. They had no clues, no leads, no hope and strangely, no Paladin! He had not returned.

The travellers were weary indeed when Copal left them, and he walked with heart as heavy as his boots, up the long trail to his jutaku, falling asleep in the wide wicker chair, cigarillo unsmoked, feet propped up on the veranda, dagger across his chest.

But sleep did not last for Copal Jenness. It never did. The dreams always came back. In them at first all was happy, and he was at home with his mother, Morning Glory, his gentle sister, Caspia, and his grandfather, Tianjin. He ran the mountains and hills, content and loved.

Then the longing to wander overcame him and he was powerless to stay. His mother's tears filled his dreams. He always promised to return, but he never did.

Then he dreamed anew of Tele, the Master Detective. Tele always appeared to be so elderly, that no one could ever believe he could run and fight. When he took Copal as his student, no one believed there was

anything the little old man could teach. But that was exactly the way Tele wanted it.

Those were wonderful years as he roamed the continent from the Northlands to the Tropics with his elderly Teacher. Until one day, Tele chose to roam no more. Copal Jenness would be his last student. The carefree days had ended, and Tele found a home on Teak Island. Tele had found an elderly widow with a kind heart and a large and lively family who called Tele “Grandfather”, and he put aside his roving to become a husband. Tele lived with peace and contentment one day’s walk up the mountain above Copal’s jutaku on a Mountain Tea Plantation.

Copal found he did not wish to leave his Old Master, and so he too found a home on Teak, in the Town of Tamarind. Yet, he could not rest, thinking of his mother. And so, the dreams. Dreams of an inner conflict, of loves and loyalties.

And so, Copal woke in the complete darkness of a tropical night on Teak Mountain. He could have reached into the darkness with eyes that could see across the fig and apricot orchards at his door, but he had no will to see tonight, and nothing to look for. Many times he had gazed through the blackness with eyes that saw all, through his own exceptional vision, akin to that of the Jaguar’s. But he knew nothing would be there except the easily frightened fruit bats and the shy and nocturnal lemurs. He lit a cigarillo there in the dark and looked down on the sleeping village of Tamarind.

Morning came for the Detective of Tamarind. Sitting alone in the night he had made some decisions worthy of his status. Someone, somewhere, knew the clue Copal was seeking. He had decided to talk to every person employed at the Inn of Tamarind, the Tea House of the Sun, the Sail Shop, the Market and each and every dock. A dappled roan was his goal.