

Copal Jenness – A Prologue [Part 7]

By: FastWinger

In a different world, in a different time, could evil have prevailed? Would Copal meet the unjust blade that fate forged for him? Why now? Why here?

When the vision of the forest canopy, the multilayered greens overlapping a steel blue sky, crossed Copal's eyes, at first he had no memory. Then the question crept back into his consciousness. Why? Only why?

Around him lay the dead. The Paladin's unrecognizable body, the three town Guards mangled by the deadly swing trap, and then the body of the Sheriff, brought down by the Questors who now stood between Copal Jenness and the Sheriff's corpse. There too in death lay the last three town Guards who had turned at the end to defend their Sheriff.

Copal found his feet and staggered upwards. The forest canopy swirled in his vision, and his chest and jaw ached. But he was alive!

Miyu stood a little way off with the ladies from the Tea Shop of the Sun. They all murmured among themselves; then, reaching a decision, moved forward towards Copal like a little bouquet of dark eyed flowers, their silk wraps of red and gold fluttering like petals. The senior lady spoke for them all.

"Thank you, Copal Jenness! Thank you for the life of Miyu. You have saved her! She is only in this world now because of you, and so she is your daughter from this day forward."

They moved in a little gaggle, all together, to the side of the distraught Questors. The Knight kneeling where his brother, the Paladin lay; the Bard, silent; Roth, the Cleric, standing aside the trail, head down; and the lady archer with one arm through the Cleric's for support. The oldest of the ladies of the Tea Shop of the Sun spoke.

“Your Paladin saved us. These were very bad men. He found them taking our missing girls to sell to the ships and he fought them. And yes, even the Sheriff knew of this evil slavery in his own town. They were dreadful men, all three, and abused all of us, just as Miyu has said.”

She continued. “There will not be any more Tea Shop of the Sun. We are moving away from this town of tears. We will have a new life, and open our own Tea Shop far from here, where there will be only happiness.”

Then she spoke with emphasis. “But first we must find our girls. Please help us. If we hurry, maybe we can catch the slave traders, for they do not dare to run a ship into Tamarind Harbour. It is too dangerous for them, for they fear being caught. They anchor at Storm Rock Bay. Last night we saw them slip away in the darkness with the girls, and we know this is where they go.”

The good townspeople of Tamarind who had followed the party into the jungle, gathered round the group and heard this evil story. They vowed to go with Copal Jenness and the Questors Four, and stop the traders at Storm Rock Bay.

It was the strangest band of rescuers ever seen on the Island of Teak! A hundred farmers and shopkeepers ran with Copal. The Questors rode fast ahead, promising to turn the traders at bay, and save the proud name of their lost Paladin. They were as good as their word, for as the motley and rag-tag band of avengers reached the top of the hill above Storm Rock Bay, they saw a wide and low, three masted sloop, painted in black, laying at anchor. And there too, a harried band of ten mercenaries, high on a land point above the bay, held by lance, broadsword and arrow by the Questors.

Off to the far side of the hill, over a hundred girls waited wide-eyed, as the Questors rode against the mercenaries, driving them down and back to where Copal came fast with his rag-tag band. All the wrongs that the kidnappers had done were paid in their blood as the ten slavers died on that trail at the furious hands of the townspeople.

In their victory over the mercenaries, the mob failed to see the black sloop lift anchor. The tide was full and the wind seaward. She hoisted sail silently. The wind furlled her sails and she crossed the breakwater and was gone. And so the captain and his crew escaped the clutches of the justice of Tamarind.

Copal Jenness stood on the cliff over Storm Rock Bay and watched her go. He knew in his heart that there were others in Tamarind who were as guilty as the dead. His eyes narrowed as he silently swore he would see justice done.