

# **SANDOKAN**

## **THE PIRATES OF MALAYSIA**

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**Emilio Salgari**

**Translated by Nico Lorenzutti**



*Sandokan: The Pirates of Malaysia*

By Emilio Salgari

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Back Cover: Coins from the Kingdom of Sarawak

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**Part I**  
**The Tiger of Malaysia**

# Chapter 1

## The Young India

“Mister Williams, where are we?”

“In the heart of Malaysia, my dear Kammamuri.”

“How much longer before we reach our destination?”

“Bored, are you?”

“No, just in a great hurry; the *Young India*’s barely moving.”

Mister Williams, a forty-year-old American seafarer, just over five feet tall, looked at his companion in dismay. The man in question was a tall, dark Indian about twenty-four or twenty-five years of age, with noble, almost refined features, naked to the waist, save for his earrings and several gold neck-rings that rested gracefully above his broad chest.

“What!?” the American cried out indignantly. “Barely moving? That’s an insult, my good Maratha.”

“For those in a hurry, Mister Williams, a cruiser flying at fifteen knots would be advancing at a crawl.”

“By the devil, why such haste?” asked the quartermaster, scratching his head. “Off to collect an inheritance?”

“Hardly! If you knew...”

“Well then, don’t keep me in the dark, young man—”

“Pardon? The wind makes it hard for me to hear...”

“Ah, playing deaf now, are we? You’re hiding something; that much is obvious! That young woman travelling with you, is she—”

“Returning to my original question, Mister Williams. When are we going to reach port!?”

“Which port, my friend?”

“Sarawak.”

“Now that’s in the hands of Fate. You never know what can happen at sea. A typhoon could come bearing down upon us at any moment; or a gang of pirates could board our ship and send us to the devil with a kris between our ribs or two lengths of rope round our necks.”

“There are pirates in these waters?” asked the Indian.

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“As ferocious as they come. They’re every bit as dangerous as those stranglers you’ve got in India.”

“Really?”

“Look over there, towards the bowsprit. What do you see?”

“An island.”

“It’s crawling with pirates. That’s Mompracem, my friend. Makes me shiver just saying the name.”

“Why’s that?”

“That little patch of land is home to a man who has reddened these waters with blood. Have you ever heard speak of Sandokan?”

“No.”

“Sandokan, known as the Tiger of Malaysia, and the name isn’t given lightly. He’s ferocious, merciless! If we fell into his hands, he’d slay us all without a second thought.”

“And the British haven’t moved to crush him?” asked the Indian, surprised.

“Destroying the Tigers of Mompracem is no easy feat,” replied the quartermaster. “Back in 1850, the British assembled a powerful fleet and stormed the island. They captured the Tiger after a tremendous battle, but before they could reach Labuan, the pirate mysteriously escaped.”

“And returned to Mompracem?”

“No. For two years there wasn’t so much as a peep out of him, he’d vanished from these waters, but then a few months ago he reappeared at the head of a new band of pirates, Malays and Dyaks, fearless to a man. After slaughtering the handful of British colonists fool enough to settle in his former lair, he retook his island and began to rove the sea once more.”

A whistle sounded from the bridge, as a gust of wind rattled the masts.

“Darn!” said Mister Williams, quickly raising his head. “Looks like things are about to take a turn for the worse.”

“What do you mean?” the Indian asked nervously.

“Do you see those dark clouds? They sure don’t mean clear sailing.”

“Are we in danger?”

“The *Young India* is a sturdy ship; she’s weathered many a storm. Now, to work, the sea’s getting restless.”

Mister Williams had not been mistaken. The water had turned leaden

and the sea, until then as smooth as glass, had begun to toss and roll.

In the east, towards the large island of Borneo, an enormous cloud as black as tar slowly shrouded the setting sun. Albatross squawked nervously as they flitted about the climbing waves.

A dead calm followed that first gust of wind; claps of thunder rumbled in the east, filling the passengers and crew with apprehension.

“Clear the deck!” bellowed Captain MacClintock, gesturing for the passengers to be taken below.

