



Chapter Five

Three naked young women were bloodied and tied face-down to a huge, fallen kapok tree trunk.

There were no animal noises in the jungle today, only the screams of the captives and the grunts and guffaws of the outsiders. The village raiders had taken the young women away from the burning huts and into the brush around the village. The women had been bent over, with their hands and feet bound and then used by the outsiders.

The three gunmen could hear their friends, their fellow-raiders from GRUMEC, as they drank rum, argued, and then urinated on some of the women. Several of them called out to the trio with ribald taunts.

“You better save some for me Pablo...” yelled a voice from the village. It was Carlos, a short thick outsider who had once been a member of the Wauja, a tribe from the Tumucumaque mountains. He was the leader on this raid and he was ordering men to search the huts and then set them on fire between raping and torturing the village women left alive.

“If you ruin the best ones,” he yelled at Pablo and his men, “I’m going to cut your selfish balls off myself.”

Pablo was inside one of the women as he called back over his shoulder.

“Just you try, asshole, and it’ll be your balls we’ll be roasting...”

There was a quick noise and then a sharp red tip stuck out of Pablo’s chest. He looked at it, mystified, and slowly ran his hand up and down the wet red shaft protruding six inches from his breast.

He managed to mouth a few more words before he fell, but with the impact of the four-foot hunting arrow piercing both sides of his lungs the words came out more as a gasp.

“...what the hell? Where are they?”

It no longer mattered as he fell to the ground and bled out. His companions grabbed their AKs from the ground with their trousers still around their ankles. They just had time to turn before

the darts hit them in their necks, and as they reached up to pull out the curare-coated darts the arrows hit them right in the bread basket.

When the two raiders fell to the ground, they looked up in confused fascination as the very bushes and trees seemed to be moving toward them.

Kakwa, the Okanoan protégé of the ancient healer Piritapuy, was the first out of the tree line. He was covered in leaves and vines and he threw his bow on the ground as he rushed over to the bleeding women. He pulled a sharp obsidian blade from his leather satchel and sliced the thin ropes that bound the women hands and feet.

A small group of moving foliage surrounded Kakwa and the women. There were five in the hunting party that had come from the Okanoan village. Two of the group, Kamiaura and Nukak, had bows like Kakwa, while the other two held long blow guns and were armed with feathered darts dipped in curare.

They watched the jungle in the direction of the smoldering village. Screams permeated the air as the other teams of gunmen took out their sexual fantasies on the village women left alive. They called out again to their colleagues.

“Damn it, Pablo, say something so we know you’re getting some...”

There was no reply. Kakwa and his team of hunters wrapped some light skins they had with them around the women and helped them towards a forgotten jungle trail on the west side of the village.

Kakwa pointed toward the trail and put his finger to his lips. He whispered to his group.

“Take them to safety.”

There were more voices from the village along with a quick burst from an automatic weapon.

“Pablo! Enrique!” the outsiders yelled. “Answer dammit!”

A steady rhythm of single shots rang out. The gunmen shot the women they were still using and rushed toward where their silent friends had taken their captives.

Kakwa waved his hand to hurry his hunting party and the terrified women onto the densely overgrown trail. He reached into Kamaiura's long quiver and pulled out several arrows.

"Go, but give me half your arrows. Take the women and get them to where we left the dugouts. Wait until morning for me. I'll take care of this."

The short, muscular, Nukak led the way as the Okanoan hunters hustled the women down the trail and away from the screams and death behind them. Kamaiura was rear guard for the group and he disappeared immediately as the dense foliage folded over the fleeing group.

Kakwa stood still for a moment, gauging the number and speed of the other outsiders that he could hear rushing toward him from the village. He stepped backwards into the brush and disappeared.

There were a few perimeter guards patrolling around the village. Kakwa moved like the panthers he so loved, quietly and quickly. He stayed out of sight of the village and circled through the jungle to the opposite side of the village. The main group of outsiders had found their dead friends and none of the three women they had been raping.

Wild shots flew through the jungle. The raiders were firing blindly on the other side of the village from Kakwa. He crept up to the edge of the treeline behind a guard who had turned his back on the jungle and was looking towards his friends and the commotion.

One arrow hit him below his right shoulder blade and stuck out through his chest. The outsider paused for a second like they always do, not sure why he couldn't breathe, but the pain wouldn't hit him before the second arrow, which went in on the left side of his back and pierced his heart. The guard issued a muffled scream, staggered toward the clearing, and tried in vain to pull the trigger on his AK.

As the man fell on his face Kakwa could see his fellow raiders running across the clearing towards him. The Okanoan stepped backwards quickly and disappeared again as a dozen men came racing up to the edge of the bush, but were unable to see beyond it.

Just as they had before, the men unleashed a torrent of automatic fire blindly into the jungle. After sixty seconds of continued fire the jungle went quiet again.

