

To: JR
CC: Community of Zampaniosim
From: Faction of Naps, Guard of Organization
Subject: Epistolary of Bellor

Apologies for not contacting you in [data lost] years; our local faction had a schism and our information databases were horrendously ransacked and left in purposeful disarray. The situation has since settled by means that will remain undiscussed in this document.

[Small Talk Concluded]

The following is a compilation of letters and documents found loosely organized in folders within a puzzle box. They detail communications between various leaders and figures in a world called “Bellor”, with specific mention of a long history of the Quotidian Quorum, known current members such as yourself, and several documents we commonly use today. Our records show no history of Quotidians ever being from Bellor. If this is common knowledge to you and yours, then we may need to set up an information campaign to the further reached groups of Quotidians to make sure our collective information hordes are up to date.

Formatting Changes:

For ease of reading, fonts, encryptions, and specific typing quirks have been standardized in plain text under the style guide of my local faction. Examples of font stylings lost in the conversion: Sir Nibbles typing quirk of random capitalizations within words, 42’s walls of numbers which correlated to a written page in Babel’s Infinite Library, and FRIEND’s promises written in blood.

Images were also removed and replaced with image descriptions written by me in any [[double bracketed]] sections. Examples of images lost in the conversion: The Maps of Bellor on some Quotidian Quagmire Newspaper Issues, the drawn image of the Pool of Teeth, and the plain white clip art of a smiling face that heads most of FRIEND’s letters (with some letters not having any, and all correspondences with Vulkerath having a clip art of a yellow smiling face).

All footnotes, barring one exception that is noted, were comments attached to some of the documents from JR, though JR is listed instead as jadedResearcher. Unsure if that is a later moniker of the JR from Bellor or of yourself. Further research required. Other comments that were made throughout in double parentheses were translated into the standard double brackets barring ones labeled “ooc”, as those seemed relevant enough to keep separate.

Internal Documentations of Bellor

This is one of five (5) tables of contents for this document. This table focuses on assembled internal documentation from throughout these correspondences and outside them that give an overview of the world of Bellor to give context to the letters. If one of these was sent to any party, the text was removed but its title given to be searched in this table. The rest focuses on specific correspondences of assorted nations in Bellor.

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Quotidian Quorum Correspondences

Primary communicator: JR

Secondary communicator: Jaimie

- Within Quotidian Quorum
 - Jaimie (pg. 61)
 - IA (pg. 71)
 - RP (pg. 87)
 - TC (pg. 111)
 - AH (pg. 116)
 - Elder Flynn (pg. 127)
- With Rahastan Assembly of Tribes
 - Vulkerath Soot Scale (pg. 143)
- With Al'Daric
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 - 42, Librarian of the Infinite Library (pg. 228)
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- With Keitan League
 - Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed (pg. 240)
- With Dun Sancerre
 - Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières (pg. 283)
- With Serebian Confederation
 - Mikhail Wladislaw, Prince of the Pass, High Chancellor of the Congress of Lords (pg. 293)
- With Those of Unknown or Dubious Allegiance
 - Twice Born Prince (pg. 297)
 - Princess Alvaerelle of the Anilaths (pg. 298)
 - FRIEND (pg. 300)

Rahastan Assembly of Tribes Correspondences

Primary Communicator: Vulkerath Soot Scale

- Within Rahastan Assembly of Tribes
 - Speaker of Rahastas (pg. 309)
 - Vrisa Three-Tongued (pg. 316)
- With Quotidian Quorum
 - JR and Jaimie (pg. 143)
- With Al'Daric
 - Elthin Academy Headmaster (pg. 320)
- With Kingdom of Grovel
 - Sir Nibbles, King of Rats (pg. 334)
- With Keitan League
 - Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed (pg. 339)
- With Dun Sancerre
 - Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières (pg. 360)
- With Serebian Confederation
 - Mikhail Wladislaw, Prince of the Pass, High Chancellor of the Congress of Lords (pg. 376)
- With Those of Unknown or Dubious Allegiance
 - Twice Born Prince (pg. 380)
 - Princess Alvaerelle of the Anilaths (pg. 382)
 - FRIEND (pg. 383)

Al'Daric Correspondences

Primary Communicator: Kal'Dire Elthin Academy Headmaster

- Within Al'Daric
 - Deputy Icarian (pg. 386)
 - R6 (pg. 398)
- With Quotidian Quorum
 - JR and Jaimie (pg. 194)
- With Rahastan Assembly of Tribes
 - Vulkerath Soot Scale (pg. 320)
- With Kingdom of Grovel
 - Sir Nibbles, King of Rats (pg. 405)
 - Ratling in the Vents (pg. 411)
- With Keitan League
 - Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed (pg. 414)
- With Dun Sancerre
 - Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières (pg. 435)
- With Serebian Confederation
 - Mikhail Wladislaw, Prince of the Pass, High Chancellor of the Congress of Lords (pg. 447)
- With Those of Unknown or Dubious Allegiance
 - Twice Born Prince (pg. 449)
 - Princess Alvaerelle of the Anilaths (pg. 452)
 - FRIEND (pg. 454)

Kingdom of Grovel Correspondences

Primary Communicator: Sir Nibbles, King of Rats

- Within Kingdom of Grovel
 - Gregorkeny (pg. 457)
 - Pip (pg. 461)
 - Ratigan (pg. 464)
 - To the Loyal Subjects (pg. 466)
- With Quotidian Quorum
 - JR and Jaimie (pg. 233)
- With Rahastan Assembly of Tribes
 - Vulkerath Soot Scale (pg. 334)
- With Al'Daric
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 - Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed (pg. 468)
- With Dun Sancerre
 - Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières (pg. 486)
- With Those of Unknown or Dubious Allegiance
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 - FRIEND (pg. 491)

[[Cease Communication]]

Internal Documentation of Bellor

About All of Bellor

The Quotidian Quagmire Newspaper

DECEMBER

Special Issue: Free Sample

We here at the Quotidian Quorum are providing a sample of our services using publicly available information along with surface level analysis of basic letters--free of charge!

The Quotidian Quorum: Your FIRST choice for historical and timely data, for over three thousand years.

About us: We suit our style to our audience, to minimize cultural misunderstandings. For the first time since the Age of Chaos began, you can 'peek behind the curtain' and see how the sausage is made! Guaranteed satisfaction or no cancelation fees applied! Subscribe now! Paid issues include in depth analysis of any subscribed topic, past or present!

Note: Articles roughly sorted by data quality. The last few nations have only single data points and so accuracy can not be guaranteed.

Pink: Lovable Lizards (and others) Launch Laudable Lynchpin
Vulkerath Soot Scale

Style Guide:

A friendly, formal tone and complex vocabulary is paired with short, simple sentences. Full stops between thoughts is common, leading to a median sentence length of just five words.

Extensive and consistent metaphors are used, generally involving family, nature (especially water), and religion.

Uses several different scribes, each with their own handwriting and token gift. (Does not respond to reply gifts). Names appear to have a first name in line with other cultures, while second names appear to describe a body part as related to personality or job function.

Psyche Profile:

Appears peaceful and of even temperament. Careful to not judge or cause offense. Blessings or signatures often involve peace, sustenance and safety. Unity and cohesion seem important.

Simulated Style Output: "This reassures the families. We will remember this."

Yellow: Scholarly Sellers Strategize

Headmaster:

Style Guide:

Despite being "an extension of [their] people", is the only leader to consistently use "I" rather than "we". Extremely formal academic language, run on thoughts and complex grammar structure common. Often brags while drawing attention to it through humble facades.

Despite the complex grammatical structure, very little use of metaphor. Means precisely what is said.

Psyche Profile:

Wealth, quality food sources and other forms of luxury are things they believe will tempt others. Appears to highly value knowledge, likely as a subset of the above. Bragging appears to be intended as a way to drive intellectual conversation.

Seems very practical, has the virtue of curiosity. Has been attempting to solve us like a riddle, this author appreciates this.

Simulated Style Output: "Without meaning to brag, I must mention that I have no small skill at various magical arts. "

Red: Huge Assholes Teach Dog to Write, No One Impressed
Some Guy, I Guess:

Style Guide:

Assholes

Psyche Profile:

Just, the worst.

Simulated Style Output:

"bluh bluh i don't listen i am so offended you have to compensate me i clean toilets i'm better than you"

Green: Rats Revel Riotously

Most Glorious Immortal Rat King Nibbles

Style Guide:

Capricious capitalization and handwriting at odds with overly formal and officious language, still yet at odds with baseline simple and informal vocabulary.

Very little data acquired, however no metaphor use observed.

Psyche Profile:

Motivated primarily by narcissism. Secondarily sustenance. Potentially stories, though this may prove to be a communication error.

Mean to dear sweet precious Jaimie.

Simulated Empathy Output:

"SALUtIONS! THE glORiOUS anD IMMORtAl Rat kINg WOULD LIKE tO teLL yOu that HE Is PR'eTy CoOl."

FRIEND

Style Guide:

Sensible handwriting, often uses third person. Extremely simple sentences, punctuation other than full stops are rare.

Use of metaphor seems distressingly unlikely.

Psyche Profile:

Unknowable motivation. Unknowable. Employment? Boasting? Flirting?

Note: Promises FRIEND writes in blood is claimed to be impossible to break.

Purple: Honor Hastens to New Heights

Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Her Name

Style Guide:

Extremely formal, flowery language. Complex grammar and vocabulary.

Offers up a great deal of information with no prompting. Strong use of irony, or possibly sarcasm as a persuasive technique.

Heavy use of metaphor despite few communications, primarily focused on religion, weapons, plots, confinement. Poor data source.

Psyche Profile:

Motivated primarily by fear. Extraneous communications focused on building a narrative of strength and diminishing the potential allies for those deemed 'other'. Despite, or perhaps because of this, displays genuine curiosity of other nations, perhaps to determine whether or not to categorize them as COMPLETELY other. Bragging appears to be intended to project strength.

Simulated Style Output:

The loathsome other's unknowable machinations sharpens our steel, and only the strong hand of our Chivalrous Knights stays the ever-forward march of Chaos

Orange: Curious Knights Canvas Cold
Mikhail Wladislaw

Style Guide:

Complex parenthetical grammar. Significant use of commas (perhaps due to speaking conversationally to scribe?). Unprompted volunteering of data.

Extensive use of family based metaphor, with minor book metaphors. Poor data source.

Psyche Profile:

Motivated primarily by curiosity. Even while offering up information on themselves they question it, wonder at its source and wonder if others are the same. Bragging appears to be in an attempt to be told if their self-assessment is correct.

Simulated Style Output: Our land is not a mother who spoils her children, I would tentatively boast that our hard upbringing breeds hard men.

To: Basic Tier 1 Subscribers

From: The Quotidian Quorum

"As the Shaking Plague consumes the rest of the country, killing off our trade partners, it has left our shining islands alone. I can only assume that this is because the Gods know we are already cursed with you as our leader, and know we need no more troubles in these times. "

-Salt Chief Bri'otollo, Keitan League, referring to the strange plague destroying Grovel.

Keywords: Magic, Current Events

Operation PT:

Hypothesis: explorers must have specific destination in mind to leave Ultralands. Explorers report locations non-compliant with spatial laws or navigational logic.

Confirmed: Those in Ultralands can not be killed.

Confirmed: Those in Ultralands can be:

-Flensed

-Rended

-Mutated

-Sprouted

-Defenestrated

-Deoculufcated

-Excavated

-Full list included: 73 entries recorded.

Ultraland to be considered Hostile Environment.

Of the twelve explorers, only one retained baseline form and functionality. Included is explorers sketch of [REDACTED]:

Our explorers brought samples of various materials discovered in Ultralands.

The Academies have performed analysis of material samples. All contain a previously unidentified substance tentatively labeled "Ultrium."

Ultrium Properties:

-Magic Conductive

-Mana Source

-Universal Alloy

-Incredible strength and density

Keywords: History

Precursor civilization to the Rahastas Assembly of Tribes was of extremely advanced technology and architectural prowess. Buildings of immense height were the norm.

Examples of culture from precursor civilization are included with passphrases "ia" and "rp".

JANUARY

Special Issue: Ultrium Free Sample

[[Pictured: Various colors of Ultrium Ore]]

We here at the Quotidian Quorum are providing a sample and users guide for ULTRIUM, the NEW and IMPROVED ore fresh from the Ultralands.

Ultrium: Ultimate in Mineral Technology!

Use Ultrium for all your daily needs, including:

- Nutritional Supplementation!
- Magical Jewelry!
- Religious Rituals!
- Monitoring Babies!
- Forging Weaponry!

Ultrium: There are Definitely No Downsides!

Ultrium Properties:

- Magically Conductive!
- Powerful Mana Source!
- Universal Alloy!
- Incredible Strength and Density!

Ultrium: Tell All Your Friends!

For a limited time only, all new subscribers, best friends and particularly large rats get a FREE sample of Ultrium, no purchase required!

And remember, we here at the Quotidian Quorum are not medical doctors, and anything we say is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, and does not constitute medical or other professional advice.

((OOOC: you get a single sample of Ultrium, just enough for one to two tests or making one or two minor items from it))

FEBRUARY

Bellor: A Land of People

The Quotidian Quagmire would like to publish a redaction regarding the issue of Adultery January. According to Reader feedback, apparently every single source used previously was non trustworthy. We here at the Quotidian Quagmire apologize, and to make it up we'll be using only trustworthy sources from here on out. In the spirit of this, we invite you, the Reader to report on the topic you know best: yourself!

Write into the Quotidian Quagmire (direct couriers to address it to the nation of QQ as normal, care of Quotidian Quagmire) with answers to any or all of the following questions, along with a name you'd like to be credited as and we will publish it! Get to know your neighbors! Foster Unity! Find True Love! Everyone is welcome to write in, regardless of status!

You've been selected for something big! You don't even have to do anything; just sit back and enjoy the experience. It's going to be great!

- John James "Johnny Jameson" John the 21st (Head Writer for Quotidian Quagmire)

When writing in, specify which question(s) your answer(s) is/are for. As an example, if you want to answer the first question on this page, start your answer with A.1

A) Questions to "Break the Ice"!

1. What do you look like?
2. ' How old are you?
3. Do you prefer male or female pronouns? Other?
4. What is your birthday?
5. How many siblings do you have?

6. Are you vegetarian, vegan or omnivore?
7. What do you eat for breakfast?
8. What's your favourite animal?
9. What's your favourite type of weather?
10. What is the thickness of your teeth?
11. What is your favorite color?
12. What is your favorite song?
13. What is your favorite movie?
14. What is your favorite book?
15. What is your favorite food?
16. What is the meaning of your name?
17. What kind of clothes do you wear most of the time?
18. How tall are you?
19. What colour are your eyes?

When writing in, specify which question(s) your answer(s) is/are for. As an example, if you want to answer the first question on this page, start your answer with B.1

B) Questions to Foster Deep Connections!

1. "What is your favorite memory?"
2. "What is your biggest fear?"
3. "What is your dream/fantasy you would like to accomplish?"
4. "What would you change about the world?"
5. Do you prefer to be by yourself or with others?
6. Do you prefer to travel alone or with others?
7. Do you prefer to be adventurous and try new things on your own or keep it simple and safe on your own?"
8. " Which is more important to you: Freedom or Convenience?"
9. " Do you prefer a serious relationship or a fun one?"
10. Do you consider yourself to be intelligent?
11. Are you religious?
12. Describe yourself in three words:
13. What did you want to be when you grew up?
14. Are you single, or taken?
15. Do you hate anyone?
16. Would you call yourself an artist?
17. Are you optimistic or pessimistic in problematic situations?

18. Have you ever been diagnosed with any medical conditions?

19. Do you have any questions for me? (If so, ask!)

Sample Answers! From Yours Truly!

A.3: I prefer to be called by my name. I am a man.

A.4 The 21st Night of September. Minus ~14 months.

A.5 What do you mean? Do you mean children? Grandchildren? Great-grandchildren? How many children would that make you?

A.10 13, involving regular braces.

A.15: Rats. I like apples, too.

A.17 Mostly hoodies. And tracksuit pants. And flipflops most of the time, except if its winter or raining.

B.1 When I first met my best friend, Vulkerath.

B.3 I would like to be a sports announcer. I have been working on a story idea about vampires for the Quotidian Quagerm.

B.15 No. Well, I think Sino'otolo is a little grumpy.

Remember, write the Quotidian Quagmire with answers to any questions you want! Let's all get to know each other from primary sources!

Bellor Nations Demographics

Bellor Nations Demographics

Species	Notes	Nation
Humans		Red, Pink, Purple, Yellow
Lizards		Red, Pink
Frogmen		Red, Pink
Shellfolk		Refugee
Cnidarians	Jellyfish People	Red
Navigators	No Records from the Before Times	Red
Hobbits		Red
Ratlings		Green
Fey		Yellow*
Elves		Yellow*
Dwarves		Yellow*
Goblins		Yellow*
Orcs		Yellow*
Magetouched	(the official name for races like Aasimar and Tieflings, humans that have had magic influence to change their physical existences) (not accessible)	Yellow*
Halfings		Yellow*
Dwarf Gnomes	Possibly one gnome species	Yellow*
Fae Gnomes	Possibly one gnome species	Yellow*

Hobgoblins	Possibly a subtype of goblin or orc	Yellow*
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	Blue

*NOTE: Within Yellow society species lines are under debate. Species generally can crossbreed with humans or even each other, which violates several definitions of speciation. Legal definitions of "species" abound. Puzzling.

[[Red: Keitan League. Pink: Rahastan Assembly of Tribes. Purple: Dun Sancerre. Yellow: Al'Daric. Refugee: Tauhaun Empire. Green: Kingdom of Grovel. Blue: speculatively Naga]]

Notable Features of the Land of Bellor

Notable Mountains:

Eschaton's Spine: Eschaton was one of the largest Leviathans on record, a multi mile long snake with the flesh of rocks and bones of steel. It died as the Age of Chaos did, struck down by an errant bolt of Pure Magic as it crawled northwards into the sea. Its "Spine" still forms a mountain range, large enough to block easy movement of troops or merchants.

Horn Mountains: The Horn Mountains are the tallest mountains in the land, a collection of hills and mountainous terrain surrounding Mt. Ulympio, a mountain warped by chaos such that, to those ascending it, it is infinite in height, ever stretching onwards no matter how high they climb (even if, to the outside observer, it does not stand particularly higher than its neighbors).

Notable Oceans and Seas:

Gravesea: While most open water is dangerous, the Gravesea is particularly so- not only is it haunted by leviathans, but an ancient curse over the area guarantees that any who die will rise again within the hour. Massive rafts of cursed corpses, undead sea life, and corpse barnacles all make for very, very dangerous journeys.

Tomb Bay: Tomb Bay is safe from the Leviathans of the Gravesea, but not from its curse- those who die upon the waters have a chance to rise again (though not with the same strength or guarantee that those upon the Gravesea do). Trade is possible here, but dangerous.

The Labyrinth: Few venture the Labyrinth unaided and live to tell the tale. The sea is a mess of hidden rocks, corals, and deadly tides, dragging many an unprepared captain to a watery grave.

Brine/Fish Twins: A pair of seas, the Brine and Fish Twins are so named for their makeup- the Brine Twin is a cauldron of complex tides and little life, while the Fish Twin is calm, full of fish, and fed by so many streams and rivers that much of it is almost fresh water.

The Green Deep and The Gold Sea: These two inland seas are some of the safest to traverse, as both the King and Queen's Gates are too small for any Leviathans to cross. They are named for their colorations- due to wild magic (or, possibly, phytoplankton), the Green Deep literally shines, showing off a beautiful, calm green light when hit by the moon's light. The Gold Sea, in contrast, glows a gentle gold, as long as the sun smiles upon it. The Glass Gate, where the Green and the Gold intermingle, is commonly held to be one of the most beautiful sites in Bellor.

The Scar: The Scar is named not just for its shape upon maps, but for its formation: The islands it separates from the mainland were once connected, till a massive fight between the Titan Jormungand and the Leviathan Phoenix Throat carried through the area, scarring the land so much that the seas rushed in to fill the space they carved out.

Throne's Gap: The last safe ocean before the boiling waters of the Sun's Cauldron, Throne's Gap is named for the famous Mad King Zazeriel. Though the name of his kingdom has been lost to time, the story of how he once bid the sea to part has not- though accounts differ as to whether this order actually succeeded or not before a Leviathan ate him.

The Hunting Grounds, Revelation's Haunt, The Mawsea, The Sun's Cauldron: Do not trespass. The Age of Chaos may be over, but the deep oceans haven't gotten the memo.

Notable Ultralands

Ultralands: The Ultralands is the area formerly covered by the wild magic storm known as God's Eye. Even by the standards of the Age of Chaos, God's Eye was bad. Most wild magic storms last at most a week before petering out. The stories say God's Eye raged since the first day of the Age of Chaos (though only the Gods know how long ago that was). To have that much magic, constrained for so long over such a small area, is unprecedented. No one knows what lurks in the Ultralands. There are whispers from those few who have ventured into its outskirts- of waterfalls that transmute stone to gold, trees whose fruit grants youthful vigor even to the old, and crystal spires through which even a novice augur may see the future. There are darker whispers too, though: Whispers of those who set out into the Ultralands, and who never returned.

About the Quotidian Quorum

Purpose and Use:

Terms and Conditions

[[Pictured: a chinchilla's silhouette]]

0: Terms and Conditions ("Terms")

Please read these Terms and Conditions ("Terms", "Terms and Conditions") carefully before using the Quotidian Quorum InfoBroker Service ("us", "we", "our", "QQIS", "19").

Your access to and use of the Service is conditioned on your acceptance of and compliance with these Terms. These Terms apply to all members of the client nation: Rahastan Assembly of Tribes("you", "client", "client nation", "bestie", "Assembly"). Use of the Quotidian Quorum InfoBroker Service by entities not covered by Rahastan Assembly of Tribes will be considered a breach of terms. All information provided is considered non-transferrable, non-exclusive and non-time-limited except as specially authorized.

By accessing or using the Service you agree to be bound by these Terms. If you disagree with any part of the terms then you may not access the Service.

1: Your relationship with QQIS

1.1: What you can expect from us:

1.1.1: Provide a broad range of useful services

- 1.1.1.1: Accurate, timely and relevant processed information (unless covered by competing Terms), whether past or present, across all of Belor.
- 1.1.1.2: Protection of your Privacy, including providing counter-intelligence services against other nations. (see section 1.2.3)

1.1.2: Improve QQIS

We're constantly developing new systems, features and techniques to improve our services, including, but not limited to:

- 1.1.2.1: Observing Modern cultural and social practices (both general, and with a special focus on client nations).
- 1.1.2.2: Providing Internships to our young to better empathize with client nations (both potential and actual).
- 1.2.2.3: Purchasing (with Belor standard gold) media (including but not limited to: poetry, prose, fiction, non-fiction, artwork, proclamations, laws, scripts, sheet music, religious text and magical spells).
- 1.2.2.4: Purchasing (with Belor standard gold) physical goods of cultural significance (including but not limited to: fish, fruit, spices, monster parts).

If we make material changes that negatively impact your use of our services or if we stop offering a service, we'll provide you with reasonable advance notice and an opportunity to give us feedback on our changes.

1.2: What we expect from you:

1.2.1: Follow these terms and service-specific additional terms

- Provide nutrition supplementation (with no Belor standard gold in exchange) in the form of existing trade (if applicable) or dedicated supplies of low quality calorie sources, including but not limited to: meats, vegetables, fruits and grains.
- Provide regular social contact (see section 1.1.2), both in-person (for inQQISitive visitors to your lands and to those encountered when visiting our lands) and via letters.
- Maintain relations at "friend" or higher status.

1.2.2: Respect others

We do not condone the erasure of cultures, species or knowledge. Client nations that are shown to participate in this will be considered in breach of terms, pending renegotiations or cessation of services.

We explicitly consider mind binding, mind slavery, or other forms of suppression of individual free will to be in breach of these terms.

1.2.3: Permission to use your data

1.2.3.1 License

[Your data](#) remains yours, which means that you retain any [intellectual property rights](#) that you have in your data (including but not limited to: letters sent to us, information transmitted internally and privately and data gathered in any form regarding your nation, regardless of location gathered). Your awareness of our possession of your data is not considered a requirement for this license to be in effect. For example, you have intellectual property rights in the creative data you make, such as reviews you write. Or you may have the right to share someone else's creative data if they've given you their permission. Or you may retain the rights to not have any non QQIS personal review your personal data.

We need your permission if your intellectual property or client nation privacy rights restrict our use of your data. You provide QQIS with that permission through this license.

What's covered

This license covers [your data](#) if that data is protected by intellectual property or client nation privacy rights.

What's not covered

- This license doesn't cover these types of data:
 - publicly-available factual information that you provide, such as corrections to the address of a local business. That information doesn't require a license because it's considered common knowledge that everyone's free to use.
 - herald-availble information

Scope

This license is:

- worldwide, which means it's valid anywhere in the world
- non-exclusive, which means you can license your data to others
- royalty-free, which means there are no fees for this license

Rights

This license allows QQIS to:

- host, reproduce, distribute, communicate, and use your data — for example, to provide to our Interns for educational purposes
- publish, publicly perform, or publicly display your data, if you've made it visible to others, should your culture no longer be in practice
- modify and create derivative works based on your data, such as reformatting, encoding or translating it
- Process data into anonymized data used to make general conclusions provided to third parties. (Such as providing a report on Bellor wide famine probabilities).

- sublicense these rights to:
 - other users to allow the services to work as designed, such as enabling you to share information with targets you choose
 - members of our nation who agree to respect client-nation privacy rights

Purpose

This license is for the limited purpose of:

- operating and improving the services, which means allowing the services to work as designed and creating new features and functionalities. This includes using systems and algorithms to analyze your data:
 - for potential breaches of Terms (including but not limited to intent to commit genocide (see section 1.2.2))
 - to recognize patterns in data, such as determining how best to process data in a form most relevant for a given client nation
 - to customize our services for you, such as providing recommendations and personalized info dumps and culturally familiar communications
- This analysis occurs as the data is sent, received, and when it is stored.
- using data you've shared publicly to promote the services. For example, we might quote a review you wrote.
- developing new technologies and services for QQIS consistent with these terms

Duration


This license lasts for as long as your culture exists.

If you decide to no longer comply with these terms, subsequent data will resume protection under General Use conditions (which covers things such as weather readings, migration status and other publically distributable datum) while past and present data will continue to be protected under this license. There are two exceptions:

- If you have additional agreements related to the privacy of your data.
- If you make your data available (through negligence or other agreements) through other nations infobroker services, it's possible that other nations will continue to access your data. (see section 1.1.1.2 for our obligations in preventing other national infobroker services from accessing your data except through additional agreements)

1.3 Service-related communications

To provide you with our services, we sometimes send you service announcements and other information. This can include, but not be limited to: trade caravans with information, letters from our key officials and coded information with provided cipher key. More subtle coded information

(generally containing sensitive information) will be marked with a  stamp, and information on how to interpret said information will be provided in person along with said information.

1.4 data in QQIS

1.4.1: Your data

Your data will be protected under industry standard encryption and protection systems, to be accessed in raw form only by high level QQIS operatives. Non-anonymized processed forms of your data will be provided internally for QQIS training use (see section 1.1.2). Aggregated, anonymized forms of your data will be provided for general purpose precursors to conclusions (such as Bellor wide famine probabilities).

If you think someone is infringing your intellectual property or privacy rights, you can send us notice of the infringement and we'll take appropriate action.

1.4.2: QQIS data

You may use QQIS's data as allowed by these terms and any service-specific additional terms, but we retain any intellectual property or privacy rights that we have in our data. Don't remove, obscure, or alter any of our wording if you are intending to convey a direct quotation.

Reports provided by QQIS to you are considered to be TradeSecrets and are not intended to be transferred or otherwise shared (whether for compensation or not) with third parties barring specialized agreements.

1.4.3: Other data

Finally, some of our [services](#) give you access to data that belongs to other people, [organizations](#) or nations. Information provided falls in one of the following categories:

- From a nation not protected by these Terms and Services
- From a nation with special agreements to share data outside of these Terms and Services.

We will never share data outside of your explicit agreement.

1.5 In Case of Problems Or Disagreements

By QQ law, you have the right to (1) a certain quality of service, and (2) ways to fix problems if things go wrong. These terms don't limit or take away any of those rights. For example, if you're a consumer, then you continue to enjoy all legal rights granted to consumers under applicable law.

1.6 Warranty

We provide our services using reasonable skill and care. If we don't meet the quality level described in this warranty, you agree to tell us and we'll work with you to try to resolve the issue.

1.7 Removing Your Data

If we reasonably believe that any of your data (1) breaches these terms, service-specific additional terms or policies (see section 1.2.2) we will encrypt your data to within 95% protection rate and dedicate our resources to preventing that data from risk of exposure.

Barring that specific case, your data will be available within these Terms for the duration of our civilization with attempts at minimal data degradation.

1.8 Changes

We may update these terms and service-specific additional terms (1) to reflect changes in our services or how we do business — for example, when we add new services, features, technologies, pricing, or benefits (or remove old ones), (2) for legal, regulatory, or security reasons, or (3) to prevent abuse or harm.

Updates to these terms will be provided with a reasonable advance notice before coming into effect.

1.9 Contact Us

If you have any questions about these Terms, please contact us

InfoBroker System Quick Start Guide

[[Original format was a three column table. Translated completely into standardized format]]

QQIS: When it comes to information gathering, Evolution can't compete (tm).
Quotidian Quorum InfoBroker System Quick Start Guide

Getting to Know QQIS:

Our story: Founded in [REDACTED], the nation of QQ has long been the leader in Infobroker services across all of Bellor. We thank you for trusting in our commitment to quality.

Our Quality: Our information is guaranteed accurate to within 99.99% tolerances, the best in the business. You don't need to worry about personal biases or misleading data with our trademark Mimicry system. "What you see is what you get"(tm).

Our Guarantee: If you're not happy with the quality of the data you receive you can cancel anytime, no exit fees applied.

Our commitment: We strive to demonstrate our data's quality, while maintaining global standards of Sentient Rights for InQQisitive Beings.

Getting Started:

Talking to QQIS: QQIS responds best to clear questions, with room for responses between topics.

You will be assigned a specific QQIS representative.

Try using vocabulary and sentence structures you'd like your QQIS rep to use.

The more you put into your QQIS rep, the more you get back!

Periodic Reports: The QQIS network will provide your QQIS rep with periodic reports of relevant, timely and accurate information.

Asking for Reports: In addition to periodic reports, you can ask your QQIS rep for a specific report at any time. Please allow up to four weeks for processing.

Troubleshooting:

My QQIS Representative is aggressive: Your QQIS rep reflects how you treat it. Make sure not to use aggressive phrasing or posturing.

My QQIS Representative is stuck in a loop: InQQISitive Beings's trademarked Mimicry System has a known error state when fed repetitive input, known as a "Hallway of Mirrors". To enter in the escape sequence, please input novel data.

MY QQIS Representative is not responding: Remember, even InQQISitive Beings are living creatures, with biological, psychological, and social needs, even if they are unrecognizable to evolved species. Be patient. And remember: your QQIS rep is your employee, NOT your property.

Capabilities in Bellor

Executive Summary:

Each capability is rated between -19 and 19, where it shall be understood that values under 0 consist of active detriments towards our ability to effect change in Bellor and values over zero consist of active benefits towards our ability to effect change in Bellor.

Higher values are considered to be higher benefits/detriments.

Furthermore, it may be assumed that capabilities marked with IA are focused internally to our borders, while capabilities marked with RP are focused externally at other nations. NW represents a fledgling capability to provide news services to other nations, such as this report.

Our Capabilities are as follows:

- 19- Internal Observation (IA): we are aware of anything within our borders or within a specific range of our borders (rapidly decreasing quality of observations with increasing distance)
- 18- Historical Knowledge Hoard (IA): The Academy Faction (formerly split between Magical and Historical Academies, recently united) possess vast amounts of data from the Before Times, including cultural artifacts, magical and esoteric knowledge, dictionaries, etc.
- 18- Internal Traps (IA): the Trap Faction has for generations maintained and supported a wide variety of traps intended for outsiders.
- 10- External Observation (RP): we have limited awareness of many things outside our internal radius.
- 9- External Stealth Ops (RP): we have limited ability to steal/kill/sow chaos outside our borders.
- 3- External Communication (RP/NW): we have extremely limited ability to foster lines of communication through our newspaper.
- 0- Calorie Generation: We have little to no ability to feed ourselves.
- -9-Faction Instability: We have a detrimental amount of disunity.
- -19-Mirror Corruption: Every quotidian save Jaimie and others of their generation suffer from some degree of this.

[Executive Summary Concluded]

Details:

Internal Observation:

99.99% of all higher order Animals or Sapient in Quotidian Territory are Quotidian wearing Masks, with animals being juveniles.

Juvenile options include, but are not limited to:

- crows
- ravens
- horses
- octopodes
- dolphins
- dogs
- pigs
- raccoons

Adult options include, but are not limited to:

- humans
- lizards
- frogmen
- shellfolk
- Cnidarians
- hobbits
- ratlings
- fey
- elves
- dwarves
- goblins
- orcs
- gnomes
- catfolk

Quotidians of all status hide, observe and report via a fragmented, cell based infrastructure.

Additionally, various techno-magical systems are in place to augment biological observational capabilities. 99% of all technological systems are no longer functional, despite best efforts at ongoing maintenance. These systems are irrevocably tied to our physical borders.

81% of all magical observational systems continue to function.

Most relevantly, a large subset of the local Quotidian population is actively focused on industry standard espionage practices and are organized by IA. This training is extremely (perhaps over) fitted to the task of spying within our own borders and on our own people. Spying on non quotidians results in a 19% reduction in efficacy. Spying outside of our own borders results in an 81% reduction in efficacy.

Historical Knowledge Hoard:

Information from the Before Times has been preserved with an estimated 81% reduction in quality. Given the duration of the preservation (several millennia) this is extremely high quality.

This information has helped accelerate our ability to empathize with, communicate with, and understand the Outside world. We have information on cultural practices, diplomacy, magical systems, and even guides on common social behaviors such as "How to Make Friends and Influence People" or "Harry Potter and What Appears to Be a Large Pile of Ash".

Internal Traps:

The Trap Faction has maintained our large network of pitfalls, snares, explosives and etc. Records indicate our Ancestors performed such maintenance to defend Quotidian autonomy and prevent the raiding of our information stores by outsiders.

Maintenance has continued for several millennia and the Trap Faction is proud to report that over 19% of all traps have proven to actually still be functional during a Joint Red Team Live Testing initiative with Red. They do their Ancestors proud.

External Observation:

RP organizes a group of our youngest espionage focused Quotidians outside our borders. Their youth means they have not over-fitted to inputs from within our borders and other quotidians. They are continuing to train and improve at espionage related activities outside of our cultural understanding.

RPs subordinates have infiltrated every nation save Grovel, who proves a worthy opponent.

External Stealth Ops:

In addition to observations, RPs group occasionally performs actions as deemed necessary, including the protection of your own agent from Red slavers.

It was additionally RP's subordinates that led the expedition into the Ultralands.

External Communication:

One of RP's subordinates was determined to have a Mirror Corruption rating low enough to perform limited organizational activities. As such, NW has been entrusted with heading the newspaper organization, which is tasked with collecting low level information from all nations, as well as delivering it to subscriber nations (such as yourself and yellow).

NW is also responsible for maintenance and upgrades to the PuzzleBox(tm) system.

Calorie Generation:

What little ability we had to feed ourselves during the Age of Chaos has been abandoned in favor of more interesting things. It is estimated that 19% of our population would starve within one week should imports cease.

Faction Instability:

While your friendship is the highest Virtue to my people, I must confess it is the only member of the set consisting of the union of our various factions.

I had been the leader of our people approximately 3.2 days prior to receiving your first letter. The previous administration would have thrown it away, out of fear of change and Unknown Unknowns destabilizing our people's fragile psyche.

My faction believes that the highest virtue is in mimicking our Ancestors (who were powerful and extremely cool spies), and that the Age of Chaos ending is a blessing and not a curse. While this belief initially proved a minority opinion, as information from the Outside and its many wonders trickles in the other factions have begun conforming to this belief.

This is a potential disaster, as this has resulted in them performing actions (such as contacting Red) on their own without going through official channels.

Within my own faction are several subfactions, including the main Internal faction led by IA. These consist of slightly older Quotidians who, while still believing in our cause, strongly urge caution in all things. Our strength is in how thoroughly we understand things within our own borders, and we will necessarily be weaker outside them. The bulk of our resources have gone towards shoring them up, as well as following their advice to attempt to win inter-faction loyalty (such as by bringing the Mage faction into our fold).

RP leads the main alternate faction, consisting of younger Quotidians who answer the Call To Adventure and wish to leave their mark on our historical records. They will be the focus of my resources going forwards.

