

Giant Killer



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Rio Dulce July 1984 Carmelita watched the gringo through the wooden louvers of the door. The damp heat of midday poured through the slats into the shade of the kitchen and she could feel it on her face and smell the perfume of flowers and rotting jungle vegetation borne on the humid currents. Rivulets of sweat trickled down her arms and the valley between her breasts braless under her cheap cotton shift. Despite the heat the draft chilled her wet skin and she hugged her arms and shivered. The gringo was lounging at the outdoor bar by the boat dock drinking rum and quinine water from a plastic glass. He wore dirty chino shorts canvas sneakers with no laces and a frayed straw hat with a sun-bleached cloth band that said "Nassau the Bahamas" on it. The hat's brim was tipped forward hiding his long nose and

his glass eye and the prominent
ridge of bone behind his eyebrows that gave himi¼Œ with his long-waistedi¼Œ
wiry framei¼Œ something of the appearance of a rat.
Carmelita had been alone at the Pension Izabal with the gringo since
the supply boat last came upriver three weeks ago. She had said her rosary
every day for all those daysi¼Œ and prayed every night to the Blessed Virgin
Mary to forgive her for the mortal sin she knew she must commit.

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