**Chapter I**

 **Odec Lesar**

The newborn’s squeal was disheartening; nobody believed he was going to make it. During a period of months, Anhu, his mother, fought boldly. The midwife Anacka, a matron of 90 kilos with a strong voice and a nice face told her to drink Moon tea to end with the agonies. But Anhu never gave up. When the baby was born, he fit inside his father’s hand, whom immediately knew what was going to be that boy’s name.

 **Ranku**, which meant “the man of steel”, who was born in Odec Lesar. A small village in the province of Yala. In what used to be known as Tai-Land BTBW (Before the Big War)

More than 500 years went by and now

Everything was different. Yala was a beautiful land full of plants and trees, wild and domesticated animals, and because of their huge caves survived better than any other state in the world. That was the reason it did not want to be part of any other state and resisted more than 100 years to become in one of the Eastern Provinces. Yala came from the strongest fighters, the writers, the most gifted, and the teachers. They were all wanted by The Great Library of the Eastern Provinces and by many more. Its skill was legendary in many aspects: kids were learning to write, meditate and fight since they were 8 and being chosen by one of the academies when they were between 10 and 12 years old. Yala’s was formed by Writers, Meditation Professors, and Math. And only a few

ended up in the Big Library. But let’s not anticipate the story.

 When Ranku turned 5 years old, Anhu, with her peculiar smile, took him to school. He was a thin and very small kid for his age. The risky pregnancy had its job done by affecting Ahnu’s health and Ranku’s development, which made him an easy target and got mocked, laughed at and called names by his classmates. He got called dwarf, flea, baby, and so. At first he laughed at it, because he was not aware of it being an insult, but his classmates’ mistakes. After some time, insults came joined by getting punched or being molested, as well. Life outside his home became pure hell to him.

His 3 brothers were too big to stand up for him. They no longer studied and worked

Real hard to help at home. They would soon either leave or get married and would need endowment to start a new home. But Ranku was being seen, just as trouble in his mother’s eyes.

The first time his father saw him as he arrived home with a black eye and ripped Clothes, he did not wait. He did not even go to school, because he certainly knew what had occurred.

-Is it just one or many?

 -Many-said Ranku.

 - I will teach you how to stand up for yourself and others.

Since that day and on, his father, who was a Sargent at Yala’s army (already an Eastern Province), every afternoon, during at least 2 hours showed him the

Most simple, and effective defenses to punches against one, two and up to four enemies.

 Ranku used to sweat, but did not draw back or complained about his training. Sometimes, his brothers helped with his strengthening and see his small child fight hart that made his father proud.

Ranku’s mother did not want her son to become a soldier, so she taught him about meditation and stuff any other boy knew back then. She was the first one to notice about The Gift that her son was carrying. He was only 2 years away from being Prepared. Once he was detected, he would be taken very carefully, but his ability as a fighter was going to be deprived; unless he were an evocative of stories. That would save the Army.

 When martial arts started he was already 7 years old and was way ahead of others, even if he did not show it because of his father’s advice. “Only when it comes to one to one fights, that’s when you’ll show them you have to be respected.”

 Ranku nodded and always said yes to his father, but was never pleased by hitting his classmates. In his head there was a war that his mother detected. She had to tell him “You have, to teach, even to your friends that they ought to respect you. If you do not, they will never be your Friends. They will feel pity for you. When you win, do not ever humiliate them, because neither then will they like you.” All of his parent’s advices were written as fire in steel.

The so expected day had come and he was

told to fight during the ending of the training against one of the best in the activities, as same as Ranku. They took positions, and Ranku was fighting against Polang: the more-fat-than-strong, but big and heavy enough to double Ranku’s volume. Polang was licking his whiskers as he was told he would go against “the dwarf”, like he used to call him.

Polang kicked him with a very weak strength because he thought Ranku was not going to stop him. Ranku then just took his leg with his hand, pulled it, and got to knock him down. He could have go all over him and ended up the fight, but he knew exactly that he should always go slowly. Polang’s next try was to use his strength and tight him up until he surrendered. Ranku waited for him and

When Polang attacked, he moved to a side and hit Polang’s throat with his forearm. He fell unconscious and the Professor had to take him to the nursery because he was not breathing.