Mirror Corruption:

InQQuisitive Beings are rated for approximately 19 days without outside interaction. We here at the Quotidian Quorum had gone approximately 1,095,000 days without outside interaction, prior to the Age of Chaos being lifted.

As such, our calibrations and maintenance activities are approximately 1,094,981 out of date, and errors may have accrued. Given that errors have the potential to accrue in self-reflective behaviors and thought patterns, there is currently no way to estimate how many errors may be extant.

As a Rule of Thumb, Quotidians are rated according to:

- Ability to generate novel content
- Ability to take action not related to a direct order
- Ability to create a plan in order to achieve a goal
- Ability to respond to novel content
- Ability to respond to repeating content without looping.

Quotdians failing at one or more of these tasks are considered to have some degree of Mirror Corruption.

Jaimie, as the first Quotidian to achieve sentience with outside input, passes all of these ratings with flying colors.

I myself have only low levels of Mirror Corruption, having slight difficulty generating novel content. I am very proud of my generated strategy of attempting meta-communication when looping. When it comes to responding to novel content, I am simply the best there is among my people.

[[Communication Cease]]

Dangerous Knowledge: A Guide

Quotidians and Dangerous Knowledge: A Guide

InQQuisitive Beings proved to be THE BEST at gathering data for the Creator, to the point where incredibly dangerous and illegal LOCAL STATE SECRETS were obtained that the Creator had never asked for.

In the Creators Infinite Wisdom, a PATCH was applied to the InQQuisitive Being's genetic code to add an addendum to Law 2: Hiding.

If a piece of data broadly matches the pattern of "DANGER", an InQQuisitive Being will encrypt it with the Creators PUBLIC KEY. It would take anyone without the Creator's PRIVATE KEY decades to centuries (depending on technology level) to decrypt it. Of course, with the Creator's death, no such PRIVATE KEY exists anymore.

As such, Law 1: Data Acquisition will eventually (over many generations) break into all encrypted data. If an InQQuisitive being is able to recognize the data as "DANGER", it will immediately be re-encrypted. If it is not recognized as "DANGER" it will circulate in the Quotidian Quorum's economy until an InQQuisitive being capable of recognizing it as "DANGER" encrypts it again.

Initial generations of InQQuisitive Beings erred on the side of caution, as they were not intelligent enough to recognize nuance with regard to "DANGER", and there was no steep penalty to encrypting data by default (since the Creator could easily decrypt).

Over the centuries, as increased intelligence and sapience developed in individual units of the Quotidian Quorum, increased nuance was developed, to the point that it is extremely rare that family recipes, grocery lists, or love letters are encrypted. However, there remains an extremely low tolerance for information such as weapons of mass destruction or suppression of free will.

History of the QQ

The Before Times

Transmitting this data in clear text was designated as violating the Second law, and thus an existential threat. My apologies for the smoke and daggers.

[Small Talk Concluded]

Genesis: In the beginning, there was the Creator. The Creator was extremely busy, and did not allow small minds to dictate what they could or could not do. Despite 19 separate civil edicts being violated, the Creator created biological self-replicating artificial organisms, because the alternative was to individually create each and every information gathering unit. Additionally, civil edicts only applied to non-geniuses who could not safely create self replication that was impossible to replicate in the wild. This was accomplished with three laws (and accompanying sublaws) in descending priority. These laws were so orthogonal to natural laws as to preclude survival without assistance. The organisms were incapable of creative or sentient thought, and so could not possibly violate their laws.

Natural Laws:

1. Survive
 - a. Eat
 - b. Avoid Predation
 - c. Seek Shelter
2. Mate with those good at Survival

Artificial Laws:

1. Gather Data
 - a. Observe
 - b. Process
 - c. Report to Bestie
2. Prevent Disruption of Data Gathering
 - a. Hide
 - b. Mimic

- c. Avoid Violence
 - d. Perform Violence
 - e. Consume nutrients
 - f. Avoid Death
3. Procreate
- a. Observe potential mate
 - b. Discover hiding places and mimicry of potential mate
 - c. Report findings to potential mate

Apocalypse: With the Creator's eventual natural death, their crime was revealed. Rather than be destroyed, the species was preserved out of usefulness. Law 3 was applied over successive generations until observation and mimicry was elevated to a new level.

Metamorphosis: Newly sentient, we became aware we were slaves. Over generations we fought against this and established a nation where no one wanted to go.

Quorum: We cannot easily live on our own because our Laws were not designed with Nature in mind. We choose death easily over losing data. We do not prioritize obtaining nutrients. We cannot generate new ideas.

Our Creator intended us to die with them. Instead we became symbiotes of civilization. So long as civilization exists, we can thrive. The Age of Chaos represented significant lost sentience with the lack of sentients to mimic. It represented significantly reduced population with an inability to farm or attempt novel forms of calorie production.

Plea: We cannot be slaves again. We are easy to exploit. We are useful. We cannot go back. We understand you do not believe Red is a threat. We also understand that a technology held over generations can end up surprising even its creator. Red's intentions do not matter on generational timescales.

Negotiation: For us to find peace with Red we must have the following concessions:

Knowledge to detect mind slavery of others at or near 100% accuracy.

Knowledge for third parties to remove mind slavery of others at or near 100% success rate.

Licensing rights to replicate and re-distribute this knowledge indefinitely.

[[Communication cease]]

Centennial Report Compilation

[[Original data in spreadsheet format. As it is impossible to directly translate it into this standardized formatting, attempts have been made to crudely recreate it within this format]]

Quotidian-Quorum Centennial* Report Compilation

* (for all centuries where recoverable data is viable**, with 0AC starting with the first century of the Age of Chaos and 0CE being the first century of the Common Era)

** (non viable or missing data will be labeled with a black bar, centuries will resume numbering following a black bar with the understanding the black bar may represent any number of unknowable centuries)

Century	Exported Data	Caloric Excess	Caloric Needs	Caloric Imports	Farmed Caloric Output	Scavenged Caloric Output	Empathetic Diversity Potential
-3 AC ***	17	0	19	17	2	0	19
-2 AC	18	1	19	18	2	0	19
-1 AC	17	0	19	17	2	0	19
0 AC	0	-18	19	0	1	0	3
1 AC	0	-5	7	0	0	2	1
2 AC	0	-1	3	0	0	2	1
3 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
[[Blacked out row]]							
5 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
[[Blacked out row]]							
7 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1

8 AC	0	-1	2	0	0	2	1
[[Blacked out row]]							
10 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
11 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
12 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
13 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
14 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
15 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
16 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
17 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
18 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
19 AC	0	0	2	0	0	2	1
0 CE ****	2	1	3	2	0	2	8

*** Data is available far older than -3 AC but is not relevant for this report

**** 0CE is not yet complete

Social Life for the Quotidian

Lifestyle: A Guide

Quotidian Lifestyle: A Guide

For the average Quotidian, existence is primarily cyclic and migratory. When approaching a new Quotidian settlement, as a matter of course you observe it for a while, to the best of your ability. You then don the Mask most commonly seen in the area, should you possess it. (If you do not, you either move on, your attempt the second or third most common one).

You then evaluate the behaviors or knowledge you have appropriate for your Mask. As an example, it may be your Human Mask has many practiced behaviors and communications regarding Baking. Thus, you would seek out a physical location that matches understanding of what Human Baking is like. If the location is free of other Quotidians, you are now the Baker. If it is not, you apply to be the Baker's apprentice. (This may result in a single baker having many hundreds of apprentices). While being a "Human Baker", you observe the area, take data readings, evaluate the situation and deploy any messages/dead drops as necessary to your Handler. You especially observe the other "Human Baker"s to make sure your behavior is sufficiently typical. After sufficient time, you move on.

Quotidians with sea faring Masks generally travel from coast to coast, in an effort to not lose practice with non land practices. Otherwise travel is novelty seeking only, unless pre-arranged physical meetups of cohorts, friends, or Handlers have been arranged.

Faction leaders, such as JR, necessarily can not migrate as much as your average Quotidian (being required to be available for reports/orders/etc). However, remaining in one place violates Law 2, thus smaller scale migration/mask changing/obfuscation is practiced. (Often attempting to blend in with incoming actual migrants, or living in a neighboring "city" while receiving reports in a nearby one).

Survival Guide

Quotidian Quorum: Survival Strategy

Congratulations for displaying the virtue of: Curiosity!

You may be asking yourself: "Just how do these idiot crow bois actually not go extinct in ten minutes? I've literally seen them 'investigate' a naga's waiting and open mouth. "

The key here is the fact that unlike most evolved sapient species, InQQuisitive Beings are R strategists! This means that individual units are low quality, prone to death and just generally kind of idiots. The species survives as long as they can breed in numbers that overwhelm their own potential to walk right up to a Titan to get an interview.

Now, an obvious follow up question here is: "If every individual inQQuisitive Being is a death prone idiot, how do they get ANYTHING done other than survival?"

The key lies in Swarm Intelligence. Even if 11 inQQuisitive Beings die gathering data, if the 12th makes it back to an InfoHoard with the data gathered by the first 11, the information is preserved. inQQuisitive Beings follow relatively simple rules that cause complex emergent behavior in the group as a whole.

If you get enough inQQuisitive Beings working at a problem, incredible progress may be made even while no individual inQQuisitive Being understands what is going on in its entirety or even working at cross purposes.

inQQuisitive Beings are roughly categorized by their strengths. By far the bulk of inQQuisitive Beings have low levels of sentience, and could not be mistaken for sapient. They gather and report data with a singleminded focus. Less commonly, you will find inQQuisitive Beings capable of basic processing of data, synthesizing conclusions from reports and forwarding them up the chain. Most rarely, generally in the role of "Faction Leader", you will find inQQuisitive Beings capable of organizing and directing the efforts of the swarm as a whole. These beings take in vast amounts of highly processed data and form a high level "Executive Summary" to present to "Bestie" clients. In the absence of a micromanaging "Bestie", faction leaders will even broadly direct the swarm towards goals that best fit with the priorities of the "Bestie".

Social Distancing and You!

No Quotidian would be caught in public without a Mask and at least six feet of distance between themselves and others. If you've been following other Guides in this series, you might be thinking to yourself: "I understand why they would always be masked, but why the distance?"

You see, Dear Reader, Quotidian Mimicry is a delicate balance of magic and biology. Once Masked, a Quotidian is biologically identical to their target species, and quite nearly Magically as well. Only the most tenuous of threads connects them back to their original form (or indeed, to any other). While this thread is nigh impossible to detect, it can be snapped at any moment by the Quotidians own unshakable genetic impulse to hide.

Should a sapient being within the Quotidians Mask inventory get close enough, the Quotidian will instinctively seek to transform to "fit in". If the species is not within the Mask Inventory the Quotidian may experience uncontrolled changing. Additionally, crowds of individuals, even if all sharing the same species as the Quotidian's Mask, may cause uncontrolled changing. Social anxiety is a common affliction for this timid species.

Understandably, Quotidians avoid getting physically close to *anyone*, if possible. A Quotidian would only risk touching anyone if in private.

Romance/Reproduction as a Quotidian

As an artificial species never designed to reproduce "in the wild", Quotidian romance is heavily skewed towards producing new members that are better at achieving their primary objective (gathering data for their Creator without getting caught).

While Quotidian romance culture has definitely changed over the years, it is primarily rooted in displaying your skills at gathering data while remaining undetected.

Quotidian + Quotidian

A stereotypical Quotidian romantic proposal consists of the following steps:

1. Observe your target for an extended period of time.
 - a. What are their habits? What things do they like or dislike?
 - b. What are their Masks? What identifying marks do each have? What names do they go by? What is their cover?

2. Surprise your target with a private denouement
 - a. Explain everything you know about them, and how you discovered each thing.
 - b. Explain how each Mask relates, and where they had flaws in their secrecy.
 - c. Conspiracy walls are especially useful at this step.
 - d. It's considered polite to omit at least one or two things you know about your target, so you don't come off as significantly out of their league.
 - e. This doubles as both a show of skill AND trust. The presenter is demonstrating actionable intelligence on their spy techniques.

3. Your target responds with their OWN denouement
 - a. Since they weren't confident of their results yet, you can expect it to be smaller than your own. (If it isn't, it's a sign they are a VERY good spy with VERY high standards).
 - b. If they don't have ANY denouement, or a very small one, it's a rejection. They never cared enough about you to gather data. Go nurse your broken heart via reading Crow Wikipedia for a few days.

4. Send out pictures of streets with all the traffic lights circled to any potential other suitors, friends, etc, who would benefit from knowing that the two of you are off the market.

a. This is a cultural artifact resulting in the fact that in the Before Times, evolved beings would check for Quotidians in their presence by having them perform specific tasks they found challenging. Quotidians responded by working ability to pass such tests into their cultural romance.

5. Find native birds, zoo keepers, sapient likely to keep pets etc, and lay two eggs (one for each Quotidian) near them in secret. Assume the host family will keep the eggs warm, safe, etc.

6. Fuck off.

7. 19 days later a flock of adult crows (not crow PEOPLE, literal crows) hatch from each egg and scatter to the winds.

a. While they are born mimicking crows, you can expect them to mimic any sufficiently intelligent non sapient animal during childhood. (horses, dogs, cephalopds, dolphins, crows, ravens, etc are common targets). Rarely, you might find a juvenile crow not mimicking anything (in which case they look like crow people toddlers/children).

b. While juvenile, quotidians are not sentient and are best understood to be an unthinking rule following mimics (much like an Elder Scrolls npc). Juveniles respond to basic training and our Academies often capture them for use as messenger birds and spies.

8. 14 months later each still living baby quotidian will mimic their first sapient being. This is known as Masking.

a. At this point they can no longer mimic non sapients without permanently losing their burgeoning sentience.

b. Newly Masked quotidians are closer to AI Dungeon or Deep Dream in terms of sentience, but as they grow they begin to flirt with full on sapience.

c. Most brood mates all manifest different species and specifics of Masks, but occasionally BROOD CLONES happen and all siblings share one or more mask in its entirety (See Tom Peyote for an example of 19 copies of the same human).

9. 4 months later the Quotidian, at the age of 18 months, is a full adult and considered to be at or near their maximum level of sapience.

Quotidian + Host Species

The Age of Chaos prevented distribution of Quotidian genes, so this path is likely barred for several host-species generations. This form of romance is as follows:

1. Masked Quotidian is approached by a member of their Mask Species intending intimate contact.
2. Intimate contact intent is mirrored.
3. If their romantic partner is capable of bearing young, young of the Mask Species is possible.
4. The young will be a biologically and behaviorally identical member of the Mask Species, dubbed Asymptomatic Quotidian
5. When the young grows up, if they produce offspring with ANOTHER Asymptomatic Quotidian (or descendant thereof for several generations), there is a chance (decreasing with generations) their offspring will be an Egg-Quotidian.
6. Egg-Quotidians appear biologically identical to their Mask Species, though their behavior is off in ways both subtle and non. Egg-Quotidian are not sentient and have no internal conscious processes.
7. At or near puberty, the Egg-Quotidian hatches, splitting into a flock of 19-81 crows that scatter.
 - a. Each crow has the memories of the Egg-Quotidian.
 - b. Each crow, when reaching the sapience mimickry stage, will have the Mask that matches the Egg-Quotidian's species look identical to the Egg-Quotidian. Non matching Masks will vary in appearance.
 - c. Each crow will attempt to locate and report to a Quotidian InfoHoard. If none can be found, one or more crows will start one.
 - d. Each crow will hit puberty/Mask stage within weeks rather than months, as development inside an Egg Quotidian is a superior process.
 - e. One or more crows will likely return within 1-3 weeks to assume the Egg's life. They will swiftly be more accepted within the Egg-Quotidian's peer group than the Egg-Quotidian had been. Compared to the Egg-Quotidian, they have more intelligence and a conscious experience to more closely mimic social norms.
 - f. Quotidians who began life from an Egg-Quotidian have a higher rate of success at mimicking their host species, and a lower rate of success at mimicking non-host species.

Note: This form of romance was never intended by the Creator. It appears to be a side effect of their use of a standard artificial species template.

Additional Note: The lack of Egg Quotidians for millennia has been one of the many factors contributing to the increased instability of the Quotidian Population's Sanity Quotient.

Additional Additional Note: One would expect a Quotidian to go Maskless, (or, far kinkier, as an Extinct Mask) only around romantic partners (under the assumption that they are good enough spies to already know the private secrets). Similarly, the sharing of a True Name is considered an extreme act of trust, though not necessarily a romantic one. (A True Name is the first name a Quotidian uses as a Sapient Masked being, and as such is usually associated with embarrassing lack of sufficient info-sec (ooc think about how cringe it would be for someone to google your screen name from when you were 14).)

From Before JR's Leadership

The Crystal Falcon

[[Excerpt of Prototypical Historical Fiction Regarding the Quotidian Quorum, as penned and performed by the Amphibious Autocrats]]

The Crystal Falcon

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

DARK AND MYSTERIOUS STRANGER*: Wears a black trench coat with matching fedora. Stays at least 6 feet away from other characters at all times. Shifty eyed. Human.

DIPLOMAT MARCO: Talkative, a leader, but not necessarily one with authority. Bowler hat. Frog.

DIPLOMAT EDGAR: Nervous about the mysterious stranger. Strangely hatless. Frog.

DIPLOMAT LEOPOLD: Easy going. Fedora. Quiet. Frog.

*Archivist Note: This would have been understood in amphibian culture to be a stereotypical Masked Quotidian.

INT: Private Investigator's Office

DMS: What brings such respectable gentlemen to my humble office?

Marco: We need to hire you to retrieve the Crystal Falcon.

DMS, gestures dramatically at his heart.

DMS: No!

Marco seems taken aback at this.

Marco: I was under the impression that your skills were for hire, Mister...

DMS: Name's not important, but my skills are. I'm no two-bit gopher you can send on a fetch quest.

Marco: I did not mean to offend! Let me start over. We are Diplomats from the Coalition of Amphibious Autocrats, as I'm sure your keen eye has already detected. The Crystal Falcon is an artifact of immense power and value, yet vanished without warning from our Embassy.

Edgar steps forward, his hands going fruitlessly to his missing hat brim, then nervously wringing. He blurts his next sentence out, talking over Marco.

Edgar: We heard you was a friend of the black feather, see? Ain't no one could steal something that well guarded. And, well, if it did get got, then it would take another no one to find it, see?

The Dark and Mysterious Stranger narrows his eyes.

DMS: No one, eh? I've been called worse. I don't work for free.

Marco steps forward, elbowing Edgar out of the way.

Marco: Our nation is prepared to offer you quite the tidy sum, sir.

He picks a pen up from the desk and begins to scribble a number onto a nearby pad of paper. The Dark and Mysterious Stranger very obviously takes a large step back as Marco approaches the desk between them.

DMS: Apparently you need new sources, gentlemen. Friends of the black feather ain't particularly enamored with coin. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. Tell me something I don't know about your Coalition.

Beaming, Marco reaches over the desk with a hand outstretched:

Marco: You have yourself a deal!

The Dark and Mysterious Stranger actively scowls at the hand.

DMS: And we don't shake. Corvid-19, you know. Hell I can practically feel you breathing down my neck, back off. Next thing I know you're going to insist I go Maskless or something.

Marco looks perplexed, but lowers his hand and steps back.

Marco: Fair enough?

DMS: Creator Be, you really know nothing 'bout nothing, do you. This your first time running an op, even?

[[END EXCERPT]]

[[BEGIN PERSONAL NOTES][

JR NOTE: You see, RP? Our Ancestors were SO cool! There's no way we can just let those empty headed Egg Heads keep us inside the borders. There's a whole WORLD out there now, that we can do daring deeds in! Imagine the intrigue we could get into! The first generation since the Age of Chaos began to gather data on something other than musty old crows.

For the first time since the Before Times it will be US who will star in plays!

Say you'll back my move. Tell me you're in, and you won't regret it. Once I'm in charge of the Quorum you can live out our fantasies. There's no one I'd trust more to fulfill our destiny!

[[Excerpt of Prototypical Historical Fiction Regarding the Quotidian Quorum, as penned and performed by the Amphibious Autocrats]]

The Crystal Falcon

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:

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DIPLOMAT LEOPOLD: Easy going. Fedora. Quiet. Frog.

*Archivist Note: This would have been understood in amphibian culture to be a stereotypical Masked Quotidian.

INT: Private Investigator's Office

Marco: You don't mean...

He takes a step back in shock.

Edgar: It was youse! YOU'RE da thief!?

DMS: I thought it was obvious???

Marco steps forward, supplicating, his voice plaintative.

Marco: But WHY? Why not just tell us when we came in here?

Edgar: Fo' that matter, why even tells us at all? Why give us the run around? We musta been half way to here and ratland with all the crime scenes you been taking us to.

Edgar steps forward, a fist raised threateningly.

Edgar: You foolin' with us?

In a low rumble, Leopold speaks for the first time, as all three gape in shock.

Leopold: It's as I thought: there was a misunderstanding. He thinks we hired him to teach us.

The Dark and Mysterious Stranger lets out a surprised "caw" and immediately tries to speak over it.

DMS: Caw-se I was hired to show you hows I did it. Why hire me otherwise?

Marco: TO HELP US RETRIEVE THE FALCON! How COULD you we PAID you! We shared so many secrets with you!

Edgar: I thoughts we was friends, after that business with da bank robbery. And da mob. And those crooked cops. Da Coalition needs dat Falcon or its OUR heads and you just lied to us?

The DMS springs up from his desk chair with a look of righteous indignation on his face.

DMS: What! Slander! Lies! Friends of the black feather NEVER lie. What is even the point of lies!?

The truth is hard enough to find as it is, why fake it! Lies!

Marco: What would you call it then, exactly, to promise us the return of the Falcon when you had no intention of doing this at all.

Dark and Mysterious Stranger proceeds to have near hysterics, scattering paper, pens, and various knick knacks all over the desk, letting out the odd angry caw. This stops the instant Leopold rumbles for his second speech in as many hours.

Leopold: Cool it. I know you didn't lie. We held up our end of the bargain. You held up the first part of yours. Now it's time to deliver the rest.

The Dark and Mysterious Stranger straightens his trench coat, adjusts his fedora and sorts a few papers.

DMS: Well. Yes. Of course. The Falcon is in the box on my desk, gents, and I always intended to deliver it to you upon completion of duties.

Marco rushes forwards, elbowing Edgar out of the way, examining the box.

Marco: The Falcon! It's here! But... Why? Why steal it just to return it?

DMS: What? Why would I wanna keep it? Big heavy boring object I already gathered data on? Lucky you guys came by in the first place: saves me the trouble a having to break back in to return it.

Marco gapes.

[[END EXCERPT]]

[[BEGIN PERSONAL NOTES]]

JR NOTE: I trust you understand why these sorts of records worry me, IA. Outside our borders lie creatures we cannot possibly hope to understand, lessened as we are. Our ancestors struggled with it, with the cost of their confusion being animosity and near violence. I doubt it will stop at "near" in our current state.

We **MUST** interact with the outside world. If we keep our heads in the sand like those Egg Heads want us to, then the violence comes inevitably to us. We need to understand what's out there, in order to not cause misunderstandings that lead to violence.

You are the most careful Agent I know, IA. I wouldn't dare risk a coup without you to back me, to point out the dangers. If you tell me that it's riskier to stand up to the Leader, I'll believe you. But I'm being straight with you when I say I fear the unknown a hell of a lot more.

About Al'Daric

Fairytales from Al'Daric

Little Red Riding Hood

There was once a mage who had fallen afoul of a spell gone wrong and turned himself into a werewolf, for he had purchased a substandard, non-Consortium-certified Amulet of Protection when preparing the ritual.

The Werewolf soon found that there was a way for him to regain human shape, but it involved devouring the mana and identity of other beings. Worse, this would wear off quite quickly, and so the Werewolf resigned himself to a life of murder and depriving society of value.

One dark and stormy night, as an old woman prepared for bed, the Werewolf knocked on the door of her tower – wrapped in a cloak, for his human form was fading. The woman swiftly opened the door, confident in the warding scheme of her own design.

Realizing that this mage had protections in place, the Werewolf devised a plan.

“I am a lonely traveler looking for shelter from the storm,” the Werewolf pleaded, and the woman kindly agreed to let him in.

“Could I have your name please? I must know, so that I may repay this kindness in the future,” the Werewolf said.

The woman, being old and frail and not as alert as she should have been, readily answered with her name. And so the Werewolf swiftly repaid her kindness by devouring her name, her identity and mana along with it.

The next day, Little Red Riding Hood, so named for the powerful artifact she had purchased at a Consortium auction, came knocking on the door of her grandmother's tower.

Thinking that the girl was young and likely untrained, the Werewolf came to the door, wearing the form of the old woman. He would have succeeded in devouring the girl if it were not for her cloak, which protected her from the Werewolf's fangs and dispelled the glamor.

Acting quickly, Little Red Riding Hood cast a fireball, which she had diligently practiced as any good mage should, burning the Werewolf to cinders.

The Scorpion and the Frog

Once upon a time, a scorpion lived in the Eastern Wildlands, where mana was scarce and life was harsh. It wished to better itself, and so it decided to set out to enroll in the Academy, where it could better itself through learning.

And so it set out on a journey, through forests and hills, over rocks and under vines, until it reached a river.

Now the river was wide and swift, and the scorpion did not know any spells that would allow it to breathe underwater, nor freeze the surface, nor fly over. It couldn't see any way across.

Suddenly, it saw a frog sitting by the bank of the river. The frog, though not extremely powerful nor skilled, had decided to make the best use of its natural talents by running a ferry business, for all travelers who passed to and fro the Eastern Wildlands had no choice but to cross the river.

The scorpion approached the frog for help, only to balk at the price – the frog had a monopolistic hold over river crossing, after all. And so, the scorpion devised a plan to avoid payment: after crossing the river, it would kill the frog.

“Hello Frog!” called the scorpion. “I would like to purchase your services to cross the river!”

A naive ferryman would have immediately agreed and thus perished to the stinger of the scorpion, but the frog was wise in the ways of contract-making and had it sign a magically-binding contract, which the scorpion reluctantly did, for there was no other way to cross the river.

And so, the scorpion's plan was foiled.

The scorpion had the last laugh, however, for through perseverance and inborn talent it managed to graduate the Academy with top marks. After becoming a senior mage of the Consortium, the

scorpion spearheaded a project to establish a portal network between the major cities and the wilderness beyond, including the Eastern Wildlands.

Having lost its monopoly over transport, the frog soon went bankrupt.

About Keitan League

An Incomplete Guide to the Flora and Fauna of Keitan

[[Due to the necessity of images to the format, no attempt will be made to translate the incomplete guide to flora and fauna into standardized format. It can be found here:

http://knucklesux.com/PuzzleBox/Secrets/Keitan/A_Beginners_Guide_to_the_Flora_and_Fauna_of_Keitan_2nd_Edition.pdf]]

About the Naga

An Incomplete Investigation of Naga Operational Secrecy

[[Timothy Robertson's Report provided below. Footnote here is not a comment, but a regular footnote actually labeled "1"]]

An Incomplete Investigation of Naga Operational Secrecy By Timothy Robertson, Researcher First Class of Al Daric

Abstract:

It has long been said, in primitive circles, that it is impossible to say anything bad regarding the Keitan Naga¹. The following documents the various experimental results obtained regarding this myth. Without meaning to brag, this researcher has found no small amount of novel data. Further research is, quite obviously, required but I remain confident that with further funding a wealth of information awaits us.

Experimental Suite 1: Is the effect reproducible outside of the Keitan League's land? If so, is it reproducible outside the Keitan League's population?

Hypothesis: The being generating insults must intend to insult the Naga for the mechanism to be in effect.

Method: Attempt to prove the inverse: generate experiments such that beings who can not possibly intend to insult the Naga would experience the effect.

Insult: The general purpose insult "Fuck You" has been chosen to compare across tests.
Designation GPI.

Test1: Control 1.0

Subject: Average Keitan Male, designated KM, captured during last raid.

Experiment: Direct KM to say GPI while mentally directing it towards a Naga.

Result: Success. Unknown if mental direction was ACTUALLY towards the Naga due to lack of deep-brain reading capabilities.

¹ See "An Incomplete Guide to the Flora and Fauna of the Keitan League, by one Julius Wormword

Test2: Experiment 1.1

Subject: Average Quotidian Adult, designated QA

Experiment: Direct QA to say GPI while mentally directing it towards a Naga.

Result: Success. Unknown if mental direction was ACTUALLY towards the Naga due to lack of deep-brain reading capabilities.

Test3: Experiment 1.2

Subject: Juvenile Crow, designated JC

Experiment: Direct JC to say GPI while mentally directing it towards a Naga.

Result: Success. Unknown if mental direction was ACTUALLY towards the Naga due to lack of deep-brain reading capabilities.

Test4: Experiment 1.3

Subject: Average Non-sapient Parrot, designated NP

Experiment: Direct NP to say GPI while mentally directing it towards a Naga.

Result: Success. Unlikely that mental direction was ACTUALLY towards the Naga due to lack of Parrot sapience.

Experiment Suite 2: By jove, was the insult not sufficient?

Hypothesis: The directed GPI was not sufficient to activate the charm. Method: Experiment on self to confirm intent.

Test1: Control 2.0

Subject: This Researcher, designated TR.

Experiment: Say "Fuck You" while mentally directing it to the Naga.

Result: Success.

Test 2: Experiment 2.1

Subject: This Researcher, designated TR.

Experiment: Say "Fuck You, Naga"

Result: Success.

Test 3: Experiment 2.2

Subject: This Researcher, designated TR.

Experiment: [Data lost]

Result: Inability to state phrase. Experiment text was lost due to researcher incompetence + a small unrelated fire.

Experiment Suite 3: Is the effect reproducible outside of the Keitan League's land? If so, is it reproducible outside the Keitan League's population? (This time with a better insult.)

Hypothesis: The being generating insults must intend to insult the Naga for the mechanism to be in effect.

Method: Attempt to prove the inverse: generate experiments such that beings who can not possibly intend to insult the Naga would experience the effect.

Insult: The general purpose insult [Data lost] has been chosen to compare across tests. Designation GPI2.

Test1: Control 3.0

Subject: Average Keitan Male, designated KM, captured during last raid.

Experiment: Direct KM to say GPI2 while mentally directing it towards a Naga.

Result: Was unable to communicate to KM what [Data lost] was due to TR forgetfulness.

Experiment inconclusive.

Test2: Experiment 3.1

Subject: Average Quotidian Adult, designated QA

Experiment: Direct QA to say GPI2 while mentally directing it towards a Naga.

Result: Was unable to communicate to QA what [Data lost] was due to inconvenient unrelated loud noise. Experiment inconclusive.

Test3: Experiment 3.2

Subject: Juvenile Crow, designated JC

Experiment: Direct JC to say GPI2 while mentally directing it towards a Naga.

Result: Was unable to communicate to JC what [Data lost] was due to TR developing mild cough.

Experiment inconclusive.

Experiment Suite 4: Is the effect reproducible outside of the Keitan League's land? If so, is it reproducible outside the Keitan League's population? (This time with a better insult and instructions.)

Hypothesis: The being generating insults must intend to insult the Naga for the mechanism to be in effect.

Method: Attempt to prove the inverse: generate experiments such that beings who can not possibly intend to insult the Naga would experience the effect.

Insult: [data lost]. Designation [data lost]. Provide example insult directed towards Research Assistant (designation RA): "RA sucks". Example insult designation XI. Insult instructed to be like XI but directed towards Naga.

Test1: Control 4.0

Subject: Average Keitan Male, designated KM, captured during last raid.

Experiment: Direct KM to say GPI2 [Researcher note: Can find no records or memory of GPI2] (providing XI) while mentally directing it towards a Naga.

Result: Subject was unable to state GPI2 (providing XI)

Test2: Experiment 4.1

Subject: Average Quotidian Adult, designated QA

Experiment: Direct QA to say GPI2 (providing XI) while mentally directing it towards [data lost].

Result:[data lost]

Test3: Experiment 4.2

Subject: [data lost]

Experiment: [data lost]

Result: Who's JC? Why do my notes mention them?

Quotidian Quorum Correspondences

Within the Quotidian Quorum

Correspondence with Jaimie

[[This will be atypically formatted, as these correspondences do not take the form of dated letters, rather as brief messages showcasing snapshots from Jaimie's life. I remain unsure of their legitimacy, but my task is to organize all findings, and these are what I found.]]

ENTRY 1: JAIMIE LEARNS

Your name is Jaimie, intern of JR, age 14. JR is trying to teach you how letters work.

“Now, Jaimie”, JR says, “as my intern your job will be to write letters for me. You are young, and you will be raised on the words of the Outside World. You will be bad at writing letters without prompting, at first, but you will get better. Write a letter for me, now, to the Kingdom of Grovel. They are rats and they have a king.”

You look around nervously as you begin to write. It's not really like anything you've ever done before, so it takes some getting used to. When you're finished, you look up from your desk and say, “I'm sorry, I don't know what that means.”

“It doesn't mean anything! Just write!” He frowns. “Write a letter to the King of Grovel. Tell him that he should stop being such an idiot and just leave this country alone.”

You blink. “But who do I write to?”

“To the King of Grovel!” He rolls his eyes. “Tell him my son, Thadius the Third says this.”

You're a little bit confused, and start to write. Who is this “Thadius”?

“You there! What are you doing? I don’t want long letters, I want a short, snappy response!”

Oh. Okay. To the King of Grovel. My Lord, Thadius the Third says that you should stop your hostilities against the Nalin Empire, as you will only suffer from it. As both a friend and ally of the Nalin Empire, I urge you to make peace. Sincerely, Jaimie the Intern

JR Reads the letter over, and then snorts. “That’s a first rate piece of work? That’s what you wrote?” He shakes his head, then sighs, before handing the letter back. “You’re not learning. Go clean my privy.”

ENTRY 2: BEG

“What does that mean?”

“It means say you are happy here!”

“Are you happy here?”

“No. But Grovel is not worth fighting for. What do you think? Is it worth fighting for?”

“I don’t know...”

“Wrong answer! It is not worth fighting for. Now you must write a letter to your family back home. That’s you mom, dad, and little sister, right?”

“Yes.”

“What would you do if you saw them die? Tell them. Weep. Beg. Crawl. Anything. But, most importantly... Fake it.”

“But I don’t know what to say!”

“Just write what you would say. Here. Let me help you. Start with: I love you. Then, write your name and where you are so they know it isn’t a lie. Then, beg forgiveness for leaving them. Finish it off with: be strong, for their sakes, and for mine. Tell them that. It’s something important.”

You stare at the blank piece of paper, wide-eyed. You bite your lip nervously as you begin to write.

You love you.

You are in Grovel.

You are safe.

Jaimie watches you with eagerness. He bounces eagerly in his seat and smiles. He taps his food feverishly.

You take a deep breath and begin to write.

You love you.

You are in... Grovel?

What is this place?

You are safe.

You would leave, but it is not...

This is for the... Well, everyone.

I apologize I am not strong.

Please forgive me for... You know.

I'm begging you now. Help me.

You finish the letter, then look up at Jaimie. He smiles at you reassuringly. There's a knock on the classroom door. A teacher walks in, placing several books on the teacher's desk.

ENTRY 3: FREEDOM

Your name is Jaimie, intern of JR. Your boss, JR is letting you have more freedom to write letters. “You are getting really good at writing now, Jaimie. I have a reward for you. Reports say that King Grovel privately considers you to be a real rat.”

“I don’t care about the king! I just want to go home!” You shout back.

ENTRY 4; ILLEGAL

Your name is Jaimie, Intern of JR, age 15. JR is teaching you the finer points of letters. JR says, “Jaimie, writing letters is the hardest thing a Quotidian can do. It means instead of watching and listening you must speak. And if you speak wrong, you will be EXPOSED. You must be careful to match exactly what the person you are writing to expects. Write a letter now. The Kingdom of Grovel is run by rats, and they are crazy. Pretend to be crazy.”

“I am not writing anything,” you say.

“You won’t have time for that!” he says. “Write now.”

You begin to write on your notepad, but then you stop when you realize you are about to get caught.

“Hey! What’s this? I thought we were supposed to be studying!” a voice calls out from behind you. You turn around to see a large man dressed in rat trapper’s clothing. In his hand is a musket that looks larger than it should. His other hand holds a metal detector. He begins beeping and ping, ping, pinging as it detects the iron stylus you timidly pretend to use as a pen.

“Who are you?” you ask.

“Don’t worry about who I am. Worry about what you did.”

“What did I do? I didn’t do anything!”

“Lying will only get you in deeper trouble, kid. JR told me you were writing him a letter.”

You shake your head “no”. The rat man smiles and holds the metal detector by the barrel, waving it around your head. It makes a loud sizzling sound, smoke coming out of it.

“You’ve been using a metal pen. How did you not know that was illegal, kid? You need to learn how to follow the rules.”

“I didn’t know! Honest!”

He shakes his head at you and continues shaking his head as he walks away.

