

## The Story of Shu Guang Xiong - The Village of Dawn

Situated on a rough sea coast and buffeted by incessant winds, Shu Guang Xiong (The Village of Dawn) is the largest settlement in the domain's austere northern coastal region. Despite its relative insignificance, the village is a testament to resilience amidst harsh conditions: semi-arid lands, sparse vegetation, and the weight of the ancient Dragon's curse, which is said to be the cause of the frequent storms that batter the coast.

### Geography and Context

The village serves as the main link between the coast and the northern part of the domain. A trade route connects Shu Guang Xiong with lands further north, allowing for the exchange of rare spices, ceramics, and textiles. However, the village relies heavily on manufactured goods brought from the capital and larger cities such as Yun Jiang Cheng and Bai He Xiang. Local livelihoods are sustained by fishing, shellfish gathering, and careful exploration of underground water sources. The neighboring villages of Lanyue and Haiwei share this arid landscape, but none can match Shu Guang Xiong in size or importance.

### The Curse of the Dragon and the Serpent of the Misty Seas

It is said that centuries ago, a dragon was killed in an epic duel by an ancient general. With its dying breaths, the dragon cursed the entire region, bringing fierce winds and frequent storms.

However, local fishermen tell another story: from the curse emerged something even more terrifying—a colossal serpent known as Hai Mang (Sea Serpent). As huge as a mountain range, Hai Mang lives hidden in the dark depths of the sea. Its body, covered in bright blue scales, is only seen during the most intense storms, when it emerges from the dense clouds and mist that surround the region.

The locals believe that Hai Mang is the vengeful spirit of the dead dragon, a form reborn to perpetuate its fury. The serpent is blamed for shipwrecks and mysterious disappearances. Superstitious fishermen avoid going out to sea when the sky is covered in low clouds, fearing the creature's glowing eyes and deafening roar.

### The Famous Fengyin Dong Cave

Located in a hilly region between Shu Guang Xiang and Haiwei, this Fengyin Dong, or "Windsong Cave," is a legendary landmark in the region. The sea winds that pass through the cave create an eerie, melodic sound that many associate with the serpent's lament. Explorers say that ancient inscriptions on the cave walls tell stories of a sea entity worshipped as a guardian or destroyer.

In addition to its mystique, the cave attracts traders and curious visitors in search of "Dragon Tears," small crystals said to have magical properties. Some claim that these stones are formed from the scales that Hai Mang lost during his ascents.

### Life in this Region

The inhabitants of this area are shaped by the adversity of nature and the dark legends that surround the region; they are long-suffering, strong and deeply superstitious. The wooden houses, reinforced against the incessant winds and storms, shelter families who cling to ancient beliefs to survive.

Along the coast, small shrines dot the roads and beaches, each one a tribute to the sea deities and the feared serpent Hai Mang. These altars are rustic constructions, made from the bones of sea animals, such as whale ribs, the skulls of large fish and giant shells. Amidst these elements hang faded cloth flags, inscribed with prayers and protective symbols.

#### Offerings to the Gods of the Sea and Hai Mang

Offerings are a common and almost obligatory practice in the villages. Residents place personal items on the altars, such as simple jewelry, precious tools or even food, despite its scarcity. The bones of small animals, set with beads or pieces of metal, are also common, symbolizing sacrifice to the sea beast.

In darker times, when particularly violent storms hit the coast or when boats disappear at sea, desperation leads to human sacrifice. It is said that the village elders, in the name of protecting the rest of the community, secretly choose a villager, usually someone lonely or already seriously ill, to be taken to the beach under the pretext of seeking Hai Mang's forgiveness. The chosen ones are tied to a rock by the sea during high tide, in the hope that the serpent will accept their lives as payment for its fury.

#### The Rituals

The rituals, performed before storms or major sea expeditions, are times of unity and awe. The community gathers around the largest altars at dusk, when the sky is tinged with orange and purple colors, reflecting the village's name, Dawn Village.

Elders lead the ceremonies, chanting guttural chants in an archaic language believed to have been inherited from the region's earliest inhabitants. They light incense and lanterns made from local herbs.