



IN
ALIEN EYES

I

Namhar Brahman



Dance of the Crimson Asp

“You know, if you don’t put up a fight, you might stay alive,” the old man mumbled conversationally, leaning in close to my ear and blowing putrid air in my face. “We’ll pass you around once, and that’ll be it. After we cut a piece of your tongue out, of course, so you won’t go tattling. He-he.”

“Hey, why only once?” the young one bristled. “Should do at least twice, just take a look at her!” he reached out a hand and ran a dry palm across my cheek and neck.

At that moment, something made a dry sound, as if a thin twig snapped. My red hair fell across my shoulders as the leather hairband that kept it in place slipped down and disappeared in the grass.

An observant bystander, if one had been there, would’ve noticed the dust floating off the fallen band and the way I stilled, eyes staring forward, frozen and unseeing.

But, thankfully or not, there was no one around to see what happened.

“Oh, look! She let her hair down already, what a good girl,” the goon grinned, baring uneven yellow teeth and making a confident step forward towards me.

That same moment, an enormous serpent sprung out from the grass and knocked the man off his feet. The serpent covered the goon whole for a split second and threw him up like a large, grotesque doll.

Bones snapped.

The goon's body didn't even settle entirely on the ground before the serpent rushed at the old man and sliced at him from top to bottom with its wide tail. The old man stood frozen for a second, and then started falling slowly forward with his head cracked down to his chin.

The young man finally regained his senses, throwing his cleaver to the side and rushing toward the forest. The serpent soared up above the trees and spread its webbed wings. It was still for a second, searching for its prey, and then rushed to the ground and, touching the grass, started chasing after the runner.

The boy's hair was barely visible behind the trees as the monster covered him with its wide wings and plunged its knife-sharp fangs into the back of his head.

Soon, the grass rustled by me again. It was the serpent. I threw my head back and put my hair up in a ponytail, feeling something cold making its way up my back. In the next moment, a scaled leather hairband snaked around my red hair, just like before.

The sun was going down.

Cicadas were screaming.

The sweet aroma of death was spreading in the hot air hanging still. Among the disquieting sounds of the cicadas, green flies were circling above the site of the massacre.