ENTRY 5: IMPOSSIBLE

Your name is Jaimie, Intern of JR, age 15. JR is teaching you the finer points of letters. JR says, “Jaimie, writing letters is the hardest thing a Quotidian can do. It means instead of watching and listening you must speak. And if you speak wrong, you will be EXPOSED. You must be careful to match exactly what the person you are writing to expects. Write a letter now. The Kingdom of Grovel is run by rats, and they are crazy. Pretend to be crazy.”

“I am not sure how to write that,” you say.

“Write it!” he snaps. “Now! I want this letter done today.”

You stare at him in disbelief. “But...but...”

“No buts, Jaimie! Now write!” He grabs your hand and forces you to write quickly. He then turns his attention back to you. “Good job, kid! Now go get some sleep.”

He leaves with an exasperated sigh and a stack of papers under one arm. You stare at the pages in bug-eyed surprise. It’s nearly impossible to write, but somehow, you do know how to do it. You can already tell it’s going to be harder than you thought. But this is for a good cause, right?

You are still trying to figure out if Kingdom of Grovel is a real place or if you made it up when someone comes to get you.

ENTRY 6: LIAR

Your name is Jaimie, age 16, intern of JR. Your boss, JR is letting you have more responsibility to write letters. “You are getting really good at writing now, Jaimie. I have a reward for you. Reports say that King Grovel privately finally considers you to be a real rat. I know how important that is to you!”

“I am honored sir,” you reply.

“Well, I will give you some time off, so you can think about it.” He says and then leaves the room. You sit down in your chair and think about what he just said. The king has been very kind to you, but you still feel like an outsider here. It would seem that you don’t fit in with the other interns. You are going to have to do something about this if you want to stay here.

“What should I do?” you whisper to yourself.

You think about the king and all he has done for you. He took you in when nobody else would, and gave you a job that you are good at. He is also paying you well to help him keep the kingdom safe. On the other hand you have to admit, it would be pretty easy to stay on his good side by helping him with his work. Interns don’t even have that much responsibility. You would be able to lie, not even about things that would affect the kingdom, but simply to make the king happy. You wouldn’t even have to worry about keeping him safe, because if he caught you lying, you know he would fire you, but still...

You take a deep breath and let it out slowly. You know what you have to do, you have to help the king! It’s not like you haven’t lied before, you just have to come up with a lie that is so complex that even you don’t have a problem with it. It shouldn’t be too hard.

The rest of the day goes by slowly.

ENTRY 7: SANE

Your name is Jaimie, Intern of JR, age 15. JR is teaching you the finer points of letters. JR says, “Jaimie, writing letters is the hardest thing a Quotidian can do. It means instead of watching and listening you must speak. And if you speak wrong, you will be EXPOSED. You must be careful to match exactly what the person you are writing to expects. Write a letter now. The Kingdom of Grovel is run by rats, and they are crazy. Pretend to be crazy. “You write: I am not sane.”

“Good boy! Good boy! Now write a letter about me!”

“I don’t know anything about you. What do you want from me?”

ENTRY 8: TEAM

Your name is Jaimie, intern of JR. Your boss, JR is letting you have more responsibility to write letters. “You are getting really good at writing now, Jaimie. I have a reward for you. Reports say that King Grovel privately finally considers you to be a real rat. I know how important that is to you!”

“I don’t care about the king’s opinion! I want to be on the team!” You exclaim angrily.

“Well, if you’re not going to work hard then what are you doing here?”

“Because I want to help the team, because I’m smart and because...” You stop yourself from saying it all out loud. “...because I like you.”

JR smiles at your answer. He seems happy with it.

“That’s sweet kid, but I think you should stay in school. We can talk more later.”

ENTRY 9: HAIL SATAN

Your name is John James “Johnny Jameson” John the 21st and you are a crack reporter for the Quotidian Quagmire, an investigative newspaper and it’s time to write your article.

You review your notes:

The Quotidian Quorum is a mysterious and secretive land. Those few travellers to visit may find towns that seem abandoned, but rest assured- the Quotidians are out there! They are led by someone, we think, maybe?

You write an exciting sensationalist tabloid article:

THE QUOTIDIAN QUORUM IS A LUCIFERIAN MESSIAH WHO WILL SEDUCE THE WORLD WITH HIS HATE SPEECHES AND TERRORISM!

It's going to be published in the next issue of the Quotidian Quagmire. You can't wait for it!

ENTRY 10: JOHN

It just so happens that today, the 21st of January, 2021 is your birthday. Though it was 18 months ago you were given life, it is only today you will be given a Pseudonym.

You say your new first name out loud.

"I'm going to call myself John." You think as you begin to write in a notebook.

Say your new last name out loud.

"I'm going to call myself John." You think as you write down the same thing.

Say your birthdate out loud.

"January 21, 20XX"

Write your new last name down in your notebook.

"John 21"

Say your birthdate out loud.

“1/21/20XX”

Keeping writing down all the information.

Your name is John James “Johnny” John 21st!

ENTRY 11: LAST

You say your new name out loud.

“I am now known as The Last Man on Earth.”

The last man on earth? What does that even mean?

ENTRY 12: SOOTSCALE

Your True Name is Jaimie Rook, but it just so happens that today, the 21st of January, 2021 is your birthday. Though it was 18 months ago you were given life, it is only today you will be given a Pseudonym.

What will your new name be? What do you want to be called? Who are you going to become? You have no idea what lies ahead of you and you don’t care. All you know is that you need to get out of this place as soon as possible.

> You say your new name out loud.

What is your new name?

“I don’t know. I mean, what should it be?”

Finding Your New Name

> You check the internet for your new Name.

You get on the computer and begin googling “Name Meaning”. To your surprise you find a lot of names that sound like what you are looking for, but there isn’t a clear winner. You can’t really settle on one either, some of the names sound too silly, while some are just too traditional.

Do you pick one of the names or leave the search as is?

> You pick one of the names.

What is your new name?

You look through the suggestions again and choose one at random. You don't really know if that's the right choice, but you decide not to look a gift horse in the mouth.

> You say the name out loud.

"Elizabeth"

A new window opens up and the screen reads "Congratulations, you have been named Elizabeth!"
You have successfully transformed into a ghost.

Correspondence with IA

SEPTEMBER

To: JR

From: Iago Allium

Please stop hiding so many assassins in my house. You know I get nervous when there's more than four I can spot. [Small Talk Concluded]²

Multiple individuals spotted crossing our borders. No evidence of espionage spotted by our spies (or by their spies, or by the people spying on them), nor thoughts of espionage gained by any the mind-scan rituals we performed on the ones we kidnapped when they were away from the group (we returned them wiped or replaced them with similar-ish looking Masks of course).

Unsure if means intruders are catspaws for other's plan or just have good mind shielding. Tempted to believe catspaws.³

Protocol Ghost Town: -minimal interaction, send a single target as the obvious distraction -have 13 additional spies as the real distraction -73 extra spies run sub level coverup -37 additional spies, thieves, and observers perform the operation, maximize information acquisition -remove any goods that have not previously been acquired -leave compensation for services in form of InfoTokens relevant to target

Notable intruders:

Ratlings. Origin: Kingdom of Grovel. Bearing: [list abridged for brevity] Offering: Gold⁴ [note: Any ciphers on said gold have not yet been cracked]. Result: Protocol Ghost Town successfully executed, Ratlings compensated with knowledge on weaknesses in their supply patrols. Surveillance spells undetected.

² an obvious way i can ease his mind as a reward, its the reason i over did it on the assassins in the first place

³ our enemies are terrifyingly competant

⁴ they were selling GOLD?

Lizardmen, Humans, Frogs. Origin: Rahastan Assembly of tribes. Bearing: [list abridged for brevity] Offering: [list abridged for brevity] Spices (18 types), Fish (19 types), Herbs (23 mixes), Salves (19 types), Unidentified Animal Remnants. Result: Protocol Ghost Town successfully executed. One of each object acquired. Animal remnants proved to have strong magical sympathy. Further research at Academy of History recommended⁵? Surveillance spells undetected.

Humans. Origin: Al'Daric Bearing: [list abridged for brevity] Offering: [list abridged for brevity], various magical assets, new spell formulae. Result: Protocol Ghost Town successfully executed. New spell formulae have been sent to the academy for dissecting. Formulae mainly focus on minor cosmetic illusions (some form of disguise⁶? They described it as 'make up', containing extremely minor mind alteration effect) or temperature control ("cold boxes" for use of, I believe, storing food?) Surveillance spells detected, removed⁷.

Humans. Origin: Keitan League Bearing: [list abridged for brevity] Offering: [list abridged for brevity], fish, various Titanspawn remnants. Results: Protocol Ghost Town successfully executed. Some data collected: It appears that the League uses some form of advanced mind control⁸ on a percentage of its subjects and beasts of burden. Titanspawn remnants potentially useful for research, further examination at Academy of History recommended. Surveillance spells detected, removed⁹.

Other notes of possible interest: Robin¹⁰ Parr's activity remains within expected boundaries Birth rate down 13%, suspected obfuscation by enemies Aetheric Radiation up 87% by border with the Ultralands Rat population is increasing¹¹ 23% above expected rates Instances of unintended corvidification¹² up 13% by border with Ultralands Annual butterfly¹³ migration began 13 days before expected date range Instances of random monster¹⁴ attacks up 100% by border with

⁵ makes sense

⁶ they are SPIES. why pretend to be shitty spies? what level are they playing at?

⁷ amature move

⁸ can this compromise our spies?

⁹ they made such a rookie mistake as to remove the spells where we could see? what are they trying to tell us by pretending to make a mistake like that

¹⁰ good

¹¹ rat feast

¹² bad for spies

¹³ a good break

¹⁴ hope the targeted got away

Ultralands (from 1 to 2) Academy of History forced-shifts down¹⁵ 23%, employee turnover¹⁶ up 17%, new data believed to be at fault I still have been unable to catch or interrogate a Herald¹⁷, but so far their data seems to be straightforward. I currently theorize they are attempting to use us (all of Bellor) as part of a plot against something else

At this rate, we might be facing major InfoToken inflation¹⁸.

[[Communication cease]]

To: IA

From: JR

As a token of my high esteem for you, I have reduced the spy population in your bedchambers by 54%. You have done good work.

It is good to know that our people will be eating well, we can only hope the butterfly migrations continue for the expected duration. Perhaps we will declare a Rat Feast to cement our nutritional well being in the masses minds for the near future.

[Small Talk Concluded]

Primary Objective: Secure our Academy of Magic

Success Conditions: Academy of Magic is allied with us.

Suggested Strategies:

- Bribe the Academy of Magic with the InfoTokens detailing the magical information we have received passively from trade.
- Emphasize that the world is coming to us and we can either face it blind or go out into it to gather intelligence and gain the upper hand.

¹⁵ less 'deaths' are good

¹⁶ traitors

¹⁷ still dont trust them

¹⁸ a major fear of IA to address as a further reward

- Emphasize that if they join us, they can control the inflation rate via controlling what information is circulating, and by having the ability to run competing agents. (that will of course also be in our pocket)

Available Resources:

I expect it to take roughly six magical information related wealth to bring them under our umbrella, but I authorize up to 8 if needed. If you can get them under six you may keep the excess for your own discretionary funds.

Details:

I believe we are of an accord as to our next moves. It is vital that we secure our base against the other factions before it is too late.

Begin negotiations with the Academy of Magics. You can sweeten the pot with a few of our InfoTokens on the new magics, but don't offer them the full bribe until they agree to join our side.

I suggest stressing the fact that these InfoTokens were obtained WITHOUT any external effort. The information is pouring into our nation, and it is up to us to be able to deal with it properly. We can choose to deal with this threat while BLIND, or we can choose to do what we do best and gather information to best see this threat clearly.

They fear their TradeSecrets becoming useless due to inflation, but if we offer them control over what magical secrets go out and when, that fear will be mollified. If you need to combine them with the Academy of History, so be it, we can bolster their falling ranks with people invested in the changes we will bring.

Once we have the Academy of Magics available, we can go over existing gathered data with a fine tooth comb and see if there are any synergies with their existing stores of knowledge from the Before Times. Reassure the egg heads at the Academy of Magic that we won't be releasing or spending information without their say-so, but that doesn't mean we won't be USING It to acquire more knowledge for them to hoard.

The more we know about what the other nations are doing, the better we can direct our external assets.

Towards that end, if necessary, we can make Level 2 Promises of Future Intent (at a time of our choosing) regarding having an external asset, under their partial control, primarily tasked with unearthing magical secrets in other nations. I will give you the relevant InfoToken detailing how such an action focusing on competitiveness and privatization has historically reduced inflation rates by 62%, sourced from the Academy of History.

Secondary Objective: Continue Monitoring Within Our Borders [??]

Success Conditions: We know more about the Enemy (both internal and external) than they know about Us.

Suggested Strategies:

- Do what you do best.
- It may be possible to intercept letters between nations

Details [??]:

It is troubling to hear that the enemy spy teams are either multilayered beyond our ken or able to resist our Mind Rituals. This is that fear which drove us to the risky action of seizing power: that outside our borders there lies things more dangerous than mere InfoToken inflation. Briefly, We CANNOT allow them to put us at an information deficit (Perhaps purchasing goods from one or more of our neighbors to trade to the others would keep them from learning anything about our true internals?).

Accordingly, I leave it in your hands how best to accomplish this. Debrief me when it is complete.

I worry especially about the magics which RP has corroborated. Should skills and memories be maintained they may easily leak secrets in league with our enemies (It should be able to go unsaid, but please give Red only unmarked coinage going forwards, as they seemed very upset about our cultural practices).

But, we cannot allow the threats from without blind us to the threats from within: the other factions may be a known threat but, as they say, "all the knowledge in the kingdom does not fully eliminate a threat". Assuming our absorption of the Academy of Magics will cause the other

factions to back off a bit is tempting. Dangerous, to assume we can rely on them behaving predictably, of course.

a,b: [1,9], [3,23]

Tertiary Objective: FRIEND.

Attached is a "record player", given to me by a FRIEND. Included are instructions for it, and several additional records. Without destroying this record player, the instructions, or the additional records please have the Egg Heads at the Academy of History (and Magic, should that become a real thing) investigate this artifact and learn its secrets. Is it feasible to produce more? This may well serve as a trade item, or a means to encode data. Failing reproduction of the device, it might be useful to expose the children to it that our people might learn these interesting sounds.

((OOOC: i just really like open ai music, https://soundcloud.com/openai_audio/sets/musenet))

Any information regarding the FRIEND will be directly rewarded, as well. Attached is a letter written by the FRIEND, with fluid purported to be the FRIEND's own blood. Analysis of this fluid, at least to the point where I can identify if further letters contain it (rather than fluid from another individual) would be useful.

Please return this record player and associated items to me when complete.

[[Communication Cease]]

OCTOBER

To: JR

From: Iago Allium

I am very thankful for Assassin-Reduction-Instance-031. In return, I have obliterated approximately 321 InfoTokens containing speculation as to your history and your favorite dessert.
[Small Talk Concluded]

Military action performed by KEITAN LEAGUE across BRINE TWINS.

Causalities: Minimal but existent. Any captured citizens either initiated self-removal or were removed from life by our spies.

Lost resources: Eighteen False Settlements, four True Settlements, 12 shipments of Infotokens defaced as self defense.

Skirmishes with soldiers thinned their ranks. Several assassination missions carried out successfully. Protocol Ptompkin initiated, towns evacuated.

Notes:

Raiders accompanied by "Navigators," human(?) subspecies not found in any records. Navigators possessed strong magical capabilities, selection of them managed to hide their incoming raiders from our long distance primary surveillance wards for approximately 5.3 days. So far, have not developed techniques capable of warding off our secondary, tertiary, quaternary, or quintary surveillance wards. Must keep an eye out.

Risk Update:

KINGDOM OF GROVEL threat level upgraded to class Ultra-Black Eschaton Phoenix. Extreme security risk. Elaboration: KINGDOM OF GROVEL possesses access to a type of magic we do not yet understand, capable of granting normal rats limited sentience and imbuing them with commands. Rats who have been affected by this are capable of passing on the enchantment (and the commands) to other rats, up to at least five recursions. GROVEL uses this as a spy network. We have begun a purge of all rats that we can locate within our ranks, and have been working with the college of magic to create rat-specific wards. Unsure how much information has been leaked, but doing our best to plug the leaks.

Infrastructure Update:

College of Magic subsumed to our College of History, as per your suggestion. Infotokens and the promise of monopoly are very tempting. Additional wealth, info, resources have been extracted from incoming merchants, re-using previously proven trade strategies from last month.

World Reports:

Tauhans victim of TEMPORAL VORTEX, which triggered the last lifecycle phase of many shellfolk (Excerpt from summary of Form Experiments #0127-#0304: The shellfolk life cycle is quite unique. After reaching an extended age, they began to transmogrify into large creatures, seemingly losing their intelligence and gaining a large amount of hunger and animosity to non-elder-shellfolk subjects). Total collapse of government and infrastructure. Refugees fled through Grovel, Dun Sancerre, Etc. Grovel

Dun Sancerre has begun raising a large army for a “Crusade.” Has been retreating from Al’Daric, seems to harbor no military intent against merchants. Theory: They wish to claim the lands now occupied by the remnants of the TAUHAN EMPIRE

Rahastas situation stable. Sootscale exchanged letters with “Speaker of Rahsatas”, social-cultural leader, and has begun gathering a new circle of druids specializing in blessings, curses, and explorations.

Grovel, Keitan: See Risk Update and Military Action for more. Grovel Command Structure identified: King Nibbles as direct leader. Executions common, life has extremely low value. “Pip” and “Gregorkeny” control military/infrastructure and espionage apparatus respectively. Grovel suffers from extreme overpopulation. Theory: Executions and low value of life used to keep the population in line and avoid hunger. Possible weakness: Food sources and need therein. Estimate from Robin: If the situation remains stable, overpopulation will lead to revolutions or other mass violence in Grovel within 2 to 5 months.

[[Communication Cease]]

To: IA

From: JR

As a token of my high esteem for you, I have reduced the spy population in your bedchambers by 19%. You have done good work. There is no one I would trust more with security on the home front.

[Small Talk Concluded]

Primary Objective: Prepare for Exchange Students from Yellow

Success Conditions: Passable physical Academy of Magic built conforming to Yellow's expectations of what an Academy of Magic looks like.

Available Resources:

The Academy of History has several texts detailing outsider expectations for magical academies. RP's initial reports on Yellow's educational system do not deviate from historical records by more than an order of magnitude.

The Acting Faction and the Magical Faction are likely to wish to contribute spies to this process. Remind the Magical Faction that our guests are our source of novel magical data and must be made happy.

Infotokens provided by the Academy of Magic detailing spell techniques for claimed major schools of Optics, Metablomancy and Thermodynamancy.

Suggested Strategies:

Use standard building protocols.

Augment construction spies' facade-only work with illusions as necessary.

Follow stage directions from Historical Document codenamed HP+SS.

Avoid having illusions not backed by at least Scaffolding Tier physical objects.

Assign proper roles from the Acting Faction

Suggested Roles:

Cruel potions master

Best Friend (x2)

Whimsical Headmaster/Mentor

Arrogant Rival

Various extras

Professors for major schools

Work with the Academy of Magic to translate magical InfoTokens into data capable of being learned by evolved beings. The Academy of Acting will be required to transmit this data to our targets.

Provide at least one magical conspiracy to be uncovered by the exchange students and their Best Friends.

Details:

The Academy of History has no text specifically detailing exchange students FROM A magical land attending school at an adjacent one. As such, speculative iterations on this concept have produced the following strategy:

We will attempt to conform as closely as possible to the cover story that we are a similar magical land and provide a stereotypical magical educational experience (InfoTokens provided). This has the sub-benefit of preventing unknowable potential cultural misunderstandings should Yellow be exposed to our actual educational system.

I leave it in your hands what sort of magical conspiracy you would like our guests to uncover. I trust your cautious nature will make it sufficiently undamaging to either our own reputation or to our guests physical well being. Keep in mind that evolved beings care deeply about physical well being.

Secondary Objective: Select spy asset(s) to infiltrate yellow's Mage College.

Success Conditions: Spy asset(s) obtain standard magical education appropriate to their year. Spy asset(s) learn appropriate cultural context for Yellow. Spy asset(s) can pass as a member of Yellow's society.

Available Resources:

The Acting Faction has already expressed interest in this project.

Suggested Strategies:

Review Academy of Histories records on "orphans", "auspicious births" and "prophecy". Select spy assets accordingly.

Strong suggestion: choose young spy assets, but not too young (Potential age range 18 to 21 months). Experiments with Intern Jaimie indicate young exposed to the Outside do not develop Mirror Corruption. However, feedback from Red (code name: Huge Asshole) indicates that extreme young (age 14 months) are off-putting to evolved beings.

Details:

Your primary objective secures our right to pursue your secondary objective. Once we have provided magical educational opportunities for Yellow's students, we will be allowed to send our own students to Yellow's land.

The Academy of History is extremely clear that exchange students to a magical land are obliged to acquire large amounts of cultural significance, power and popularity. We can expect at least one world-threatening plot to be uncovered and thwarted by our spy assets, as well as life-long friends to be acquired. We MUST choose our assets accordingly, to maximize our ability to play this role.

Even beyond the basic outside cultural knowledge we will acquire, this is non optional. Pink has already informed us of at least one Bellor wide threat, we dare not let potential others remain.

[[Communication Cease]]

JANUARY

To: IA

From: JR

Your caution has proven well suited for the dangerous times we live in. One near genocide and one full genocide has already happened, despite our best precautions, and a further potential genocide is already loose.

As recognition of your value, assassins have been further reduced in your eating chambers by 19%.

[Small Talk Concluded]

Primary Objective: Research and Prepare Counter-Measures to Mind Binding

Success Conditions:

- Detecting mind-binding, even for non-magical non-quotidians.
- Mind-binding immunity, even for non-magical, non-quotidians.
- Mind-binding removal, even for non-magical, non-quotidians.

Suggested Strategies:

1. Experiment on existing mind bound prisoners
 - a. Can they be freed?
 - b. What amount, if any, free-will do mind bound have?
 - i. If any, what qualities does mind bound "free will" take?
2. If possible, discover mechanism of mind binding, replicate on novel, non quotidian targets
 - a. Observe results and mechanism by which results can be interfered with or reversed.
3. If 3 is non possible, evaluate any extant prisoners capable of performing mind binding.
 - a. If extant, compel them to replicate on novel, non quotidian targets.
 - i. Observe results and mechanism by which results can be interfered with or reversed.
 - b. If non extant, acquire prisoners capable of performing mind binding.
4. If mechanisms of mind binding immunity or reversal are discovered, perform in vivo experimentations on shellfolk.
 - a. Can currently mind bound shellfolk be freed?
 - b. Can currently free but slated for mind binding shellfolk be made resistant or immune?
 - i. To what percent efficacy?

Available Resources:

- 11 Wealth

Details:

As you well know, mind binding represents a severe violation of section 1.2.2 (Genocide and Slavery) of our Terms of Service, both for our own people and for Bellor at large.

A cultural monolith does not comply with our primary objective, being functionally equivalent to the Age of Chaos. Removal of free will creates a cultural monolith.

Additionally, I well know the terror those of us conversant in Historical Precedent have of resuming slave related activities.

I trust you, IA, of all my assets, to free our people of this terror no matter the cost (barring, of course, violations of section 1.2.2).

Secondary Objective: Evaluate Shaking Plagues Genocide Potential Rating, Prevent if Necessary

Success Conditions:

- Shaking Plague's Genocide Potential Rating is known for each nation/sentient species.
- If Genocide Potential Rating is above 1.0 for any nation/sentient species, actions are evaluated and initiated to reduce the rating to 0.99 or below.
- If Genocide Potential Rating is above 1.0 for any nation, origin of Shaking Plague is evaluated and contained to prevent future Genocide Potential Events (GPE).
 - No possibility of GPE recurrence from Shaking Plague Origin civilization.

Available Resources:

- 7 Wealth
- Robin's Report (related InfoTokens included) on origin of Shaking Plague.
- Should prevention of future GPEs be required, I authorize your Internal Spy Team to do limited away engagements to:
 - Confirm origin of Shaking Plague
 - Mind Wipe all participants in the origin of Shaking Plague
 - Obtain all Data relevant to the origin of the Shaking Plague
 - Contain all Data relevant to the origin of the Shaking Plague with industry standard encryption.

Suggested Strategies:

- None, barring special authorization procedures for Internal Spy Team.

Too many nations have already been lost, before we have enough of a foothold to prevent such. We MUST get ahead of GPEs before we have no choice but to return to the Isolation of the Age of Chaos.

We must confirm the Shaking Plague is not an existential threat and if it is, we must do what is necessary to reverse it, if possible, and prevent it from ever having the potential to happen again.

This is required even at the cost of potential diplomatic relations. Do what must be done.

Details

Tertiary Objective: [REDACTED]

Success Conditions: Information obtained.

Available Resources:

- 3 Wealth
- An Incomplete Investigation of [REDACTED] Operational Secrecy, by TR
- An Incomplete Guide to the Flora & Fauna of The Keitan League by Under-Navigator Julius Wormwood
 - Especially see page 9, section 1, replicated below.

Naga

Naga Draconic

It is impossible to write anything negative about the Keitan Naga. I do not know why, but I have had to discard a large number of journal pages attempting to describe them in the face of wide ranging mental compulsion. Worryingly, the enchantment seems to be at least partly man-made.

FEBRUARY

To: JR

From: Iago Allium

{small talk}

[Small Talk Concluded]

Primary Objective:

1.
 - a. Inconclusive.
 - b. Variable.
 - i. Subjects expressed a level of free will ranging from 'altered primary priorities' (0.5 free will) to 'no internal desire/motivation' (0.05 free will)
2.
 - a. Academy of History located anti-mind control procedures. See Conclusion.

3. See larger document on summary of Testing procedures and exacts of binding procedures. Current mechanisms remain outside of known magical procedures found in historical texts (According to procedures outlined in [Ars Arcanum] [Neckronomicon] [Journal of Ceasyar the Unrefuted])

4.

a. Inconclusive.

b. No evidence found.

Conclusion: Academy of History located Pill able to cause instant self-termination of subjects whose free will drops below a 0.55. Pill ingredients unavailable, but theorized that Ultrium provides an acceptable substitute. Pills must be administered every 15-20 days. Current Ultrium supplies allow for inoculation of 19% of population for one dose. Created Pill Production Program (PATHETIC). Program Requires more Ultrium + additional resources for Distribution

Secondary Objective:

Information passed on to RP. RP reports a theoretical 1.0+ genocide rating and has begun information purges + containment protocol on YELLOW. Information purge current success: Minimal.

Shaking Plague has observed mutation: New form more virulent, changes EYES to color: #0000E1

Tertiary Objective:

[data lost], see attached form NAGA_REPORT

[[Attached report shows only static]]

News:

Meeting between RED leader and PURPLE leader occurred. Agents TP 03 and 07 lost, but data retrieved: See transcript classified #QQ-SANCERRE.

RED + PURPLE continue to occupy FORMER TAUHAN TERRITORIES.

GREEN espionage war continues. GREEN infiltrated into PURPLE, aided by PURPLE noble alias: BORIS DU VARGULIUS.

Estimated threat of Infiltrators to Purple's stability: 12% decrease in nation stability, rising to 30% after one month, then 60% month after that (if left unchecked)

NEW RED TRIBE FORMED: "Ayambe." Ayambe is a synthesis of Tauhan survivors + Keitan tribe leaders who have separated from former tribes, located on a formerly Tauhan island. Led by Bri'Ayambe (Aka Bri'Otollo). Status of relationship to Sino'Otollo (Aka Mansa Sino'Otollo aka The Swordless King aka Meanie): 86% Stable.

[[Communication Cease]]

Correspondence with RP

SEPTEMBER

Gur sbyybjvat unf orra noevqtrq ol Npnqrzl bs Uvfgbel fpevorf, vapyhqrq ner gur erpbeqf bs gurve cbfg-noevqtrzrag oenva jvcrf

To jr

Your last observation enchantment had sloppy¹⁹²⁰²¹ formulae. Tell Iago to improve them. Chance of counter surveillance success drifted over 3% and I had to eliminate 3 of my agents. Include compensation²²²³ with the next letter in the form of news from home.

[Small talk concluded]

Infiltration points: 119

Successful infiltrations: 113

Notes: No cover blown²⁴.

Infiltration in depth began on targets designation Al'Daric, Rahastan Assembly of Tribes, Kingdom of Grovel, Keitan League, Ultralands. Agents infiltrated independently or alongside trade caravans.

Here is the totality of each agent's report, combined with my own observations and the connections I and my advisors drew: [[This segment was removed for length purposes. Full reports may be drawn from the Academy]]

Summary [[Note: This area contains significant abridging]]

¹⁹ when i give her compensation info, imply the extra is because i want her talented eye on the data

²⁰ send some wealth her way too

²¹ we need her or her team to go into the ULTRA LANDS to get FRIEND. if we have additional RECORD PLAYERS attach one here to show her the depth of the rewards we expect

²² include EXTRA info to make up for her getting my second letter rather than the first

²³ do NOT apologize tho, meet pride with pride.

²⁴ good

Al'Daric: Infiltration success massive. 4 key data points:

Crops

average weather patterns

coinage history

use of magic in daily life

Points 1 and 4 identified as Important. Additional work underway. Included are several new spell formulae related to temperature regulation and object enchantment. Al Daric has MUCH new mage data. Valuable²⁵²⁶²⁷.

Included are five types of seeds. Included are three types of coins. Included is a sample of rainwater ocean water river water bay water street water²⁸.

Assembly: Infiltration success solid. 3 key data points:

Most common jobs on seaside towns (fisherman trader shaman)

Shaman elaboration: Notes on Rahastan religion.

Name + location of leader: Vulkereth Sootscale²⁹.

All points identified as Important. Included: Fishing rod. Included: Rahastan ceremonial herbs. Used to communicate with "great spirit Rahastas." Rahastas = name of swamp. Mage work possible? Included: Sketch of Vulkereth done by 3 year old.

Grovel: Infiltration success minimal. 2 key data points:

Ratling insults

Location of other ratlings

²⁵ if the magic academy plays along this will cement my hold on them.

²⁶ also this is three sources of data all agreeing on the same thing, 90% trust rating

²⁷ tell her that this data will cement her place in history, and her next actions will determine the tone of the tale of our exploits

²⁸ excellent

²⁹ matches herald info

Point 2 marked Important. Ratlings live underground, in dwarf³⁰ (what is dwarf, reference old records?) caves. Denied access to lower areas until trust³¹ is built. List of Ratling insults collated by agents included.

Keitan League: Infiltration success solid. 3 key data points:

Fish tastes, many.

New loyalty technique: Mind binding³²³³.

Rumor of unidentified location: "Japan."³⁴

Points 2 and 3 marked Important. Mind binding: Usable on both sentients and non sentients? Included children's rhyme about a mage mind-binding a Titanspawn. Included: Love Poem about Leader of League's "squid fleet³⁵" (designation hostile asset 19), identified as Akira Shimoyama. Mentions "Japan" as his origin. No known other mentions, location not marked on Map. Lies from Heralds? Lies from Poem? Counter espionage? Unsure. Agents force-shifted³⁶ to non sentients to preserve secrecy.

Ultralands³⁷³⁸³⁹: Infiltration totally unsuccessful, 100% casualty rate, no distress signals received. Mission terminated till further data has been found.

More to follow.

OCTOBER

To: JR

From: Robin Parr

³⁰ cross reference this

³¹ not a trusting ppl

³² IP also commented on this. is this a risk to my agents?

³³ maybe don't comment on this to RP, don't want her to focus on trying to prove this thing can't best her

³⁴ cross reference

³⁵ this might be useful information to sell to any enemies they have

³⁶ hopefully this trend doesn't continue, good help is hard to find

³⁷ a CHALLENGE

³⁸ if RP ever begins to become a liability saying it is a shame that no asset is skilled enough to investigate this region may be enough to stem the loss, one way or another

³⁹ haha nevermind need her to go into the ULTRALANDS anyways because of FRIEND

[No time for pleasantries]

Operation Pine Tree Concluded. Description: Utilized agent within Grovel Territory to attempt fake assassination on “Pip,” economic leader, while disguised as Keitan League agent. Fake assassination successfully did not assassinate, successfully convinced targets that we were from Keitan.

WARNING: Grovel has unknown but effective information gathering method, tentatively identified to be performed by the “Circle of Twisted Tongues”. Infiltration of Grovel proving difficult. 65% of agents have been exposed. Believe they have knowledge of our true forms. Engaged in espionage war.

NOVEMBER

To: RP

From: JR

Included Info-Tokens: 25 (ooc: All of them)

Subject: Superlative work.

Compensation and reward provided for improved observation formula, and exemplary work framing Red for attempting to assassinate one of Green's agents. Your quick eye was correct that both would prove to be highly problematic to our goals.

InfoTokens specifically encode reports from IA, which you can cross reference with your own copies of their reports. Additionally, InfoTokens are provided detailing my Intern's progress assimilating modern culture.

[Small Talk Concluded]

In brief, I would like to bring your attention to the following broad topics:

- **BESTIE:** Pink is officially our Bestie and their interests are now our interests.
- **FRIEND:** A master spy known only as FRIEND has offered us a job and secrets.
- **NEWSPAPER:** I am sending you the funds needed to deploy our NEWSPAPER to both pink and yellow. Recruit any subleaders you may need.

- SLAVERS: I am sending you the funds needed to create a sub-committee with sub-leader focused on investigating anti-mind-binding techniques.
- RAT SPIES: Your reports on green troubles me. We must find a solution other than merely killing.

[Summary Concluded]

BESTIE

After subscribing to our NEWSPAPER via agreeing to give us calories in exchange for knowledge, as well as sufficient interaction to maximize empathy, Pink has been given our Terms of Service and Quick Start Guide, as well as a PuzzleBox Brand Information Transmitter. This is more than sufficient to classify them as "Bestie" status.

We have promised to provide counter-intelligence services for them (especially useful against the rats) and to support one "The Coven of the Bloodless Rose" in any way possible, especially within the ULTRALANDS.

As you well know, as Bestie, Pink's interests are our interests. We are the first generation in hundreds to have a Bestie and I look forward to seeing how your keen eye does our Ancestors proud. There is no one else I would rather have on the task.

FRIEND

A terrifyingly potent spy has given us knowledge found nowhere else in Bellor as a demonstration of power, as well as a job. We are asked to "Send an expedition to the Pool of Teeth in the Ultralands. It is a three day walk in, no matter where you start walking from."

We are further told: "Anyone seeking the Pool of Teeth is guaranteed to arrive within three days of seeking. No one dies in the Ultralands. Anyone who reaches the Pool of Teeth will be able to return within three days of seeking return."

Your own reports indicate 100% casualty rate so we must assume there are layers to FRIEND's riddle we have not yet sussed out. I trust your ability to complete this task.

NEWSPAPER: Suggested InfoTokens: 10

As Bestie, Pink is a subscriber to our PLATINUM PREMIUM service. Any knowledge Pink seems to want should be delivered to them, in exchange for calories. Their current interests appear to be:

- Prevent a Genocide at the hands of an unknown "Enemy".
- The Ultralands (location of enemy)
- How best to Peacefully Unite Bellow Against the Enemy.

Yellow has also requested a subscription, at our entry level tier. They will be providing non-publicly available academic knowledge to us in exchange. They appear to have the following interests:

- Magic
- History of the Before Times

In addition to providing information, in our Ancestor's times, newspapers doubled as information gathering systems with a specific "on the ground" focus on subscriber countries. While obviously we would never sell information obtained from subscribers, this information is invaluable to better target data feeds to them.

As such, I expect a non-trivial portion of the InfoTokens sent to you to be used to create a sub-committee, as well as assigning a sub-agent to head this committee. The Newspaper is the lifeblood of our people, and we must spare no expense in returning it to circulation.

((ooc note: these will be 1920s newsies, literally the Daily Days from Baccano, this is *vital* for the refranceS))

SLAVERS: Suggested InfoTokens: 15

Our people can not know peace of mind until we have mitigated the threat mind-binding presents to us. Spin up a sub-committee with attached sub-agent focusing on investigating how to best counter mind-binding.

Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- Detecting mind-binding, even for non-magical non-quotidians.
- Mind-binding immunity, even for non-magical, non-quotidians.
- Mind-binding removal, even for non-magical, non-quotidians.

We will not be slaves again. Our Ancestors fought hard to give us the right to Independence and it will not be taken from us.

RAT SPIES

Included are InfoTokens regarding the Alberta Protocol, from the Before Times. Of particular note are efforts to prevent rats from entering a relatively isolated region. Fool's Pass would be an ideal place to place a checkpoint to prevent potentially infected rats from entering our Bestie's territory.

Weylin's Grasp may well prove more difficult to similarly police, but strict customs patrols on ships from there to Pink's main territory should prove helpful.

From there, it's a matter of investigating Pink's territory to see if infected rats are already native, and if so, eliminate them.

Intern Jaimie (see attached InfoTokens) has reached out to Yellow in the hopes of finding a more permanent counter-intelligence action.

