

7/2/11 Continued

Do you know how long it takes to plan a city? If you can only place six buildings, it's very quick. I did learn something new about Camaboise: it had a brand-new mining industry, only about five years old. The Reo was eager to tell me that it was recently owned and had netted several million dollars. "However," he said, "keep an eye on it. I am unsure why it gives us so much money. Especially when the amount we receive is so irregular."

"Who owns this mine?" I asked. "Castaño Lucadao," the Reo said. "He is jefe of the Montañas de Camaboise." I nodded. The island was a U divided into several parts with the bottom end facing south. In the center/south was where the majority of the Camaboisoui lived, called the Dun. To the North, it was all beaches and sunshine, the kind of place movie stars and tycoons fight over. They were separated from the rest of the island by a seemingly mineral-rich mountain range to the west (the Montañas de Camaboise) and a fertile plateau to the East. There was a pass between the two areas in which the palace sat, but a lake blocked the way. You could try going around the dangerous Eastern route, but that was near-impossible. There wasn't a similar way in the west, but there was a nice cove I thought would make a good site for a college.

Of course, there were rumours that it was possible to get to the other side through a mountain path. But that way seemed like it would be guaranteed to be long and hard. The easiest way would be to build a bridge across the lake.

I also knew that Camaboise was divided up into tetraos. Each tetrao was headed by a jefe. As Reo Futurado, I was the jefe of Tetrao Palaciao, which was everything in the Dun between the quarry and the lake. Jefe Lucadao was Jefe of Tetrao Minaos, the only tetrao that had to pass through mine in order to make it to another. If it wasn't for the fact that he and his people believed in all that the Reo believed in, there would be serious tensions.

That day, I also learned that Camaboisoui ate mostly fish and this bread that was made of bread that naturally became pastry-like. When asked about the bread, I learned that the grain it was made from was called lao norriturao, or "the food." Talk about a staple crop.

Also, I started what I began calling my "general staff" (Sara Danoui, Dono Rayao, and Rico Tempesa.) That very night I began reading *Black Hawk Down* to them, but was only three pages in when we were interrupted by the Reo having a seizure. After that, I went to bed.

Saturday, 7/3/10

Just realized today that I haven't been putting on the days of the week in the dates of my entries. Amazing how an NDE will jog the mind.

Anyway, about the near death experience, I decided to go for a walk after breakfast. I decided that I'd walk along the quarry for a bit, take in the sights. Maybe meet new people.

I was about a twenty minute jog from the palace when I noticed two large cats, a little over knee height, were watching me. They were a tawny gold color, and looked, for all the world, like miniature lionesses. I kept jogging, but noticed they were subtly herding me somewhere.

Now, for today, I had done two smart things. These were outweighed by leaving the

palace without any guards, but I digress. The first smart thing was to bring the SOCCOM .45 pistol Scott Brown had given me, and to fully load it. The second smart thing was to draw the pistol. However, the moment I drew it, something large jumped out at me.

It was a mini-lion. Slightly bigger than the mini-lionesses, it still knocked the wind out of me. I only managed to keep it from slicing at my throat and chest when the two mini-lionesses attacked me from either side.

Despite the fact that the mini-lion had my right arm (my gun hand) in its mouth, I was able to fire off the gun three times into the one coming at me from the left. I only hit it once, but I'm reasonably sure that was enough. I swear, I will never forget that smell.

The other one was attacking my right leg. Thank god it couldn't figure out my shoe. I reach for a rock while the micro-lion increased his assault, raking my exposed belly with his forepaws. I fumbled for a rock and smashed the thing on the noggin. Its blood sprayed onto my face.

As it fell away, the remaining creature realized it was the only one left. It turned and tried to jump for my jugular, but I put about seven rounds in it. I suddenly realized I only had about five rounds left in my fifteen-round clip.

I was amazed I was able to stand. I must have gone five steps when I heard a growl. I turned around. Behind me, the god damned fun-sized feline was getting up. I aimed, and fired. The .45 round must have done massive damage judging by the hole in its gut and blood splatter, but it still managed to stand up.

My next actions would be described by professional gun people as "spray and pray." I pulled the trigger ten times. Needless to say, my panicked pulls of the trigger only produced four more shots. The creature collapsed, but not because I had hit it any more times. In my opinion, when I had shot it the first time it hadn't given up and admitted it was dead, like some *Monty Python* skit gone terribly, terribly wrong. But, as in all things, God and biology had its way and the thing died. Normally, I really like cats, but I can't say I was sorry that it died.

