



## The Eruption

On the summer of May 11th, 1421, the volcano Techazi erupted.

It was the middle of harvest season. The weather just turned warm enough so that the snow receded far into the summits of the surrounding valley. Flowering groves just started to bloom, painting slopeside hills with color against the cold alpine gray. The fields brightened as well. Crops started to shift into a yellow and red hue as the grains and maize ripened. The townsfolk could be seen adorned with the brightest of their dresses ascending and descending the terraced slopes like a rhythmic performance in play. They grab a husk of corn, then another, filling their woven baskets until their backs could not stand straight any longer.

The farmers then turned towards where they went and gathered around the town center. The outer walls were built upon the slopes of the country terraces, right in the center, so that the town's laborers did not tire from climbing the escalated starway. Fires were lit so the elder women could prepare the feast for the coming festival. Upon the setting of the sun, the paper lanterns would be hung and the townsfolk would dance with the color of their tailored costumes. Unfortunately, this would not come to be.

The ranchers were the first to notice the mysterious plumes in the sky. Ash colored smoke gushed out from the crater of Mt. Techazi in an endless stream of gaseous plumes. It was not an unusual site for the volcano to suddenly become active. Sometimes, a little lava would even trickle from the summit. However, it never did go anywhere past that stage. Still, the plumes Techazi released seemed darker this time, seemingly foreboding something ominous. The

ranchers felt their hearts beat with a sense of dread. A few of the horsemen rode up towards the walled town center. Everyone in the quiet village gathered around a pile of large ears of corn, chanting Lambanan folk songs and removing the husks in unison. The sound of hooves brought them to a silence.

"I think we should leave. Techazi seems rather rowdy today," the horseman says.

The townsfolk dismissed him. The volcano did spew plumes every other month. They even believed that the ash from the mountain is the reason why their harvest was so bountiful. The farmers chose to continue their singing.

The ranchers crossed the cobblestone streets to find the village elders cooking in the shade. They too refused to leave. As the men exited the wooden palisades of the village square, praying to Isimbili that the thoughts in their minds were just paranoia, the volcano sent out a thunderous roar. Black smoke and dust filled the air. Boulders of lava fell from the sky and crashed into the stone houses that were speckled across the countryside. The forest started to burn a bright orange. A mix of mud, snow, and pyroclastic flow descended from the mountain slopes and started burying the highest terraces of the country before crashing into the panicking village like the thrashing tides. The town sank. Each building was enveloped with the cascading blanket and whoever was left in these homes were locked into a eternal moment of fear and terror.

The ranchers were the first to reach the safety of the nearest village. Some farmers followed as well, riding buffalos, donkeys, or horses and carrying their families on carriages that usually reserved for corn. Most, however, did not escape the destruction. Some of the men and women had scars and their faces. Their skin was covered in a ghostly shade of white. From the lowest valleys where the climate is warmer, a gray powder started falling from the sky followed by a frigid gale. It resembled the slow descent of a pristine snowflake in a winter day. However, it was just the dirk of ash. Techazi's erupted shrouded the empire with dust and plunged it into an extended winter. The year 1521 is often referred to as "The Year of the Summer Snow."



## The Passing

The winter of the following year, December 3rd 1422, King Ethuna IV passed away.

He was not a noteworthy king, mostly being remembered for his finality and death. He did good things and he did questionable ones, but nothing that would place him upon the annals of time like some of the forefathers before him. The ash from Techazi's eruption caught in his lungs. His frail body did not handle the dust well as, at the age of 88, he rested in his royal bed, coughing and wheezing until he could not breath any longer.

His son, Ethuna V, was young of age. He was born of his father's youngest bride and was left without a mother after she died of common ailments. Surrounding him on the throne were his regents, barely known by the late king and his son but nevertheless elected by the Imperial Council. They were sleazy and transparent of their malicious intentions, something that may be reviled by many but not by the Grand House of Sebile. A long line of merchant royals, they stood by one of the less altruistic variations of Isimbili. "The Kore is to bring bounty to his kin and his kin only," an old pastor said. The motto became ingrained into the clan for hundreds of years.

The family was known to be very different from the rest of the nation. They were pale, due to their aristocratic status and relations with the fair skinned Metsajarvi, and had many deformities in their outwards appearance and train of thought. Despite holding the highest pedestal in the empire, many of the newer sons of the Sebile were illiterate. They were born with twisted deformities and their eyes were too faded to see much more than a blur. Ethuna V, though, was lucky. His grandmother was a Soercan duchess. Although the misfortunes brought by this taboo

were still present, they were by far not as malicious as the ones cursed upon the coronated king's cousins. The prince was born without the ability to hear, but, aside from that, he appeared and behaved as a normal boy.