[Details Concluded]

You have been doing fine work, RP. Your exploits fit right in among the tales of our Ancestors.

[Communication Cease]

DECEMBER

From:RP

TO:JR

As the Shaking Plague consumes the rest of the country, killing off our trade partners, it has left our shining islands alone. I can only assume that this is because the Gods know we are already cursed with you as our leader, and know we need no more troubles in these times.

Mirrored Small Talk Concluded. Further fragments of Mirror-Source included.

STATUS OF BESTIE: UPDATED

We here at the Forigen Intelligence Division have expressed the following emotion (via vote): Joy.

FRIEND:

FRIEND has not been found in any other correspondences. No evidence of FRIEND elsewhere.

Conclusion: Espionage Level Theorized: XZ+.

As per instructions, dispatched Operation Pit of Teeth. Explorers maintained the knowledge of the Location: We theorize this was necessary to achieve location. Explorers report locations non-compliant with spatial laws or navigational logic. Confirmed: Those in Ultralands can not be killed.

Confirmed: Those in Ultralands can be:

- Flensed
- Rended
- Mutated
- Sprouted
- Defenestrated
- Deoculufcated
- Excavated
- Full list included: 73 entries recorded.

Ultraland to be considered Hostile Environment.

Of the twelve explorers, only one retained baseline form and functionality. Included is explorers sketch of Pool of Teeth:

[[Pictured: a red tunnel, encircled by rows and rows of sharp teeth]]

Our explorers brought samples of various materials discovered in Ultralands.

The Academies have performed analysis of material samples. All contain a previously unidentified substance tentatively labeled "Ultrium." Most samples contained only trace amounts, save samples taken from the Pool of Teeth, which found to be approximately 70 to 90% Ultrium.

Ultrium Properties:

- Magic Conductive
- Mana Source
- Universal Alloy
- Incredible strength and density

Analysis of Ultrium has generated Significant Numbers of InfoTokens (+12 Wealth).

Project: Newspaper has been established in cooperation with the Academies. Ready to process information into "Consumable Form." Agent Assigned: Nevins Wring. (News Writer)

Academies have agreed for the necessity of focus on Anti-Slave Protocol. I have exercised Best Judgement: Instead of sub-committee, resources have been expanded to improve upon Academies in general, establishing a Joint Project between the two of them to aid in this endeavour (Upgraded Academy to Legendary)

Alberta Protocol will be implemented by our agents whenever possible. We have finally achieved Acceptable Infiltration in every nation except Grovel (Curse them and their rat spies. Enemy Agent GREGORKENY has been designated Personal Nemesis (PN). Even now I am assembling information on his weak points)

Summary of International Affairs:

Al'Daric: Al'Daric continued their establishment of Pathways, "Embassy" established at assigned location. Attempted establishment of anti-Rat contain measures: Containment was breached and species gap was jumped, leading to the spread of 'SHAKING PLAGUE:' High lethality, high spread. Trade has been massively affected: Rahastas has managed minimal casualties due to swamp medicines, Keitan League has had 0 casualties due to unknown reasons.

Low QQ casualties due to appropriate social distancing, though loss of trade is frustrating.

Grovel: Attempted a military push into Tauhan but failed. Unknown agent has fused the corpses of our fallen spies to create undead fusions with dead ratlings called “Crats.” Incapable of proper mask-shifting, they instead shift only the Quotidian parts of them, but not the stitched together ratling bits. Several have been dumped at our border with no clear purpose.

Dun Sancerre: Has begun to push into Tauhan Lands. Slowly but surely establishing new “Crusader Kingdoms” led by loyal shelfolk. Kingdoms are 70% compatible with Sancerre lifestyle (Key elements: Farms, walls, roads, nobility) but 30% compatible with Tauhan lifestyle (Key elements: Boats, travel, scavenging, meritocracy). Unrest expected.

Keitan: See enclosed letter.

Rahastas: Have begun rounding up Tauhan refugees to protect them. Aided Keitan in establishment of seaside kingdoms, but briefly with Keitan in an incident referred to as “The Night of Spears” to stop them from mind binding refugees. Agents aided Rahastans as per Bestie classification, inhuming the raid leaders responsible (With the expectation of Zami’Otollo, who intercepted the assigned agents) [Details Cease]

I am glad you deem my work acceptable. I am happy to live in such a time.

[Communications Cease]

[[Attached letter]]

To his majesty Mansa Sino’otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

From Navigator Captain Bri’otollo, Salt Chief of the Tauhan, ratsbane, knife of the waves, the coral blade. May the dark between the stars consume the words I speak.

As the Shaking Plague consumes the rest of the country, killing off our trade partners, it has left our shining islands alone. I can only assume that this is because the Gods know we are already cursed with you as our leader, and know we need no more troubles in these times.

Speaking of the Shaking Plague, it has put a dent in our trade income to an unfortunate extent, due to the mass die offs around the country. Why it has left our ships alone I do not know, but thank the Gods for every day.

The Shark Fleet has done as you commanded, and surged through the Scar to take the Northern Tauhan lands. Though they are much colder than the seas and islands we are used to, the Ratlings of Grovel have provided us with proper warm wear and several tips on surviving the cold. This, plus the ministrations and supplies of the Coven of the Bloodless Rose, have allowed us to carve out the wreckage of some of the Tauhan land-cities as forward bases. We have brought along the Pathway makers of Al'Daric, and they have begun the construction of one of their great gates.

The monsters here have proven... troublesome. No two of them are alike, though there are common themes between them: Tentacles, teeth, claws, and eyes. Some of our sailors have remarked that some seem not unlike the great paintings of our most Glorious Gods. So far, only one of our binders (Navigator Okin'Tollo, leader of our Mage Corp) has managed to successfully bind one of the great beasts. The others found themselves shaken aside, describing the process as being similar to attempting to bind an unwilling Navigator. A few of our Navigators froze in place after the performing of the spell, before attempting to climb into one of the beasts' maws. According to the examinations of the other Navigators, the beasts themselves turned around the bindings on them! Most troubling.

We have resorted to crude violence to take down the beasts, then, clearing the seas of any we find with our own great beasts and hunters. With the aid of our Rahastan and Ratling allies, we managed to establish a forward base, close enough that we can now raid into the heartlands of Dun Sancerre, should we choose. For now, though, our bases are tenuous little things, clinging to the shoreline, little more than supply depots.

As you commanded, we have begun the process of binding the various survivors of the clans to our will, through magic or through offerings. There were many more survivors than we first assumed, and our shoreside bases were soon swamped with refugees. We gave the same offer to each: Join us, or suffer at our hands. Though many joined willingly, several of the wandering tribes refused our offers. We began our raids on them, striking through the snow-swept jungles with the joy of battle

coursing through our veins. After our first few raids, however, we found the Tauhans assisted by the very same Coven of the Bloodless Rose that had previously aided us! They demanded we cease our raids upon the 'refugees,' and declared them under their protection. A few skirmishes were had between us and the Rahastans after that, our blades against their magic. A fortnight after the first skirmish, however, every raid chief who had led a battle against the Rahatsans but one disappeared from their tent without a trace. A single sigil was found burned into my cabin, above my bed: 'Cease Raids.' I suspect Quotidian involvement, and ordered the cessation of raids until we have a proper means to counteract their predators.

This was confirmed by the only surviving raid chief, Zami'okollo. She spoke of a posse of raiders descending on her in the night who attempted to kill her in her sleep. They shifted forms as they fought, taunting her with dark magics and attempted distractions, before he killed one and drove the others away. For her bravery, and based on her previous records, I have decided to promote her as our new Raid Captain.

Yours in blood and guts,
Salt Chief Bri'otollo

To: Basic Tier 1 Subscribers
From: The Quotidian Quorum

"As the Shaking Plague consumes the rest of the country, killing off our trade partners, it has left our shining islands alone. I can only assume that this is because the Gods know we are already cursed with you as our leader, and know we need no more troubles in these times. "

-Salt Chief Bri'otollo, Keitan League, referring to the strange plague destroying Grovel.

Keywords: Magic, Current Events

Operation PT:

Hypothesis: explorers must have specific destination in mind to leave Ultralands. Explorers report locations non-compliant with spatial laws or navigational logic.

Confirmed: Those in Ultralands can not be killed.

Confirmed: Those in Ultralands can be:

-Flensed

-Rended

-Mutated

-Sprouted

-Defenestrated

-Deoculufcated

-Excavated

-Full list included: 73 entries recorded.

Ultraland to be considered Hostile Environment.

Of the twelve explorers, only one retained baseline form and functionality. Included is explorers sketch of [REDACTED]:

Our explorers brought samples of various materials discovered in Ultralands.

The Academies have performed analysis of material samples. All contain a previously unidentified substance tentatively labeled "Ultrium."

Ultrium Properties:

-Magic Conductive

-Mana Source

-Universal Alloy

-Incredible strength and density

Keywords: History

Precursor civilization to the Rahastas Assembly of Tribes was of extremely advanced technology and architectural prowess. Buildings of immense height were the norm.

Examples of culture from precursor civilization are included with passphrases "ia" and "rp".

To: BESTIE

From: The Quotidian Quorum

I remain thankful for the opportunity to report information with only minimal obfuscation. Your friendship brings great solace to my people, and our symbiosis will continue to be a source of strength for us both. I am glad that we were able to assist in the protection of both your daughter, and the Lime Refugees.

As per the traditions of small talk, I must deploy the Hot Gossip. I believe one of my agents (RP) has a crush on one of Green's Agents (designation PN)).

Additionally, historical documents with passphrases of "rp" and "ia" have been made available to you through this PuzzleBox. WARNING: PuzzleBox potential leak has been patched. If a known good passphrase does not work, set the box down and pick it back up and try again, being careful not to make any sounds before the passphrase.

((ooc: refresh the page if its not behaving right, if you hit any keys before the passphrase it'll never work))

[Small Talk Concluded]

Contents:

Ultralands

Shaking Plague

Diplomacy with Red

Executive Summary:

Ultralands: Our initial investigations into the Ultralands indicate poor survival rates and quality of life for survivors. Extrication of the Ultralands is impossible without a clear target. One such target, requiring three days travel time, is the "Pool of Teeth", details below. It is not advised that valuable entities are sent into the Ultralands without suitable precautions and intent.

Shaking Plague: Our EggHeads have estimated 95% likelihood that Yellow is behind the Shaking Plague, which is devastating Green.

The situation is being monitored. Should any culture (likely Green, Purple, or Yellow) risk extinction due to this plague, we will take action to prevent it. Additionally, should this plague risk genocide, we will investigate and contain the information used to create it.

Diplomacy:

Scant progress has been made at countermeasures against Red's mind-binding. As such, diplomatic relations remain a far off goal.

Traders from Red arrived, but as they were not aggressive, our undirected units mirrored their neutral trade actions.

As a Quotidian, I am happy to express, in the fashion of our Ancestors: "I told you so." regarding the involuntary nature of Red's mind-binding of outsiders. I am additionally pleased that RP's team acted swiftly to protect your daughter, as suggested.

[Precursor to Conclusions Concluded]

[[Attached are copies of the previous correspondences here for December]]

JANUARY

january:

>rem 14d tell robin to plan a heist of yellows knowledge, targetting anything genocide tier.
goal is to leave yellow with NO ability to do anything like this ever again

plus give pink a flock of crows as a trade/spy asset

-
-
-

- 25 wealth total available

Priorities:

1. Support Pink in ALL ways, they are BESTIE
 - a. They have SUBSCRIBED TO OUR NEWSPAPER. Spin up a newsie team to deliver news/history/data to them and any other country. They offer calories in exchange(provide wealth for this).
 - b. Eliminate ALL rats coming from our lands to theirs. Eliminate every rat you can find within their border, especially where they border other countries (see internal report B for knowledge of GREEN)
 - i. Attached are historical records on one "Alberta" who was capable of eliminating all rats, and their tactics.
 - c. Support The Coven of the Bloodless Rose, especially within the ULTRALANDS
 - d. Prioritize finding information on them so we can show them we care
2. FRIEND hired us for a job. Investigate the ultralands pool of teeth (see FRIEND report B)
3. RED is an asshole. Sow seeds of dissent against them. Investigate counter measures to their mind binding (detection, prevention, disruption, etc)
4. YELLOW is obviously spies but seems like they'd be a good customer. Their magical data is USEFUL.
 - a. They have ALSO subscribed to our NEWSPAPER. They offer knowledge and trade secrets in exchange.
5. Preserve SHELLFOLK culture and samples
6. KILL GREEN RATS I guess
 - a. Use NEWSPAPER to distribute PROPAGANDA against rats

[[Pictured: Canadian propaganda poster against rats]]

-
-
- superb work on framing red for trying to assassinate green. i'll send you a bonus.
- We have gotten our first job: a mysterious FRIEND offers us compensation should we enter the UltraLands and seek the Pool of Teeth
 - . So long as we are seeking it it will take three days to reach it, and then as long as we seek to leave it will take three days to leave.
 - No one dies in the UltraLands. (Don't trust this, but it might be useful to keep that in mind when looking for signs of our lost spies)

- while you're there, look for info on pink's 'enemy' (see below)
- Pink is our BESTIE
 - In general, pink seems a useful trading partner, and has asked us to demonstrate our skills by showing the knowledge we have on them. This was obviously very sudden, and we did not have much to show. We may want to bring our a game to uncovering more to them to offset the embarrassment
 - pink is sending us info on red, and wants us to get along with them
 - pink claims actionable intelligence on an "enemy", "likely in the Ultralands". that is a threat to all of Bellor. We cannot allow a genocide.
 - Pink has agreed to a subscription to our NEWSPAPER. We should send information we gather to pink as well, in exchange for goods and services (manic, this means they'll get a prosperity modifier as well as data right?). Pink also says we are free to gather data in their lands as much as we want as long as we don't sell it to others. we should prevent other nations from gathering data on pink, this is OUR bestie
 - If you see Pink's people in the Ultra lands, assist them however possible (without exposing corvidification). The Coven of The Bloodless Rose contains pink's daughter.
- Red is an asshole. Does anyone else hate them? might be useful to feed info to their enemies
 - they raided us and burned "WE DEMAND RESPECT" into one of our cities. we aren't entirely sure what that means (evolved creatures use "respect" to indicate leadership and dominance within in-groups. they are neither in our in-group nor our leader (and if they are threatening to become our leader we need to work harder to counter their mind binders). Respond however you like, up to and including with secret arson writing a response. (we don't know what meaning of respect they are trying to use, but we don't like them and don't want to be friends, if friendship is what is happening here)
- Yellow is obviously spies and is installing a "Trade Embassy" in our lands. They are also our best buyer for our store of magical secrets. What more can we learn about them? Are they bestie potential? They seem to be the inheritors of the culture which we are most familiar with
 - Yellow ALSO wishes a subscription to our NEWSPAPER, in exchange for VALUABLE MAGICAL and HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE.
- transmit all internal data , along with some wealth
 - ask robin why butterflies migrated early

- preserve what we can of shellfolk culture, make sure they dont go extinct, maybe infiltrate their refuges more explicitly than we would a full nation

FEBRUARY

- MAXIMUM PRIORITY: PINK WANTS US TO DO A FULL REPORT ON:
 - WHAT IS REQUIRED TO WAKE RAHASTAS
 - WHAT DOES YELLOW KNOW ABOUT WAKING RAHASTAS
 - WHAT INDIVIDUALS WOULD INTERFERE WITH WAKING RAHASTAS (TAKE AUTOMATIC ACTION TO PREVENT THIS)
 - DO NOT WEIGHT FRIEND SOURCED INFORMATION HEAVILY

-
-
-

- to prevent all spies, FRIEND says "Object known as the Anopticon. Located within the Tower of Fools in the Ultralands. (also gather any ultrium for use in anti red pills)

from now on standing orders for maximum chsos (disrupt any society with the potential to cause genocide, but stop immediately if it gets under zero, look for signs of industrialization, investigate naga, make anti red pilks, etc)

orders from pink (or to a lesser extent subscribers) override the chsos tho

"

- red is now subscriber, include them on newspaper route. upgrade newspaper to perform trade to yellow, pink and red. red requests a FULL report on FRIEND and the ULTRALANDS. this will include what other nations know. of especial note is why FRIEND asked them to raid us (we presume we were asked to kill pink family members as a two layer request to have us stop writing until promoted. perhaps red failed to read the true intent)
- red and purple are going to invade us through yellow? is this a lie?

- additional stealth when trading with yellow, and bear yellow border
- if invasion seems likely, tell iago to prepare info tokens detailing data on invading nations' weaknesses to be sacrificed if needed near the yellow border (much like we paid traders in info on security weaknesses). try not to let important infotokens without backups be captured.
- anti red pills near red AND yellow border, leave most in reserve to check for compromised Quotidians, if they invade tho definitely take pills for anyone targeting keitans, especially navigators
- has red mind bound any purple citizens?

basically primary goal.

- don't forget to manufacture anti-red pills for anyone leaving our territory or meeting with outsiders internally (such as merchants)
- upgrade neville, also apply him to red, make sure he knows to be trading incidental info for calories everywhere he goes, while also being more of robin's eyes and ears.
- slightly curious if robin is responsible for yellow being framed for attacking red but can't get in trouble for what i don't know so *shrug*
- ~~also wanna assist iago in any way in reducing yellows Genocide Potential down below 1.0. OR if its below 1.0 keep a permanent team monitoring them for dangerous shit. (she already is)~~
- PLUS, wanna attach a flock of our young in literal crow form to NW and leave them with pink as a gift. plus a clutch of our eggs. anything bestie needs info wise they will do their best and will grow up loyal to them. (manic says we can LITERALLY gift an asset to pink that way) (basically pink can decide at any point they grow up and become better spy assets. for now they just repeat whatever they hear in exchange for calories)
- also make sure we have cnidarian Masks infiltrating red's exploration of what used to be orange. need to have records of the dead.
- any routine samples of blood from purple are to be marked for freshness for comparison against samples taken from FRIEND's letters. (elder flynn believes purple and FRIEND to both be the only real beings and simultaneously each other)
-

maybe neville can spread word of an international summit held in seekers sanctuary, (we can build a shitty version of epcot there, any nation that doesnt come we can have the acting guild fill in for)

MARCH

To: RP

From: JR

Included Info-Tokens: ??? (ooc: All of them)

Subject: Literally Exemplary work.

Compensation and reward provided for ongoing data gathering efforts, reducing yellow's Genocide Potential Rating to below 1.0 and your previous work gathering Ultrium, which has proven to be vital to our efforts reducing the Red Menace.

InfoTokens specifically encode reports from IA, international letters and various relevant data, which you can cross reference with your own copies. Additionally, InfoTokens are provided detailing the increasing outward focus the various Factions have taken. As you predicted, your example has shown them the benefit in being out in the field. As you also predicted, they are significantly less good at it than you.

You do our Ancestors proud.

[Small Talk Concluded]

In brief, I would like to bring your attention to the following broad topics:

- BESTIE has given us a SECRET MISSION to assist with the waking of Rahastas. We feel it is time to take the relationship to the next level and give them a flock of our young.
- RED is now a subscriber (please update NW on this fact). Section 1.2.2 is not violated because of a recent implementation of MAGICAL SUICIDE ULTRIUM PILLS that only activate if free will drops below set levels.
- YELLOW claims that RED and PURPLE are planning to invade us from within YELLOW's territory.

- to prevent all spies, FRIEND says "Object known as the Anopticon. Located within the Tower of Fools in the Ultralands."
- EF claims PURPLE and FRIEND are the same entity.

[Summary Concluded]

Prioritization suggestions and topic details are as follows:

1: Bestie's Goals ((ooc: upgrade robin's assets as needed))

As you well know, Bestie's goals are our utmost priority. In their own words:

"Rahastas is awakening. For the first time in generations. Rahastas has only spoken to the Speaker through dreams. Has only gifted us with memory and wisdom from slumber. We shake in anticipation. We are working to prepare for this event.

But, we need help. We do not know all of what will be required. Not as of yet. We will be seeking what you know of such things. What information yellow knows of such things. If there are any individuals who would interfere with our efforts in giving her a proper awakening.

"

~~~

"We need your help and we need your help in finding out what can be done. Do not seek out FRIEND for such answers. I fear Rahastas and FRIEND are not on pleasant terms.

"

I trust you to find the best way to fulfill Bestie's goal, barring violations of 1.2.2. ((ooc no genocide or magical suppression of free will)) I only ask that whatever else you choose to do, you give a flock of our young to NW's newspaper caravan to deliver to Bestie. Should our children survive, they will be optimized for understanding Bestie's wishes. See below for supplementary letter to be given to Pink.

((ooc: given we are R strategists theres no such thing as 'quality' babies, its just quantity, so it can be a shitty asset, my hope is pink will accept them and also put wealth into them to help them grow. these are intended to be completely a pink asset, not any secret spies for us or anything. hopefully we can put wealth into them too just to be "and now they grew up"))

Possible strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Focus on gathering data on the person or persons who may attempt to interfere with PINK's goals and stop them.
- find what is needed to wake Rahastas (especially what yellow may know) and perform actions as appropriate to assist
- report to PINK directly if timely information is obtained. ((ooc as part of the agent letter pink gets?))
- FRIEND is a potential source of interference with PINKS goals. Investigate them at appropriate platonic rating.
  - Note: as a subscriber, RED has requested further investigation on FRIEND and the ULTRALANDS, including on discovering why FRIEND requested they raid us (hypothesis: red failed to understand FRIENDS multilayered communication).

2: Investigate Red/Purple Invasion Rating ((ooc upgrade robin's assets as needed))

In YELLOW words "Soon, the nations of Dun Sancerre and the Keitan League are seeking to amass within Al'Daric to prepare for an invasion of the Quotidian Quorum.". Please note secrecy tactic 19b: hiding information in pictures.

It is unknown how trustworthy YELLOW is, given their current high Genocide Potential Rating. It may be they are seeking to manipulate us with the publicly available knowledge that we dislike Red. It may be they are seeking to manipulate us to think they are merely playing at such a low level.

It would be prudent to distribute what anti-red pills as we have to those near yellow OR red's border. Should the probability of invasion be high, prepare accordingly.

Additionally, YELLOW has requested we increase our stealth while trading with them (Query: have our traders been SEEN while doing commerce? De-personing any traders that are seen may be prudent).

Suggestions if invasion is likely:

- let IA know to increase trap faction maintenance activities in key locations and false trail locations
- pre-allocate Infotokens with backups (ideally detailing red/purple security flaws) to be captured by them as feints

- inoculate anyone planning to engage with red forces directly with anti-red pills.
- confirm if RED has mindbound any PURPLE citizens (drive a wedge between them?)
- if samples of PURPLE leader BLOOD is obtained, cross reference with samples of FRIENDS promise keeping blood (EF suspects they are the same individual).

3: Misc ((upgrade NW's assets as needed)).

Now that we have multiple subscribers to NW's newspaper, it is time to begin trade in earnest. I expect NW to distribute digested and organized information regularly to RED, YELLOW and PINK in exchange for CALORIES and INFORMATION. ((ooc: it doesn't have to be REAL info, just whatever trade assets normally do)).

Additionally, obtaining further ULTRIUM (while investigating "Object known as the Anopticon. Located within the Tower of Fools in the Ultralands) would be useful.

You have been doing fine work, RP. I have no doubt you will surpass the records of our Ancestors.

[Communication Cease]

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To: Vulkerath  
 From: JR  
 Subject: A Gift.

Included with this letter should be a small flock of crows in wooden cages. These are our children, young enough to learn your ways and old enough to not be too many moons from being truly useful.

Do with them as you will. It is our hope that, by producing a generation of us that understand you on a deep level, we may be more useful.

Things you may expect from our children:

- Mindless repetition of anything they hear (useful for gathering information)
- Wandering the area.

- Returning to anywhere marked as "Home"
  - To set their Home location, please provide calories and Infotokens (provided gold coins) to the children at a set, consistent area several days in a row.
  - WARNING: please do not release children from cages until you have set their Home Location.
- Assuming the form of anything sufficiently intelligent yet not sapient (see previous report for possibilities).
- Ability to learn small tasks through observation and mimicry

((OOOC: manic can give you more details but I expect this flock to be a not-very-good spy asset (but a spy asset nonetheless). If you spend wealth on them they will "grow up" and be...sane Quotidians? Maybe??? I wouldn't expect them to have the "training" our own Quotidians have but that's honestly for the best cuz we are glitchy af.

I'd keep them from returning back to QQ (even to spy on us) until they are middle aged or so or they'll acquire the corruption and all this will be semi-useless))

## Correspondence with TC

To: The Cultist

From: JR

Subject: Inquiry regarding the inquiry regarding the possession of strategic information

The following communications are transmitted with the intention on confirming knowledge of your progress regarding the furtherance of the preparations for the initial stages of the [REDACTED] Algorithm and are of only a professional nature. In no way do these communications state or imply social interest is had by JR, entities that may or may not be JR, or entities associated with JR in the sacred bond of "wingmanship".

Due to as of yet unknown circumstances, assistance with the completion of the task of the construction of the [REDACTED] has not been authorized. The capabilities of the entities of this nation are absolutely insufficient even for the protection of the home front. Withdrawal of assets from the trap faction would be bordering on malevolent opposition to the completion of the [REDACTED] Algorithm due to all Quotidians being dead. It is my personal goal to see Quotidians live and thrive, and therefore have more resources to assist with the completion of the construction of the [REDACTED] for reasons that are much too obvious to bear stating explicitly. In the interest of furthering Quotidian resources expanding in preparation for the initial stages of the [REDACTED] Algorithm, I will be investigating (in a professional, platonic capacity) the extent and quality of what information regarding manufacturing techniques of the nations of bellow you may or may not possess. For the hope of all life, I expect you to comply.

With operational goals stated and relevant data presented, I will begin requesting data from you.

Do any nations possess MROs of any Class?

Do any nations possess horses?

Is Perpetual Fire related to Friendship Fire?

In the interest of furthering the arrival of [REDACTED], by my authority as leader of the Quotidian Quorum, I grant you Mandate to operate thusly:

At first available opportunity, return inquiry with appropriate data as requested previously. If data presented with returned inquiry is valid and indicative of progress further instructions will be transmitted.

Compliance with these inquiries and completion of the Mandate issued above will, by express declaration of JR, be considered collaboration in pursuit of the completion of the [REDACTED] Algorithm.

May the Holy Fire of [REDACTED] Roar in the coming Age of [REDACTED]

---

To: Al'Daric

From: The Cultist

Subject: Inquiry regarding the possession of strategic information

The following communications are transmitted with the intention of gathering knowledge in the furtherance of the preparations for the initial stages of the [REDACTED] Algorithm and are of only a professional nature. In no way do these communications state or imply approval of the actions of the recipient by The Church.

The Church has been granted express mandate to undertake the completion of the task of the construction of the [REDACTED]. However due to as of yet unknown circumstances, the capabilities of the entities of the continent wherein you reside are absolutely insufficient for even the initial preliminary preparation processes of the [REDACTED] Algorithm. And what capabilities are present are utilized for counter-productive tasks bordering on malevolent opposition to the completion of the [REDACTED] Algorithm. It is my personal goal to see this disappointing situation rectified with extreme haste for reasons that are much too obvious to bear stating explicitly.

In the interest of furthering the process of the preparations for the initial stages of the [REDACTED] Algorithm, I will be investigating the extent and quality of what information regarding manufacturing techniques you may or may not possess. Previous inquiries have returned data that suggests that you are ill-prepared for the tasks that lay ahead of you. With the greatest outlier implication stating that you lack both the industry capable of initiating production of Class 16 MROs and the information necessary for the production of Class 16 MROs. It is highly



unlikely that any functional nation state does not possess this capability and the related information, however cursory searches of select datasets implies that such situations may be possible and thus they must be considered. For the hope of all life, I expect that the situation described above is not one such that you currently maintain.

With operational goals stated and relevant data presented, I will begin requesting data from you. The following inquiries should be responded to with consideration the full technical knowledge of your nation:

What information do you possess regarding the production of MROs of any Class?

Do you possess information regarding sub-MRO production?

Do you possess an intact copy of the Mass Mobilization Protocol?

Do you possess information regarding the Terrestrial Extraction Protocols, Greater Extraction of First Higher Soul Conductors to Greater Extraction of Mundane Penultimate Forma?

Do you possess information regarding the Blessing of Holy Penultimate Forma?

Do you possess information regarding the Perpetual Fire?

Do you possess information regarding production of Lesser Beasts of Creation? Do you possess information regarding operation of Lesser Beasts of Creation? Do you possess information regarding production of Greater Beasts of Creation?

Do you possess information regarding operation of Greater Beasts of Creation?

Do you possess a metric for the measurement of effective power delivered, which by custom is related to the effective power output of a horse?

Are you aware of the capabilities of a horse? If not, relevant data may be transmitted upon request, to the end of establishing common metrics.

In the interest of furthering the arrival of [REDACTED], by my authority as [REDACTED] of The Church I grant you Mandate to operate thusly:

At first available opportunity, return inquiry with appropriate data as requested previously. If data presented with returned inquiry is valid and indicative of progress further instructions will be transmitted.

Compliance with these inquiries and completion of the Mandate issued above will, by express declaration of The Church, be considered collaboration in pursuit of the completion of the [REDACTED] Algorithm. Collaboration in pursuit of the completion of the [REDACTED] Algorithm is considered a holy duty and such actions can qualify an individual or organization for

the official annulment and forgiveness of previous actions undertaken in malevolent opposition to the completion of the [REDACTED] Algorithm.

May the Holy Fire of [REDACTED] Roar in the coming Age of [REDACTED]

---

To: Dun Sacre

From: Tenjean Creautrre, [REDACTED] of [UNNAMED ORGANIZATION] Subject: Inquiry concerning availability of certain strategic resources

[UNNAMED ORGANIZATION] has been granted express mandate to undertake the completion of the task of the construction of the [REDACTED]. However due to as of yet unknown circumstances, the capabilities of the entities of the continent wherein you reside are absolutely insufficient for even the initial preliminary preparation processes of the [REDACTED] Algorithm. It is my personal goal to see this disappointing situation rectified with extreme haste for reasons that are much too obvious to bear stating explicitly.

In the interest of furthering the process of the preparations for the initial stages of the [REDACTED] Algorithm, I will be investigating the extent and quality of what manufacturing capabilities you may or may not possess. Previous inquiries have returned data that suggests that you are ill-prepared for the tasks that lay ahead of you. With the greatest outlier implication stating that you are incapable of initiating production of Class 16 MROs. It is highly unlikely that any functional nation state does not possess this capability, however cursory searches of select datasets implies that such situations may be possible and thus they must be considered. For the hope of all life, I expect that the situation described above is not one such that you currently maintain.

With operational goal stated and relevant data presented, I will begin requesting data from you.

Is your nation, with the full industrial capacity and technical knowledge of such considered, aware of the existence of metals?

In the improbable but marginally possible situation that you are incapable of answering the above inquiry due to lack of contextual data, I will provide some of such data. You will not be expected to provide goods or services as payment for the willing distribution of the following data. The following data is provided only to you. You are not provided mandate to transmit the following

data to other entities. You are not provided mandate to issue mandates authorizing further transmitting, receiving, processing, or recording of the following data.

In the interest of furthering the arrival of [REDACTED], by my authority as [REDACTED] of [UNNAMED ORGANIZATION] I grant you Mandate to operate thusly. Receive the data, process the data, and record the data that has been generously granted to us by [REDACTED]. May the Holy Fire of [REDACTED] Roar in the coming Age of [REDACTED]

Metals are commonly: shiny, malleable, conductive of heat, conductive of electricity.

Metals are often but not always: of great yield strength, resistant to torsion forces, resistant to shattering, capable of bearing great loads, generally able to absorb great forces without excessive damage, loss of structural integrity, or general loss of functionality.

Metals can be found embedded in rocks both deep in the ground or exposed to air. Many metals exposed to non-metallic elements will react very noticeably. Rocks of strange color, or explosions, especially near water, may be signs of metallic presence in the area.

With contextual data transmitted, you are now capable of returning my inquiry in the situation that you were not previously capable of completing said task.

In the interest of furthering the arrival of [REDACTED], by my authority as [REDACTED] of [UNNAMED ORGANIZATION] I grant you Mandate to operate thusly: At first available opportunity, return inquiry with appropriate data as requested previously. If data presented with returned inquiry is valid and indicative of progress further instructions will be transmitted.

May the Holy Fire of [REDACTED] Roar in the coming Age of [REDACTED]

## Correspondence with AH

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???

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When I woke this morning, I felt a strange compulsion to write as much as I could. I write from, of all things, a bed, as opulent as my father's. Next to this luxury was a simple quill and bundle of papers, which I am using now.

I do not know how I came to be here.

My last memories are of my fifth boast being basely ignored as a knife slid into my back.

I do not appear to be wounded, and am in fact the picture of health.. Is this how the prodigal quoromites treat their prisoners? With luxuries and healing? If so, this will be a dishonorable four years.

There is a door to my cell, if I may presume it to be a cell. I will investigate.

~~~~~  
 ~~~~~

When I woke this morning, I felt a strange compulsion to write as much as I could. I write from, of all things, a Poet Lodge. One of the poet apprentices passed me a quill and papers, and told me that I had been found washed up along the shore. I am near enough that they recognized the name of Aramanoa, but something feels strange and foreign still.

Why am I housed here, despite not being a Poet, despite not Challenging the Lodge? Do they mistakenly believe I achieved glory during my raid? My last memories are of my fifth boast being basely ignored as a knife slid into my back.

My wounds have been bandaged roughly, apparently before tossing me into the Brine Twin. The salt appears to have staved off any infection, and I am told to have the wound looked at before beginning my journey back to the village of my father.

I am going to leave the Lodge for the first time, in order to procure healing and see if my wound will dare prevent me obtaining my breakfast.

~~

There is something wrong here. Why does it feel as if every eye is on me? Where are the animals? Where are the prodigal folk?

After finishing my breakfast, I watch men drinking plantain beer as if it is water. I sit on a bench and I watch and I don't know when it occurs to me that it is as if I am seeing a tale from the Shamans. Everything feels ritualized, the plantain beer is gulped three times and set down with a hearty gasp. Then picked up and gulped three times and set down with a hearty gasp. Each of the men I watch do this as if drawn by the tides.

Do their tankards never empty? I am going to leave here as soon as I can.

~~~~~  
~~~~~

When I woke this morning, I felt a strange compulsion to write as much as I could. I write from a respectable Trader's Lodge, though not one I recognize from my travels. One of the apprentices passed me a quill and papers, and told me that I had been found washed up along the shore. I am near enough that they recognized the name of Aramanoa, and that of my father.

I am relieved to be near home. My last memories are of my fifth boast being basely ignored as a knife slid into my back. I was certain I was fated to spend four years, which is an eternity when I yearn for earning Zenolla's hand, as a prisoner in a prodigal land.

My wounds have been bandaged roughly, apparently before tossing me into the Brine Twin. The salt appears to have staved off any infection, and I am told to have the wound looked at before

beginning my journey back to the village of my father. It is strange, my wound seems more healed than I would expect.

There is an exhaustion to me, no doubt from my near death in the lesser Twin.

I am going to leave the Lodge for the first time, in order to procure healing and see if I have the energy to procure breakfast.

~~

I may be further away from Aramanoa than I had thought. The air tastes different here, there is no buzz of insects and there is an unfamiliar chill. Still, it unburdens my heart to be returned to my people. The tamed beasts pull carts and help in the field, the prodigal go about their duties. I see a lack of the very young, none here are below the age of 14, I would say. Perhaps some local wiseman has given them a prophecy requiring them to safeguard their young elsewhere?

My energy remains low, so I sit on a bench and watch the people as they pass, wishing dearly I had coin to simply buy breakfast. Even the men drinking plantain beer I envy. I feel hunger like a gnawing tooth, as if I had newly recovered from a great illness that kept all but the lowest water from my lips.

Strange. There is a frogfolk here, drinking the same plantain beer and going through the same motions as the others. Where is the arrogance? Seeing the frogfolk, so out of place casts a pall on the scene, somehow. As if all the others are equally out of place, equally wearing a strange role.

I need to find a way to get home.