The Professor came back and the couple fights went on, but there was just one difference, where the biggest kid in class who was called Sang, almost broke Dingalev’s arm (one of the smallest and the shyest kid). The Professor decided to end up with the combats and take the kids to Meditation.

Up to this point, Ranku was already feeling some weird vibes towards him. He felt, and saw, that Polang and Sang were talking outside school and pointed out at him. He then remembered his father’s advice “If you cannot escape a

Fight, then you might as well face it. But wisely; think about how and with whom”. Ranku then thought *“the one that will hit me first seems to be Sang. In case he is winning, Polang will join him in. So focus on Sang.”*

 And, of course, as Ranku thought, Sang came up to him first and at the middle of the attack he said -Why would you hit Polang so roughly?-Why would you hit Dianglev if he’s way now hit you Smaller than you?

-Well, the same reason I will.

 Sang was 3 years older and 10 kilos heavier than Ranku, so he had to distract him and give him a strong punch.

-Are you really going to hit me in front of the Professor?

He said as he pointed with his eyes at the Back of Sang’s back, where obviously, there was not a Professor. Sang turned around and at that moment Ranku hit him in his inner thigh, which provoked Sang to fall and scream. *“I cannot let him get up”* and as he was down, Rank kicked his jaw as well and knocked him.

He turned to Polang and asked “are you coming too?”

-No, I just came here with him.

Only a few saw what Ranku did, but only those few were

Enough for the rest of the village to know.

The next day, the three kids’ parents were called and Dianglev’s father was called too. The Professor stood up and greeted

the parents very solemnly (kids were already in class) talking about what Ranku did to Sang, and about how he had got distracted but was going to get his revenge.

The Professor Arthit: a strong and young man. Thin, but very good at Meditation said that some problems had occurred during and outside school.

-What kind of problems? - Ranku’s dad asked.

-That your kid hit 2 kids that had to be taken to nursery. -Excuse me, professor. How heavy is Ranku? 55 pounds, maybe? How tall is he? A 4 feet? His classmates: They’re like 85 pounds and 5 feet, I will not ask about their ages, because I do know they are older than Ranku. Now please, explain to me: why did you not

call home after the first 10 times my son came home with a black eye, with no clothes and no food eaten? -I did not know about that, said the professor.

 -Well, it is your job to know what happens with the other kids, too. Did we ever come here to complain?

 -Never.

-I never taught him to attack. And now you come here and tell me that my son, who was attacked, hit two kids that are One and a half feet and 40 pounds heavier than him, and that, also, are 3 years older than him!

-If I was those kids’ parents, I would be ashamed of the education I have been giving them and the sample of it they are giving- said Dungaleav’s father, who was small but seemed as strong as a bamboo stick.

-Would you like to add something up? - said to the other parents kids, The Professor.

Sang’s father said “it is a shame what your son told us. We are really sorry”.

Everybody saluted Ranku’s father, whom they knew as the Sargent, but was called Muy, which meant “tough”.

Polang’s parents stood up as well and Polang’s father: a cranky carpenter from the village said: “kids should not fight if

They are in so different ranks. There will be a big accident someday if this continues happening.”

-Yes, I understand. Said the professor.

When Ranku’s parents and his professor were left alone, he said “besides being good at fighting, Ranku does everything better than the students who are his age. Congratulations! You can easily tell he got a very good education at home. He’s always calm, he’s nice with both of his classmates and superiors. He really is a very strong candidate to Yala’s Library.

-Maybe. But he needs to stay a little more to help his mother, since I travel a lot for work and his brother’s work at the fields and arrive home really late. I wouldn’t like my wife to be left a long for such long periods of time.

-I think the Library would help him with the schedule and will give him compensation. Your kid is brilliant, sir. One in a million.

-There are no more millions left, professor.

And that’s how they said goodbye.

From that day on, no one would mess with Ranku. And the ones that were mistreated would look for him. Most of the time, he didn’t even need to fight. His skills in Meditation were amazing, he was an excellent Story Writer. He chose all of the right words and when he didn’t find them, he would go to books or teachers. He was never afraid of asking.