Despite the questionable intentions of Ethuna V's regent, they did genuinely care for the young "king" and his well being. They did many misdemeanors and cruel acts, especially in the eastern isles, but most of the gold was getting funneled into the king's upbringing. He sat on a golden throne. His tutors were the best in the land. All that his uncles and aunts asked in return was a single portion of the flowing river poured into their coffers. However, the stronger the current was, the more their share would be.

The Rempat Wars were an absolute disaster. The navy underestimated the natives and overestimated the force of their fleets. Many men perished. Most importantly, much of the most prestigious first class Lambanan warships were sunk. It was the first time the empire experienced a true war since the time of the Kiya. The throne wanted it to look flashy and imposing to counteract against the failure of the first encounter. While, indeed, it was a spectacle, the price to be paid for this theatre was piling up.

The eruption of Techazi worsened the matters. Farmers had a system of paying the government with sacks of grain for their taxes. With the coming of the Year of the Summer Snow, these crops started to die. The empire's economy died along with them. Lambana housed some of the largest cities in the world. The glimmering city of Ashwaye was the pearl of its time, an endless sea of stone buildings radiating from the flow of the Fundiswa Canal. However, the empire never had the luxury nations like the Metsajarvi or the Shari had. While there were plenty of rivers and arable land in the empire, the land was mountainous and hard to harvest. Most of the terraced farmlands that filled the bellies of millions of Lambana's citizens suddenly found themselves frozen from the bitter cold. Even the lowland farms in Bi'si and the Lived were affected. The market stalls were deserted. The gold did not flow.





## The Riot

On the autumn, October 24th, 1423, the Ku'aji Riots began.

It was a cold night in the Lived Lands. I knew it would be cold. The beginning of fall just began and the trees started to release their persimmon leaves into the autumn wind. However, the shivering on my neck came from something else. I could sense the overbearing presence of a dark figure ahead, ever hidden from my sight, sucking whatever warmth was left of this place after most farmers migrated to the north.

As if by queue, the faint sound of footsteps began.

They were rhythmic. The monotonous pattern of boots hitting the soft dirt made me think of my time serving the conscriptions back home. I actually whispered to myself that I preferred marching under the midday sun of Idlovu's heat than waste away in some quiet farmstead in what I can assume to be the farthest place a human can possibly be to the sea. I now wish I hadn't said that. At this point, what else could you do?

I stood up and called towards my partner who was still sewing the soil five meters beside me. His face and fingers were covered by the dirt of the humid soil. He always took his job way too seriously. Even when you pushed him to fulfill his desires, it seems that his mind is always fixated on what he thought was necessary rather than what was enjoyable. Nothing changed

when we were assigned here. I'd tell him to take a break and he'd tell me to shut up while he struggled to maneuver the two ton steel flow that was clearly designed for cattle. Still, you have to admire his perseverance. He'd always be last to go to the bunkers at night and his bed is always empty yet neatly put together when the rays of sunlight brush my eyes.

The footsteps now grew louder and the men that made them started to appear in view. *Clop clop clop*. Each step the horse at the group's center took was followed by the splashing of mud on its hooves. These soldiers, they were adorned with colorful metal garbs yet they weren't of the military. The army usually had even its highest rated generals dressed in the most dull looking piece of cloth you could possibly get. The conscript guard from the ku'aji was a less practical role. We had to dress in similarly flashy attire when we were recruited by the school's monks "do our part" and help protect the sanctity of the university. By that I think he meant sweating under the sun while other unmerciful students passed you by. No, the outfits these men were wearing, they were even more adorned than that. They were the king's royal guard. I wondered what they were doing in the middle of nowhere. It was a good thing I didn't think to ask.

"Zul Enyari?" the man riding the horse shifted his gaze towards me.

I nodded. My friend answered when his name was called as well.

"By order of the King, you and your duties are to be transferred to Onyeya. We apologize for the inconvenience and request that the transfer be done as quickly as possible. Please pack your things and head to the carriage."

"Just wait a minute, I just have to finish the final round of my duties. Last corner of the field," I heard from my side.

"Sir, I stated that you pack your things immediately," the horseman asserted in a stronger tone.

"Hold on, hold on. Look, I need to finish the plot or else the Lived will not have enough to harvest when the summer comes," my friend replied still with his head to the ground.

A soldier looked into my eyes and motioned me to my hut. I shyly obliged.

As I walked through the muddy grass, I could hear the argument between the imperial guard and my friend grow even louder. My mind was such in a state of disorientation and confusion that the details were lost. However, once I reached the front hatch of my cabin, I heard the unmistakable sound of a fired pistol coming from my behind.



## The Note

By the spring of 1427, April 6th, the fuse of the revolution had been lit.

