

When you wake, Tomo gives you a bright pink tanga. You hadn't realized how little you've eaten, and you wolf it down. Smiling, Tomo replaces it with another.

"Someday we will go hunting," says Tomo.

"Are you a hunter?"

"Almost. I must first go on the Hunt of the Black Sun. I must kill a Kota beast."

"A Kota beast? What are they?"

Tomo frowns. "Great toothed animals, with eyes like blue flames and teeth like iron fangs. They live in the darkest, hottest parts of the woods. They tear anything apart, even themselves."

You start to ask about the Hunt of the Black Sun, but Tomo raises a hand. "Now we must talk of war. The Archpods will not expect an attack when the river is low. That is when we shall cross and destroy their boats."

The next morning as the Great River begins to fall, the Rakas load their hunting boat, now called the war boat, with brakpa—crude bombs packed in hollowed logs. You shudder to think that you are about to witness the beginning of a war. But there seems to be no way to avoid it. Before the sleeping tide has ended, Tomo, you, and five hunters set off in the war boat.

*Go on to the next page.*