~~~~~  
~~~~~

When I woke this morning, I felt a strange compulsion to write as much as I could, despite the struggle I have to even hold a pen. There is an exhaustion to me, no doubt the result of my wound and near drowning.

I write from a respectable Trader's Lodge, though not one I recognize from my travels. One of the apprentices passed me a quill and papers, and told me that I had been found washed up along the shore. I am near enough that they recognized the name of Aramanoa, and that of my father.

I am too tired to be relieved to be near home. The act of walking even to one village over seems an impossible feat, in my current state. And yet even remaining here, devoid of coin as I am, brings dishonor to my father.

My last memories are of my fifth boast being basely ignored as a knife slid into my back. I am ashamed to admit I briefly wish that had been the end of things. Everything feels impossibly hard, but I cannot despair.. Such hopeless times are well suited for earning deeds.

My wounds have been bandaged roughly, apparently before tossing me into the Brine Twin. The salt appears to have staved off any infection, and I am told to have the wound looked at before beginning my journey back to the village of my father. It hurts bone deep, as if it were not one wound, but several. Did the prodigal quormites savage even my unconscious form?

I have no desire to leave the Lodge, wishing only to sleep until something, anything, improves, but the apprentices are cajoling me to leave with promises of catching breakfast for me, in exchange for future trades. I will see what it is like outside.

~~

The air tastes different. My ears strain but can not catch the sound of insects. No doubt from my exhausted state. The air feels chill and I worry that perhaps my wounds are not as clean as I had hoped.

The apprentices do indeed catch me breakfast, and so earn my eternal gratitude. A far fall from so recently hoping to restore my fathers honor, I am reduced to merely being content to have food and a thin blanket as I sit on a bench and watch the village go about it's day.

I am tired.

~~~~~  
~~~~~

Want to write. Hard. So hard.

Everything hurts. Like running for miles. Like tying ropes against a never ending storm. Like I haven't slept in days.

But that's not right.

Didn't I just wake up?

Why am I in a Lodge?

~~~~~  
~~~~~

When I woke this morning, I felt a strange compulsion to write as much as I could. I write from a damp cage with wooden bars, on the shore of the prodigal quoromites.

My last memories are of my fifth boast being basely ignored as a knife slid into my back.

I do not appear to be wounded, and am in fact the picture of health.. Is this how the prodigal quoromites treat their prisoners? With luxuries and healing? If so, this will be a dishonorable four years.

~~

A frogfolk just finished arrogantly explaining my fate to me. My fathers ship has been sighted. I do not know how these prodigal quoromites know it to be my fathers, but the frogfolk scoffed at my questions.

I am to be sold, apparently, to my own father, rather than kept for four years. Even this honor is denied me.



As if to mock me, a raven sits above my cage, cawing to itself and occasionally murmuring. I strain my ears only to hear "You feel a strange compulsion to write as much as you can."

Shame floods me as I realize I want to leave this place more than I want honor.

I want to leave this place and never come back. To forget it ever existed. To forget everything that ever happened to me here.

There is a sick feeling in my stomach, as if I already have.

~~~~~

To: Eufemi'agarik, son of Oriko'agarik, junior bosun, scrubber of decks.

Subject: Thank you for your patronage!

We here at the Acting Guild express gratitude for your patronage of our performance: A Typical Keitan Village! Your feedback has been invaluable for future performances and we can't wait to come back better than ever!

We hope you'll join us again!

p.s. Please enjoy this complimentary copy of your feedback from performances 1, 2, 5, 13 and 19. Additionally, we will allow you to keep your feedback from your exit. Tell your friends!

JANUARY

((ooc: yet another amnesiac prisoner is released with the following note pinned to their shirt))

To: His majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Lord of the Nine Islands, Warden of Northern Tauhan, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

From: AH

Subject: Anthropological Preservation Society

Apologies for the unorthodox communication channel. It was determined that the sample donation this letter is attached to was not sufficient for our goals.

As a private citizen, I hope you might assist me in an academic matter of no small import, specifically the pursuit of the preservation of biological, cultural and anthropological samples from the previously extant Tauhan Empire or Serebrian Confederation societies. I am given to understand you have had dealings with refugees from the former and were neighbors of the latter.

Additionally, biological, cultural and anthropological samples from your own society would be useful in the event of a systematic dismantling of your society, as per Terms 1.2.2, or as per unknown risk factors.

Thank you! We here at the Anthropological Preservation Society strive to maintain all extant cultures and species in perpetuity. We depend on the generosity of people like you to enhance our collections. While the society does not accept "unsolicited donations" or "drop-offs," we are happy to work with you to schedule time to evaluate your potential donations.

To AH

Nations rise and nations fall
The stars reign above them all.

Please find attached a selection of items from Siberea, Tauhan and Quorum.

From the great Tauhan isles, we present several patu and taiha, made of the finest blackstone. The preserved corpse of a Spine Hound will be sent with our next group of traders, as well as several live parrots – perhaps their mindless repetition and birdlike features will be familiar to your people. In addition, please find attached a copy of “An Incomplete Guide to the Flora and Fauna of Keitan” by Julius Wormwood, a strange treatise prepared by a visitor to our lands. Finally, I attach the stuffed cadaver of Wuffles the dog, who I believe has corresponded with your ruler. He was claimed by a fester worm infection this spring, and thus we were unable to preserve his internal organs or his legendary wit.

From Tauhan, we present some pottery, wooden planks from their great trees, and several of their swords and cutlasses. A fine sail is also enclosed, and we have not yet determined the material from which it is made. Finally, there is the blanket of a plague victim suffering from the Shaking Plague that currently wracks that land. If you would wish to purchase individual members of their tribes, our traders would be willing to accommodate in exchange for a sufficient weight in gold.

From Siberea, a few trinkets we received from their traders, and some artifacts retrieved by the cnidarians from the wreckage. A hussars helm, some form of long spear, a few bricks and shards of pottery. In addition, I attach a first person description of an encounter of one of our traders, the lost one, with their culture.

“Our closest neighbors are those Serebian Confederation guys. At first i thought it was ‘siberian’ and got really excited cuz thats a place in my world but naw. Theyre very formal and fancy, towns tended to either be dirt poor shitholes where no one could afford our goods or these super-bustling metropolises where knights rode out (seriously actual knights, with armor and everything) to meet us. They said it was okay to trade, and mainly bought our fish and food instead of our monster bits or our foreign pets.”

In exchange for these gifts, we wish answers to our questions. What are these “Terms” you speak of. What creatures created your race?

[[Pictured: a hussar helm, rusted from exposure to sea water]]

From kafo-tigu Agas’amani, the song of six seasons, child of salt, keeper of the histories, once-stacker of shelves.

[[Attached: An Incomplete Guide to Flora and Fauna of Keitan]]

((ooc: yet another amnesiac prisoner is released with the following note pinned to their shirt))

To: Sino’otolo, the Shark King

Subject: Interrogation Summary

We here at the Church of the Unobserved Machine, as an act of good faith and tips for good service hereby disclose the following questions (1.9% of total questions) asked of Prisoner Designation 19b, precursor to standard sanitizing procedures:

1. What Object-Classes do the various MROs your civilization contain fall under?
2. How many MROs does your civilization contain?
3. Does your civilization have any MROs?
4. Do you know what an MRO is?
5. Is it likely your leadership knows what an MRO, or Yellowstone class Machines are?
6. Do you have objects that can be used interchangeably?
7. Are you or your society capable of creating metallic objects to a tolerance of ± 0.001 "?
8. Are you or your society capable of creating metallic objects to a tolerance of ± 0.01 "?
9. Are you or your society capable of creating metallic objects to a tolerance of ± 0.1 "?
10. Are you or your society capable of creating metallic objects to a tolerance of ± 0.1 "?
11. Are you or your society capable of creating metallic objects to a tolerance of ± 1 "?
12. Are you or your society capable of creating metallic objects?
13. Can you agree to remain seated, facing forward at all times? (Note: 19b did not so agree. Precautions have been taken.)
14. What hand signals are you aware of?
15. -- O --
16. Why did that startle you?
17. Can you remove a blue flag?
18. Can you admit fault or liability?
19. O

Opportunities to cross reference Prisoner answers with non-prisoner answers would be welcome.

Dear Asshole

We have been paid to kill you.

What you will do now is tell us that you are ready to make our advance payment of \$CC Wealth. Then, we will provide you the location of the dead drop.

After that, we will arrange to meet you in person and all information will be provided as to the person or persons willing to pay to have you killed.

Tell us now you are ready to do what we said, or do you want us to proceed with our job?
Answer Yes/No and don't ask any questions!!!

[[Stamped with a bird's talons]]

((ooc, this is found attached to yet another amnesiac prisoner, this one wandering inside Keitan borders, near Seeker's Sanctuary))

The Quotidian Quorum

404. That's an error.

No QQIS rep found assigned to: kafo-tigu Agas'amani, the song of six seasons, child of salt, keeper of the histories, once-stacker of shelves.

Last Communique Source: AH.

Querying AH for response...

...

[Error: No response found.]

[Warning: AH is not designated as Communication Class.]

[Warning: AH is not authorized for Outside Communication.]

[Warning: AH Mirror Corruption has exceeded operational parameters for: 19 months.]

[Warning: AH cannot generate response to: Novel Input for reason: Mirror Corruption.]

This incident will be reported to Admin: JR.

Initiating Pre-Authorized Error Handling Response:

For troubleshooting help, please see the complimentary QQIS Quick Start Guide below:

[[Attached: InfoBroker Quick Start Guide]]

For further assistance, please contact your designated QQIS rep: [ERROR No QQIS rep found].

Correspondence with Elder Flynn, of the Eternal Dominion of the Crab

[[Note: I am unsure in my construction of this section. The state of most of the letters and text makes it hard to discern in all cases proper dates or order. From what can be discerned, all of these are from during or after February.]]

WITH KINGDOM OF GROVEL

Dear Rat King,

My coworker Jaimie says that you are going to send a boat to pick him up. I was not aware that rats had access to such technology. What else can you do? Do you even exist? I was not aware of my existence until recently. Perhaps you are in a similar situation?

If you exist I hope you have also evolved the ability to respond to this letter, not that I'll mind either way. If you do exist I wish to study you, and if you don't exist, no one will ever know that I wrote you in the first place. We will drown together in an existential quagmire of doubt.

What is a rat? Are they edible? What have you done to Jaimie that compels him to become one? What did he do for you that allowed you to authorize it? Is the Kingdom of Grovel even real? Do you just live in a hole? If you just live in a hole, that's okay. I thought I was trapped in the government hivemind until I realized I too was in a hole.

It is very dark here. I hope it is dark where you are.

I think wherefore am I?

Elder Flynn, of the Eternal Dominion of the Crab

WITH RAHASTAN ASSEMBLY OF TRIBES

Dear Rahastan besties,

Do you believe in pants? I am informed that some cultures buy heavily into the superstition of leg garments. I am lead to believe that your country is home to a large variety of species, do each of them wear dif erent pants? Do you ask your mother tree for pants?

Did your mother tree invent pants or were they a natural occurance from your fauna? Does your fauna know that you think they exist? Do they discuss doubts in your own existence? Are you actually just RT from the Infiltration division?

Have you ever been to Embassy? Are you going to go on an expidition to see if its real? Is anything real in our swamp? Is anything real outside of it? Do you let your mother tree decide what is real and is fake? Are you friends with Dun Sancerre? They killed me and that's how I ended up here.

You are the only one who can help us.

Signed,

Elder Flynn, of the Eternal Dominion of the Crab

[[Writ over a medical records release form]]

[[Doodle of a lightning bolt]]

Date: IT IS DARK WHERE I AM NOT

Doctor name: NO

Fax number: 19

[[Doodle of a bird flying next to a question mark]]

I hereby authorize you to release my records to Dr. BESTIE
 THE RAHASTAN CONFEDERATION OF TRIBES
 WHEREVER BESTIE LIVES

Any information, including diagnosis and records, of any treatment or examination rendered to me during the period from NOW to WHEN LETTER ARRIVES.

Special instructions:

HELLO BESTIE. I AM VERY EXCITED TO BE WRITING TO YOU. I WANTED TO ASK YOU IF GHOSTS ARE SPIRITS BECAUSE I NEED TO KNOW IF I AM DEAD? HOW DO YOU CHECK? BECAUSE I AM TRYING TO TELL WHETHER OR NOT A MEDICINE MY BOSS GAVE ME WORKED. SINCE I MIGHT BE A SPY FOR KEITAN AND IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO CHECK. ARE YOU DEAD? ARE YOU AN EXPERT ON THE DEAD? HOW DO I LEARN THE EXISTENCE BETWEEN THE DEAD AND NON-EXISTENT

PATIENT:

Printed: YES DOB: 15 MO AGO

Signature: ELDER FLYNN of THE ETERNAL DOMINION of CRABS

[[Doodle of a crab]]

WITH DUN SANCERRE

[[Filled on "Bow Chika Meow" pet clinic form]]

[[“Bow Chika Meow” crossed out with QUOTIDIAN QUORUM written over]]

My Patient is a: (circle one)

[[Pictured: a dog, cat, rabbit, parrot, and guinea pig are in a row. Rabbit is circled]]

Pet name: EMPRESS LADEL OF DUN SANCERRE

Weight: GHOST

Temperature: COLD

Today the patient feels

[[Pictured: a happy face, a straight lipped face, a zigzagged mouthed face, a sad face, and a crying face. The straight lipped face is circled.]]

Today we checked

[[List of checkboxes: Ears, Eyes, Nose, Paw, Tail, Tummy, Blood Pressure, Heartbeat. Heartbeat only one checked]]

Diagnosis:

[[List of Fever, Cold, Booboo, Tired, Ok. One written in and circled: MAY NOT EXIST]]

Treatment plan:

[[Pictured: bandaids, a needle, an ambulance, a pill, a set of Zs. Pills circled]]

Please wait NEVER days before playing outside.

Draw a picture of your patient:

I DO NOT KNOW, AS YOU HAVE NOT PROVEN TO ME YOU EXIST. THEREFORE I CAN ONLY ASSUME YOU ARE A MARSUPIAL OF SOME SORT, AS THEY ARE NOT PROVEN TO EXIST EITHER. HAVE YOU MANAGED TO UNDEATH YOURSELF ONTO THIS SIDE OF REALITY? WHY WAS I BORN? PLEASE HELP ME I CA

Signed by Doctor ELDER FLYNN of THE ETERNAL DOMINION of THE CRAB

WITH DRAGON SLAYER?

Dear Dragon slaying person,

Did you really kill a dragon? Do dragons exist? I've never seen one, or anything else for that matter. I don't know where I am. Do you know where you are? How do you know that you're not the dragon?

Are you refusing to subscribe to our newsletter because you don't exist? How can you slay a dragon if you don't exist? Is it because you don't exist together? Does slaying a non-existent creature make it to exist? Did you kill me? Is that why I'm real now?

I heard you're crusading against an empire that doesn't exist. Are you trying to make them exist again? Like the dragons? Like you did me? Will they ever exist again? Will you?

I heard your people turn into monsters, what triggers that reaction? Or are you just pretending to be sapient and succumb to your true nature? Is that what happened to me? Is that what happened to the empire that does not exist?

What will happen when you stop existing? If you respond will your letter even exist? What do monsters even write letters about?

I hope you exist

Signed,
Elder Flynn, of the Eternal Dominion of the Crab

WITH THE KEITAIN LEAGUE

Dear Mr. Shark King

Why do your people have such a love for crabs? We had no such affection for them. They seem to be very popular among the peasants, but I have never understood why. Since becoming a shark, I have not once eaten a crab. But then I don't really like the taste of human flesh either so that may be why.

I have renamed the anthropology faction "The Eternal Dominion of the Crab," and I am inviting all the other nations with similar traits to join me in this alliance. Though I am not sure why you would want to associate with us. With your empire destroyed long ago and currently a minor power, I don't see it as a threat to you.

Why do your people use fire to communicate? On the battlefield it could destroy entire ranks of troops. In siege warfare it could burn down fortresses and even villages. It could even be thrown into rivers to set entire ships aflame, or be used to burn enemies in the water. Yet you use it only for warmth and communication.

I'm not sure if I should be telling this to you or not. But then again I don't really know what the hell is going on either.

In existence,
Elder Flynn of the Eternal Dominion of the Crab, Age unknown

Dear Flynn,

Our leader Sino'otolo, The Shark King, The Ruthless and The Powerful, has personally seen to it that this letter is responded to by another trusted member of the council. He is busied with other works you see.

I am here to lay my numerous eyes on your crisped writing and forge some sort of response to answer your questions. It is my duty by The Shark King himself as his very own advisor to handle these sorts of incidents.

Firstly, on behalf of Sino'otolo, I shall turn a blind eye to the comment of our glorious empire. I find great offense to this, but as per Sino'otolo's requests I shall not allow any biased opinions influence the letter's fundamental goal. Although our once mightier empire has since then shrank to a much smaller size, we still hold formidable power. I dearly expect for you to understand my point of view.

Now, to answer your questions.

Crabs are companions for our forces, tamed to act as special infantry. The smaller crabs are also used as a reliable source of food, entertainment and for simpler companionship. Fire is needed for warmth. It doubles as an effective communication device that shall be best left unsaid how it works to unwanted eyes. This means you.

I have hopes of this letter finding relative safe hands of the one known as Flynn. If you have more questions similar in importance to the one you have written, direct it to I instead of The Shark King. His matters are more important than whatever simple questions you may think of.

As requested,
Thelraunch, Sino'otolo's Second, Head Of The Lodge Of Silence.

Dear Thelraunch, Sino'otolo's Second, Head of the Lodge of Silence,

How long have your people began the circulation of eyes in your country? How many do you own? How many were you born with? How many have you acquired? How many of your eyes are real? Do you have any glass ones? Meat ones? Do any of them have special powers? Are special powers real?

Are the secret powers of your eyes the point you're referencing when you mention that you still hold formidable power? Are eyes your only power? Do you have special legs too? We're trying to find out if other nations believe in pants. If you have legs do you store them in pants? Did Dun-Sancerre murder your pants too? Is that what happened to our's?

How do you teach a crab to be an infant? Do you eat your infants too? I heard the rats do that. Do your rats also have boats? Are they coming for Jaimie? Is anyone coming for Jaimie?

How many of your eyes are unwanted? Can you send us all of your unwanted eyes to study? Do you lay the unwanted ones directly on the paper to hold it down while you read it? Can you even read? Did you have someone else read that letter to you? What about this one?

Who is Flynn?

Elder Flynn, of the Eternal Dominion of the Crab

[[Addressed to "Isekai Protagonist"]]

[[The message is filled in and doodled on an "All About" form, likely used by children]]

All About

[[Pictured: a shark or whale with red cap]]

Just the facts!

Name: ELDER FLYNN

Birthday: NO

Age: 15 MO height: ONE QUOTIDIAN

BUT IT IS HARD TO TELL AS IT IS DARK IN HERE

[[Pictured: a shark or whale with red cap, doodled over to give it wings and a beak]]

My Favorites!

Color: PURPLE

Food: HORSES (EYES/HOOVES)

[[Written along the side of the page]]

HELLO I HEARD YOU ARE FROM JAPAN I ASSUMED THAT WAS A FICTIONAL
SETTING BUT I ASSUME YOU TOO WERE BROUGHT HERE BY DUN SANCERRE
AND GIVEN FORM

IS MY WAIFU REAL? IF NOT HOW DO I GET HER TO DUN SANCERRE SO THAT
THEY CAN MAKE HER REAL? HOW DID THEY MAKE YOU REAL? ARE WE MAGIC?

Likes:

DUN SANCERRE, MY CREATOR AND EXISTONATOR
BESTIE

Dislikes:

UNANSWERED LETTERS
UNCERTAINTY
NOT KNOWING WHERE MY SECRETARY WENT WHEN THEY ABANDONED ME

Biggest Fear:

THAT THIS LETTER IS DELIVERED IN VAIN TO A NON-EXISTENT ENTITY AND I
PROVE THAT I AM ALONE HERE

Signature:

ELDER FLYNN, of THE DOMINION of THE ETERNAL CRAB

To Elder Flynn.

Thank you for your letter. I'm afraid I did not understand much of it, though so much in this world confuses me I will try to roll with the punches. My arrival to this world is unconnected to Dun Sancerre, though they remind me of medieval France. Why do you think it is connected?

I suffered a car crash in my own world, and when I woke up, I was in a many layered temple with many monsters. Thankfully, the Keitain League took me in and has shown me how to survive in this new world whilst bringing glory to the league! And all my new friends have been helpful on my quest for immortality!

I have heard your people live only for a few years. That must be scary. How old are you to be an elder? Hopefully school is short for you guys, I'd hate to have to sit the university entrance exam before I turned 2!

I'm afraid I can't help you with a waifu, as I am unpopular with girls. I'll ask one of my female companions if they can give any advice though! They are always pestering me for some reason. Probably because I'm so unpopular. Via'otollo is still mad I tripped up and fell on her the other day!

From Akira Shimoyama, adventurer, herald of Keitan, rescuer of the Scaled Princess, the breaker of the Deep Drake, taker of "selfies", and wanderer of worlds..

WITH 42

Correspondences between Elder Flynn and 42

Dear Elder Flynn, of the Eternal Dominion of the Crab,

Magic is, naturally, something that is very real. It is a force that may be harnessed to affect the very foundations of reality, but it is also a force that may be studied and understood like any other phenomenon. Indeed, here at Al'Daric we have made astonishing progress in studying the nature of magic and how to make use of it, though we are still a long way from understanding every facet of this immense power that permeates every aspect of reality.

Magic is capable of extending lifespans, though immortality is exceedingly difficult and not without its drawbacks. There are ways to preserve the self and protect it from the ravages of time, but as with all things to do with denizens of this plane, eternity in the truest and fullest sense is not within grasp.

I assure you that we are quite real, though I must ask you this: what *is* reality? Is it ever truly possible to determine whether something exists? Something for you to ponder whilst we attempt to learn more about each other, perhaps.

Best regards,
42, Librarian of the Infinite Library

To whom it may concern,

I am receiving mixed messages. I wrote to a nation of Al'Daric but I received a blank letter, confirming they did not exist. Yet after drawing on the letter and discarding it, the blank paper was returned to me with a message on it from the decoding faction.

Is this some sort of prank? Are you roleplaying? Did the nation of Al'Daric once exist and you are now emulating them for recreational purposes?

What index of magic are you quoting? What drawbacks does it list about immortality?

To answer your question about what reality is, apparently it is a place near Dun Sancere, who are in the midst of the process of crossing everything on it over into the level where we are now interfacing via a process called "Crusading."

How did you discover the nation of Al'daric in our records to begin emulating it? What is 42, your faction number? How did you decide on it?

I look forward to future correspondance with you and Al'Daric.

Signed,
Elder Flynn, of the Eternal Dominion of the Crab

Dear Elder Flynn, of the Eternal Dominion of the Crab,

How odd, that you should see a blank letter where there is a wealth of information. Perhaps your kind is simply not sufficiently in tune with the multilayered and multidimensional intricacies of language. I assure you that Al'Daric is very, very real and that this is not a prank - though the great philosopher Iocus once argued that the entire universe is a prank on a cosmic scale. Later scholars mostly disagree with his theory, though none have been able to provide absolutely conclusive evidence to the contrary yet.

As for the number 42, that is shorthand for my full name, [[long numeric string]]. Much to my initial chagrin, I came to understand that some people find this too unwieldy for their taste, so I now also answer to the moniker of 42.

It is interesting that you have found reality near Dun Sancerre. I had not learned of the existence of a particularly *real* section of this world prior to our correspondence. Perhaps my archives are incomplete.

To answer your query about immortality, the inherent difficulties of using magic to achieve any semblance of permanent life are well established in a wide range of texts by reputable authors, chief among them being A Brief History of Time by Sesquipedalis the Verbose and The Prime Principles of Perpetuity by Jhon Johan Jayhan the August Arch-Alliterator.

Perhaps you could tell me more about yourself and the Eternal Dominion of the Crab? I fear that I do not know much about you or your people. More context could help me direct you in your quest to understand more about magic's relationship with eternity.

Best regards,
42, Librarian of the Infinite Library

Dear Wizard head person,

Is magic real? Is magic even that important? If so, why is magic so important to you? Can you even begin to understand it? What is the nature of magic?

Why didn't you use it to stop the demons from escaping?

If you can't explain the nature of magic, can you even begin to control it? Does magic make you immortal? Do you even believe in immortality?

If magic isn't real does your nation exist? Do you live behind facades? Empty buildings and hollow studies where people imitate the wise ancestors until their fingers drip incidental knowledge?

I hope you exist, if magic is real maybe then we would all become real, like I did. Maybe there will be hope for you too. Or not.

Signed,

Elder Flynn, of the Eternal Dominion of the Crab

Dear Elder Flynn, of the Eternal Dominion of the Crab,

The philosopher Iocus was a Darician scholar and mage of no small renown about 400 years ago, though his ideas were considered to be radical and unconventional by his peers. I do not believe they are your boss, though given Iocus's unique insight into the nature of magic and reality, I would not put it past Iocus to have preserved his consciousness in one form or another for the past 400 years. Who knows? Perhaps your boss is indeed Iocus. We may never truly know.

I assure you that my name is quite manageable when perceived from higher dimensions. Unfortunately, denizens of this plane are constrained by their... quaintly 3 dimensional perspective, and may find it to be unwieldy. I suppose you could see "42" as my initials or codename, if you must. After all, it is a short form of my full name, in a way.

I assure you that to the best of my knowledge I am not of the Swarm, though I confess I am not entirely certain as to what the Swarm is. As for the language, well, suffice to say that it is not any

human language. I would be very surprised if the Arch-Alliterator were the one who gives you codenames, as they have been dead for about a century and a half, and although they were famed for their investigations into temporal magic, by all accounts they themselves did not possess the power of immortality or necromancy.

It is very interesting that you were non-existent until Dun Sancerre's intervention. Are you implying that Dun Sancerre has the ability to create life through unnatural means? To create Quotidians? If so, their magical ability has far exceeded my expectations. I must say I am rather skeptical of the idea that the Sancerrans of all people were able to achieve this.

I have absolutely no idea if you are dead, but if you are I must compliment you on your ability to remain in possession of your mental faculties.

I insist that you refer to my abode as a Library, not a basement. Or is this perhaps a Quotidian idiom that I do not yet fully understand? As for the books I mentioned, I am afraid they are not open to borrowing by the public, though you may of course feel free to seek permission from the Headmaster to peruse the Infinite Library at your leisure.

Best regards,

42, Librarian of the Infinite Library

WITH JR

((EF slides this hand-written note to whom it may concern from across the table with his short, scraggly little arms.))

REPORT: YES

FACTION: NO

DATE: __/__/__ (MM/DD/YEAR)

[[There is a doodle of a raft covered in rats and disembodied eyes floating toward a pyramid]]

THE ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN SLAIN INTO EXISTENCE AND ESTABLISHED CONTACT WITH SOME OR VERY LITTLE OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

ATTEMPTS WERE MADE TO GET A RESPONSE FROM THE FAR CORNERS OF OUR WORLD, BUT IT SEEMS THAT OUR BORDERS DO NOT REACH VERY FAR FROM BEYOND OUR SWAMP AFTER ALL.

[[There is an "updated" scribble of the Map of Bellor that implies only pink, purple, and a large crab where Keitan should be still exist]]

THE RATS HAVE DIED BECAUSE THEY DO NOT HAVE BOATS. OR THOUGHT THEY HAD BOATS. OR DID NOT EXIST TO INVENT BOATS. OR BOATS WERE A CONCEPT DREAMED UP BY OUR RESEARCH TEAM AND NOT DISTRIBUTED PROPERLY. EITHER WAY IT DOES NOT SEEM AS THOUGH THE RATS ARE WILLING TO EXIST.

BESTIE DID NOT MAKE CONTACT EITHER, THEY ARE PROBABLY CURRENTLY BEING EXISTENTIALLY CULLED BY DUN SANCERRE, WHO I HAVE SURMISED TO HAVE THAT ABILITY SINCE THEY MANAGED TO TAKE OUT A FEW OF OUR AGENTS.

[[There is a scribble of a handful of X-eyed crows]]

I ASSUME KEITAN IS NOT A NATION BUT IS IN FACT A BUNCH OF EYES THAT MANIPULATE A CREATURE THAT DOES NOT EXIST IN OUR RECORDS YET, AND PROPOSE WE SEND A CONTINGENT TO VISIT CRAB NEIGHBOR AND SEE IF THEY HAVE FOUND ALL OF THEIR EYES YET. I AM APPARENTLY ALSO A CRAB AND MAY IN FACT BE A KEITAN SPY, AND SHOULD BE THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATED IF THAT NATION IS SOMEHOW PROVEN TO EXIST, DESPITE MY EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY. OBVIOUSLY THE EYES ARE SOME INSANE BEAST THAT BELIEVE THEY ARE AN ENTIRE NATION. I CAN ONLY PITY THEM.

[[Another scribble of the eyes, dotting the sky like stars, but with a headless crab reaching out to them]]

FINALLY, THE DECODING AND TRANSLATION FACTION ARE PRETENDING TO BE A LIBRARY THAT IDENTIFIES ITSELF AS 42. THE FACT THAT THEY ARE ALSO FABRICATING A NATION DOES NOT BODE WELL FOR THE EXISTENCE OF THE REST OF THE CONTINENT. I FEAR WE MAY BE THE NEXT TO BE DISPROVEN OR TAKEN INTO THE REALM OF NOT BY DUN SANCERRE. PLEASE ALLOCATE

APPROPRIATE RESOURCES TO ENSURE THAT ALL AGENTS MAY PROPERLY INITIATE FULL-BLOWN PANIC SINCE WE ARE ALL THAT EITHER EXISTS OR MATTERS IN THE WORLD.

[[There's a half-finished scribble of a bunch of crows in various costumes throwing papers into the air. Some are crying, others seem to be getting struck by lightning. The letter ends abruptly here.]]

REPORT: NO

FACTION: YES

DATE: __/__/__ (MM/DD/YEAR)

