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Keravno book 2 - Manuscript

(Thailand)

The blood thumped in Rama's ears as he ran. The phantom echo of those gangsters' voices drove him faster. He was breathing too hard to tell if the voices he heard were real or imagined. He ran all the same.

It was all too unfair. Wrong place at the wrong time. He hadn't even realized that he'd wandered into Giant's Hand territory until they had jumped him. It was pure luck that he'd managed to get away. Not that it really mattered much at this point. He was dead either way.

It was why they hadn't stopped him running into the jungle. The further he went the higher his chances of never setting foot in civilization ever again. Civilization? Such a joke, he thought bitterly. There wasn't a living thing in this wild that could do worse to him than the people living in that city!

That's why he ran so readily into the humid unknown of trees that made up Khao Yai National Park. He realized he may have been tempting fate a bit, as his next step caught a root and sent his body tumbling down the nearby bank.

Rama lay at the bottom panting, feeling the new set of aches and wounds sink their haze of pain into him. He looked up at the sky through the veil of the canopy and thought about his mother. She would be worried when he didn't return tonight. Would she go out and try to look for him? He hoped not; the night was dangerous for a person out alone. He would know.

The sounds of the nightlife filled his ears, a disharmonious chorus of calls, chirps, and whistles through the undergrowth. He heard no sounds of humanity mixed in with that choir of life that surrounded him, so after waiting a while to listen he suspected it would be safe to begin the long and lonely trek back to his home. Rama didn't know how long he had been running, but he suspected it was longer than he should have. It would be

light before he finally made it back. That is if he was lucky. The night may be the most dangerous, but a beaten, bleeding boy would be easy prey even in the midst of daylight.

With shaking arms, Rama began to push himself up off the jungle floor. And that's when the earth began to shake. The trembling sent the teenager back to the ground, but he could tell that this was no normal earthquake. The source of the shaking seemed to be directly underneath him.

The song of life from moments before was replaced by the cracking of wood and the shifting of soil. Up from the moist earth beneath him, an enormous form began to rise to the surface. Rama was sent tumbling to the side, falling from the rising form before it got too high into the air. Gigantic pincers snapped at the night air, as rippling segmented coils sloughed out from the dirt.

Rama recognized the monstrous form; he had seen it enough times in his life, scurrying from behind an opened doorframe or an upturned stone. But never had he taken the time to examine one as closely as he did now. The way the colors shifted from one segment of its exoskeleton to the next. Going from dark green to burgundy, with streaks of black that almost reminded him of a tiger. A similar black tipped the giant centipede's legs, as well as its pincers and even the end of its antennae, which flowed out like the tendril beard of a royal dragon.

The shock abruptly wore off for Rama when the great insect fixed its many-eyed gaze onto the spot where he still lay. Neither of them made a move; it was as if time stopped for that very moment as monster's gaze met man's.

Then slowly with an alien sort of reverence, the boy rose unsteadily to his feet. The giant centipede remained motionless save for one of its long flowing antennae. The tendril descended towards Rama, who felt some unnatural urge to meet the appendage. The needle-sharp tip of it pierced the skin of Rama's abdomen, there was pain, and then everything changed.