I am unsure how long I had been limping when I collapsed. I was sure that when I did, two humvees were racing towards me a little before I did, one blazoned with a red cross, the other with a huge gun mounted on it. By the time I was on my face, bleeding feebly, they had stopped, and shouting men were getting out.

Needless to say, I am still alive. Also, this entry is a day late.

Sunday, 7/3/10

I woke up the next day, my face feeling kind of funny. I got up to leave, but somehow I didn't have the energy to. I turned towards my left to see I was in a hospital bed with the Reo. "I see you had a run-in with the other Reaos. Not many survive that."

"Those cat things?" I asked. The Reo nodded. "You made a serious error that may turn out in your favor. Sara is spreading the rumour among her... friends that you killed those other Reaos with your bare hands. Now, I know about your plan to convince Tio Saraos. What about the other jefes?"

"How am I going to convince Tio Saraos again?" I asked, wondering if someone had suggested I had a plan. "Da changes to de army," the Reo said, "It is always easier to live with a

dead person then a live one.”

“Honestly,” I said, “I hope it won’t come to that. We’re going to need as many people as possible building. But I have no clue how to convince him.”

“You can’t.” The Reo said. “The sooner you be acceptin’ it, the more likely you be livin’ a long and prosperous life. However, you need to be convincin’ de other jefes.”

“Yeah,” I said, “at the council meeting at the full moon, which is in... twenty-three days. Right?” The Reo smiled. “It would be wiser to be movin’ sooner, ‘ermano.”

From the hall, there came the sound of yelling. Some of it was in Camaboisoui, some of it was in English. All of it was angry. It grew until Sara Danoui and a very similar looking man burst into the door. I could tell because the Camaboisoui tend to differ more from each other in the nose and chin than in other things, like musculature, facial structure, skin color, and height.

They were yelling very fast in Camaboisoui, not the usual Camaboisoui drawl. It was so fast that I could only pick up a few words. Words that translated to English as “traitor,” “disobedient,” shameful,” moron,” “royalist,” and plenty more insults. Before I could get a fix on the gist, other than that they hated each other, the man turned to me and said, “So, I be seein’ neither o’em be long for dis world, eh Sara?” For a second, I thought he was going to spit at me.

“Actually,” I said, “even though I haven’t heard back from a doctor, I think I might live.” A medic at the door came barging in. “Only ‘cause God loves morons,” he said, though he might have been so polite. He turned towards Sara and the other man. “Oh great,” he said, “you two.”

Sara continued to stare at the person who had come in with her. “Talo,” she said, “I be thinkin’ the nice man be wantin’ you to leave. Now, we can walk outta ‘ere like good ‘ermanaos, or I can be draggin’ you out. You be choosin’.”

Talo thought for a moment, then spit in Sara’s face. Before anyone could react, Sara delivered a brutal uppercut to Talo’s throat, then a right hook left hook combo to both of his temples. The medic was moving to intervene when she had grabbed Talo by the throat and slammed him into the wall.

“The reason I did not kill you,” she said, “is because our matrías would never forgive me.” So *they* are *brother and sister*, I thought recognizing matrías as the Camaboisoui word for parents. They stared daggers at each other for a few minutes, then several soldiers came in. “Sir, ma’am,” one said, “We’ve been ordered to escort both of you off base. Immediately.”

The rest of the day passed by much more slowly. Captain Tempesa was understandably concerned about the breach of protocol. In fact, he *requested* that I never leave the palace without at least a squad of Soldadaos or Marines. Colonel Fargo was more direct. He essentially told me that if I ever ventured out without an escort, he would shoot me himself. Dono was unsure if he wanted to panic because I was injured and thus weak, or celebrate because I had proved my skill as a Soldadao by killing three otrao reaos.

However, once it was decided that I could walk (provided I didn’t exert myself,) the Reo told Dono he expected me to be out meeting other leaders. I was discharged that night. So, I’m quite proud of all of this writing.

