

It was a misty autumn afternoon, nearly evening. The sea sat calm, and the wind blew silently, unfeeling. The dew clung to the needles of the trees, Cypress, Cedar, Pine. Kenéil sat upon a rock, on a white beach, looking out to sea, looking for signs of his quarry: Harbor seals. He too, felt the droplets embrace on his fur, but he did not mind, his kind loved the water. His kind were the Kayéil Kushtaka, or Peaceful Land Otter People, in their tongue.

The Kayéil Kushtaka were a relatively new race to Anowara, only existing for the last millennia. Physically, they were similar to River Otters, only they had opposable thumbs, a two legged stance, slightly shorter, slightly human shaped torsos, and limbs that were about twice as long as their four legged brethren, as well as Human height. They were slender, but quite muscular, with small shoulders and necks the width of their relatively small heads, to add to their swiftness underwater. Their people did not have boats for this reason, doing nothing but catching their fish by mouth or, for larger prey, by spear. That was precisely what Kanéil was using, a copper tipped spear, that was two thirds his body's length. He had not seen anything yet during his time surveying the water. Most of his kin would have been in the water, but he had trained his eyes to see surprisingly far, and he did not want to spook his quarry.

He soon noticed something in the distance. From where he stood it appeared almost as large wall of red, with some black, but the red was exceedingly prominent. As they got closer, he realised what they were: Kígáat War Canoes. The Kígáat were their human brethren, the folk they split off from many hundreds of years ago. They have continued to be close as clan mates ever since the transformation of those who were split off, and have helped each other many times, in many ways, throughout their many years. Both people created ornate carvings of anything with a face on anything considered property. Their most iconic pieces were tall poles carved from whole cedar trees. Many outsiders believed them to be of totemic significance, in truth, they were family symbols, often showing their clan affiliation as well.

But there was something very wrong with what he was seeing: these men were clearly warriors: clad with armor made of wooden strips on their torsos, large, solid wooden collars on their necks, solid carved wooden helmets, along with shin and shoulder padding. They were armed mainly with long daggers made of iron, as well as bows and war picks.

He knew this was a raiding party, and a big one at that, but this was as far west as anyone could go before hitting nothing but open ocean. At this point, despite how nervous he was, he decided to investigate. He waded into the water and then got to deep water, taking to a full swim, with his spear at his side. He had too many thoughts racing through his mind: are they attacking? If so, why?

He swam underneath one of the boats closest to the shore, clung to the bottom with all of his limbs, and poked his head out of the water, attempting to eavesdrop. He could only hear a conversation between two of them “I can’t believe this,” a young warrior said, “Why would they suddenly turn on us?”

“I don’t know,” said a slightly older sounding one, “but that fisherman seemed pretty sure about what he saw.”

“But aren’t they called Kayéil’ Kushtaka for a reason? They’re not killers. I don’t know any of them personally, but my cousin is quite close to them!”

“Every single one of the diplomats who went over to converse with them went missing. Why are you even on this boat anyway?”

“My uncle forced me to go. ‘For the honor of our clan’ he said. I really wish father had more say in the matter, but he’s not my disciplinarian. Wait, why is it that the diplomats went missing, but we’re not suffering their fate?” The elder of the two then snapped his head right over the edge of the canoe. Kanéil wasn’t prepared in the slightest. Through the man’s visor, he saw his eyes widen. He managed to dive back down only barely missing a dagger that went into the side of the boat.

He had to warn his village.

He dove farther down to avoid detection, but that didn’t stop an arrow from coming in his direction: he didn’t see it, he merely felt it hit the water.

He had never swam so hard in his life.