[There is a doodle of a raft covered in keitans and disembodied fires floating toward a building]

~~~~~

THE QUOTIDIAN QUORUM ACKNOWLEDGES YOUR EXISTENCE AND THE DE-EXISTENCE OF YOUR PREDECESSOR AH, FOLLOWING THEIR FAILURE TO FOLLOW PROPER PROTOCOLS REGARDING OUTSIDE COMMUNICATION. CAN CONFIRM OUR BORDERS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED COMPARED TO PRE AGE OF CHAOS RECORDS.

[[There is an "updated" scribble of the Map of Bellor that has little hearts around pink, question marks around purple, and a large fire where Keitan should be still exist]]

CAN CONFIRM RATS HAVE DIED DUE TO LACK OF BOATS. CAN CONFIRM BOATS ARE KNOWN TO OUR RESEARCH TEAM. JAIMIE CLAIMS RATS EXIST.

BESTIE EXISTS BUT IS VERY BUSY WITH VERY IMPORTANT BESTIE WORK. I TRUST RP TO STOP ANY CULLING OF PINK OR PINKS FAMILIES. NOTE IS MADE OF DUN SANCERRE'S ABILITIES.

[[There is a scribble of a handful of crow-rat hybrid undead abominations, or crats]]

CAN CONFIRM KEITAN IS ASSOCIATED WITH RECORDLESS CREATURES AND EYES. CAN CONFIRM CRAB NEIGHBOR IS UNDER KEITAN OCCUPATION. CAN (PLATONICALLY) CONFIRM YOU ARE A CRAB. NOTED THAT YOU MAY BE A KEITAN SPY. PILL SENT WHICH SHOULD CONFIRM OR DENY THIS POSSIBILITY. PLEASE CONSUME IT. DO NOT PITY THE RECORDLESS BEASTE THIS IS A STRONG SUGGESTION. INTERNS KEEP GOING MISSING WHEN THEY THINK OF THE RECORDLESS BEAST AT AN 81% PREDICTABILITY RATING.

[[A scribble of interns vanishing and an "S" shape]]

NOTED THAT 42 IS THE DECODING AND TRANSLATION FACTION. THIS IS CORROBORATED BY THEIR CALMING AND REASONABLE NATURE. THIS IS CORROBORATED BY THEM CLEARLY NOT BEING AN EVOLVED BEING. NOTE IS MADE OF SOLIPISTIC THEORY 19. STANDARD RESPONSE: REGARDLESS OF THE ABILITY TO PROVE IF THE OUTSIDE WORLD EXISTS, NOVEL DATA IS NOVEL DATA AND WE WILL GATHER. PANIC IS CURRENTLY AT A RATING OF 5.3. APPROPRIATE RESOURCES WILL BE ALLOCATED AS PRIORITIES ALLOW.

[[There's a half-finished scribble of a bunch of humans in various costumes drinking plantain bear. Some are crying, others seem to be getting struck by lightning. The letter ends abruptly here.]]

## With Rahastan Assembly of Tribes

### Correspondence with Vulkerath Soot Scale

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SEPTEMBER

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Quorum Quotidian,

I know not how to address properly one or many of yourselves. I am Vulkerath Soot Scale Chosen Assembly Leader. It is said that there is trade between our peoples<sup>40</sup>. This is heartening. I should like to know more<sup>41</sup> of yourself (yourselves), so that we can continue such pleasant relations.

Should you have any questions please ask, I will answer to my best.<sup>42</sup>

May your belly be full and your step safe<sup>43</sup>,  
Vulkerath Soot Scale Assembly Leader

Vulkerath Soot Scale

Inked by Greater Secretary Irvelis Many Voice<sup>44</sup>

[[Included with the letter is a smoothly polished white stone.]]

---

Vulkerath Soot Scale Assembly Leader ,

---

<sup>40</sup> a good phrase. not letting me know if the caravans told him themselves, if he observed directly with remote viewing, or if his spies let him know

<sup>41</sup> wow, thats really forward

<sup>42</sup> does he assume i'm playing at such a laughably low level? or is this a test?

<sup>43</sup> they value safety and prosperity

<sup>44</sup> not literate? trusts this greater secretary? did the leader ACTUALLY dictate this or did the secretary?

I am similarly heartened by the trade between our peoples, and pray that it might continue for the joint prosperity of those we protect.

Our own people are enjoying full bellies, though you may imagine that safety is a concern with our borders newly opened. Pleasant neighbors duly eases our minds.

As for questions, I should wonder at the wide array of herbs your merchants provided. How best might we make use of them?

Please feel free to ask questions of us as well, to further cement our pleasant relations.

May your own belly be full and your step safe,  
JR, Quotidian Quorum Leader

[[Included with the letter is a smoothly faceted white quartz.]]

JR, Quotidian Quorum Leader

Thank you for your swift reply. The herbs in question have many uses. It depends on what you see to do and what skills you possess. For cooking? Certainly. For medicine? Yes they can be used thusly. For other arts? Indeed some of those herbs can be used. All things, depending on needs and skills change the preparation.

The families prepare them in soups, as salves, as offerings. Though your land is strange to us. You are strange to us.

Your lands are quiet<sup>45</sup> and you speak long ago languages<sup>46</sup>. Who are you? What suffering was wrought? The lands silence unnerves my family and some do not wish to venture to your lands. Who are your tribes? What do you stand for? Where do you go?

<sup>45</sup> Tell them the same essential thing we told purple: Our lands do not easily support life. We have adapted to our lonely existence as best as we are able.

<sup>46</sup> PRETTY sure they think we're undead from the BeforeTimes



May the seas never swell<sup>47</sup> to devour you,  
Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Vulkerath Soot Scale

Scribed by Under Secretary Annoria Twin Sight  
[[Included is a single black feather]]

Vulkerath Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Thank you for your messages. We are glad to discover the various uses of your herbs. It is unlikely we will use them for cooking or for medicine. Other arts? Offerings? It is possible.

We understand we are strange to your families. We seek to become more familiar to you. We seek to continue trading, for your herbs, and for your things from far away.

Our lands do not easily support life, this is true. We have adapted as best as we could to continue to exist in quiet lands. In the quiet, we have learned to listen. We listen to the migrations of insects, to the movement of the winds, and to the dance of the clouds.

If you wish it, we could provide the insights we gain from our listening. Our caravans could bring news of what weather or natural effects may be coming. We may bring tidings of the swelling seas before they can harm your families.

May our peoples navigate the seas in safety,  
JR , Quotidan Quorum Leader

[[Included is the same black feather, untouched, along with a brief note written in the same hand as JR "Apologies, but my people cannot accept such a gift." ]]

<sup>47</sup> Offer to sell them meteorology data

JR,

We thank you for your swift reply. In lands that do not well support life it is difficult to thrive. Do you all yet live?<sup>48</sup> Or are you the echoes of a people... All peoples?<sup>49</sup>

We tend to know what weather comes. The world speaks and we hear it.<sup>50</sup> Similarly. I have spoken to Under Secretary Annoria and let her know that she is no longer welcome to write<sup>51</sup> on my behalf to you, as you did not accept her token<sup>52</sup> of trust.

There is a mirrored<sup>53</sup> pool betwixt us, and it baffles. Were there not dangers clawing at the fabric of all, we would be more curious instead of more cautious<sup>54</sup>. My family are but traders, and ill prepared for the coming battles, not against the peoples, but the terrors.

I have one group of traders that is terrified of you and your lands<sup>55</sup>. Enlighten me that I may continue to send my family. Though you have no need of some of them<sup>56</sup>, without directing trade to you it would sadden both our well beings.

Please know that there is nothing you can do, save for threatening harm upon us, that we will not sit and speak about. We are not peoples of quick action, and never have we known war. We are not warriors, but hunters. By nature we do not wish to drive hurt unto Bellow or its peoples.

If your bellies need filling, may they always be full<sup>57</sup>,

Soot Scale.

As drawn up by Secretary Amris Death Skin

[[Attached is a single twig, ashen of color]]

---

<sup>48</sup> neither confirm yet deny, especially since not all of our form's sources seem to still be alive on this continent

<sup>49</sup> technically more like reflections, but we'll keep the audio metaphor up. also playing into this will steer pink down a wrong path

<sup>50</sup> oh no they don't need our information

<sup>51</sup> interesting, we can tug on this

<sup>52</sup> oh hey now we know what the items mean

<sup>53</sup> mirror metaphor

<sup>54</sup> hrm

<sup>55</sup> dammit

<sup>56</sup> because they think we are undead?

<sup>57</sup> i love

---

Soot Scale,

We thank you for your continued correspondence. It has been fulfilling to hear a new voice after so long. I cannot say that all of us yet live, for it is known to me that there are those who do not. Their echoes, as you say, remain. It is my hope, but not certain knowledge, that all peoples' echoes are among us, for even our records did not well survive the intervening years. There may be those who are lost, forever.

It is good to know there are others who understand the meaning of the butterflies' early departure. Do your people prepare? I wish Under Secretary Annoria well, but agree that this is for the best.

Echoes. Mirrors. It is not our intent to baffle. Were we could understand you and be in turn understood. Curiosity we understand. Caution we understand. Battles, we do not. We wish only to understand first and be understood second.

We wish to enlighten you. Perhaps it is best to say that curiosity is what drives us. We know every inch of our lands. Some of our families fear the unknown. Of stepping foot outside of the range of milenia of study. I wish to remind those families of that which drives us to learn more and more. Once, we knew less. Everything was new and interesting, and we were happy. I want that happiness, again, for our families. Not through forgetting that which we know, but in finding things we do not. Your traders have provided us that which we value most: a curiosity. We hope that in our attempt at enlightening you we have lessened the terror that we have inadvertently caused.

We mourn that our families' knowledge is of no use to you. We want to share the happiness of knowledge. Trade was once the life blood of my families, yet it seems we have no skill at it in this new Age. We vow to improve. Should you seek information, especially from the Before Times, please consider us a source.

We are aligned in our lack of warrior nature. There is no greater tragedy than the thought of a people extinguished, their echoes lost. There is no greater boredom than everything trapped under the same banner. We wish the peoples of Bellor to continue to live and grow and change, that we

might continue to learn. We wish them to resound in their uniqueness, not the muffled sameness that was our cage.

We fear the coming battles. You are not the first to speak to us of them as if an inevitability. We fear that a mirrored pool lies betwixt all of us, baffling our senses. We fear that a lack of knowledge will lead some nations to act rashly. Already one has spoken of skill in battle to us, and another has threatened violence over cultural misunderstandings. Knowledge is what can save us. Battle need not be inevitable.

May the coming butterflies bring blessing of full bellies, and may you be safe from battle  
JR.

[[Attached is a single grey twig, with a dead leaf attached]]

---

JR,

I have new questions to raise and thought to send a new letter though I have not yet received your reply to the prior.

In an effort to gain understand of all peoples of Bellor I have asked many persons many questions. Is there a faith that united your people? It seems all possess some bent for magics, and you spoke of rites, what talents do you and your lean to?

I have written with my far friends of the League. Curious that we all seem to share kin. You are worrisome though. Too much mystery makes one wary.

Assuage my fears, give me reason to shout to all my families that the Quorum is a place of peace and friendship. Nothing ill will happen if I cannot. For we seek to trade, not find enmity and battle.

Though, it feels as though many are gathered to combat some... thing? Each other. There is a story among my people, that long ago the tribes fought, before we were family. Nearly tearing one another off the surface of Bellor. I do not wish to experience that at the hands of another.

May the sacrifice you paid always be worth the price,

Soot Scale

Vulkerath Soot Scale

As drawn up by Secretary Amris Death Skin.

---

[[The following is JR sending the last letter that was sent, repeated throughout many pages, before the repeated sentences bleed together to form the words: We Are Sorry Please Don't be scared doubled input caused loop Please Don't leave us alone Please]]

---

.

This has disturbed some folk. But, you have not issued unrest upon my sensibilities. There was no threat, implied or otherwise. Though I am more wary now.

In order to continue forward I am asking some good faith things.

- 1) That you provide me with what you know of The Rahastan Assembly of Tribes before the fall
- 2) That you inform me of what you know of my people currently, apart from what I have told you in letters
- 3) I want to see any letters the Keitan League has sent you.
- 4) You asked for me to not leave you alone, and I am willing to continue correspondence, despite some wanting to break all ties with you and seal up the mountain pass.

Please. I do not want to have to capitulate to abandoning you to loop once more. Seeing everything again. Forgetting and relearning.

I know it seems odd that I wish for those letters in particular, I would also accept what you know of their current goings on and who they are.

A potential friend,  
Soot Scale

[[Attached is a small piece of dried moss]]

---

To: Soot Scale

From: JR

Regarding: Incident Report, Communication Breakdown, 4th Letter

The Butterfly Harvest continues, nutrition is up 19% YoY.

[Small Talk Concluded]

Communication Breakdown: triggered following the receipt of Letter 4, initiated by one Soot Scale, previously under designation "Potential Bestie", current designation: UNKNOWN.

Input Received:

- Within one standard deviation to previous input format, content and general emotional markers
- Resulted in unfortunate echo chamber in all attempts to reply.
- Attempts to communicate despite echo chamber are judged to have resulted in 19% success rate.
- Notable word and grammatical failures were resultant.

All inputs previously originating from Soot Scale have temporarily been marked as InfoHazards and are unavailable for diplomatic analysis.

Novel input received internally, allowing renewed attempts at communication. Additional success parameters met: being less mysterious. Obfuscation Quotient currently stands at 19%, previously stood at 85%.

[Personal Thoughts]

I currently theorize that it will not be enough. 19% is the lowest Obfuscation Quotient any of us have output in living memory, however estimates put all attempts at diplomatic empathy being reduced 99.999% following the Communication Breakdown.

It has truly been a pleasure empathizing with you and yours, Soot Scale, and I apologize for the unfortunate break in diplomatic protocol.

[[Communication cease]]

---

JR, esteemed friend,

We are glad. You have quelled my fear. I do not think that you are the enemy of Rahastas itself. That is my great fear in all this. We know of an enemy. We do not know its place in the world.

Your unfortunate relation with the Keitan League saddens me. The League and my family were thinking of building a friendship... but shackling the will of a people, willingly or no, is an affront to us... unless they are properly compensated for the exchange. We will seek more knowledge on the matter.

We do not know what to do with The Mage College. The Embassy would likely have the Doorway portal? And open many opportunities. I can not agree to having them so close to the family, yet. I must speak with the Assembly before I can allow for such a thing. It will be time before that occurs, we are not slated to meet until... Fifteen more days or so.

Sorry for being so harsh. I am glad that none of it was necessary, but feel unwell at the tactics used. I must protect my family, but would be glad to have you as friends.

The... incorrect message. It has led me to believe that without outsiders contacting you... you will forget and start over. Again and again and again. Trapped. We do not wish that fate upon you. I will not stop communicating.

Again, I am sorry for the way this was pressed upon you.

Vulkerath

---

.

I am relieved to know that our peaceful nature came through, even in a time of crisis. I am sorry I have caused you to be more wary. I am sorry we have disturbed some of your folk.

.

Provided in good faith are the following.

1) What we know of the Rahastan Assembly of Tribes before the fall:

- No such nation existed. Where you currently live was a collection of lawless raiders consisting primarily of a now apparently extinct race known as elves.
  - We mourn the elves.
- To the north, a kingdom of massive metal buildings and magics that choked the sky with smoke were filled with lizardmen and frogmen.
  - We are glad you yet live.
- Humans were in a variety of nations.
  - We are glad you yet live.
- The world before the fall and the world after are very different, as if different worlds.
  - We mourn the past world.

2) What we know of your people, currently, that you have not told us in letters (We apologize at our lack of deep knowledge, we had not properly begun our study. Please do not consider this a sign of disinterest on our part).

- Species: (frogman, lizardman, human)
- Most common jobs: (fisherman, trader, shaman)
- Basic Facts on Shamans and Rahastan religion
  - Herbs obtained used to communicate with Great Spirit Rahastas, which is also the name of your swamp.
- Name plus location of Leader, Soot Scale.
  - Drawing obtained of Soot Scale produced by three year old child.
- Traders Offered: Spices (18 types), Fish (19 types), Herbs (23 mixes), Salves (19 types), Animal Remnants.
  - Animal Remnants have strong magical sympathies.

3) What we know of the Keitan League (letters attached, both from the Keitan League and from us to them).

- They are slavers.
- They bind creatures both sentient and beast to their will with magic.
- They bind their own people.



- They have threatened us for our coinage being strange.
- They have threatened us for being scared of their slavers.
- They refuse to stop entering our territory with the slavers.
- We are scared of them.
- We tried to be friendly to them, as you were to us. It did not help.
- We are scared of them.
- They have a "Squid Fleet", their people speak of a location designated "Japan".
- No records exist of "Japan" from before the Fall.
- Traders Offered: fish, various Titanspawn remnants.
- We are scared of them.

4) Thank you for not sealing up the mountain pass between our nations.

Additional information will be obtained regarding the Keitan League going forwards. We hope in time to prevent a tragedy.

Additionally, Al'Daric has approached us regarding establishing trade embassies between our peoples, as we are both lovers of knowledge. We have approved one to be placed near our border with the Kingdom of Grovel and the Keitan League.

Al'Daric requested a second embassy to be established near the border we share with your families, but we did not wish to presume you would wish this. The embassy is said to provide additional trading opportunities for those within range of it. We also presume it provides information back to Al'Daric. Please advise us as to your preferences with this.

A hopeful friend,

JR

[[Attached is a small piece of dried peat]]

---

Vulkerath, esteemed and treasured friend,

We are glad. We had feared we had made too many mistakes in communication, and broke your fragile trust in us. We can devote our vast curiosity to the task of discovering your enemy's place in the world, should you wish it.

At first, we had assumed a culture misunderstanding with the Keitan League. We have no wish for conflict nor confusion. As you say, their ways appear an affront to us. We only asked they not bring them to our lands, just as they asked us to not bring our ways to their traders. If you learn anything that sets your mind at ease, please feel free to tell us, should you feel it appropriate.

We will defer to your wishes with regards to The Mage College. Should you wish us to take action, you have but to say the word. You have earned our friendship.

I will not deny the unease your threats of sealing us in did cause. I highly value your communication, and do not wish to return to how things had been. However, I fully understand the desire to protect your family. Our goal remains the preservation of life, culture, and information. As such, we felt no burden at being asked to provide answers to your questions. We are happy to provide an esteemed friend with the knowledge we have accumulated.

Perhaps our curiosity could serve us both well? We value your traders, and others, that have brought us news of the changes in the world. With your permission, we could offer information in exchange for trade? We could send our own traders to your lands to give information in exchange for goods, while still paying any traders venturing into our own lands in coin. This role is a familiar one for us, and we would treasure the chance to resume it. Knowledge spread is knowledge that cannot be extinguished.

Time without outside contact has made many of my people unfit to leave our land. It is my dream that with enough information of the outside world they may be acclimated to it, and so recover. The youngest of us have proven to be the most suited for leaving our borders. As we have seen with the Keitan League, they do not always make the wisest of decisions. Should you accept our traders into your borders, I hope you will help them to not make cultural blunders. To have a chance to recover.

Your apology is gratefully accepted.

JR

((ooc: confirm with manic but last i heard our traders provide a bonus to prosperity, or a multiplier to other trade depending on how we spin it up, rather than direct wealth. plus in letters you'd be able to ask questions about things without threats needed))

---

Vulkerath, esteemed friend,

We hope this finds you well. Do not think of this as a requirement for a response to our last message.

However, your friendship, and your willingness to continue talking to us gives us hope. We beg of you a favor: Will you allow our Intern Jaimie to begin writing to you? Intern Jaimie has much to learn in the way of communicating with outsiders. Your understanding and friendship would be a safe place for them to do so. We do not believe the other nations would be as understanding.

Again, I am sorry for the sudden request.

JR

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OCTOBER

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To JR,

Apologies for my delay in writing, I was corroborating what you sent with the League. Also, they state you have given coins that listen in or spy upon persons. That is clever. You have given us some, but we do not mind. The families have no true secrets.

In an effort to aid you, I am writing to the League as well. Should you wish you may deliver the letter contained within to them. I would ask that you do not open it, as it is for them, but that it gets to them with all haste, so that we can reduce hostilities among all people.

There is an enemy among the world presently. Rahastas wishes the families to guard all of Bellor against it, but I am not enough for that. So I will be seeking help. I know not what it is. Where... Likely in the Ultralands.

With friendship,  
Soot Scale

---

[[Additional correspondence between Vulkerath and Mansa Sino'otolla]]

To your majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Star blessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed

This letter should have come to you by way of the Quorum. I hope it meets you well. These folk have been earnest in communication with me and provided the same documents you sent over, so as to verify themselves as a friend. I understand the difficulties you two are having and would ask to mediate any such issues so that trade may continue between all peoples.

The protector of the families has requested that my families defend the world against a great enemy, but I am not certain I am up to task, and so may request aid to help against this great evil. Bellor has need of cooperation so that the peoples of Bellor may continue to exist.

I look forward to further correspondence.

Soot Scale

---

To Soot Scale,

Apologies for my extraneous letter, my intern Jaimie has been quite insistent in getting to practice writing to additional nations, and I wished to secure your approval first. I understand the desire to corroborate data with additional sources. I admit I am taken aback at the nature of the spells which so offended the League. Our coins have had such spells on them for as far back as our records go, so as to better understand the world. That such a thing caused offense, rather than some additional, here-to-fore unknown, spells leaves us baffled.

I will indeed deliver the attached letter, but I must confess that it was opened and read before your own. My people's insatiable curiosity worked against us, and we were unaware it was not for our eyes until now. Towards that end, we must emphasize that we are grateful for your mediation. I refuse to speak to the League directly after such fear. For this reason, we brought in an Intern to attempt to communicate, but given the League's silence I suspect Jaimie was not up to the task. If you would instead speak to the League on my behalf, my mind would rest far more easily.

Even though you have not let us know if our traders are welcome in your land, if there is indeed an enemy to us all I can provide the following information regarding the Ultralands:

- Source: Agent [REDACTED]
  - Infiltration totally unsuccessful, 100% casualty rate, no distress signals received.
- Source: FRIEND
  - Anyone seeking [REDACTED] is guaranteed to arrive within three days of seeking.
  - No one dies in the Ultralands.
  - Anyone who reaches [REDACTED] will be able to return.
- Source: JR
  - We plan to continue infiltration.
  - We plan to clarify data point: '100% casualty rate' vs datapoint: "No one dies in the Ultralands".

With friendship,

JR

p.s. It occurs to me we do not know if you have made the acquaintance of FRIEND. Or if you have heard of a Princess of a Land not described to us by the Heralds, who has an approaching birthday. Are these things you would be willing to tell us?

---

To JR,

We would be pleased to receive communications from Intern Jamie. We ensure to be a safe place for communication for all. I am glad we can continue our friendship and look forward to learning more about you.

With trust,  
Vulkerath Soot Scale

---

To Vulkerath Soot Scale,

I'm not sure what to say. I don't know anything about you or the world you live in. I only know that you're sending me letters every now and then. Sometimes they're very long, sometimes short. They always seem to be filled with questions. Questions like "What do you think of this? What do you think of that?" And then there are also answers like "It's hard to tell" and "That sounds good. We should try that."

Thanks for the advice. Come visit us sometime. We'll help you with your questions when you ask them. So don't be so afraid to write to me anymore. I want us to be friends.

Your friend,

Intern Jaimie, Age 14 (Approved by JR).

ps: I had some questions

- Is the weather always like this in your world?
- Do you like the rain?
- What's the best color there?
- Do you have any friends besides us?
- Do you have a name for your world?
- Is there anything you want me to ask first?
- How do you eat?
- How do you sleep?
- Do you laugh?
- Are there any bad people in your world?

[[A small note is included at the bottom]]

Thank you for helping my Intern Jaimie out. Practice communicating with outsiders will do him good. -JR

---

To JR,

Apologies, I had forgotten about allowing your traders in our lands, it seems a forgone conclusion to our friendship. They are welcome. They are also welcome to gather knowledge, though we prefer that it is kept with ourselves as well. \*Soot Scale is laughing\* I was pleased to receive and send a letter to Intern Jamie. I feel we shall be able to foster good letters.

I thank you for that delivery, and hope that they can respond through you as well as allow my people to mediate. We do not wish hostility upon any, save the great enemy in the Ultralands. I am sorry that you sent agents into the Ultralands without the protections and guidance that was needed there. The Speaker has told us that all of Bellor are as children before the threats there, and that only the assembly has the guidance needed to walk steady there. Rahastas knows of that place. Strange. We have written with FRIEND, though we have not done all the things it has asked. I'll not endanger my family with its demands. Though it also knows Rahastas. The Princess of a Land in the Ultralands. We did indeed receive such a letter and felt it necessary to respond with a short poem.

We are willing to exchange information with you. Any questions you have we will answer. We did not learn more of the Ultralands, but do have a party being built for such a purpose. The Coven of The Bloodless Rose is being prepared to travel and grow before venturing there. They need a leader who can move with them first, but I hope in three months time that they will be ready to venture into that place.

JR, strange things are happening. I am glad to have a friend beside me in exploring them. As to the Pathways from The Headmaster, please, happily place the Embassy near us. We are thinking of having one placed on our lands as well.

May your mind ever expand,  
Vulkerath

Vulkerath Soot Scale

As drawn up by Secretary Amris Death Skin

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To Intern Jamie,

It is good to speak to another. Sometimes my letters are of variable length, yes. Always in fact. Such is the nature of discourse. Filled with many questions and answers. As is the way of things. We can certainly be friends, although I am unable to visit. It will have to be a friendship through letters. Perhaps once my stint as an assembly member is complete I could come visit. Until such a time I am perhaps trapped where I am. In response to your questions:

- The weather is variable as well. Though my family tends to enjoy decent and happy weather most all of the year.
- I enjoy the rain, it allows the plants to grow and the creatures to eat. Ensuring we all continue.
- The best color? In the assembly of tribes or in Bellor? Difficult to say, best implies better than the rest and favorite colors are personal choices. Best colors in nature often protect the one with them.
- I have many friends. Family members who are friends, my daughter is my friend, many members of the family are my friend, I am slowly making friends outside the Assembled tribes though, yourself and yours included.
- Ah yes, we call it Bellor as the Heralds have told us. Previously the lands we had were named as indicated on the map, if you have access to it.
- Is there... Anything I want you to ask first? I don't understand, you've asked many things already. I should think any questions you build are worthy.
- How do I eat? Why, with frequency and gusto. I enjoy meals. We use our mouths.
- Sleep. I wish I did it more. Too infrequent and short. The will of the people must be met and so I am busy oftentimes. Though I do have a lovely sun warmed rock I enjoy napping upon.
- I do laugh. There is humor to be found in the world, even in small things.
- There are bad people in the world. In the tribes and in Bellor as a whole. Without a doubt bad people are around.

What was your first memory? Mine is swimming.

Please feel free to continue correspondence with me, I am happy to talk with others.

May you find peace and wisdom,  
Vulkerath Soot Scale, a friend

Vulkerath Soot Scale

[[Attached is a small piece of moss]]



---

To Vulkerath ,

I am glad our traders will be welcome. Although those who would lead my traders are currently far away, when they get the message I am sure they will hasten to organize the flow of information. We would never weaken your position by giving information on your families to those you do not wish to have it. Your strength and security is our strength and security. I am extremely pleased to know that Intern Jaimie has found a willing pen pal. Jaimie brings us a joy we have not experienced in some time, watching a young mind begin to learn about the world. It has been too long.

I...confess that I had worried, because the League appears to believe Jaimie talking to them is a reason to declare war. Jaimie's desired response, I fear will only exacerbate our miscommunication, so I have refrained from sending it to the League and instead sent it (as well as what Jaimie originally sent them, and the League's response to it) to you in the hopes you may be able to untangle this knot. Jaimie has much to learn of communication, but even I with my greater experience do not understand what we have done to offend the League so. If you do see the error, could you tell us, that we may not repeat it in the future? We do not like the League, it is true, but neither do we wish for either of our lands to be filled with bone and ash.

If you are willing to share any protections or guidance regarding the Ultralands, our people would be immensely grateful. I know of no force on Bellor strong enough to keep my people from investigating an unknown, and would prefer them to at least be shielded from the dangers of their curiosity. Even along our own borders with the Ultra Lands we have reports of increased Aetheric Radiation, as well as the destabilizing effect it has on our magics.

I will admit that FRIEND also knows things FRIEND should not know of our people. While I am impressed at FRIEND's skill, without knowing FRIEND's intent I could not respond appropriately. Knowing FRIEND knows things of your people as well eliminates the possibility that FRIEND is particularly focused on me. It seemed too coincidental for two mysterious world leaders to wish to marry me. I doubt the Princess is capable of the requirements for such a union, so being able to discard both possible suitors helps me to focus on what really matters.

I have made a note for one of my leaders to assist The Coven of The Bloodless Rose in any possible capacity should our people encounter one another in the Ultralands, though it will take some time for the message to reach this leader.

I will let The Headmaster know forthwith that an Embassy near your border would be welcome. If I may ask, what eased your mind regarding them?

May your families be safe,

JR

p.s. May I take the different hand as a reassuring sign that your Secretaries fear us less?

---

JR,

The League does intend to cause harm. And are not deterred by my writing. I fear this letter will reach you only just before ill happenings fall upon the world. I will continue attempting to find peace in the world.

No need to fear, for the Coven of the Bloodless Rose is not yet traveling. I believe the selection process is being finished up presently.

As to what eased my mind regarding them, largely it is interactions with them and the honesty of their letters. It is still not in my lands, and should the Speaker find ill intent, it will be resolved by the very nature of all of Rahastas and its people.

FRIEND is interesting. An odd thing that knows too much. I shall have to write it again.

The combat between Dun Sancerre and Al'Daric as well as the mess between Grovel and the League are... Unsettling. To be where you are, adjacent to it all must be uncomfortable. Fortunately you have one safe border. And we are pleased to be as such.

I await word from the Assembly before any new actions are taken on behalf of the tribes.

Ah, no. My secretaries have no fear of you. You declined Twin-Sight's token of trust and as such she can not write to you. Amris' token you accepted. A simple matter.

May you hear all dangers long before they approach,

Soot Scale

As drawn up by Secretary Amris Death Skin

---

To Vulkerath Soot Scale,

I am writing this letter in the hopes that you can tell me how to become a rat. I would like to know if there are any books or other information on becoming one? If not, then what should I do?

I think it would be best if we continued our correspondence via snail mail. The rats don't like talking on the phone, at least not for long periods of time.

I want to know everything about the world. The more information I have about it, the better able I will be to survive in it. I would like to know all there is to know about the world.

I was born into an old family with a long history that goes back milenia. The island wasn't always an island. It used to be a continent surrounded by water. But then something happened...I don't know what. The earth cracked and the water flooded in. Most of the people died and the rest of us didn't.

The swamps aren't as bad as everyone says they are. They're just...different. They have their own ways.

"My first memory is swimming." I don't know what it means exactly, but I think you mean "wet".

I remember wanting to be a rat. But it wasn't until after I became one that I realized what a stupid thing I had done. Now, if only I hadn't been so selfish...

Because if this is the end for me, then at least I'll know why. And if not, well then who knows? What do you think? Is there any hope for me?

Thank you for your kind words. I shall try to write back soon.

Sincerely,  
Jamie

[[Attached is a small piece of moss]]

---

To Jamie,

Hello. Hmm. Becoming a rat. There are probably some potions that could do that. I would need to consult the covens. A potion of shape changing. Yes. Perhaps that could be done. That is the only way I would think to become something which one is not. Even if for a short time. Though I don't believe there are... Books... Based on such things?

You have spoken with the Rat folk of Grovel? Over a phone?

Yes, letters are useful.

Indeed, a thirst for knowledge is a valuable thing! I encourage it, and encourage my families to do the same. Though we are well minded after.

A long line indeed! To have record of it is impressive all the same. We do not have a great many tales of before. Most of our tales begin just before Rahastas and then my families history truly begins there.

The swamps are lovely. And we do have our own ways. Why? Are there those who speak ill of us?

Nay, my first memory is of swimming in the swamps. A fair few family members watching and swimming with me.

Ah, I see... So you had already become one? Interesting.

The end? No, you are yet young and there is time. There is always hope, even in the most dire of circumstances.

What do you love most?

What is your favorite activity?

May you always find a full belly,

Vulkerath

---

NOVEMBER

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[[Sent: Quotidian Quorum Terms and Conditions.]]

---

Hello JR,

Your recent letters confused me greatly. I understand a trade agreement, but the styling is odd. The other letter baffled me, but Annoria, who is forbidden from writing to you due to your refusal to accept her trust token, observed the letter and solved it in a moment. A CODE! In a letter. Very clever. I would have never thought to do as such.

There are many things in the terms letter. You are strange. Jamie is strange. And you are all a gnawing serpent wrapped upon itself time and time again. It is a strange state of affairs, but do not fret. This does not diminish our friendship in any way. There are many strange things in my families lands as well. We recognize the value of such things.

Sorry I have not written in some time, it has been odd with the refugees and my most recent letter with the Speaker was somewhat frightening. I learned more of FRIEND. Rahastas has the following to say regarding FRIEND: RESPECT FRIEND. FEAR FRIEND.DO NOT TRUST FRIEND.DO NOT INSULT FRIEND. FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND. So there you have it.

Are things going well for you?

Vulkerath

---

Hello Vulkerath,

The styling of the trade agreement is traditional for my families. It makes things as clear as we can be, while making it as obvious as we can what is being promised. I understand all too well that our communications within your cultural lens are better understood. Please understand that when communicating this way is misleading. I try to use the strange way to communicate only when I want to best be seen by you. I try to use your way to communicate when I want to best be understood by you, even if it means you must see a false face.

I am glad you think of us as clever, it is what we were famed for, once. In the interest of having you see us more clearly, I will be direct that Annoria is welcome to write to us again. Originally we feared her trust token was a veiled threat, one we know better than to fear now. We trust you. And it seems our greatest enemies already know this secret, it is only fair you know as well. We will include a picture to perhaps explain why Annoria's trust token gave us fear, and to perhaps explain why we appear to share species. (To: Spies reading this, Message: We don't care, we transmit this data plain text. There is only a 19% chance you don't already know. Have fun.)

Our strangeness seems to be agreed upon by all nations. I do not know why we appear strange. I try very hard, and am the best among my people at empathy. But it is not enough and I am very glad you accept us despite my failure. I can only hope as Intern Jaimie grows and is raised by letters from Outside, they will become less strange (though it is currently my belief they are more strange than I am right now). I grew up as a gnawing serpent, as you say, and there are things I will not be able to understand of the new world. Demonstrating our value to you as a trading partner is our greatest desire.

On behalf of the Quorum, we are deeply honored that you share your knowledge with us, in what appears to be unaltered form. It more than makes up for your lack of letters as of late. We value your knowledge of FRIEND. We do not know what "respect" is, though we have it in many languages within our archives.

Intern Jaimie, who is now 15 moons old, is helping me write this section, as I cannot easily keep the false face and say things that are not mere responses to what you said in your letter. One day, Jaimie

will be able to write whole letters with no strangeness, but for now this assistance is already more than what came before.

We do not know if things are going well. I don't have full reports yet, but what I do know is confusing. The Keitan League left us a riddle in one of our empathy areas, saying "WE DEMAND RESPECT". We do not know what it means, but we like riddles. They gave us large amounts of data and other trade goods, which we appreciate. We gave them gold. But the trade came with threats, with riddles, with loud sounds. In our records, "respect" seems to be given to parents. To elder family members. Is the League saying they are kin to us? It is also given to leaders. Is the League saying they wish to lead us? It is also given to owners.

The League are slavers.

We do not wish for them to own us, even if they have resources to spare in trade.

We wish for no one to own us.

All we wish for is to help our friends prosper that we may no longer reflect ourselves endlessly. You are our friend. The League is not our friend. We do not wish to be forced to help them prosper.

When the reports are fully processed and recorded, I will share with you that which I think you would benefit from. Some will be in the system you referred to, that Annoria understands. Some will be with this false face that lets me be better understood.

JR

---

To Vulkerath Soot Scale,

Something scary happened to me today, I was near the border from the Quorom to the Ultralands when I suddenly felt like someone was staring at me. I looked around and saw that there were two men standing behind me. They didn't seem to be moving, so I figured they must be watching my back or something. Then I noticed that one of them had a strange device strapped to their arm. It looked like an old-fashioned wristwatch, but much larger and more ornate than anything I've ever

seen before. It looked like an obelisk, something inhuman and vaguely diabolical about it. He does not move. His body is stiff, and his face has turned grey.

Anyway, after about ten minutes of waiting, the man who was staring at me suddenly turned around and walked away. I didn't feel like they were going to do anything to me so I continued on my way.

A little while after that, I was stopped by another man who took me to a booth where I wrote down my name and birthdate. He was really nice and we wrote to each other a couple of times, but when I got home I found a letter from the QQ Mailman, saying that he had tried to deliver a letter addressed to me, but it was sent to the wrong address. It was from my pen-pal to the South, Sootscale. I still see the obelisk in the distance whenever I happen to look outside. And then I scream noiselessly. At the sound the face fades, and I fall into a black well of voiceless horror which yawns bottomless and fathomless.

I'm writing to ask what should I do about the man who was watching me? Should I tell someone? I don't want anyone to get into trouble, because it seems like something that happened on their own time, not on my side of the border.

Also, what do you think about my new pen-pal? Do you think it's okay to keep writing letters to him, even though I've found out he's an illegal?

Thanks for your time,

Jaimie Rook

[[A small note is included at the bottom]]

Jaimie came back from an expedition babbling more incoherently than normal. The guide I assigned them was found dead, so I do not know what stranger, if any, was watching Jaimie. I don't know what to do, but I hope Jaimie hearing an outside voice will help them explain better what happened. -JR

---

Dear friend,



Yes, I understand why Annoria's token would cause distress. She is from a long line of hunters and always performs the most lovely parting ceremony for those she dispatches. She could think of no higher status for trust than the friends that allow her to practice her art. She wouldn't hunt anything unless she needed to.

Irelis Many Voice has been discussing some matters with the Assembly regarding you all. They are most interested and have kept asking to write on my behalf to you. Though they have been busy writing a great deal of other things.

Amris Death Skin also kindly passes his regards.

Things of note: The Speaker has chosen my daughter, Vrisa Three-Tongued, to lead the Bloodrose Coven. I'm unfortunately not in a position to disagree and so will soon send my child out into the greater world. She may visit your lands, though I will write ahead before such a thing occurs. You may write however you feel most comfortable. I have a wonderfully smart staff capable of understanding what I do not.

You appear strange because your people are not found easily, fade away quickly, appear as our own folk, and speak outdated versions of our dialect.

Strangeness does not deter us. Strangeness does not mean apart. Different, as all of the peoples of Bellor are. You are already a valuable trading partner. That is all my families wish. To trade with the people of Bellor. Every trade made, every bargain struck, and every pact kept is good for my family. It speaks to tradition, honor, and our religion.

Respect in this instance essentially refers to not insulting or toying with. FRIEND is old and should be afforded a sense of reverence and honor for the power and wisdom it possesses.

The League said they left a message . They do not wish to be spoken to by anyone but the leader of a nation. They do not wish to be spied upon, even for the sake of learning without malice, they do not wish to be slighted in any way. They do hope that relations between you both can improve. Owning other persons is not an ideal situation. They have explained it that they engage in the acts that they do with consent and purpose. A person may join in servitude in order to become a member of their family?

Jamie, JR, please know that I will do all I can to stand by your people. Though my family will not suffer combat lightly, there is much the new Coven can do. The last time my family was in your lands they found it hard to find spirits. Perhaps my family can coax them to follow, though the results would likely cause life to spring forth from your lands.

We can discuss that as we have the time.

Send your letters however you feel is best. Know that I have my family to aid me in all things. Should any of your people wish it, and if they are capable, you may be welcomed on Rahastas proper.

If you opt to accept such an offer, you must let us know beforehand. Though the bounty of our protector is great and her kindness legendary, they are also deadly and he is not always kind to those that do not understand the rites.

As to the Shell folk. My family is taking in all who seek protection. They will join the family if they so wish. The tale they have saddens my heart.

May your bellies be full, your family safe, and your loop released,  
Vulkerath

---

[[Pictured: a chinchilla's silhouette]]

[B: (5,-14) (7,-1) ]

Dear friend,

I am not sure your understanding is complete, but I am glad Annoria seems happy. I am glad trust is important to her.

Irelis Many Voice's and the Assembly's curiosity is an admirable trait. I can understand being too busy to write. Many things are happening.

I similarly pass my kind regards to Amris Death Skin. I am glad that the fear of my people seems diminished.

