

When I was able to pull myself away, the sun was starting to set. I had noticed that two of the natives had managed to ask the majority of the questions. Amazing, seeing as there were several thousand Camaboisoui (plural for people from Camaboise) all clamoring for information. However, Sara somehow managed to pluck me out of the crowd.

As I headed inside, I noticed some of the soldiers were looking nervous, but most were enjoying themselves. We walked to the ground floor of the palace. It had sliding doors, one layer was glass, but if you looked closely, another layer was the kind you saw on banks. In other words, it was the kind of thing that could take a few pounds of C4 without even buckling. "This, of course," Sara said bitterly, "was made by some of Souper's minions. I worry that all we're doing is exchanging reliance on Souper and his family for a reliance on your army.

"Anyway," she said, regaining her business-like attitude, "the Reo will see you now." She walked me through a lobby to an elevator. She pressed a button that said floor seven. I noticed that it was possible to get to the roof using the elevator. "If it makes you feel any better," I said, "I could request that the engineers train people to do various construction jobs."

She nodded. "That would make the entire island feel better. Just like using the Taken Land that the British forbade us to use." I nodded. "Also, who do I need to talk to about creating an army? Besides from the US, I mean." Sara stared at me. "We already have an army."

"Well, who's in it?"

"The first people to show up everyday, of course." The elevator dinged, and she shoed me out. "Left corridor, first door on the right," she said. I began to move toward the door she had mentioned. I heard the elevator door ding closed softly. When I got to the door, I noticed she had followed me.

"You're more than just a bodyguard, aren't you?" I asked. Her response was extremely vague. "I do what the Reo requires."

"Like spying?" I guessed as I opened the door. From inside, a man called out, his voice quavering with age, "Only when I require it."

There, sitting on a couch facing a window, was a man I assumed correctly was the Reo. I could see his mane of long gray hair. "Sit with me," he said. I walked forward. The room I was in was L-shaped, with a vault-like door leading to an inner-sanctum area besides me. I moved to sit close to the man.

The man was an old, shriveled man. He was scarred from dozens of fights and his leathery brown skin on his neck boasted a huge tumor. "The doctor Mr. Souper brought wit' him say the mushrooms on my skin be somthin' called cancer. He say that he coulda cured it if I'd been lettin' him pump this special poison into me. Said it would have made me weak. Said it prob'ly would kill me, definitely wouldn't be fun, but de cancer would definitely kill me. I tol' him I'm most likely dead soon. He be sayin' I won't last the month."

He paused, and looked at me. "You want to know why I be choosin' this way to go?" I nodded. "Of course. Cancer is one of the more painful ways to go. In fact, it is one of the few diseases that we can't stop."

The Reo smiled. "I am bein' called by de gods, boy. This is their way of telling me my time was up. That I should make my peace with them before I join 'em forever." He looked me squarely in the eye. "The way to do that is to be findin' me an heir. And I hope my heir will be the Emproa." Emprao was pronounced "em-prow."

“What is... Emprao?” I asked. The Reo smiled, but there was an intense gleam in his eyes. He leaned forward and said with an almost evangelical fervor, “The Emprao is the Reao who will help the Camaboisoui take the entire island. Take it away from de dunlobos, de gatareaos, and dese foreigners ‘oo tink dey can have *our* island. And to do that, a Reao would need to make a modern island.”

He leaned back, defeated. “Owever, I could not modernize. After I got de power plant and de palace and de mines, Tio Saraos threatened war if I made one more foreign structure on the island. And any war I started would be a hard one.”

I looked down. A few soldiers were talking to the locals, showing off the vehicles, weapons, and electronics they had. “Where’s our army?” I asked. The Reo responded. “We give muskets to the first six to show up at de palace and de first six to show up at de docks.”

“How many does Mr. Saraos have?”

“About five hundred.”

I sighed. “We do not have an army.” The Reo said, “We can more people in an emergency.” I nodded, “Yeah, we can draft a bunch of people, but that doesn’t make an army. That makes an untrained mob.” I stood up and walked over to the window. “Honestly, I’m afraid Tio Saraos knows this. I’m afraid we’ll draft every man and woman old enough to fight, and he’ll just roll over us because his guys are better trained.”

The Reo motioned to the soldiers down below. “What about your military? Soup Souper claims they be the best the world has.” I shook my head. “No. They may be well-trained. They may be able to outgun all of us. But as soon as they get a single casualty, Congress will order them back home. All the help we can expect from them is construction, maybe...”

I stopped. From the window, I watched a soldier disassembling and reassembling his gun for a group of locals. “Maybe,” I said, my voice suddenly becoming hopeful, “training and supplies.”