Everyone reluctantly obeyed, descending through the hatches along the bow and stern. One man, however, had remained behind, the Indian Kammamuri.

“I said clear the deck!” thundered the captain.

“Captain,” said the Maratha, advancing determinedly, “Are we in danger?”

“You’ll know once the storm has passed.”

“I have to get to Sarawak, Captain.”

“And you will, provided we don’t sink.”

“I have to get to Sarawak! It’s important! I must—”

“Mister Williams, remove this man! I have no time for this!”

The Indian was dragged away and forced down the nearest hatch. A strong wind blew from the east, roaring through the ship’s rigging. Thunder rumbled incessantly as the black cloud stretched across the sky.

The *Young India* was a magnificent three-masted schooner that bore her fifteen years well. Her light but sturdy construction, her enormous sails, her strong keel, reminded one of those daring blockade runners that were to play an almost legendary role in the American Civil War. She had set sail from Calcutta on the 26th of August 1852, bearing a cargo of iron rails for Sarawak.

She carried fourteen crewmen, two officers and six passengers; aided by favourable winds she had arrived in Malay waters in less than thirteen days, or more precisely, she had arrived within sight of the dreaded island of Mompracem, home to the fiercest pirates in the South China Sea. By eight, they were in almost total darkness. The sun had disappeared behind the clouds, and the wind roared with ever-increasing intensity. The sea raged about them; mammoth swells collided and disappeared in a spray of



## The Pirates of Malaysia

foam as enormous waves broke against the shores of Mompracem, its sinister mass looming menacingly before them.

The *Young India* raced forward, pitching over the waves, hurtling into troughs and climbing mountains of water, her masts tearing at the clouds.

Barefoot, faces drawn, their hair whipped by the wind, the crew grumbled as they went about their tasks. The scuppers could not keep pace, and the decks streamed with water, making each manoeuvre more difficult. Commands and curses mixed with the cries of the storm.

By nine, the three-master, tossed about like a toy, had arrived in the waters off Mompracem.

Mister Williams pulled at the wheel with all his might, but despite his efforts, the *Young India* was dragged so close to the reefs and shoals ringing the island, the crew feared she would be dashed to pieces.

Much to his horror, Captain MacClintock spied several bonfires burning along the shore. A flash of lightning illuminated a tall man standing at the edge of an immense cliff that towered over the sea. Arms crossed, he stood motionless as the elements swirled violently about him. The man's eyes flared like burning coals and were fixed upon him strangely. For a moment it appeared to the captain that the man had waved in friendship, but he could not tell for certain, for darkness returned within seconds, and a gust of wind quickly tore the *Young India* away.

"May the Good Lord save us!" exclaimed Mister Williams, who had also sighted the man. "That was the Tiger of Malaysia."

His voice was stifled by a powerful clap of thunder, the start of a deafening symphony. The heavens erupted in flames, bathing the storm-tossed sea in a sinister light. Lightning streaked the sky, jagged bolts danced about the ship, striking the water mere cable lengths from her sides.

The sea, as if not to be outdone, swelled to enormous heights. Waves grew ever more mountainous, sparkling like gold with each flash of light as they climbed towards the heavens. The wind, too, added its voice, roaring furiously as it lashed the ship and drove squalls of rain across the sky.

Pitching wildly, the *Young India* bravely battled the elements. She groaned beneath the onslaught of waves; she climbed, she dove, thrashing the waters with her bowsprit as she was dragged north, then south, against her helmsman's will. At times the crew thought the ship had begun to sink, so

## The *Young India*

large were the waves charging over her shattered bulwarks. Then, at midnight, the harsh north wind shifted and began to blow her towards the east.

The ship could resist no longer. To sail against the typhoon was certain death. Though the crew had not spied so much as a trace of land in the west, save for the dreaded shores of Mompracem, Captain MacClintock had to acknowledge defeat and attempt to escape with all the speed the *Young India* could muster from her few remaining sails.

Two hours had passed since the ship had tacked about; however, the waves had not relented, as if determined to sink her.

The lightning storm had almost passed, only the odd flash lit the heavens from time to time; the darkness had grown so thick the crew could see no more than two hundred paces before them. Suddenly, a menacing roar reached the captain's ear.