“To my dear friend and bar buddy,

First of all, I hope this message gets to you. This town is a bit unfamiliar to me and I am quite unsure how much trust I should give the postage establishments here. Perhaps, by the time you reach this I would have found a reliable messenger. You reading this sentence is proof I have succeeded.

Second, I am terribly sorry for the events that took place with you and your friend. You were inebriated with rum last night and your mouth seemed to be unable to keep your mind's secrets within. These men, however cruel they may be, are not inherently malicious in their personalities nor their intentions. Sometimes, we, as servants of the state, are just trained for years of our lives to never question the lies of the commandants above us. All of us know what happens if we do. Do not worry for me, though. The web spun by Idlovu has not yet reached these shores. Again, if that were the case, you would not receive this letter. I requested for my servant to deposit an offering on the mound you described he rested on. I hope this makes up for my intrusion.

It was bold of you to ask my assistance in the first place. I think I may not be as immune to the effects of intoxication as I thought I had been trained for. To tell you the truth, I detested the way the system was handled by my superiors from the moment I was enlisted. They could not touch

me, I was the granddaughter of the woman who had built the colonial institution in the first place, but I could tell from an uneasy feeling in my neck that there was something incredibly wrong with the orders that were given to me. My mother taught me the Edicts of Honor. It was an ancient philosophical scroll handed down by my family from a time even before what constitutes as Lambana or even Akore existed. As such, I was expected to be a morally impeccable and righteous woman. My family taught me to be strong at the face of adversity. Sometimes, they said, it meant going against what your instinct is telling you.

I was instructed to be the commander of the Fourth Imperial Fleet headed towards Rempah Rakyat in the initial instigation. We colluded all the vessels and encroached them on the stilted houses which constituted the natives' homes, I awaited my command. I was told to wait for a signal before I could fire. I held my firearm with vigilance. My eyes scanned my surroundings awaiting for an ambush or a fired blow. I guessed the flag would be raised by the forefront ship the moment the Rempah took their chances. But the flag was raised. There was no sign of an attack. In fact, these natives were almost smiling when they stared at our vessels. It was as if they were thankful that we were there after the devastating storm that had just past. They thought we were to protect them. But the first fleet fired their cannons and the others followed suit. My crew asked me if we should start a barrage as well. As if by instinct, as my body stood their paralyzed at the scene at my front, the cowardice in my soul had the audacity to nod. I knew the moment last for a split second. In my memory, it lasted an eternity. The smile in these children's faces turned into the crooked expression of fear and doom as the cannons of our galleon rained hell on their villages.

Even at the face of this cruelty, our fleet didn't even leave a dent in their ranks. The typhoon made them vigilant for a disaster to arrive. Little did they know the disaster was from us. Many of my fellow soldiers died on that day. I was lucky enough to be among the five hundred to retreat. They launched another larger attack the months after. It was more successful, however they lost more soldiers than our operations did and the former home of the Rempah turned into nothing but sawdust.

So what I am saying to you is yes, I am joining this revolt of yours. I don't know if it is because my mind believes it is the right thing to do. Deep inside I know my soul just seeks repentance for the death I had rained on that day. However, I do know that I cannot let this continue.

With Regards,  
Admiral Sina Kidongo"





## The Parade

On November 30th, 1430, the capital falls.

“Idlovu was the last city to raise the red banner. Peasant settlements like Izinyo and Libertas fell first, willingly even. They were ones that felt the most anger. Drove upon drove of them paraded into our ships carrying their rakes, rifles, and musical instruments. To some, the galleon felt uplifting. The sound of drums, singing, and dancing would carry even until midnight. It was like revolution had already succeeded upon its inception.

Sidogo was the next stop in the journey. Being a city mostly of priests, the battle was fought not with weapons but with words. Ashwaye soon followed. The men did not raise their guns but instead plucked their strings and sang to the tune of the people as the galleons descended into the canal. The men and women of the harbor clapped their hands at the song. One could even sense Lady Isimbili nod her head. Ingwenyana followed soon after.

No, Idlovu was the last to fall. Their cold hearts did not swoon under the rhythm of the people. And so the galleon descended on the shore and the men and women paraded into the streets. The passers-by danced. They chimed in to the song of the people. Old and young, rich and poor, their spirits were warmed by the beating of the drum.

And so when the parade reached the King's palace, the young king walked towards the singing parade. Those behind him tried to pull him back, but the sound entranced him further. With a tap of a drum and the tune of a pipe, the young king clapped. He danced. He sang the song of the people. The gray and white of his shirt turned bright red, the black of his trousers melted into a yellow, and his sandals glimmered with green."

*The Song of the Red Banner, 1590 AS*