Meditation was his favorite subject because he learned how to leave his

Physical Body. That’s when he could fly and see himself meditating in the Astral Plane. He would fly so high he didn’t believe himself. One time he found a woman on top of the mountain. Malai was her name, which meant flower wreath. She was really surprised, as she was a deep meditation Master of The Great Library of Timor, The Capital.

-Aren’t you too young to fly up this high?

-And aren’t you too big to do so? You must weight a ton.

Malai laughed really loud and asked Ranku about where he came.

-I’m from Odec Lesar.

-Odec Lesar? Well, of course. The best writers come from there. How old are you?-I just turned 7 yesterday. I’m a

grown up now and my name is Ranku.

And then again, Malai laughed.

-The man of steel.-Oh! Should I be scared? You will soon be a grown up and I will see you at The Great Library-said Malai as she left flying.

-Goodbye!-said Ranku.

Malai immediately flew back and said “no. No goodbye. I will today ask for you to be sent to The Big Library, and you will be there in less than a week.”

-But I don’t want to leave my family, my mom, my brothers, or my dad.

-But you belong to The Big Library.

-No. I belong to my family.

-Okay, let’s do something. In a month I will go to your house, and we will see

how long you could go to your house, and when to go to The Library, and we will all decide. -Okay-he said as he said goodbye and shook hands with Mali.

Ranku was a little worried, even though he had recently heard that his destiny would be The Library. He thought that it would be Yala’s tough. He would see his family every weekend like that. Going to Timor would be seeing his family every year.

He arrived home and quickly told his mother about what happened. She took Ranku in her arms and said “it was just a dream. Maybe you fell asleep and dreamed about that.”

-No, mom. It was real.

-Then we will see her in a month. Don’t

worry. We will wait for a month and if nothing happens, you don’t have to worry anymore.

Life in Odec Lesar, was almost rural, Even if it was a town with a big population. Half of men worked out of the city and that included kids with “The Gift” (ability of getting and writing stories that were always veridic and another thinks) that always ended up in Timor’s Big Library, which was a very remarkable one and possibly after the one in La Cima, the biggest and most advanced of the modern world. They both kept great relations, even if a letter lasted from 2 to 3 months as minimum to arrive with good conditions, but with messengers pigeons they had regular communications.

Like in every town, news were quickly known and Ranku was already an important character at the age of 7. His parents tried to keep him on the ground because they didn’t want him to go out Looking for adventures that were not up to his age. His brothers did too. So it became a family work to keep him in place and humble. He at first felt a little bad, but he knew he had to do what he was being told to.

**Chapter II**

 **Sunan**

That was going to be a very interesting week for Ranku,

 Because that he met a kid his age and people said they

 Both had the same abilities. He and his family were from

Odec Lesar, but his father was a Professor, so he worked

In Yala and when he died, his family had to move back to

The town. Had no brothers, but had a sister called Roundtree,

 That meant Jazmin. She was 12. Ranku met him during

Recess and talked a lot about what they wanted to be when they were older. They both agreed in wanting to

Become Professors and Write Books because they were always thinking about stories, but nobody would listen to them given to the fact that everyone was always busy or thought they were crazy.

They matched in a lot of things and agreed in walking Home together after school. Sunan, that meant good job, was just two months older and thought it would be good if he followed his lead, so he would become a Professor as well.

He did not know Sang was planning an attack with his two brothers that were

older, but slower. At the end of the bridge, one that was very old, made out of wood BTGW. Sang was going to pop up at the end of the bridge with his older brother Tuang. And if Sunan wanted to go back, he would meet Sang’s older brother and He would attack. Ranku and Sunan were at the middle of the bridge and at the end they saw Sang and his brother. With a bamboo stick each.

They wanted to go back, but sat Sang’s older brother pop up. He was called teeth-knocker.

-Go if you want, Sunan. This is my fight. -Said Ranku.

-If we’re friends, it’s ours.

-So we have to do what they do not expect. I go directly to the biggest one

With my backpack and you do otherwise.

-Count to three and we change rails

They both ran up to them, which surprised the bad guys. They were even more shocked when they switched places and they hit them with the books and at the same time they kicked each one of them in their stomachs. They couldn’t even use their sticks. They were left on the floor and Ranku and Sunan escaped by running and arrived home very tired at the same time Ranku’s brothers were coming come.

-What’s wrong Ranku? Is the witch coming after you?