Kakwa had worked his way back to the edge of the river trail that the outsiders were using to load their boats with manioc flour. The Okanoan burned with hate as he watched outsiders, former Caribs, carrying away the sacks of flour.

The river trail was wet and always managed to be the trail with the thickest brush. Kakwa was able to creep right up to the edge of the trail, invisible a mere two feet inside the undergrowth.

He waited until the last Carib came down the trail with a heavy sack of manioc flour in his arms. Kakwa didn't have room to feather an arrow on his bow in the dense growth. He just took one of the arrows and jabbed it through the bushes and through both sides of the Carib's neck.

The Carib wavered for a moment before dropping the sack of flour and reaching up to take hold of both sides of the arrow with his hands. He turned and stumbled back toward the village before falling to the ground.

Carlos, the leader of the raiding party, had been the next one coming down the trail. When he saw his man with an arrow transfixed through his neck, he stepped back. He leveled his AK towards the trail and fired into the brush. There were a few screams as his shots found the backs of two other Caribs that were carrying flour to the boats.

But Kakwa was long gone. He was back at the fallen kapok tree, lying on the dark soil and looking at someone else lying on the ground in front of him.

He was a young man, an obvious Arawak from the village, naked except for a new penis sheath. The villager was prone

beneath a thick patch of ferns and it looked to Kakwa as if the man had seen the massacre and done nothing.

The Arawak was still clutching the thin fishing spear in his right hand with a grip that looked as if it would snap the weapon. He wore yellow feathers on a nose spike and had a few fresh-looking facial tattoos. Kakwa knew that he hadn't been a man for long.

The Okanoan reached out and gently wrapped his hand around the young man's ankle. Kakwa could feel the villager trembling, and when he turned slowly to see who had grabbed him, Kakwa put his finger to his lips.

The young man nodded and without rising turned toward Kakwa. The Okanoan pointed toward the jungle behind them and the villager nodded and crawled behind him into the verdant growth.

When they reached the old trail that the Okanoan hunting party had used, Kakwa stood and helped the young Arawak up.

"Speak Toyucan?" he asked.

"Some," said the wide-eyed young man.

"I am Kakwa, an Okanoan. And you are...?"

"Tulak. Arawak."

"Did you see all of that?" asked Kakwa softly.

The young villager shook his head. He looked at the ground and appeared as if he was going to start crying.

"I saw too much." He looked up defiantly. "I should have joined you and killed them!"

Kakwa nodded and put a sinewy hand on the young villager's shoulder.

"Yes, you could have helped me. But if you did, you might have killed one or two before they killed you. There will be plenty of time for killing. You are much more important alive. We need to warn all the nations, and you're going to help."

Tulak looked up at Kakwa and fought back the tears.

"I will kill them all."

"First, we have a few women we need to rescue. Let's go."

The young villager raced after Kakwa as they tore through the overgrown path upriver. When they got near the location where they had beached their dugouts, two Okanoans burst from the sides of the trail and stopped them. They smiled and grabbed Kakwa by the shoulders as Tulak ran ahead.

Kamaiura and Nukak were already in the two dugouts, paddles in hand. Tulak's two sisters and the girl next door were standing by the dugouts, bruised, bloody, and naked, except for the skins over their shoulders. The Okanoans were just about to help the young women into the dugouts when Tulak ran up and hugged his younger sister.

“Thank God! Oh, thank God!”

The women thought they were the last of the village tribe and that Tulak must have already been dead. They were overjoyed. The three women all hugged the young villager and then climbed into the dugouts.

Deep behind the river and the sounds from the burning village, they heard the twin Mercury outboards on each of the three riverboats. The raiders were on the move while the Okanoans paddled furiously upriver.

Kamiaura had taken Tulak's older sister and their neighbor along with the Okanoans that had been watching the trail.

Kakwa rode in the other dugout with Nukak, Tulak, and his younger sister. There were only four paddles amongst them, so even though Tulak wanted desperately to help, Kakwa handed him his bow and told him to watch the riverbanks.

The leader of the hunting party had insisted on sitting in the back of the second dugout. Kakwa paddled smoothly and powerfully. He looked regal in his leopard cape with the gold neck chain, blue and yellow feathers woven into his hair. He watched Tulak and his sister touching each other for reassurance, secure in a bond only siblings can know.

Kakwa heard the wicked Mercury outboards begin to quiet. The Marajo men were going back to their island sanctuary downstream. For all the death and destruction they had visited on

the Arawak village, all they had to show were a few sacks of manioc flour, and no hostages.

The Okanoan knew this was the beginning of the end. He breathed deeply and paced himself. There was no reason to keep a furious pace if they weren't being chased. It was a long journey upriver to their village, and Kakwa knew there would be an even longer and bloodier struggle ahead.