"Eyes to leeward!" he thundered, his voice booming over the wind and waves.

"Breakers!" shouted a voice.

"Reef ahead!" replied another.

Captain MacClintock rushed towards the bow, grabbed onto the fore-stay and climbed up onto what remained of the bulwarks.

Though all was dark and the wind howled about him, the roar of the backwash was unmistakable. As he had suspected, a chain of rocks jutted out from the water a few cable lengths from his ship, perhaps an extension of the reefs that defended Mompracem.

"Prepare to tack!" he cried.

Mister Williams pulled mightily on the wheel with all the strength that remained in him. Almost simultaneously, the ship struck something hard.

That blow, however, had not done much damage. Only a small section of the false keel had been torn away by the sharp coral that covered the top of the reef.

Waves and wind pushed the vessel forward, but the crew, undaunted, calmly executed the manoeuvre. The *Young India* came about, tacked two hundred meters and escaped the perilous waters. For a moment it appeared all would end well. The sounding line had been cast off the bow and measured a depth of fourteen fathoms.

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Thoughts of salvation had begun to spread among the men, when, suddenly, the sound of backwash thundered before the boom and the sea swelled violently, heralding new danger.

“Helm hard up, Bill!” thundered Captain MacClintock.

“We’re going to crash!” shouted a crewman who had gone down to the bowsprit.

His warning did not reach the stern. A mountain of water thundered down upon the starboard side of the three-masted vessel, knocking her violently to port, dragging down the crewmen who had been clinging to the braces and smashing the lifeboats against the capstan.

There was a formidable roar followed by the sound of splintering wood as a sudden collision shook the masts from bow to stern.

Dashed against the reef, the *Young India* had been gutted with one blow; six crewmen, torn from the ship by the waves, had been hurled against the rocks.

## Chapter 2

### The Pirates

The final hour had sounded for the unfortunate *Young India*. Wedged between two rocks, her frame torn, her keel shattered, she was little more than kindling soon to be scattered by the waves. The sea raged about her, foaming and frothing as it pounded the reef, carrying off the remnants of her lifeboats and the beams and planks rent from her decks and bulwarks.

Aboard her, the survivors, mad with terror, ran from bow to stern, searching for shelter, shouting, cursing, and praying for help. One crewman scrambled up the ratlines, another attempted to reach the crow's nest, while a third sought refuge upon the crosstrees. Some ran about haphazardly, praying to God or the Madonna, as others tried to don the nearest life preserver, or grab hold of anything that could float, as they prepared for the ship to be wrenched apart. Only Captain MacClintock and Mister Williams, who had survived worse storms, appeared calm.

The three-master now still among the rocks, they rushed below deck to assess the damage, but any last hope of setting sail was quickly dashed; the hold was full of water.

"Poor darlin'," said Mister Williams, moved by the scene before him, "she's sailed her last voyage!"

"I'm afraid so, Bill," replied the captain, even more shaken than his quartermaster. "These rocks will be the *Young India's* final resting place."

"What are we going to do?"

"We'll have to wait 'til dawn."

"Do you think she can withstand the storm?"

"The reef cut through her like an axe and she's wedged in pretty tight. I doubt she'll come free."

"We should go relay the news. Everyone is scared half to death."

The two old seafarers went back above deck. The passengers and crew, their faces contorted in terror, immediately swarmed about them, anxiously showering them with questions.

"Is it over?" asked some.

## The Pirates of Malaysia

“Are we sinking?” asked others.

“Are we going to survive?”

“Where are we?”

“There’s nothing to fear,” said the captain. “Nothing to fear. We’ll get through this if we all remain calm.”

Kammamuri immediately stepped forward.

“Captain,” he asked calmly, “Can we still make it to Sarawak?”

“I’m afraid that’s impossible, Kammamuri. The *Young India* will never leave this reef.”

“My master is there, Captain.”

“He’ll have to wait.”

The Indian’s brow darkened and his face turned sullen.

“May Kali protect him,” he murmured.

“All is not yet lost, Kammamuri,” said the captain.

“We’re not going to sink?”