They both turned to where Sang and his brothers were coming with their bamboo sticks.

As soon as they saw Ranku and Sunan, They asked yelling “what now? Are you hiding with your brothers?”

-Ranku, what happened?

Ranku started talking and explaining really fast what had happened while Sunan was also trying to explain.

-So, you three think you can take advantage of a 7 year old kid and you find it weird he looks out for help from his brothers?- said Kanu, the oldest and strongest. He was a candidate for marrying the mayor daughter.

 -I didn’t ask for help! - said Ranku. But his brother, was not listening.-What do you think if we three hit you with your bamboo sticks?

-I don’t want you to stand up for me! I

Want him to fight me!-said Ranku

-You want to fight with the pudge?

-Yes! So this can be finally over.

-All right. How do you want to fight?

-With sticks.

-Bamboo sticks? I got mine. And he ran to get it. He came back with a 70 cms. Stick. The one that his father made of Tew wood for him, so he could uphold

With animals. It was 4 times thinner than Sang’s bamboo and with a very small carving that had his name on it. But Kanu Knew how his brother fought, had trained with him.

-All right – said Kanu, which looked stronger. He was the oldest. - Whatever

Comes out of this fight is the end. Whoever wins it’s done. With no touching heads. If there are so, I will personally handle it. Am I making myself clear?

 Sang smiled because he thought Ranku’s stick was too thin. As soon as Sang threw the first hit, Ranku eluded it and hit him by the side where he had his weapon. It was not a very strong smack, but it was hard enough that he let go of his bamboo stick. When Sang bended to pick it up, and Ranku hit him again, this time in his Bum. That made Sang furious, so he went against Ranku’s head. He then bended down and let him pass, then hit him again. This time he did it in his shoulder. Then it sounded like if two sticks had crashed. Sang opened and closed his hand so he

 Could loosen it up. When Sang came up to Ranku for the third time, he slipped under him and hit him in the lows. Sang bended down, because of the pain and let go of his bamboo stick.

-Have you had enough, pudge?

 -Yes! - yelled Sang.

 One of his brothers carried him all the way out.

 Ranku’s brothers picked him up in their shoulders around their house joined by Sunan’s victory calls. Ranku’s mother then came out by hearing all the noise they were making. Then they told her the Story and she was left with a strange feeling.

 -This is not ending here… - said Ranku’s mother.

 -They promised it would. Don’t be sad, mother. You have got a champion in the family.-said Kanu.

 -This boy right here, who is he? Angong’s son?

 -Yes, Madame. Nice to meet you miss Anhu.

 -Have we met before?

 -No, but my mom Angong talks a lot about you, and Ranku.

 -Please, tell her I said hi and that she and your sister can come for tea anytime they want.

 Sunan nodded and waved them goodbye.

 -I’ll come by tomorrow so I can look after you while we walk to school! – said

 Sunan -See you! – said Ranku as he laughed.

 His brothers took him inside because there were too much people outside and by the next morning, everybody would know about what happened and Mr. Bo Tang, the butcher, would have some reasons to be ashamed of his 3 sons.

 **Chapter III**

 **Aya**

The next day, Sunan arrived really early

Holding a girl’s hand, she was called Aya.

She was very little but she had those eyes

 That shone like emeralds.

-Are you Ranku? -Yes, why?-You should

Say: “yes, and you? What’s your name?”

– She said with a very strong and confident Voice. She did not wait for the question and Answered- My name is Aya and I’m Sunan’s Cousin. They were talking a lot about you,

 That you hit some older kids. My mom says

 You should not fight, you should always

Talk first.-And when words are over, What does your mom say?

 -That there is always another option.

 Do not go down head. It is an option.

 -Aya, please be quiet until we arrive school.

Okay? ¬Please. Said Sunan, tired of her talking.

-Sunan, why were you not at school?

 ¬asked Ranku.
Because my father died in Yala, where we lived and we had to go back, and now we do not have a house, and we live with the family of Aya

 When they arrived to school everybody was waiting for Ranku and the new kid that had defeated Sang and his terrible

 brothers. That day Sang missed school because of the beating his father had given him for hurting Ranku without him knowing and by getting defeated. His Brothers had it worse. They were not at school anymore, but did not go to the butchery either.