Monday, 7/4/10

The weapons and uniforms arrived today. Captain Tempesa and Dono had been busy

while I had been out. Captain Tempesa's men had assembled three squads, with a fourth on the way. However, he didn't have any lieutenants picked out. Dono had, however, pulled off quite the political scheduling coup. On the day I was scheduled to inspect them, so were the four jefes: Castaño Lucadao, Tio Saraos, Jeano Qua, and the man known as the Dio'ablo, or The God-Talker. The Dio'ablo held the largest and most populous district, Camatetrao, and was also the high priest of the Camaboisoui religion.

We met on the firing range, and, as planned, Dono began his speech. "Honored jefes," he said in Camaboisoui, stuttering, "I am pleased to introduce a new force in our land. A modern army, which will provide us with stability as well as open connections with the Americans. These connections that will allow us to train our people to construct buildings like what you see here." At this, he motioned to the buildings in the base. He then continued, now confident. "Today, we will see the first steps of our new army, one that will make the world envious."

All those who spoke Camaboisoui listened intently. The American soldiers listened confusedly. After he was done, Colonel Fargo raised his hand. The Camaboisoui looked at him curiously. "I believe," I said, "Colonel Fargo has a question. Mind sharing?"

The Colonel immediately asked, "What the hell did he just say?" He may have added a preposition or two, but the statement is mostly accurate. Dono eagerly translated. "Well," the Colonel smirked, "it depends on whether or not y'all can learn."

I froze. Of all the things he could have said, this was one of the worse. However, before someone spoke out, "I'd be sayin' it depends more on how much you can teach us," said one of the jefes. I assumed him to be Castaño Lucadao, as he seemed to be the youngest of the jefes. Instantly, he defused the tension, turning the insult into a challenge.

Colonel Fargo smiled in acceptance. "All right," he said, "we'll do our best." He opened the cases. "Well, these are certainly mixed blessings," he said. He opened one case, and pulled out a large automatic pistol. "This is the Colt 1911," he said, "the mainstay of US Armed Forces since 1911. Ninety-nine years old from the look of it, but it can still flip a man over at several paces. Seven rounds that can quickly be changed, but it sure can recoil."

He went over to the next case. "And this," he said, pulling out an old gun with wooden furniture (stuff that goes around the magazine, firing mechanism and barrel) and a turn-bolt, "is the M1 Garand, the most well-loved rifle to serve with US troops. Another semi-auto, like the 1911, but with more range, accuracy, penetration, and the ability to fire rifle grenades. It's also positively ancient as well."

He opened another case. "Ah," he said with some disgust, pulling out a black, futuristic-looking rifle with handle on the top and large grenade launcher fixed onto the bottom. "The M16A2 with built-in M203 grenade launcher. Clean it well, and it will provide you with accurate semi-auto and three round bursts. Also, it has a grenade launcher. However, these things are a bunch of prima-donnas." I may have replaced some rather creatively vile and offensive descriptors with the word prima-donnas, but the intent was the same.

Next, Colonel Fargo pulled out a medium length rifle with wooden foregrip and stock. He whistled appreciatively. "The Thompson sub-machinegun," he said. "Word of advice: don't unload in areas with people you *don't* want to kill. Just like with..." he struggled to open three other crates. He pulled out three guns, each one bigger than the last. The first was very similar

to what Rambo used in *First Blood*, the other two were mounted weapons. "All of these," Colonel Fargo said, sweeping at the big weapons, "should only be brought out in emergencies. The M2 .50 caliber machine gun and M60E1" he said pointing to the biggest and smallest "are designed to suppress and demoralize large groups of enemies. The AGS-30," he said, pointing to the one in the middle, "is designed to do worse. Now, let's get started!"

He then began drilling the soldiers and talking about discipline. Jefe Castaño walked up to me while this was happening. "Mi Reo," he said, "why have you created dis?" I stopped, and thought. Honestly, when I thought about it, the reason for creating the army was simply that I was scared.

Castaño guessed this, and was disappointed. He sighed. "Please, Aaron," he said, pronouncing it *air-onn*, "do not be corrupted by fear. You have just created a new force in Camaboise, and I am sure you don' be understandin' it. To top it off, it is a force of destruction, constantly lookin' for ways to accomplish its nature, an' new ways to justify it. And the young are joinin' it like mad. Please, Mi Reo, get the young, the ones wit' de talingo focusin' on buildin' instead of destroyin'."

He walked off, but I didn't see. I was too busy staring at my feet, the shame at my cowardice creating a weight so heavy I couldn't lift my head.