“Not as long as we keep our heads. Come dawn, we’ll get our bearings and assess our situation.”

The captain’s words appeared to soothe the troubled spirits of the crew, and they began to hope in the possibility of rescue. Those who had begun to build rafts abandoned their work; those who had climbed up the masts, after a brief hesitation, slid back down. Order soon returned to the deck of the shipwrecked vessel.

The sea continued to rage. Enormous waves attacked the reefs, crashing down upon them with frightening noise. Pounded from bow to stern, the *Young India* groaned helplessly as the remnants of her bulwarks and shattered keel were swept away. Sometimes she would shake so violently that all aboard her feared she would be torn from the reef and dragged in among the waves. Fortunately, she held fast, and the crew, despite the danger, took it in turn to sleep for a few hours in hope of regaining their strength.

At four the sky began to clear in the east. The sun rose with the rapidity common to the tropics, its arrival heralded by a magnificent red sky. The captain, standing in the mainmast’s crow’s nest, Mister Williams at his side, kept his eyes fixed northwards, where he had sighted a dark mass less than two miles from them.

## The Pirates

“Well, Captain,” said the quartermaster, angrily chewing some tobacco, “do you recognize that bit of land?”

“I believe so. It’s still dark, but... see those reefs?... There’s no mistaking it, that’s Mompracem.”

“Great God!” murmured the American, grimacing. “There is no worse place we could have been wrecked.”

“It’s true, Bill. There is no island more sinister.”

“Call it what it is, Captain; a pirates’ den. The Tiger of Malaysia has returned.”

“What!?” exclaimed MacClintock, starting slightly. “The Tiger of Malaysia is back on Mompracem?”

“Yes.”

“Impossible! It’s been almost two years since that scoundrel disappeared.”

“He’s back, I tell you. Four months ago, he attacked the *Arghilah*, and she just barely escaped after a gruelling battle. A man who had fought the bloody pirate in a boarding raid a few years back, told me he had spotted him on the bow of a prahu.”

“Then we’re done for. He’ll attack us.”

“By God!” shouted the master, suddenly turning pale.

“What’s the matter?”

“Look, Captain! Look over there!”

“Prahus, prahus!” shouted a voice from the bridge.

Having turned as pale his quartermaster, the captain cast his eyes towards the island and sighted four large Malay prahus rounding a cape just three miles from them. Light, trim, and low keeled, the ships flew over the waters with surprising speed, their large sails bulging with wind.

The captain immediately recognized them for what they were: pirates! He rushed down to the bridge and with a few words quickly informed the crew of the new danger; stubborn resistance was their only hope.

Unfortunately, the ship’s armoury was not well stocked. There were no cannons, and though they carried enough rifles to arm the crew, most were in disrepair. There were, however, a few carbines, a few revolvers, a good number of axes and several boarding sabres, whose blades though slightly rusted with age could still be of use in a fight.

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Once armed the passengers and crew rushed towards the stern, which now, underwater, would likely be the boarding point. The American flag rose majestically to the peak of the mainsail, and Mister Williams nailed it in place. They would fight to the death.

The four Malay prahus were now only seven or eight hundred paces from them and were quickly drawing nearer, determined to attack the poor ship.

The sun was rising on the horizon, allowing those aboard the *Young India* to clearly make out their attackers. There were eighty or ninety of them, bold, well-built men, naked to the waist and drawn from the various tribes of Asia: Bugis, Makassans and Javanese, olive-skinned Malays, handsome Dyaks with copper bracelets adorning their limbs, and several Chinese, their shaven heads making them easily recognizable even from that distance.

They were armed with stupendous silver carbines inlaid with mother-of-pearl, large parangs, scimitars, poisoned krises, and kampilans, enormous cudgels they wielded like sticks. Weapons waving menacingly, that bold legion of men kept their eyes fixed upon the stranded three-master, filling the air with ferocious cries to frighten those aboard her.

When the ships had drawn to within four hundred meters, a cannon blast thundered from the first prahu. A cannonball struck the *Young India*'s bowsprit, severing it in half and plunging its tip into the sea.