Sunan talked about the plan they came up

With at the bridge.

 -And weren’t you scared?

 -Of course I was! But after what I had been told about Ranku and due to the fact that my dad showed me combat, I was left with no fear. Plus, I can run really fast and the porkies would have never reached for me.

 Everybody laughed with Sunan, Ranku just smiled. He would never make the

mistake to mock an enemy.

 *-I will later tell Sunan about it.*

Classes started that day with meditation. The professor asked Sunan if he had done it before, and he did many times but it did not work all of them.

 -Everybody here is going to help you,

 Sunan. The ones that know, and the ones

 that don’t: try to go inside of your hearts and look down there.
There is where you will find the substance that allows us to leave our bodies, it is very important to know that mass is not infinite. That’s why we can’t let go of our Physical

 Bodies without risks. Ranku was back to his

 Astral Body in only 3 minutes; not even the Teacher had arrived so soon. He was

 Surprised that Aya, the little girl, was

 Watching and following him.

 -Be careful, I am going really far

 Before she answered, Sunan was with them. The teacher to and told them, that they should not follow Ranku. Sunan and Aya followed him to The Great Cave of the Laying God. “Touch him or stand on him. That will give you more mass.” -Why is The God laying? – asked Aya.

-Because he is waiting for everybody to start believing in him again. But TGW made that the ones that were left, lost their faith.

-And do you believe, professor? – asked Sunan.

-Sure I do. I wouldn’t be introducing you to him. I mean, who can give us mass to fly if it is not a God?

After a while, everybody started to arrive. Ranku arrived at the end, like he always did.

-Where did you go now Ranku?

-To look for Professor Malai, but I did not find her. -I know a Professor called Malai. From Timor’s library.

-Yes! That’s her! That’s professor Malai, from Timor’s Library. She said she would come for me, but I don’t want to. I want to be with my family.

-We will talk about this at the end of the class.

And so they left. They went to lecture class; Sunan’s Favorite.

The lecture professor also taught them Calligraphy, and Sunan had the best one she had ever seen.

-You will be a great Book Writer. Do you have The Gift?

-Yes. But I can’t always see the full story.

-Help yourself with someone, like

Ranku, and your cousin Aya. They can help you complete your pieces. When you write and can’t finish, call them. Tell them to read your story and to check them. Sometimes, with a simple line stories can go on again.

-Thank you professor, I will do.

When the bell rang, all the kids went out to get breakfast and Sunan, Aya and

Ranku, sat together. Three of the big guys were taking parts of other’s lunches. One kid that was distracted asked Aya for her cookie, and as you should expect, she did not want to give it to him.

-Do you want me to take it aggressively? Said Paku. Sunan quickly stood up and said “why don’t you try and take it from me?”

Paku wanted to take Aya’s cookie and Sunan moved Away from him, so Paku would get closer to him. When they got close enough, Sunan punched him with his left hand in the jaw, which caused him to fall. Ranku stood up amazed by the

Disturbance, which had been made while he was not conscious. He was mad at himself, but happy for Sunan. *He promised himself that that wouldn’t happen again: “Always here and* *now”.* During the rest of that day, all you could hear was about what a great pair they were.

The Professor heard about what had happened and what was being said about them both.

-I heard about that happened yesterday, and about all people say about you. It is good that you stand up for yourself and others, but you have to think before you act. You can’t hit someone that’s younger than you or a girl. You can’t brag about what you are or what you do. Don’t worry

about that. Everyone around here knows that. Don’t do things you might regret and most importantly: Fight, combat, flattering, everything that distracts you from being a Professor and a Writer is superfluous, and that is how it all should be seen. You have to stand up for yourselves and be role models to everyone in here. But a Role model does not talk about himself. And about that fear you have apropos of going to The Great Library, you have to think that you will probably go to Yala’s first. Then they will reassign the best in Timor’s. Either way, it is a real honor to be selected and most importantly, at your age. As far as I know, no younger kids have gone to Timor.

-Yes Professor, we know. - They said at the same time.

-My family, sir – added Ranku – they keep me down to earth. I do not know what that means, but they do.

-Same goes for me at home. I was talking to my mom yesterday about what happened with Sang and his brothers, and she kept on telling me not to fly, but to stay down to earth.