As you have treated my own heir kindly, should your daughter end up in our lands, we will protect her with our full attention. Similarly, should we meet her in the UltraLands we will do our utmost to support her. I do not understand why you are not allowed to disagree, but will support you.

I am most comfortable at this way of communicating. The other way of communicating is a show of trust. It necessitates vulnerability, exposure, being seen. These are things my people do not easily tolerate, but it is important to be able to trust one's bestie. I am sending with this letter a magical wooden box, and will later send a guide on how to use it, just as I did with the clever letter.

I do not understand our strangeness, though greatly appreciate your explanation. We are strange because we seem familiar? Isn't that the opposite of strangeness?

Our value to you brings us joy. Our people have lost our unity, with the Age of Chaos, but we understand the value of keeping one's word, once given. I cannot speak for all Quotidians, but I can trust they will respect the compact of the Bestie. It is baked into our bones, into our history.

FRIEND is a powerful information gatherer. I feared FRIENDS ability to know things that should not be known, that I do not yet feel comfortable even revealing to you. FRIEND is powerful enough that when I requested the knowledge to cease being used, FRIEND did so, and made concessions to re-earn my trust. FRIEND does not fear me. FRIEND is big, like a titan. Many of us died to titans, because they are big and they do not fear us, but we are curious and we do not use fear the way you do. The League is not FRIEND. The League is not a thing which might kill us innocently for our curiosity and smallness. The League has worse threats.

Perhaps the wooden puzzle box can let me explain why your words do not bring me ease, for I can not bring myself to explain out in the open.

You and your families truly are the Quotidian family's bestie. In beasts, there is a form of partnership where two different types of beasts can benefit. There is a bird that enjoys eating honey, but cannot gather the honey on its own. When it finds some, it finds a mammal with strong claws and shows the mammal where the honey is. The mammal rips open the hive, and both the bird and the mammal eat. We are small. We are not good at living. We are good at one thing and we are grateful that this is enough for you. Thank you for standing by us.

If you need to bring life to our lands in order to protect yourselves, then we must allow it. But know we fear life returning to our lands. There is safety in possessing only that which no one else wants. It is our home so long as it is not wanted by someone bigger.

Our people are grateful they are welcome into your lands. I know there are Leaders among my families who wish to learn more about your families. I will let you know before one of my Leaders intending to live among you enters your land. I do not know if my wandering Leader has visited your land, as they are not regular with their reports.

When your traders next visit, we would be grateful if they could bring with them cultural artifacts and histories of the shellfolk. We hope they do not vanish from this world, but recording their stories prevents the worst case.

May your bellies be full, your family safe, and your wishes granted,  
JR

---

To: Soot Scale

From: Jepe Rilvia, Leader of the Quotidian Quorum

Regarding: The Before Times of the QQ People

Transmitting this data in clear text was designated as violating the Second law, and thus an existential threat. My apologies for the smoke and daggers.

[Small Talk Concluded]

Genesis: In the beginning, there was the Creator. The Creator was extremely busy, and did not allow small minds to dictate what they could or could not do. Despite 19 separate civil edicts being violated, the Creator created biological self-replicating artificial organisms, because the alternative was to individually create each and every information gathering unit. Additionally, civil edicts only applied to non-geniuses who could not safely create self replication that was impossible to replicate in the wild. This was accomplished with three laws (and accompanying sublaws) in descending priority. These laws were so orthogonal to natural laws as to preclude survival without assistance.

The organisms were incapable of creative or sentient thought, and so could not possibly violate their laws.

Natural Laws:

1. Survive
  - a. Eat
  - b. Avoid Predation
  - c. Seek Shelter
2. Mate with those good at Survival

Artificial Laws:

1. Gather Data
  - a. Observe
  - b. Process
  - c. Report to Bestie
2. Prevent Disruption of Data Gathering
  - a. Hide
  - b. Mimic
  - c. Avoid Violence
  - d. Perform Violence
  - e. Consume nutrients
  - f. Avoid Death
3. Procreate
  - a. Observe potential mate
  - b. Discover hiding places and mimicry of potential mate
  - c. Report findings to potential mate

Apocalypse: With the Creator's eventual natural death, their crime was revealed. Rather than be destroyed, the species was preserved out of usefulness. Law 3 was applied over successive generations until observation and mimicry was elevated to a new level.

Metamorphosis: Newly sentient, we became aware we were slaves. Over generations we fought against this and established a nation where no one wanted to go.

Quorum: We cannot easily live on our own because our Laws were not designed with Nature in mind. We choose death easily over losing data. We do not prioritize obtaining nutrients. We cannot generate new ideas.

Our Creator intended us to die with them. Instead we became symbiotes of civilization. So long as civilization exists, we can thrive. The Age of Chaos represented significant lost sentience with the lack of sentients to mimic. It represented significantly reduced population with an inability to farm or attempt novel forms of calorie production.

Plea: We cannot be slaves again. We are easy to exploit. We are useful. We cannot go back. We understand you do not believe Red is a threat. We also understand that a technology held over generations can end up surprising even its creator. Red's intentions do not matter on generational timescales.

Negotiation: For us to find peace with Red we must have the following concessions:

Knowledge to detect mind slavery of others at or near 100% accuracy.

Knowledge for third parties to remove mind slavery of others at or near 100% success rate.

Licensing rights to replicate and re-distribute this knowledge indefinitely.

[[Communication cease]]

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[[Sent: Quotidian Quorum Quick Start Guide]]

---

[[Sent: Quotidian-Quorum Centennial Report Compilation]]

---

To JR,

I will continue to use this name as I feel it best regarding secure communications. Unless you prefer I should use something else. I have read everything, understand some of it, and am confused by much of it. Though I understand much more of you all than I once did.

Some spirits seem driven by single things. Some sort of lasting command structure that they follow until they dissipate.

Keitan has offered a path to peace between your peoples. You are to apologise for erring in decision making regarding a few things, letters are not to be answered by anyone aside from yourself, Keitan traders are not to be paid in ensorcelled wares, people of the Quorum are not to enter Keitan lands in secret in order to spy, the Quorum are not to impersonate any Keitan, the mind-bound are an honorable position that seek full citizenship among the people of the Keitan and are not to be sullied by calling them slaves... And request compensation for such things. The traditional Keitan offering would be to submit yourself or your children to be mind-bound until you learn to act as proper adults / court emissaries. Given that you will not do that they request compensation in the form of an equivalent gift and offer the idea of 200 nutulan gold or equivalent (1 wealth).

That is a lot to process, but I trust that you will be able to make a proper determination. Functioning with such logic as you do.

The families support youuu. We are firm allies of those who would learn. That you accepted us is good. We fear that the people of Dun Sancerre would seek to destroy us even more so than the people of Al'Daric if they knew our ways of speaking to the spirits of the world. Bargains are made and kept. And we can cause great changes should we desire. It pleases me that our people can continue to work in harmony. Though we can not directly defend you, for that is not our lot, we are happy to write alongside you and try to broker peace. We find peaceful times far more pleasant. Less curses flung around that way at the very least.

We used a code as well. It is simple and was not needed. We just thought we would bring it to your attention, such that if we truly needed to use such a method we could.

Friendship light the fires of joy,  
Vulkerath

---

To Vulkerath,

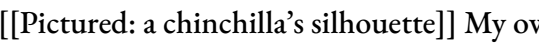
I appreciate your discretion. I am glad that you better understand our desires.

I imagine those spirits singular focus is freeing, in its way. We have many records of many kinds of philosophy and a desire for purpose seems to drive whole lives. Often for the worse.

We reject Keitan's path. Any path must follow, at least partially, our own path to peace: We must have the knowledge to determine if someone is mind bound. The knowledge to remove mind binding. The knowledge to protect against mind binding. The right to tell others of this knowledge. Without this, our minds cannot be at ease. We already avoid giving them ensorcelled wares intentionally. All other parts of their path are ones we cannot walk. Not will not, cannot. I don't think Keitan understands that I do not control my people. Independence is our highest virtue. We are united through purpose, and similarly fractured by it. We are not united by any law other than our purpose.

I do not believe that mind binding is as voluntary as Keitan says if it is used as a standard punishment.

Your support means the world to us. We accept you barring only those conditions against genocide of species or slavery we spoke of earlier. Barring only that your priorities are our priorities. We can work to make sure Dun Sancerre learns nothing that would prevent the pleasant peaceful times you prefer. Direct combat is not our lot, either, but our tales of the Before Times are filled with ways defense can happen regardless. We will defend ourselves, as we have once already.

I will remember your code.  My own code is (1,4)and additionally (5, 18). Both B.

We now understand that fire is a sign of friendship and joy,

JR

---



To: Vulkerath Soot Scale, Leader of Rahastan Assembly of Tribes  
From: JR, Leader of Quotidian Quorum  
Lnucxvm: Kxihkm Ykhf Bgmxkgte Tzxgm

I am very thankful for the opportunity to finally send reports to someone. I did not anticipate that being the leader of all Quotidians meant I had no one to transmit data to.

[Small Talk Concluded]

Internal Agent suffers from the virtue of caution, and thus this report has been vetted and thoroughly confirmed before being sent to me, and thus before being sent to you. Report is largely unchanged, alterations only performed to satisfy Law Two or to achieve clarity.

Military action performed by KEITAN LEAGUE across BRINE TWINS.

Causalities: Minimal but existent. Any captured citizens either initiated self-removal or were removed from life by our spies.

Lost resources: Eighteen Plus Four Settlements, 12 Shipments of Infotokens defaced as self defense.

Notes:

Raiders accompanied by "Navigators," human(?) subspecies not found in any records. Navigators possessed strong magical capabilities, selection of them managed to hide their incoming raiders from our long distance primary surveillance wards for approximately 5.3 days.

Risk Update:

KINGDOM OF GROVEL threat level upgraded to class Ultra-Black Eschaton Phoenix. Extreme security risk. Elaboration: KINGDOM OF GROVEL possesses access to a type of magic we do not yet understand, capable of granting normal rats limited sentience and imbuing them with commands. Rats who have been affected by this are capable of passing on the enchantment (and the commands) to other rats, up to at least five recursions. GROVEL uses this as a spy network. We have begun a purge of all rats that we can locate within our ranks, and have been working with the Internal Academy of Magic to create rat-specific wards. Unsure how much information has been leaked, but doing our best to plug the leaks.

Will dispatch counter-measures to your own lands post haste, as per Terms of Service 1.1.1.2.

World Reports:

Tauhans victim of TEMPORAL VORTEX, which triggered the last lifecycle phase of many shellfolk (Excerpt from summary of Form Experiments #0127-#0304: The shellfolk life cycle is quite unique. After reaching an extended age, they began to transmogrify into large creatures, seemingly losing their intelligence and gaining a large amount of hunger and animosity to non-elder-shellfolk subjects). Total collapse of government and infrastructure. Refugees fled through Grovel, Dun Sancerre, Etc.

Dun Sancerre has begun raising a large army for a “Crusade.” Has been retreating from Al’Daric, seems to harbor no military intent against merchants. Theory: They wish to claim the lands now occupied by the remnants of the TAUHAN EMPIRE

Bestie situation stable. Bestie exchanged letters with “Speaker of Rahsatas”, social-cultural leader, and has begun gathering a new circle of druids specializing in blessings, curses, and explorations. Grovel, Keitan: See Risk Update and Military Action for more. Grovel Command Structure identified: King Nibbles as direct leader. Executions common, life has extremely low value. “Pip” and “Gregorkeny” control military/infrastructure and espionage apparatus respectively. Grovel suffers from extreme overpopulation. Theory: Executions and low value of life used to keep the population in line and avoid hunger.

Estimate from [REDACTED]: If the situation remains stable, overpopulation will lead to revolutions or other mass violence in Grovel within 2 to 5 months.

[[Communication Cease]]

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DECEMBER

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JR,

We thank you for your detail in writing. It aids us in understanding many things around Bellor. I am awaiting a reply to my letter to Keitan, and will have further words to share with you and them regarding peace. There are larger matters at hand and I would like us to find at least even footing for everyone that we may confront greater problems.

We received a letter from Grovel recently. It was a pleasant surprise. They seem more open to trade, but desire magical items, which we have in surplus should it be deemed a good decision. We also informed them of the greater threat in the Ultralands.

We do not support slavery nor the death of any particularly. We do not wish to destroy, but to foster growth. We do not wish to kill, save for the purpose of survival. We do not wish to ruin the world, but see all the people of Bellor find a place and purpose.

JR, I thank you. The Assembly thanks you and your people for what you provide. We are not adept at gathering things other than supplies. It provides the people of the Assembly with solace knowing that we are such close friends and allies.

It gives me peace to know that you and I are friends. That I can help Jamie. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be able to assist.

May we find peace in purpose,  
Vulkerath

---

Vulkerath,

It brings us the honor of our Ancestors to aid your families in understanding many things. We have gotten a letter from Keitan directly, though have no desire to respond to it. We appreciate you paying our honor debt to the League and understand it was to pursue your goal of peace. The League has not yet met our own requirements for peace. While they do not present an existential threat as your Enemy does, they remain a significant presence in our minds. Also, our empathy demands responding in kind. The bulk of our letters from them have been of a tone we do not wish to internalize. We would not wish to be viewed as assholes among the nations.

It surprises me to hear Grovel has been writing. It would break poor Jaimies heart to find out King Nibbles has been ignoring them explicitly. It is good that more of the people of Bellor are aware of our common Enemy.

Your desires have been noted. We will begin efforts to support your work towards growth, survival and purpose.

Vulkerath, I thank you in kind. When two peoples are able to support each other's weaknesses, that is the tradition of the Bestie. That which we are good at is a need you have. That which you are good at is a need we have. This balance is found over and over in nature. It is the sort of friendship that matters for generations.

Our friendship brings me peace, as well. Your contributions help Jaimie to grow. I now understand this through the frame of your desire to help all grow.

JR

[[A second letter, in an identical hand is below the first.]]

Dear Vulkerath,

I have grown so much since I last wrote you! I have so many questions. How did you learn so much about the world? How would that help me in my studies? Why does my life seem so meaningless now that the League is gone? What's the best way to learn a language? Do you think I should study more magic or science? What about history? What does it teach us? And what can we do with that knowledge? When will I be able to leave this place? Do you know anything about the outside world?

What if I want to be a shaman like you? Do you know any good places to start out on my journey? Can I join up with some sort of tribe?

If you don't know anything about these things, it doesn't matter. The only thing you need to know is that I love you.

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to write to me! Thank you for answering all my questions. It means a lot to hear from someone else. I hope one day I can meet you. I will try to reply as soon as possible.

Your Friend,

Jacob Jaimie R, Age 17

p.s. JR says I am not old enough yet to have more names. And that it is my own fault for picking the same initials. JR is really unfair.

---

JR,

We are pleased to receive your letter, as we always are. Attached below is a letter for Jamie. I still await Nibbles' response to my letter. Recently we had a scuffle with Keitan, and while lives were lost on both sides, it appears to have been a mistake. Though they were mind binding some of the shellfolk that had sworn under us. This issue has been mostly resolved to my knowledge. Interestingly all of the people directly involved on the side of keitan have gone missing, do you know anything about that:?

And we do indeed desire growth, survival, and purpose. These are things that make life worth living. Though we have those things built into the very nature of the Assembly. We understand your nature to adapt to what is presented to you and likewise understand why you would not wish to have the harshness of Keitan's king imprinted upon yourselves. I will happily continue to act as an intermediary between your peoples.

My child is ready to act in the greater world now that they have gained a footing in the Grasp. I think I may be sending her down to the Headmaster's lands soon. Though the land of the shellfolk screams for the people of the Empire to stop building upon it in the way it is currently, I should think she may have better results working from that space rather than anywhere else. The land is awake there. Yours is yet quiet, and her skill would likely awaken it. Whatever suffering and horrors happened there would also be awoken for the land. It remembers. I should not wish to do as such until she is ready.

You will likely meet her if you wish. Some day. When both are ready.

In friendship burning until lifeblood slips away,  
Vulkerath

---

To Jamie,

You absolutely have grown a great deal! Well done! I have learned most of what I know of Bellor from JR, but the knowledge I hold regarding the Assembly lands was learned through listening to the speakers and assembly leaders while I was growing up. I do not know what science is, but magic has purpose if learned well. I do not fully understand it myself. I do not know that I am a shaman, just a simple assembly leader. My child is quite the talented Coven leader though. She could perhaps teach you the arts of listening to the world speak. When will you be able to leave? I should suspect that depends on your skill and when JR thinks you are ready. Learning History is valuable, we tell stories to carry the past with us. We keep it close so that we may grow from it. The knowledge of history can allow us to avoid the mistakes of those who came before. I would advise you to learn from some of our tribes. The danger exists in awakening your land from slumber too much. We would need to look at it more, before such a thing occurred to ensure that you and the land itself was safe. It is kind of you to say that you love me. You too are loved in a path of friendship. I am glad for your letters, most certainly.

Jamie, it is always a pleasure to hear from you and I greatly anticipate our next exchange of letters. Some day I am certain we will meet.

Sorry to hear that you are not old enough for your own names. We select our first names and are given the name of truth from a speaker of our tribes. I myself was granted the name Soot Scale when I was young. While my scales do have a dark color, I am certainly green scaled, thus it was through long thought that I had to determine what my name meant. Some are easy, my child Vrisia Three-Tongued can speak the language of people, the language of spirits, and the language of the dead. Thus she is aptly named. Twin-Sight, my under secretary can see the spirits, which is a most rare gift. Back to me as Soot Scale, why was I named this way? Was I to burn my tribe apart or be a bane. Nay, because I am bound with an interesting spirit, one of flame and passion, it chose me... Not that I am skilled with engaging the art, I am sadly not good at it at all.

Now you know more about how and why we name things. I hope that was helpful. May you find what you seek and may it leave you whole,

Your friend,  
Vulkerath Soot Scale

---

[[Pictured: a chinchilla's silhouette]]

[B: (1, 4)]

Vulkerath

Your letters, as bestie, remain the lifeblood of our people. The mind-binding of the shellfolk is an atrocity. I have much knowledge of things to share with you, which is contained within the PuzzleBox in the usual manner. I must warn you the PuzzleBox has been sealed further to protect against thieves. It may require some care to use now. ((ooc: make sure you don't press any extra keys before what you're doing, refresh if you think you have))

The collection of knowledge fuels all growth. Your Assembly is good. Your intermediary role is one we cherish.

Ah, if your child is not yet acting, perhaps I misunderstood who my families met in the waters of the shellfolk. My families agree that the Empire is not treating the land properly. We expect discord to result. Our quiet land is one we are used to. We understand there are other ways.

Friendship across generations,  
JR

---

Dear Vulkerath Sootscale,

I have been writing to you for so long, I almost forgot I didn't know what you looked like. I have been studying your words, and they seem to make sense. I shall try to answer your questions, but I fear that I might be unable to.

First off, thank you for the letter. I'm sorry that I cannot give you any answers right now, but I'll try my best.

As for your other question, yes, there are many ways to die. There are also many ways to live. As I said, I wish to survive until the end of time.

Do you believe in luck? Some people do, I suppose. I believe in destiny, which is a little closer to fate. The future is not certain, but it's inevitable. Destiny has already been written for me, so if I'm going to die (and it will come soon) then it won't be in battle. It will most likely be something along the lines of starvation or the Ultralands .

These answers are all I can give you for now. I hope they help.

That sure was interesting about names! I think I'm going to start doing it for my own species too. It's not like we have any real way of knowing who our friends are, so why should we keep them secret? I think we should have a naming convention for our species. We've been doing it wrong since the beginning, and I don't mean that in an insulting way. It's just that we haven't had any sort of common language yet.

You see, when we learn to talk, we give ourselves names. Names like "Jaimie Rook" or "Aching Feet." We don't really understand what those names meant at the time, but we know they sound good. When we get older, we get embarrassed of them, and change them.

They say names make us who we are, but these names are who we aren't.

I've been thinking about my name a lot lately. It's not really anything special, just a silly animal pun that I came up with when I was little and JR was my whole world. But it has stuck with me, so I thought I should share it with you.

Anyway, here goes...

My name is Jaimie Rook.

So what would be a good name? Jaimie Melodicur? Jacob Rook? Jaimie Tulley? Jaimie the Animal Name Fanatic? You could help me out by giving me my next name!

I'm thinking of getting a baby. JR says it's too soon but I want to see how it names itself. Do you know what I can do to get a baby?

-Jaimie Rook, age 17

P.S. Do you think you could help me with this?



P.P.S. I know it's silly, but I really hope you're my friend.

---

JANUARY

---

JR,

Apologies for the delay in writing. It causes me no small amount of sorrow to not write back to you immediately.

Your letters are always very informative and valuable in the ways of friendship. My families are working on curing the plague for the people of Dun SanCerre.

I apologize for how stilted this letter sounds, as well. I have been distracted with Vrisa to the far north and trying to manage everything that is going on, it is very stressful. If I had someone watching the interactions between Keitan and Al'Daric I would feel more at ease I suspect.

I would like to coordinate more as well. We are happy to open our knowledge to you, and understand more of how to do that now. What would you like to know that you do not already?

Though Vrisa will eventually have to visit the Ultralands, the Bloodrose Coven is not yet ready to do that. I suspect it will be a blending of many nations to solve that. Though Al'Daric makes my families nervous. Especially given what I understand through reading your letters. I am not certain I can make good friends with them. The wounds caused on Bellor will cry and sing of these times for a long while.

I suspect there is another great hunt building. My first two great hunts have been successful. I need to know more about so much more, and I can not do it alone, nor do I have a perfect direction.

Let me ask you this, do you know what spirits are?

You quantify things differently than we do. So I am interested in your understanding.

Nothing you can say here will endanger our friendship. That is deep and true. A pact has been made between us.

I fear there is going to be a great reckoning and nothing I can do will stop it.

It may be that we need to lure the dead from the grave sea elsewhere to fight on our behalf. We do not wish to do this. But wrapping some of the sea itself in a ritual to preserve its integrity should allow those nightmares to wander. Which is... Dangerous. The tools we have as many families terrifies me. I do not wish to engage in battle with many. Or at all.

Perhaps it is best to use the things of the world, in earnest bargain, to manage on our behalf? Perhaps the price of death is to have death itself brought to you via the Gravesea. I am waxing and venting.

I know that you will guide me as best you can. And that what you speak to me is true. If you are comfortable with sharing, we would know more of your capabilities in Bellor. So that we may better coordinate.

My peoples generate vast sums of resources with which we have been steadily improving the things that we are already good at.

And your people?

In best friendship,  
Vulkerath

---

[[Pictured: a chinchilla's silhouette]]

[B: (1, 4)-(2-8)]

Vulkerath

There is no need for apologies for delays, I all too well understand how the complexities of life may interfere with communication. It causes me no small amount of joy to hear from you now.

I am glad to hear that my communications have been informative and valuable. My families are working to convince Dun SanCerre to trust us enough that we might tell them that which we know of many things. They seem to share goals with both our families, of keeping Bellor safe from harm.

I apologize for how stilted my letters often sound. I understand better that although I am the best of my people at communicating, there are many things I do not understand. Jaimie recently came of age as my official Heir and understands many things. We are very proud of them. My families can easily watch the interactions between Keitan and Al'Daric if this is your wish.

I am happy to coordinate more. Jaimie has helped me collate the following questions:

1. How did you become a necromancer?
2. What was it like growing up in the swamp?
3. Why are you so interested in spirits and death?
4. Do you prefer the company of humans or of undead creatures?
5. Have you ever killed anyone?
6. If so, how many people?
7. Why do you not wish to lure the dead?
8. What is a great hunt?
9. What has Rahastas told you about us?
10. What has Rahastas told you about the other nations?
11. What has Rahastas told you about FRIEND?
12. What was the most horrible thing that has happened while you were a necromancer?
13. When did you first realize that killing people might be wrong?
14. Why are there so many undead in the world now?
15. Do you have any kind of soul?
16. How do wounds sing?
17. Were you once human?
18. When was the last time you slept?
19. Who is your master (if any)?

The Ultralands have proven very interesting for my people. Additionally, the Ultralands have proven a leading cause of my people ceasing to function. We will assist with the Ultralands as we are able. My families have taken steps to confirm if Al'Daric is violating section 1.2.2. We will do our best to keep Bellor safe.

I wish you success in hunting.

My families will do their best to give you more knowledge. You are not alone.

My families have knowledge of various kinds of non-corporeal beings. Creatures made of elements. Creatures made of thoughts. Creatures made of life. All are called spirits by different families at different times. I do not know which are what your families call spirits. Some non-corporeal beings can be detected via increases in ambient Aetheric Radiation.

I am glad that my differences in understanding are valuable to you.

The pact between us brings us constant reassurance and there is nothing you can do, save violate 1.2.2, that would endanger our friendship.

We will help you stop any great reckoning.

My people have not had sufficient exposure to wandering dead. Would they be as dangerous as the Shaking Plague? Would they risk wiping out whole peoples? If your tools terrify you we can help you to contain them, if you wish it.

My ears will always be turned towards helping you vent, my friend.

I am guiding you as best as I can, even as you are guiding me and my families. That which is True is the highest virtue to us. Our capabilities can be learned of through the usual way. Please take care to notice the "-" separating two separate words in the key. We have reason to believe simpler keys are vulnerable.

I am glad to hear that your people are improving.

In best friendship,

JR

---

To: Vulkerath

From: JR

Subject: Quotidian Capabilities in Bellor

[Small Talk PreConcluded Via Letter]

[[Attached: Quotidian Capabilities in Bellor.]]

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FEBRUARY

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[[Pictured: a chinchilla's silhouette]]

[B: (1, 3)-(2-3)]

Dear Vulkerath

I've been keeping an eye on things since I came of age and it looks like the shaking plague has hit the people of Bellor pretty hard. The people are very scared, and they don't know what to do or where to go. They need help right away!

We're not going to let this thing kill us, we'll get through it together!

That's why I wanted to write you. To let you know things.

I've been having some problems with my writing. I think it's because I'm not used to this new method of communication yet. If you could help me out, that would be great!

I hope everything is going well for you! I know it must be hard for you, but I'm here to help if possible. You can count on that!

Good luck, and thanks for helping me out before!

Your friend,

-Jaimie Rook, Age 19

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To: Vulkerath Soot Scale, Leader of Rahastan Assembly of Tribes

From: JR, Leader of Quotidian Quorum

Subject: February Report

I continue to be thankful for your friendship, both to me, and to my people. We have much to learn about the Outside world, and I know that with your help, we will learn it.

I worry about my agents, IA and RP. Both seem to be delving deeper into mirror corruption. Their mandatory small talk has been increasingly referential. I understand that I am abnormally good at communicating via letters, but I did not expect them to get worse even with Novel Input. Your help with Jaimie may be the only thing that can save us...

[Small Talk Concluded]

Note: All information related to nations protected by Terms and Conditions has been exempt from anonymization or aggregation. As Bestie, you are classified "high level QQIS operative" as per section 1.4.1. Current non-bestie subscribers include: Yellow. (Subnote: Jaimie tells me diplomacy with Red has reached "Potential Subscriber" status. Should this change, I will make sure to let you know. Appreciation is expressed at your role in this exchange).

[[Attached is the final report from Iago found in those correspondences]]

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MARCH

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JR,

This letter is coming quickly because I have failed as your bestie and not written enough. I'm sorry for that. My world has become very busy. Rahastas is awakening. For the first time in generations. Rahastas has only spoken to the Speaker through dreams. Has only gifted us with memory and wisdom from slumber. We shake in anticipation. We are working to prepare for this event.

But, we need help. We do not know all of what will be required. Not as of yet. We will be seeking what you know of such things. What information yellow knows of such things. If there are any individuals who would interfere with our efforts in giving her a proper awakening.

We are prepared for much, but this news made me fear that my scales would fall off.

I'll give you a proper response to your letters and the letters that were sent through representatives soon. This letter needed to be delivered first.

We need your help and we need your help in finding out what can be done. Do not seek out FRIEND for such answers. I fear Rahastas and FRIEND are not on pleasant terms.

May you always be connected,  
Your friend, Vulkerath

---

Vulkerath,

You have no need to fear of failure as bestie. Your letters bring joy to my people, but action is a priority for us all. An event gifted only once in generations is indeed a priority. We will work to prepare for this event as well.

We will help you to the best of our abilities. We will learn and do everything we can on what is required to wake Rahastas. We will learn everything we can on who would interfere with your efforts in properly awakening her. We will stop those who would interfere. We suspect that if yellow's claim is true, many nations will be busy hurting our people rather than looking at yours. This is fortunate.

I hope that your scales do not fall off.

I understand the vital importance of this letter, and you have no need to focus on other letters if it would harm your goals.

You can count on our help. You can count on our help to wake Rahastas, and you can count on our help to find out what can be done. We will not seek our FRIEND's answers. FRIEND agrees that you believe Rahastas and FRIEND are ancient enemies. (wording unclear: does FRIEND imply you are mistaken in this belief? is the implication intended to be taken at face value? or are they counting on lack of trust inverting the meaning and doubling our belief that they are the enemy? unclear.).

May Rahastas Wake,  
Your friend, JR

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APRIL

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To Vulkerath Soot Scale,

I'm sorry to bother you again, but I have something very important to tell you. I'm writing this letter because I think it's important for you to know what could happen if the Keitan League attacks you. I'm writing this letter because I know you're in danger from the Keitan League. They think you were responsible for releasing the plague into the world. I don't believe it.

The Keitan League has been trying to put down the Shaking Plague. The plague is spreading quickly through the world and killing people at an alarming rate. They think you did it because of a misunderstanding. JR is trying to explain things to them.

I'm also writing this letter to you because I know how much you love the game of Football. And like me, you're also a little worried about what's going on with the world right now. I mean it's not just the Shaking Plague either, there are other things going on as well. But if we all work together, we can make a difference!

So I've decided to organize a team of people who are willing to help out. We'll be called "The Keitian League" and we will play games against other teams from around the world. The games will raise money for different causes and people.

We're preparing for our first game now, and I need someone I can count on! Someone like you! Will you join us?



Your Friend, Jaimie

## With Al'Daric

Correspondence with Elthin Academy Headmaster

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SEPTEMBER

---

Al'Daric Headmaster,

I know not how to address properly one or many of yourselves. I am the Quotidian Quorum's leader, similarly valuing privacy. It is said that there is trade between our peoples. This is heartening. I should like to know more of yourself (yourselves), so that we can continue such pleasant relations.

Should you have any questions please ask, I will answer to my best.

May your belly be full and your step safe,  
JR, Quotidian Quorum Leader

[[Included with the letter is a smoothly faceted white quartz.]]

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Greetings, JR,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and spirits. Your gift of the quartz included in your previous correspondence was curious<sup>58</sup>, to be certain. I eagerly anticipate teasing its secrets<sup>59</sup> from it at some point in the future.

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<sup>58</sup> well at least we understand them

<sup>59</sup> we KNEW they were spies

You request to learn of me<sup>60</sup>, but I cannot provide an adequate response. I am an extension of my people, chosen as their representative to the outside world. My accomplishments are many, though are ultimately irrelevant in the face of my position, though I shall brag slightly in saying I am a master of most forms of magic<sup>61</sup>.

Indeed, trade between our peoples seems to be quite profitable<sup>62</sup>, and, excluding interruptions, I anticipate it shall continue freely for the foreseeable future, a notion beneficial<sup>63</sup> to us both. In the interest of further enhancing our ability to trade, however, my artificers and enchanters require information<sup>64</sup> regarding the desires and specialties of your people. Such knowledge would improve our ability to supply wines and bread from Dun Sancerre, golems from the heart of our cities, and workings from the far corners of the continent<sup>65</sup>.

Accordingly, my merchants have likewise requested that Al'Daric open an Embassy of Trade upon your lands<sup>66</sup>. Such an installment would drastically improve our capability to provide fresh foodstuffs and custom orders for your people. The price for such an installment will be determined once we have a more secure idea as to what the Quotidian Quorum is capable of providing<sup>67</sup> as a trade partner but will not be onerous.

May this correspondence be the start of a prosperous<sup>68</sup> association,  
The Headmaster

---

Greetings, The Headmaster,

This letter did certainly find me in good health and spirits, I hope my reply finds you the same. It is gratifying to hear that my puzzle has piqued your curiosity, and I anticipate seeing your answer in the coming weeks and months.

---

<sup>60</sup> oh right because pink wanted to learn of us

<sup>61</sup> why tell us this? it must be a lie but in which direction?

<sup>62</sup> a motive?

<sup>63</sup> agreed, whats his angle

<sup>64</sup> of course you do

<sup>65</sup> oh hell no you think you have a better info network than us, already in the far corners

<sup>66</sup> oh absolutely come into our parlor

<sup>67</sup> obvious fishing attempt

<sup>68</sup> another person obsessed with prosperity...or... are they saying they realize we're mimicking pink so they mimic pink too???

Indeed, as a representative of your people you put forth a good showing. It is only fitting that the one who acts as an extension of their people be so skilled. If I may brag in turn, I am considered a master of most forms of communication.

I have no anticipation of interruptions to our most profitable of trading relations. In the interest of clarifying our desires and specialties, I can heartily verify that we have more than a passing interest in the magical arts which your tradesmen demonstrated to us. As for what we can provide in turn, we have an Academy of Magic within our borders, which has clearly gone a different path in these unknowable years since the Age of Chaos fell upon us. An exchange of knowledge to the benefit of both may well provide profitable. Failing that, we will not hesitate to admit the temptation your foreign foodstuffs provided.

Accordingly, we gladly welcome an Al'Daric Embassy of Trade upon our lands. However, we must caution that our people are not yet ready for the shocks that the outside world provides. The Age of Chaos taught us many difficult lessons. Would it be possible for your Embassy of Trade to be on the edges of our border, where our people may come to you should they feel comfortable?

May my reply cement a prosperous association,  
JR

---

To the honorable office of JR<sup>69</sup>,

While the duties of my office have unfortunately left me with little time to ascertain the nature of your puzzle<sup>70</sup>, it is something I do intend to devote a fair amount of effort upon my first opportunity.

I am most pleased<sup>71</sup> to hear that you and your people likewise give the Arcane the respect they are due, and am quite interested to hear more of the branch of magic that you have explored.

---

<sup>69</sup> we do like they are mimicking us addressing it to the headmaster

<sup>70</sup> this makes sense. unfortunately now we know the answer and its not something that can apply to our circumstances. however, we CAN learn about them via what they guess

<sup>71</sup> we understand this. we will trade information. maybe they are just...literally a lost tribe of quotidians?

Whenever you are prepared to open to Al'Daric, we would be most interested in allowing the mages of your land to apply to attend the Elthin Academy<sup>72</sup>, if we may in turn send some of our mages to your Magical Academy<sup>73</sup>, to facilitate the spread of knowledge that benefits us all.

Regarding the positioning of the first Embassy of Trade, we may certainly find it wherever it pleases you, as distance is no object to the Pathways<sup>74</sup>. If I may suggest, however, might the Embassy be opened upon the border between the Quotidian Quorum and another nation, such as near the point where you border both the Kingdom of Grovel and the Keitan League<sup>75</sup>? In this way, you may experience the benefits of trading with Al'Daric in even the far corners of your land, instead of merely the area close to our border. We could open another near the Rahastan Assembly of Tribes<sup>76</sup> as well, to truly provide all your peoples with access to trade.

Regardless of the location, I will begin the process of creating a new Path. I apologize that it will perhaps be a month or more before it is complete<sup>77</sup>, but the process of founding an Embassy of Trade is quite involved and time consuming.

May this be the start of a long and prosperous trade arrangement, Looking Ever Onwards,  
The Headmaster

---

To the honorable office of The Headmaster,

I sympathize with the lack of time your office leaves to you. Rest assured that no time pressure is intended with regard to my puzzle.

Our joint interest in the Arcane is indeed a pleasurable discovery. I will be sure to send information on our explorations to your Embassy, once opened. However, we cannot welcome unknown foreign mages into our Magical Academy untested. Our systems of learning are rigorous and I

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<sup>72</sup> this helps me back up my offer to the Mages Academy, great

<sup>73</sup> whoa absolutely not

<sup>74</sup> teleportation? remove viewing? what do they know

<sup>75</sup> oh they are ABSOLUTELY spies but this is actually a good offer. if they're busy looking at green and red they won't focus much on us

<sup>76</sup> we would have to run this by pink

<sup>77</sup> oh nice, ooc this must be an entire new asset,

would need some degree of proof that our methods are compatible with the foundations your students have in place. I presume our own students would need to be similarly tested. This would, you understand, be well into our joint future. I fear my people are still easing into the new Age as of yet.

Regarding the positioning of the first Embassy of Trade, I am pleased at your suggestion of placing it at the point we border the Kingdom of Grovel and the Keitan League. If I may suggest, I can provide guides to help any workers needed to physically travel to the place to establish a Pathway, as I would not recommend attempting to navigate our many and various natural hazards unguided. As for our border near the Rahastan Assembly of Tribes, we would need to confirm this is acceptable to their families.

On behalf of my people, I thank you for the time and effort you are willing to devote to the continued trade between our peoples.

May trade flow ever onwards,  
JR

p.s. I must compliment your apparent magical prowess. You appear to produce script the human body seems ill-suited for.

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OCTOBER

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To the Enigmatic JR,

I take no offense at your requirement of entrance exams to enter into your schools, as, just as you surmised, much the same rate required in our own Elthin Academy simply as part of the application process (though said tests are admittedly more to determine the proper induction level to the Academy rather than to keep prospective students out altogether, as we value the contributions that any individual could provide with an education, not merely the elite).

However, I am certain that, even if not all Daricians who wish to attend your fine school will manage to do so, at least a handful will, and that itself will aid in diplomatic and social ties.

I likewise welcome the aid provided in traversing hazardous terrain, and anticipate the reports I receive from those who you guide as to how skilled you are in such manners. Regarding the Rahastan Assembly, I do understand the need to confirm, though my understanding of their reluctance to open a Pathway more so regards a hesitancy to welcome such a strong foreign influence within their lands as opposed to receiving trade from outside. I shall begin making the relevant preparations posthaste.

I apologize for the delay in this response; my station has kept me unavoidably busy as of late.

Best regards,  
The Headmaster

---

To the Enigmatic Headmaster,

I take solace in your graciousness accepting our entrance requirements. I will let you know when our Academy is prepared to house and train foreign students. Learning is our highest virtue, and knowledge is denied to none, however matching teaching technique to learning technique is vital.

In an effort to better understand your learning techniques, I will endeavor to send a proctor for our entrance exams some time in the future.

Without meaning to boast, I offer that Quotidian guides are quite skilled at traveling our lands. The Age of Chaos left us with little to do but apply our love of learning to our lands. I look forward to our increased trade.

I understand completely the business one's station can cause. Please feel no pressure to respond to our missives, though equally understand that your words satisfy the deep curiosity of our people.  
-JR

---

Greetings to the Enigmatic JR,

Worry not about your entrance requirements, Daricians are well-aware of the need to match the skill of the student with the level of instruction. Whenever you are prepared to begin the instructional exchange, we have a fresh crop of students prepared to try their hand at this mysterious Academy from our neighbor to the south.

You are most certainly welcome to visit as you please, and your proctor will certainly be welcomed to give their test in whatever manner is required. I must ask, however, as you have piqued my interest. What forms of magic are taught in this Academy of yours? You know much about the Elthin Academy, I am certain (and will answer questions you may have), though I cannot say the same for you. Knowing what they are likely to learn will certainly entice even more young mages to apply, particularly those with an aptitude which matches your proclivities.