"Take heart, men," thundered Captain MacClintock. "Fire a broadside!"

Several rifle blasts followed that command. Ferocious cries emanated from aboard the prahus, indicating the lead had not gone to waste.

"Well done!" shouted Mister Williams. "Those wretches won't have the courage to draw any closer. Ready! Fire!"

His voice was stifled by a series of formidable discharges. The pirates had begun their attack.

Smoke rose from the four prahus as they unleashed a relentless rain of iron. Cannons, swivel guns, and carbines fired in unison, smashing, felling, and destroying everything in their path with mathematical precision.

Four castaways had been killed by that lethal volley. The foremast, severed beneath the crow's nest, came crashing down, dragging yardarms, sails and cables along with it. The triumphant cheers of moments ago

## The Pirates

gave way to groans of agony and cries of fear. Retaliation was impossible; that hurricane of steel was destroying the ship with frightening speed.

Realizing that all was lost, the castaways emptied their muskets and retreated back up the deck, attempting to take shelter behind the remnants of the masts and beams. Many had been hit, and cries of agony filled the air as blood poured from their wounds.

Less than fifteen minutes later, with cannon fire shielding their advance, the pirates drew up beneath the vessel's stern.

Captain MacClintock and three of his men immediately rushed to repel the attack, but a volley of grapeshot felled them in their tracks.

A terrible cry filled the air, "Hurrah for the Tiger of Malaysia!"

The pirates cast down their carbines, picked up their scimitars, axes, clubs and kris and swarmed aboard the ship, grabbing onto the bulwarks, backstays and ratlines. Several had scrambled up to the peak of the prahus' masts, run along the yardarms, dove onto the three-master's rigging and slid down onto her deck. Within seconds, the few remaining defenders, greatly outnumbered, fell along the bow, stern, quarterdeck and forecastle.

Only one man remained alive, standing by the mainmast, armed with a heavy, wide-bladed boarding sabre. Battling with the courage of a lion, Kammamuri slashed and parried at the onslaught of enemy weapons, striking blows in all directions.

"Help!" the poor man howled hoarsely as he fell to the ground. "Help!"

"Stop!" thundered a voice. "Quarter to the brave. That Indian is a warrior."



## Chapter 3

### The Tiger of Malaysia

The man who had shouted those life-saving words appeared to be between 32 and 35 years of age. He was tall, with white skin, fine aristocratic features, and light blue eyes. A black moustache lined his smiling lips. He was dressed with extreme elegance: a large hat of Manila hemp, a brown velvet jacket with gold buttons, brocatelle trousers, and red leather long boots. A large sash of blue silk was wrapped about his waist. A magnificent Indian carbine was slung over his shoulder, and a scimitar with a hilt of gold, inlaid with a diamond the size of a walnut, hung from his side.

He gestured for the pirates to make way then advanced towards the Indian, who stunned by that sudden cry, had not moved, such was his surprise at finding himself still alive. The newcomer studied the *Young India's* lone survivor for a moment, carefully taking in every detail.

“So, what do you have to say for yourself, young man?” he asked with a smile.

“What?...” exclaimed Kammamuri, surprised at finding a European in command of those ruthless pirates.

“Surprised to be alive?”

“It seems like a miracle.”

“There’s no doubt of that, young man.”

“Why did you spare me?” asked the Indian.

“Well, you aren’t white for starters.”

“You hate white people?”

“Yes.”

“Aren’t you white?”

“Good Lord, I’m pure-blooded Portuguese!”

“I don’t understand, then why do you—”

“Stop there, young man; don’t ask for an explanation.”

“So you spared me because I’m not white.”

“And because you’re a warrior; I admire warriors.”

“I’m a Maratha,” the Indian said proudly.

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“A noble race. I have an offer for you; how would you like to join us?”

“Me? Become a pirate!”

“Why not? By Jupiter! You’d be great.”

“And if I were to refuse?”

“I’d no longer be responsible for your head.”

“Well then, sir, consider me part of your crew.”

“Good man. A wise choice. Hey, Kotta, see if you can find us some whiskey. Americans always keep a few bottles aboard.”