-That means your parents want you to be good men, and you too. Congratulations.

Aya was sitting in the door waiting for them, while playing pinjex with stones. She never missed.

-How do you do it? – said Ranku.

-I tell them not to fall.

-Do they listen to you?

-All the time. Look, this is what happens when I don’t tell them anything. Ranku turned with Sunan, that only shrug.

-Did you know this?

-No. And I don’t know what other weird stuff she does.

-Aya, if I throw a pebble can you tell it where to go?

-Sometimes they go where I tell them to, but I can’t tell them to go back.

-Let’s see. I will try not to hit that bamboo.

-Do it – said Aya.

And so Ranku did. And when he thought

he would miss, the pebble made a subtle twist and hit the bamboo stick just in the middle.

-I know just where we can play! – Said Sunan – at the Carnival there will be on Sunday! There are always target shooting games.-I don’t know. I don’t like cheating.

-It’s not cheating if you do it with a cheater. They put extra weight inside balls and pebbles in rings to unbalance them. At least, that’s what my dad used to say.

-We’ll see then.

-What do you think Ranku? – asked Sunan.

-I have my doubts too, we will see during Sunday. If we see that they are cheating on us, we will do the same.

The week went on really fast and nobody messed with any of them three, but there were people that were afraid of them and didn’t want to play with them. Ranku noticed it and asked Dungalev.

-What’s wrong? Aren’t we friends anymore?

-Yes! Yes! Sure!

-Are you scared?

-A little.

-Why? Afraid of whom?

-You. Or Plang, or Sang.

-Why? We have never done anything to you. And we wouldn’t let Plang or Sang do anything to you.

-Yes, I know. But it is really dangerous to be around you, now.

-Why?

-Because you are all taken to Yala or Timor, and you are never coming to Odec Lesar again.

-Who said that?

-My dad.

-Why would your dad know more than ours?

-He says that everyone that is like you is eventually taken to Timor. They take you and all of your friends.

-Your dad knows nothing! – yelled Ranku.

He then ran with Sunan and Aya and grabbed them by the hands. He ran away with them.

They were confused, but still followed him because they saw a tear that was running down and Ranku never cried. In the way, he told them about Dungalev and they were speechless for a while. Sunan was the first one to talk.

-They could take me. I don’t have a dad. But you do, Ranku. And he’s a Sargent.

-I don’t think so. But still I will ask my parents. I am too young to be taken to The Great Library.

Ranku then arrived home all bereaved, but when he saw his parents and brothers,

he smiled. During dinner he told everybody about what Dungalev had told him. His father coughed and said: “that man doesn’t know anything, but the Professor does. I will talk to him on Monday.”

Ranku quickly thought that there were 4 days left and that was an eternity. The brothers started to ask questions to their parents. “At what age were you recruited?” “Who chose them?” The mother was also questioning the same stuff. Ranku’s father stood up and said in a very low voice: At this moment, the army doesn’t know about Ranku; which is the worst that would happen to him and the family. If The Great Library wanted him, somebody would be here already and we would have insurance and We would be honored. So our only worry

should be to keep him from the eyes of the Army.

Ranku’s mother stood up and said “no more fights, or challenges, or flying during meditation”. Everybody finished Their food without making a sound. But at the end, Ranku’s brothers took him to his room to tell them everything he could do. Sunday arrived and so did the end of The Harvest Carnival. Sunan, Aya, and Ranku went there very early. Each one of them with a coin called **bath**. People still used antique coins from BTGW. It was not a lot for a whole day, but it was enough if being well used.

After going through the food stand, the games for kids, and grown-ups, food eating contests, where they fund the way

Of not spending their money, a cup of pumpkin pudding, grilled rib, snail with garlic, coconut water, and so. They could eat a whole lot because everybody recognized Ranku. Everyone wanted to give him food, asked for his opinion; he thanked and praised the food and had free Drinks. Aya and Sunan were really happy that they went with Ranku. They would have hardly eat that much if they would have gone by themselves.

They saw Aya’s parents talking to Ranku’s, but Sunan’s mother was not there. He felt a bit weird about it. They waved at their parents and said goodbye as they continued walking and searched for the games. Sunan then saw his mother with a copper pot over a brazier, he ran up