A Malay, about five feet tall, with strong, powerful arms, went down into the captain’s cabin and returned minutes later with a couple of glasses and a dust covered bottle.

“Pure Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey,” said Yanez, reading the label. “These Americans are truly men of taste.”

He poured two glasses, offered one to the Indian and asked, “What’s your name?”

“Kammamuri.”

“To your health, Kammamuri.”

“To yours, Mr. ...”

“My men call me Señor Yanez.”

“To your health, Señor Yanez.”

They drained the glasses in one shot.

“Now, young man,” said Yanez, always in good cheer, “time to go pay a visit to Captain Sandokan.”

“Who?”

“Good Lord! The Tiger of Malaysia. The most feared pirate in these waters”

“You’re going to take me to him?”

“Certainly, my friend, he’ll be quite happy to receive a Maratha. Come.”

The Indian did not move. He appeared slightly embarrassed. He cast his eyes upon the pirates then turned them towards the stern.

“What’s the matter?” asked Yanez.

“Sir...” the Maratha said slowly. “I have a favour to ask.”

“Ask away, my friend.”

“There’s a woman with me.”

“A woman! White or Indian?”

## The Pirates of Malaysia

“White.”

“Where is she?”

“Hiding below in the hold.”

“Bring her up on deck.”

“You promise no harm will come to her?”

“You have my word.”

“Thank you, sir,” said the Maratha, deeply moved.

He ran to the stern and disappeared through the hatch. A few minutes later, he was back on the bridge.

“Where is she?” asked Yanez.

“She’ll be here shortly. Do not speak to her, sir; she’s mad.”

“Mad! Why is she—”

“Here she is!” exclaimed Kammamuri.

The Portuguese turned towards the stern.

Wrapped in a large white silk cape, a woman of exquisite beauty had suddenly emerged from the hold and stopped near the base of the mizzenmast.

She was about fifteen years old, elegant, attractive and graceful with delicate, rosy skin, large dark eyes, and a small thin nose. Her lips were coral red and bore a charming smile that revealed small white teeth. Her hair, adorned in the front by a cluster of large pearls, fell to her shoulders in a shower of midnight curls that reached all the way to her waist. Her eyes swept over those armed men and the bodies strewn among the wreckage, but not a trace of fear ruffled her gentle features.

“Who is she?” asked Yanez, pressing Kammamuri’s arm, his voice a hoarse whisper.

“My mistress,” replied the Maratha. “The Priestess of the Eastern Temple.”

The young woman did not move. Yanez took several steps towards her and studied her fixedly.

“What a resemblance!” he exclaimed, turning pale.

He quickly walked back to Kammamuri, grabbed his arm once again and whispered, “Is she British?”

“She was born in India to British parents.”

“How did she get like that?”

## The Tiger of Malaysia

“It’s a long story.”

“You’ll tell it to the Tiger of Malaysia. Time to set sail, my good Maratha. Men, strip this ship of her valuables then set her ablaze!”

Kammamuri approached the madwoman, took her by the hand and led her into the Portuguese pirate’s prahu; she did not offer the least bit of resistance, nor did she utter a single word.

“Let’s go,” said Yanez, as he took hold of the tiller.

The waters had calmed, but at times a few large waves still broke upon the reef. Guided by her skilled, intrepid crew, the prahu sailed past the rocks, bouncing over the swells like a rubber ball, sailing off with fantastic speed, her bright wake lighting the playground of several enormous sharks.

Less than ten minutes later, she rounded the far tip of the island and headed towards a large bay. Twenty longhouses lined the shore, defended by tall palisades, deep moats bristling with sharp iron spikes, and a triple line of trenches equipped with large cannons and numerous swivel guns.

A hundred Malays, naked to the waist and armed to the teeth, emerged from the trenches and rushed towards the shore, filling the air with savage cries as they waved their axes, pikes, kris, scimitars, carbines and pistols in greeting.

“Where are we?” asked Kammamuri, a note of unease in his voice.

“This is our village,” replied the Portuguese.

“Is this where the Tiger of Malaysia lives?”

“Do you see that flag? He lives up there.”

The Maratha raised his head. Atop a cliff that towered over the sea stood a large hut defended by thick walls. A red flag emblazoned with the head of a tiger fluttered majestically from its rooftop.

“Are we going up there?” he asked nervously.

“Yes, my friend,” replied Yanez.

“How will he receive me?”

“In the manner becoming a warrior.”

“Will my mistress be accompanying us?”

“Not just yet.”

“Why not?”

“Because she resembles...”

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His voice trailed off and his eyes grew damp. Kammamuri noticed the change.

“You seem upset, Señor Yanez,” he said.

“You’re mistaken,” replied the Portuguese, pulling the tiller towards him to avoid the reef. “We’re here, Kammamuri.”

The prahu dropped anchor, and the Portuguese, Kammamuri, the madwoman and the pirates quickly stepped ashore.

“Take this woman to the most beautiful hut in the village,” said Yanez, assigning the priestess to the pirates.

“They won’t harm her, will they?” asked Kammamuri.

“No one would dare touch her,” said Yanez. “On this island, women are respected far more than they are in India, perhaps even more so than in Europe. Come, my friend.”

They headed towards the cliff and went up narrow steps cut into the rock, walking past several sentries armed with carbines and scimitars.

“Why so many precautions?” asked Kammamuri.

“The Tiger of Malaysia has a hundred thousand enemies.”

“Do the men not love their captain?”

“We idolize him, but others... if you only knew how the British hate him, Kammamuri. Here we are. Do not show fear.”

They had arrived before the great hut, an imposing structure defended by numerous moats, trenches, gabions, cannons, mortars and swivel guns. The Portuguese cautiously pushed against a large teak wood door strong enough to withstand a cannon blast, and led Kammamuri into a room carpeted with red silk, cluttered with axes, daggers, European carbines, Malay kris, Turkish jatangs, lace, cloth, bottles, majolicas from China and Japan, bars of silver, piles of gold, and vases brimming with pearls and diamonds.

In the midst of that chaos, Kammamuri spotted a man dressed in sumptuous robes of silk and gold, sitting on a rich Persian rug in the centre of the room.

He could not have been more than thirty-two or thirty-three years of age. He was tall, well built, with a handsome bronzed face and thick black wavy hair that fell freely about his strong shoulders. He had a high forehead, sparkling eyes, and thin lips that bore an indefinable smile. A mag-

## The Tiger of Malaysia

nificent beard gave his features a proud look that inspired fear and respect. One could tell at first glance that he possessed the ferocity of a tiger and the strength of a giant.

When the two men entered the hut, he sat up and fixed a piercing look upon them.

“What news do you bring me?” he asked, a slight quiver in his metallic voice.

“Victory,” replied the Portuguese, “and a new man for our crew.”

The pirate’s brow darkened, and he fell silent.

“You spared this man?” he asked, eyeing the Indian closely.

“Yes, Sandokan. Does it displease you?”

“You know I have the greatest respect for your whims, my friend.”

“I know, Tiger of Malaysia. This man wishes to join us. I saw him fight, he’s a warrior.”

The Tiger’s eyes flashed as the wrinkles vanished from his brow.

“Approach,” he said, addressing the Indian.

Kammamuri, still shocked to be standing before the legendary pirate who had bloodied the waters of Malaysia for so many years, stepped forward.

“Your name?” asked the Tiger.

“Kammamuri.”

“And you are?”

“A Maratha.”

“A warrior.”

“Yes, Tiger of Malaysia,” the Indian said proudly.

“Why did you leave your country?”

“I have to get to Sarawak.”

“The land of that dog, James Brooke?” asked the Tiger, not hiding his hatred.

“I do not know this James Brooke.”

“So much the better. What takes you to Sarawak then?”

“My master.”

“And what does he do? Is he one of the rajah’s soldiers?”

“No, he’s the rajah’s prisoner.”

“Prisoner? Why?”

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The Indian did not reply.

“Tell me your story,” said the pirate. “There are no secrets among my men.”

“It’s a long story, sir, a tragic tale filled with twists and turns. It will require some time.”

“Sounds promising, my friend; sit down and tell us your tale.”