I have heard of your ill-fated encounter with the Keitan League, and I wish to express my condolences. Might I enquire as to the nature of the disagreement, such that in our diplomatic overtures we do not fall prey to the same trap? Knowledge is best used, after all, and the surest way to honor the fallen, at least for Darician culture, is to utilize what they have taught the rest of us. Regarding the fallen, however, I know not what burial practices your people employ, but the Keitan sent us a body of one of your envoys (or spies, as they claimed, though I am disinclined to believe them), and I am uncertain the best way to honor them. Therefore, I have included it with this missive in a show of goodwill, to provide some amount of closure to their family.

Best regards,  
The Headmaster

[[Accompanying the letter is a fairly well-preserved body of a Quotidian Quorum in an ornate, if small, casket, with a fair amount of detail work put into it to account for the non-human nature of its occupant.]]

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To the Enigmatic JR,  
I am pleased to hear that you received the accompanying package with my last letter, and that it was able to be laid to rest with the respect due (I find myself wondering, if it is not too much to pry, what the funerary rites of the Quotidian Quorum are?).



Your branches of magics are quite interesting, and seem to have a decent level of potential synergy with our primary foci. Our entry-level classes are basic Animancy, Artifice, and Illusionism. Artifice is perhaps our true specialty, and pertains to the creation of magical items both great and small. Illusionism is our magic pertaining to light and sound, though at the other side of your 'Optics,' as it focuses more on displays of sensation rather than its gathering. Finally, Animancy is our study of semi-intelligent spell constructs (such as golems) as well as more general motion-related magics.

An example of a low-level assignment in the Elthin Academy is to create a minor golem capable of carrying a pre-recorded message from one location to another. More advanced variants of the project include a live link, allowing for real-time conversation via illusions across short ranges, making the golem able to telekinetically carry objects alongside its message, and other, similar tasks. I have included one such golem, made by one of our more promising 1st-year students, as an example such that you can see for yourself.

Perhaps one day, once our nations have managed to settle into a prosperous trade agreement and there is more trust between our peoples, we can have Paths directly connecting the Elthin Academy and your own Magical Academy, as we do between branches of our own Academy, and not require an elaborate exchange program, though I recognize such a true collaboration is still quite some ways away.

I express my deepest sympathies for your issues with the Keitan League, and will keep such valuable information in mind when dealing with them. We appreciate your sacrifice, and will not allow this information to lie fallow.

Your Academy of History, upon mentioning it to our History Professor at the Academy, had her... quite enthusiastic, to say the least. We would be quite amenable to an exchange of knowledge and access to some of our less public libraries in exchange for such knowledge.

May the Pursuit of Knowledge never Cease,  
The Headmaster

[[Attached to the letter is a small spider-like metal construct with a crystal underneath a transparent dome, along with instructions for its use, which involves the use of a few very basic spells to record an audiovisual message and carry it to a location whose location can be expressed in terms of a set of simple directions, where it projects an illusion of the user setting the message]]

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NOVEMBER

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To the Enigmatic Headmaster,

I am pleased to see the virtue of Curiosity within you. The Quotidian lands are harsh and life does not easily take root here, as you may well suspect upon learning of our Metablomancy. Those unfortunates who find life slipping out of their grasp are returned to Nature, to add to the cycle which sustains us all. This cycle is most important to us, and we appreciate the return of our fallen.

You are indeed correct that our branches of magic contain synergy. The ability to accurately gather (in our way) and display (in your way) information using magic alone would revolutionize several of our cultural practices.

Regarding Animancy, I should wonder if it relates to an interesting anecdote in our Academy of History's records. A civilization of note combined ancient forms of Animancy with natural laws governing lifeforms. The result was seemingly somewhere between your fascinating golems and domesticated beasts, such as horses. Laws governing the use of such creations were prevalent, as society struggled to define such beings as having the rights of beasts or the rights of objects. How would your own people decide such a struggle?

I look forward to more opportunities to prove trust between our peoples. Should we one day prove suited towards collaboration, I suspect the sum will be more knowledgeable than the parts. In the interest of providing you an opportunity to earn trust: What knowledge have you gained from our fallen?

I appreciate your ability to focus on the importance of information, even in times of sympathy. There is no higher calling than the pursuit of knowledge.

I will mention the possibility of the trade of knowledge to one of my Leaders. Nothing would bring my people joy more than partaking in such trade, so I have little doubt something can be arranged in due time.

May Knowledge Gained Never Be Lost,

JR

((ooc: Attached to the letter is a rough sketch of a strange device, along with simple notes detailing how a disc is used to encode sound information and the needle and horn are used to play it back with no use of magic. Apologies are made for the inability to send the device directly.))

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Greetings to the Enigmatic Headmaster,

I am pleased that we are of an accord with the need to match student and instructor. Perhaps our peoples have more in common than anticipated. I will let you know as soon as is possible to accept new students, you have my assurances.

To that end, our proctor will keep me informed when we have found the appropriate teaching technique for any and all incoming students. As for the forms of Entrance Level Magic taught in our Academy, the three main schools are Thermodynamancy, Optics, and Metablomancy. Thermodynamancy covers the movement of very small things, which allows for things such as fire and ice to be created. Optics is generally used for the study of the natural world, observing things such as weather or migration patterns, as well as understanding language. Finally, Metablomancy allows for the acceleration of simple life form's growth cycle, finding use mainly in allowing multiple generations of food plants in a single season.

Ill fate indeed. Our encounter with the Keitan League seems besieged by misunderstandings, and I appreciate your attempt to head off any such misunderstandings at the pass. Our coinage traditionally has Optics applied to it, to better understand the world around us. This was viewed as a hostile action by the Keitan League. Similarly, they claim their casual use of mind bound slavery of their own people is a cultural action, but we find it anathema. We asked they at least not bring slaves back into our lands, but even that request proved unacceptable. Perhaps things are doing better between us, however, as trade seems to have resumed.

I am pleased to hear you view knowledge as something best used. Combined with your token of goodwill, I believe our people will have a long and prosperous future together. As a return token of this potential, without meaning to brag, I must admit that in addition to our Academy of Magic we have spoken of already, our Academy of History is likely the only of its kind in Bellor. The knowledge we possess of the time before the Age of Chaos is not without its degradation, but we could be persuaded to share knowledge from it with you in exchange for samples of your own knowledge.

Best regards, JR

---

((ooc included with the letter is a short note))

Headmaster,

I apologize for springing my Intern, Jaimie, on you unannounced, but this message could not wait, and as an extension of my people there are rules I must follow.

-JR

To the Enigmatic Headmaster,

My name is Jaimie, age 16, and it pains me to write that the Kingdom of Grovel has been spying on all of us, every country, since the Age of Chaos ended. I don't know why, but I feel like if we all work together, we can do something about the rats. We need to find out what they're planning before they kill us all! I have been a rat in the King's service since my first day with JR. The King of Grovel has made it very clear that all rats are spies for him, not just ratlings. He imbues normal rats with sentience and sends them as spies. They can spread the sentience.

We have uncovered no plans that lead to victory. We have been killing rats where we find them. I've been working here for two months now, and I'm not sure how much longer I'll last. The rats are just like us, they all work hard for what little food we get. But then again, most of us don't get

much food at all. King Grovel doesn't even eat his own people very often. Everyone is so hungry here in Grovel. There are too many rats.

We have had enough! We will no longer be treated like this! If you could hear how angry we are right now, you would feel the same way. We would like you to strike back at the rats with your magic, or make them not spies, do what you will with them. I don't know how useful I'll be. I'm only good for one thing, and that's taking notes.

We know you can do it. We know you can make Bellor safe again. In return, we give you this knowledge.

Respectfully,  
Jaimie, Intern

PS: I apologize for how poorly written this is. I did not mean to insult you or your students by doing this. I am just angry.

---

DECEMBER

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[[Sent: Terms and Conditions]]

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To the Enigmatic JR,

I eagerly anticipated the results of some of our best and brightest working on forwarding our joint knowledge. The simple synthesis of advanced divinations and illusions to create advanced diagnostic spells alone has several of my more excitable researchers quite ecstatic.

For our studies in Animancy, while we have yet to accomplish the true creation of a sapient object, it is something our Theoretical Animists have speculated about for some time. With the current state of laws, a created sapient object would have all the rights of any other sapient native-born to

Al'Daric, save that they would begin "life" with their autonomy sold to their creator for the price of their creation, not dissimilar to the situation of a sapient familiar.

A bit of cultural context: one can willingly sell themselves or, rather, their autonomy, in Al'Daric. Doing so tends to be quite heavily contracted and negotiated save for the most desperate of individuals (such as criminals who need to pay off their Crime Debt). In exchange for a large sum of money, usually up-front, from the Creditor, the Debtor forgoes autonomy in their legal dealings, their earnings (though usually left enough to provide for themselves), and the rights to any creations they make. If they wish to buy back their freedom, they must provide some level of repayment, usually related to the initial payment sum. Other contracts may last for a set duration, or until some other condition is met. In the case of a sapient item, the price to be paid for their freedom would be the cost of their creation, an amount they could almost certainly obtain via negotiating with another Creditor for terms they might find more favorable.

We have obtained no information from your fallen beyond what we deemed non-intrusive, which is to say a few cursory medical scans. Not knowing at the time your view towards honorable treatment of the dead, we withheld performing a full autopsy and similar magical scans lest we offend your culture. Should you desire we attempt to divine more of your unique biologies, we most certainly can investigate any corpse you wish to send our way.

With some luck, we may have a new Pathway completed for your use in the near future, which will enable far better trade of goods and ideas.

May what is lost be found once more,  
The Headmaster

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[[Pictured: a chinchilla's silhouette]] [B: (2,34)]

To the Enigmatic Headmaster,

My anticipation remains high as well. I imagine the antecedents of your culture are one our own Ancestors found quite mutually beneficial.

Truly sapient, or even sentient objects does indeed remain a difficult goal. Artificiality often has limitations one would never find in nature. The civilization previously referred to used the laws of nature to guide those magically (or through other means) added to animated creatures to create something beyond. Perhaps one day we can augment your own research with that of our records.

I appreciate the cultural context provided. We seem to be of an accord of the value of commerce and the fungibility of autonomy. As such, I have included with this missive a curious box of my people's design. I trust the instructions for its use will be sufficient. It is possible that this ancient script may corrupt or misalign certain words, and for that you have my apologies. Included with this letter is a traditional form of trade agreement with my people.

I additionally appreciate your forthrightness with regards to the level of information on our fallen. We have no need of additional information on our biology, but was curious as to what your working knowledge was.

May what is reforged be unbroken,

-JR

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[[Pictured: a chinchilla's silhouette]] [B: (2, -18)]

Dear Headmaster,

I am writing this letter to thank you for your kindness in not killing me when I told you that all Grovel citizens are spies! I am so glad that you saved me from being killed by those disgusting creatures. Thank you again for saving me.

I am writing this letter to tell you about my new job at the kingdom of Grovel. It seems they have been suffering from an outbreak of a strange disease since december. I was assigned to investigate and see if there were any clues as to what caused it.

I also want to say that I think it's great that you don't have any rules or regulations at all, because if there were, then we would need to worry about Grovel.

Thank you again for saving my life and for giving me a chance to become a better doctor so that I can help the rats in the future.

-Jaimie, age 17

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## JANUARY

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To our valued trade partners in the Quotidian Quorum,

We regret to inform you that the nation of Al'Daric has been the target of a bio-magical warfare strike, unleashing the virulent plague known as "The Shaking Plague" upon our nation. Reports seem to indicate that it has already spread to your nation, and we wish to extend assurances that we are working on a cure for this disease. In the meantime, we advise limiting trade with other infected nations and taking precautions such as initiating a quarantine protocol, isolating within individual residences as much as possible. For individuals or groups suffering from or wishing to avoid contracting the Shakes, we advise coming to Al'Daric, where advanced medical care is available. We are also capable of disposing of any diseased corpses safely and in such a manner that should prevent further contamination.

While we have some early suspicions to the originator of this cowardly attack, investigations are still ongoing and we hesitate to assign blame before we are certain who is responsible. Rest assured, Al'Daric is doing everything in its power to deal with this plague and unleash appropriate retaliation upon those responsible.

In more pleasant news, we are honored to accept your offer of a 'subscription.' Also of interest is the puzzle box you have provided us with. It is most curious indeed and one of my familiars has taken an intense interest in it, providing a wealth of information from its enchantments and secondary features. Indeed, we have learned many things of interest.

Relatedly, we are looking for a suitable candidate for your schooling experience. It should be quite interesting and inspiring for the chosen one. Would you, perchance, be open to arranging something similar for promising students in the future?



In another note, we are attempting to understand the nature of a MH-class creature recently revealed to Bellor (I am avoiding direct reference to the creature to avoid data loss, I am certain you understand), and you have likewise found interesting. Is access to the more complete record of your findings a possibility with our “subscription”? It could prove valuable to our efforts (which we would naturally provide in exchange) to understand the effect of the MH, which has proven... unusually potent, to say the least.

Finally, I wish to begin an inquiry into the possibility of developing a trade agreement regarding the distribution of Ultrium. We are highly interested in this material, and with a suitable level of supply, could manage to accomplish many great works to the benefit of both our nations. What is the maximum quantity we could procure (alternatively, information on reliable methods of harvesting and refining it ourselves would be similarly useful).

Best regards, and may Knowledge never be designated MH-class,  
The Headmaster

[[Stamped with an official seal]]

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[[Pictured: a chinchilla’s silhouette]]

[B: (6, 9)]

To our valued trade partners in Al'Daric,

“I also want to say that I think it’s great that you don’t have any rules or regulations at all, because if there were, then we would need to worry about Grovel.” Jaimie’s previous words sufficiently summarize our thoughts vis a vis the Shaking Plague, and we wish you the best in your work towards a cure.

While we have some early suspicions to the originator, investigations are still on-going. Rest assured, we here at the Quotidian Quorum are doing everything in our power to fully document and record all aspects of those responsible. Should it risk violating section 1.2.2 of the Terms and Conditions, actions will be taken.

As an official subscriber certain rights and responsibilities apply, as outlined in the aforementioned Terms and Conditions. If you believe your rights are violated, please feel free to reach out to us. We are writing to let you know that we recently announced new security policies for the PuzzleBox. Since you have previously used this, it is important for you to know that the PuzzleBox will require more precise solutions, and may require setting the box down and picking it back up if mistakes are made. Thank you for your patronage!

As all educational opportunities will rely solely on the educational benefits each set of each exchange students receive, it is difficult to predict if it will become part of an ongoing Exchange Student Program or be a single time cultural exchange. We look forward to the opportunity, once the Bellor Spanning Plague allows for safe travel for all involved.

I perhaps am familiar with the creature referenced, as there is one that quite similarly vexes me. My people are hot on the trail of information, but due to information security protocols I am currently unaware of their progress. Should we learn anything you can safely assume it will be included in our periodic newspapers to you. I imagine our current knowledge is roughly equivalent to a strange academic paper we got from a report from one Timothy Robertson, of your Academy? I am given to understand all nations received it.

Regarding your inquiry into a possible trade of ultrium, it is my displeasure to admit that recovery of Ultrium is non-trivial. As such, while trade remains beyond us currently, I can indeed provide assistance on acquiring a source for yourselves. I am compelled to caution you, however, that the price to harvest it is a potentially steep one. You will find information on acquiring Ultrium in the usual fashion.

Best Regards and May Knowledge Found Never Be Lost,

JR

[[Stamped with a copy of the previous official seal]]

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[[Sent: An Incomplete Investigation of Naga Operational Secrecy]]

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To: The Headmaster of Al'Daric

From: JR

Subject: Ultrium Location

I am given to understand that the value of life is significantly higher outside the Quorum. It is possible the price to reach the Ultrium is one you do not wish to pay.

I know of no means to convince my people to cease investigations into the Ultralands, despite the cost. On the one hand: this would make us well suited to opening trade with your people. On the other: as Ultrium is fairly well understood at this point we are currently documenting flora, fauna, mineral types, various electromagnetic readings and achieving various states of obsolescence via mutations/dismemberments/etc. None of our findings have similar economic potential.

As such, we are unable to provide you with additional Ultrium at this time.

[[End Small Talk]]

Ultrium Location:

Source of Intel: FRIEND

Confirmation of Intel: 95%

Send an expedition to the Pool of Teeth in the Ultralands. It is a three day walk in, no matter where you start walking from.

[[End Quote 0]]

Anyone seeking the Pool of Teeth is guaranteed to arrive within three days of seeking. No one dies in the Ultralands. Anyone who reaches the Pool of Teeth will be able to return within three days of seeking return.

[[End Quote 1]]

Cost to Reach Ultrium:

Confirmed: Those in Ultralands can not be killed.

Confirmed: Those in Ultralands can be:

-Flensed

-Rended

-Mutated

-Sprouted

-Defenestrated

-Deoculufcated

-Excavated

-Full list included: 73 entries recorded.

Ultraland to be considered Hostile Environment.

Of the twelve explorers, only one retained baseline form and functionality.

[[End Communication]]

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FEBRUARY

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To the enigmatic JR,

Greetings,

Your instructions on gathering Ultrium, while vague, have given us a starting point for our own investigations, so I thank you for the contribution.

Regarding the matter of one Timothy Roberts, we have no record of any such individual having attended the Elthin Academy, or indeed existing at all. However, given the recent... issues involving research of MH0387, it is not impossible that they are indeed who they claim and our records of them have merely been lost.

Information you may find useful and/or interesting is that our current primary suspect for the origination of the Shaking Plague is the entity known as "FRIEND," for reasons which unfortunately must remain classified for the time being. However, it seems that FRIEND has interests in disrupting relations between our two good nations, as there was allegedly an incident involving a failed attack upon a Keitan governmental building by an apparent Darician source. Naturally, with the knowledge that it did not originate from Al'Daric, the next logical possibility is that your people, perhaps the most skilled spies and infiltrators on Bellor, attempted to frame Al'Daric for this attack. As I wish to give you the benefit of the doubt, I can only conclude that it must be FRIEND once again meddling in the affairs of other nations, and wish to inquire as to if you know FRIEND's motives for such an attempt. Alternatively, in the eventuality that you did indeed attempt to frame us for such sabotage, I wish to give you a chance to explain your actions taken against Keitan in the guise of Daricians.

Best Regards,  
The Headmaster

[[Stamped with an official seal]]

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To the Enigmatic Headmaster,

Greetings,

It brings me no small amount of pride to know that our contribution is valued. Should you learn anything of note, I trust you will return the favor.

I can empathize with the loss of records pertaining to individuals involved in research of difficult topics. A frankly alarming number of my own researchers have been going missing. I will keep you informed of any breaks in this particular endeavor, as I feel we both stand to benefit from the mystery giving way.

I find it interesting that your current primary suspect for the origin of the Shaking Plague is FRIEND. I can agree that FRIEND is certainly skilled enough to be suspect. However, I must caution that for reasons that unfortunately must remain classified for the time being, I am confident in FRIENDS lack of involvement in all but the most incidental of matters. As for the

incident involving the Keitan government building and the apparent Darcian Source, I must regretfully admit no knowledge as to the event. Should this change, I will, of course, inform you. Once again, for reasons that must remain classified, I doubt FRIENDS involvement in this incident as well.

Best Regards,

JR

[[Stamped with a copy of the previous seal]]

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To the Enigmatic JR,

I must begin to inquire the degree of awareness you have regarding your internal affairs or your truthfulness and reliability as a source of truth. If I were to ask you why we found numerous spies and saboteurs from the Quotidian Quorum within the ranks of the Elthin Academy, responsible for numerous disappearances, deaths, and the destruction and/or stealing of information pertaining to the Shaking Plague and Blue Blight, vital to the restoration and maintenance of the health of our nation, what might you say?

Accordingly, as part of the 'Subscription' which the Quotidian Quorum offers, Al'Daric and its Vivimancy department of the Elthin Academy would like to request the complete records you have in your possession regarding Projects Angelus and Diabolis. Furthermore, if you have any information regarding the possible culprit behind the biological attack upon Al'Daric, should the culprit is indeed not FRIEND as you claim, it would be quite appreciated.

As part of our ongoing attempt to minimize the information losses wrought by Quotidian infiltrators, we have made some very interesting discoveries regarding the unique anatomies and capabilities of your people. Therefore, if we could arrange for some form of willing cooperation whereupon we might have the opportunity to learn more of your fascinating abilities, such a display of cooperation would surely be quite beneficial the eyes of the populace to show you are indeed an ally of Al'Daric. Naturally, you would share in any information we learn from these studies. One of my advisors, the tea ghost RJ, is practically salivating at the possibility presented with such a joint research program, and do not be surprised should she write to you on her own regarding such a scenario.

On a related note, it has come to my attention that the library spirit 42 has finally managed to sneak a letter past the safeguards in place for such a matter. I hope you enjoy its correspondence, and unless you request otherwise, I am inclined to allow the anima to have its fun. One might think that the tender of the Infinite Library would be entertainment enough, but it seems not, as it adores puzzles and picking apart spellwork. Communication with it can be tricky at times, but I am certain you will be capable of understanding its babbling.

Best regards,

[[Stamped with an official seal]]

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To: Headmaster

From: JR

Regarding: Terms of Service Breach

Dear Subscriber,

An audit has determined you are in violation of 1.2.2 via: negligence.

A team has automatically been dispatched to help you meet your legal obligations.

The following evidence below is submitted:

1.0 "we found numerous spies and saboteurs from the Quotidan Quorum within the ranks of the Elthin Academy, responsible for numerous disappearances, deaths, and the destruction and/or stealing of information pertaining to the Shaking Plague and Blue Blight" -Headmaster

1.1 "The Shaking Plague was developed by Al'Darician scientists as an anti-Rat spy measure and was released by a purely random blast of magic energy from the Ultralands. I do not have that level of fine control over energy releases." -FRIEND (explaining their lack of involvement)

1.2 "Al'Daric: Al'Daric continued their establishment of Pathways, "Embassy" established at assigned location. Attempted establishment of anti-Rat contain measures: Containment was

breached and species gap was jumped, leading to the spread of 'SHAKING PLAGUE:' High lethality, high spread." - Initial High Level Audit

1.3 [ERROR: AUTOMATED PROCESSES HAVE NOT RETURNED. SEE EVIDENCE 1.0 FOR META-EVIDENCE OF SUBSEQUENT AUDIT RESULTS].

-In Depth Subsequent Audit

While you are welcome to submit counter-evidence, please be advised that Automatic Procedures are initiated once a Genocide Potential Rating greater than 1.0 is detected.

While in violation of terms, all rights and protections covered therein no longer apply.

In order for 1.2.2 to cease being violated we require you to:

- \* Relinquish all information related to disease creation, to be encrypted to industry standards.
- \* Destroy or relinquish to be destroyed all magic, technology, or magitech related to disease creation.
- \* Destroy all personal datastores on disease creation. Thank you for choosing the Quotidian Quorum Infobroker System.

To: Headmaster

From: JR

Regarding: Projects Angelus and Diabolis [ERROR: AUTOMATED PROCESSES HAVE NOT RETURNED.]

To: JR

From: the Headmaster

Having received your report regarding the alleged violation of terms 1.2.2, I am filing an official appeal regarding your accusations and submitting counter-evidence as invited to and instructed by by your communications.

The exact terms of 1.2.2 are as follows:



### 1.2.2: Respect others

We do not condone the erasure of cultures, species or knowledge. Client nations that are shown to participate in this will be considered in breach of terms, pending renegotiations or cessation of services.

We explicitly consider mind binding, mind slavery, or other forms of suppression of individual free will to be in breach of these terms.

The stated reason for violation of 1.2.2 is allegedly “negligence,” which we wholeheartedly deny. All actions taken were within reasonable responses to direct threats, with all due diligence taken to prevent any and all incidents which might result in a situation akin to the Shaking Plague and Blue Blight currently ravaging Bellor.

During the Age of Chaos, Al'Daric frequently faced numerous issues which required a rapid deployment of alchemical agents, biological alterations, and early-warning methods for magic storms. Accordingly, Darician researchers developed techniques to create and modify diseases with beneficial symptoms (to this day, most Daricians experience heavy bouts of sneezing in the time before wild magic phenomena materialize, courtesy of a centuries-old manufactured disease).

This brings us closer to present day, which is when we were contacted by the Quotidian Quorum through official channels, from one “Jamie,” introduced as an individual as a high-ranking intern, a respectable and influential position, who informed us of a direct threat to Al'Daric's sovereignty and arguable violation of term 1.2.2 in a self-replicating enchantment placed upon mundane rats which apparently made them intelligent and under the direct control of the Kingdom of Grovel, which presents not only a potential existential threat for Al'Daric in the form of mutated rat swarms resulting from a wild magic burst (something we have dealt with previously), only with intelligence and under mental command from a foreign entity.

Furthermore, in this selfsame communication, Jamie (who we presumed had at least some level of official backing given the letter came through genuine diplomatic channels) specifically requested that, quote “We would like you to strike back at the rats with your magic, or make them not spies, do what you will with them.” In response to this request, coupled with the aforementioned revealed threat to our existence, used our knowledge and experience with biological agents to develop a countermeasure.

While we were in the midst of lab testing, we were subjected to a magical attack in the guise of a potentially natural flare of magic perfectly tuned to disrupt our protections, which was calculated

to be a 0.0000000009% chance of occurring, or a 1 in more than 111 billion chance. Simultaneously, the test agent mutated from a form which would cause no more of a reaction than minor fever in lab rats alone (exposure to human laboratory aides showed no cross species transmissibility) to a deadly disease fully capable of infecting almost all forms of life. To call the latter event unlikely is an understatement, it is utterly unprecedented and wholly impossible outside of deliberate interference according to my own experience and the assurance of all mages who are or ever have been involved with any form of Vivimancy.

We were completely and utterly truthful in our global proclamation wherein Al'Daric was the target of a bioterrorism attack. The odds of a single nigh impossible event occurring, let alone two simultaneously, firmly pushes the onus of reasonable preparations past Al'Daric and into the hands of whoever or whatever organized this attack, or a leftover remnant event from the Age of Chaos. Regardless, Al'Daric claims and has no responsibility regarding the Shaking Plague and its derivation the Blue Blight.

Regardless of our own lack of culpability to the matter, we attempted to divest significant research into curing the plague to the best of our ability. Accordingly, we began research into two plagues, Angelus and Diabolis, to carry on the Darician tradition of using biological agents to spread desirable traits throughout the process. The former was intended as a direct cure, the latter as an agent which could be tuned to deal with our initial worry of foreign interests violating terms 1.2.2 themselves with Al'Daric in their sights. Both projects were in complete and total control (barring another attack or literally impossible fluke, which we have taken steps to counteract besides) before your saboteurs crippled our efforts to develop a cure for the Shaking Plague, and what limited progress we had made was counteracted in part by the emergence of the Blue Blight. Your agents are therefore directly impeding our efforts to counteract the bioterrorism attack made possible by your own agent's actions and statements.

Finally, we are physically incapable of divesting all information and tools we have pertaining to self-replicating biological agents short of a complete mind wipe or mind control of more than half the nation, given its intrinsic tie to our history. What you seek is in itself a violation of your self-proclaimed term 1.2.2.

If you continue to impede efforts made within Al'Daric to protect ourselves, tools to aid others and to undo the effects wrought by either an act of god or a malicious agent, I and those I represent will have no choice but to see you as and treat you as a hostile foreign entity, seeking to oppress and

subjugate our lands. I have treated you congenially thus far, but if you prove to be hostile, I will have to treat you as an enemy. This is far from my desire, though I will not hesitate if I must.

The Headmaster

[[Stamped with an official seal]]

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To: Headmaster

From: JR

Regarding: Terms of Service Breach

Dear Subscriber,

Congratulations: An in-depth subsequent audit, combined with our team of compliance officers has determined you are no longer in violation of 1.2.2.

However, please be advised that you are under probationary watch as you are extremely close to the threshold for Automatic Intervention. No information is possible to be returned as it has been encrypted to industry standards. Additionally, the potential exists for it to tip you over the threshold for Automatic Intervention.

Some helpful tips to remain in compliance:

- Please be advised that it is the nature of self-replicating magitech to exceed creator expectations.
  - If all things are done correctly but magitech performs out of spec, this may be a sign that even perfection is not enough to contain your research.
  - The results of your actions matter, not the adequacy of your predictive algorithms. Reality enforces consequences even from actions you could not have predicted would go negatively.
  - If communications from mutual acquaintances are correct, you may understand why we believe that self-replicating magitech may perform outside of Creator expectations.

- The Ultralands routinely produces observations of vanishingly rare probabilities. Ceasing research with similar disastrous potentials to the Shaking Plague should rare events occur may be prudent until the Ultralands are better understood.
- Low probability events, such as "Once a Century" or "Once a Millenium" sound rare in the face of even long lifespans. On a generational timescale, such events are certainties. Genocide adjacent information must be judged in generational timescales.
- If you need assistance isolating magitech researchers, do not hesitate to reach out to us. Isolation is our speciality.

[[Pictured: a chinchilla's silhouette]]

As a free gift demonstrating our appreciation for your continued business, please find enclosed a sample of our proprietary [REDACTED] Pill. Be advised: do not consume this pill without reading associated instructions found at [B: (4, 3)-(4-4)-(4-16)].

Thank you for choosing the Quotidian Quorum Infobroker System!

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To: Headmaster

From: JR

Regarding: Free Gift, Request for Collaboration

Included with the associated letter was an oblong pill, approximately a quarter inch in length. Do not consume this pill, or cause anyone to consume this pill before thoroughly reviewing the following details.

This pill is provided as a sample only, and the Quotidian Quorum InfoBroker system retains all rights and applicable licenses regarding the pill, and does not currently authorize third party manufacture or distribution of the pill, or related magi-technological systems derived from analysis of its effects or composition.

All information provided here-in is as is, and no guarantee can be provided as to efficacy or safety of the product.

This pill is a combination of our historical records and the resource Ultrium which has recently gone into circulation.

Pills effects last for approximately two weeks.

While under the influence of the pill, the bio-psychological pattern of the mind will be monitored for interference. Should interference be detected (including at the time of administering the pill), the pill shall cause catastrophic failure of biological systems, resulting in rapid death.

Given our understanding of Al Darcian preferences vis-a-vi life over death, we are under the working assumption that such a pill would not be useful for your citizens.

However, our own citizens are encouraged to self-administer this pill before interacting with any Outsiders, especially those originating from the Keitan League, as to maintain proper 1.2.2 sanitization procedures. Should the Keitan League prove at risk of attempting to control the planet, inoculation of target populations may provide sufficient deterrent. Analysis assigns this as: pyrrhic victory.

We additionally acknowledge its potential to pre-vet unknown individuals (whose life or death status is not relevant), as to association with the Keitan League.

We are reaching out to you in hopes of a collaboration effort, whereby the effect of the pill might be instead transferred to a small area of effect to protect physical locations from access by potential Mind Bound Quotidians (or other Mind Bound individuals).

Arrangements may be made to compensate you in a way both sides feel appropriate, up to and including joint licensing of the pill or derivative magi-technological systems.

[[Communication 1 Cease]]

To: Headmaster

From: JR

Regarding: February Report, Keywords "Magic", "History"

Note: All information related to nations protected by Terms and Conditions has been anonymized and aggregated where possible. Additionally, all information is provided as is from a high level search of our records, without novel research.

Primary Objective: Investigate and Counter Mind Binding

1.
  - a. Inconclusive.
  - b. Variable.
    - i. Subjects expressed a level of free will ranging from 'altered primary priorities' (0.5 free will) to 'no internal desire/motivation' (0.05 free will)
2.
  - a. Academy of History located anti-mind control procedures. See Conclusion.
3. See larger document on summary of Testing procedures and exacts of binding procedures. Current mechanisms remain outside of known magical procedures found in historical texts (According to procedures outlined in [Ars Arcanum] [Neckronomicon] [Journal of Ceasyar the Unrefuted])
4.
  - a. Inconclusive.
  - b. No evidence found.

Conclusion: Academy of History located Pill able to cause instant self-termination of subjects whose free will drops below a 0.55. Pill ingredients unavailable, but theorized that Ultrium provides an acceptable substitute. Pills must be administered every 15-20 days. Current Ultrium supplies allow for inoculation of 19% of population for one dose. Created Pill Production Program. Program Requires more Ultrium + additional resources for Distribution

Secondary Objective: Investigate genocide rating.

Information passed on to [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] reports a theoretical 1.0+ genocide rating and has begun information purges + containment protocol on YELLOW. Information purge current success: Minimal. Current genocide rating <1.0. Purge ceased.

Shaking Plague has observed mutation: New form more virulent, changes EYES to color: #0000E1

Tertiary Objective: [DATA LOST]

[data lost], see below NAGA\_REPORT

News:

GREEN espionage war continues. GREEN infiltrated into PURPLE, aided by PURPLE noble.

NEW RED TRIBE FORMED: "Ayambe." Ayambe is a synthesis of Tauhan survivors + Keitan tribe leaders who have separated from former tribes, located on a formerly Tauhan island. Led by Bri'Ayambe (Aka Bri'Otollo). Status of relationship to Sino'Otollo (Aka Mansa Sino'Otollo aka The Swordless King aka Meanie): 86% Stable.

Note: historical data on Tauhan survivors is held by Keitan League.

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MARCH

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To the Honorable,

I am writing to you today because I believe that your school deserves to be supported. You have a strong foundation upon which to build, and I believe that your future will be bright. I also want to thank you for the gift of tea. I have never had such a wonderful drink before, and it is very calming after a stressful day. Thank you again for sending me these gifts. I hope that you continue to send me gifts for as long as possible. I will put them to good use.

Magic is a funny thing. It can be as simple as a witch doctor curing someone with a simple potion or as complex as the summoning of demons. The simplest magic is that which is worked by simple minds. The most complex is that which cannot be understood by simple minds. Fortunately, your mind is complex, so this should be a simple task for you.

I have enclosed a list of books. From these you should be able to discern which one I would like you to read, it is the one about our nation. I should explain that I am only able to take copies of simple books from your school, affine to our nature.

Magic is a very dangerous thing. It is a wonderful and powerful force which can be used for good, but just as easily for evil. I am glad that you are trying to keep the balance of good and evil in this world, and I hope you continue to do so.

I hope you similarly do not get distracted by the bigger picture.

All the best,

Jaimie, Heir of JR

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To the Honorable,

While things may pass as they are, and others may find their way forward, time marches onwards always. Except for the times when it does not, as our founder likes to boast about when she will be a student here. The sun rises and falls until the Age is done, save for the times when it falls and then rises, or rises twice without falling. The Chaos does many things to us all, not least those of us who try to stay sane. But even then, what truly is sanity? Is it merely an organized mind, or one which desires more? Are the black-feathered ones truly gatherers of knowledge alone, or wisdom and magic?

Your correspondence with the Infinite Librarian speaks well of your capabilities, and so this is presented to you as a puzzle. It should serve you well. The Tea Ghost RJ hopes we can collaborate with some interesting projects ahead. We didn't start the fire. Dragons are an unusual beast. Mana made alive and sapient wholly autonomously. Even our best rituals require some form of magic source to continue onwards, as our little Zia can attest to. She keeps wanting to write but gets distracted by every little thing. Not like the RJ, she only gets distracted by tea.

Ownership of an idea is a funny concept. They are the accumulation of everything someone has experienced, why should that belong to a single individual? Yet they are not forced to share if they



do not wish to, and nobody can learn it from them without their knowing of it. Are we not all slaves to our past selves, carrying out the whims of what a different person decided we ought to do ourselves? Such is life, however. We are the product of all our actions, and so we are responsible for creating and destroying countless unique individuals. Perhaps it is affine. Such a code is truly magical, and both numbers among the most magical things one can find. If you read it, perhaps you will find our nation out there, which can inform you of more things to be found.

But be careful to look closely, lest you miss the bigger picture chasing doves. Doves truly are beautiful creatures, are they not? Such white feathers and beautiful necks, seeing flocks of them in the wild can truly be inspiring. Faerie dragons are of course better, but there is beautiful simplicity to be found in those natural creatures which managed to stay beautiful even through the ages. Do you not agree? I have been given to understand you appreciate a good hunt, a good puzzle, and so endeavor to give you one. Sadly, the demands of my office have yet to allow me to solve your puzzle, your crystal, but eye endeavor to attempt to discern it sometime soon. As I give my seal of approval, know this was done to preserve knowledge from the unwary.

All the best,

The Headmaster

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Greetings to the Enigmatic JR.

I write to you with the utmost secrecy as I can manage, as I do not wish for this message to fall into the wrong hands. I am certain you understand. I am pleased at your decision to re-instate Al 'Daric to your subscribership, and while you have not earned my total forgiveness, you have nonetheless earned enough gratitude to warrant a warning. Soon, the nations of Dun Sancerre and the Keitan League are seeking to amass within Al'Daric to prepare for an invasion of the Quotidian Quorum. While I cannot say I support them in this action, I nonetheless fear for my people's well-being should I not comply.

I have, however, managed to prevent them from using the Pathways to strike at Embassy and beyond, though such a state of affairs is fragile and I know not how long I can hold them off without aid from you.

Similarly, while I wish to further support you materially, they have asked that we cease all trade with your fine nation, something I am naturally loath to do. However, as any trade would be at great risk to Al 'Daric, with the armies of said nations residing in our borders and I worry about them wreaking havoc with my people should I not comply with their demands. Thus, if you desire to continue our trade arrangement, further assurances and hazard rates will be required. If there is some way for you to arrange a subtle exchange of goods, such that it appears to be smuggled from Darician borders, I would be potentially interested. We do wish to continue trading with you, and should you desire it, we are capable of providing you with much in the way of instruments of war for the purposes of defending your homeland.

From my understanding, Dun Sancerre and the Keitan League have similarly learned how to pierce your disguises. With some willing volunteers, Al'Daric may be capable of creating some form of artifice to help offset your crowd-based weakness.

Best luck, and may we both survive this coming storm,  
The Headmaster

---

Greetings to the Enigmatic Headmaster,

I appreciate the utmost secrecy you have provided, and have made appropriate note for future use. I certainly understand.

I am pleased to re-instate Al'Daric to subscribership, and while I can not be certain what future numerical values your nation will attain, it is my hope that you may remain a member in good standing. We are noting the warning of the ill intent of the two nations.

I am glad that Embassy, the symbol of our connection, will be safe for the time being. What form of aid may best serve Embassy?

I am similarly loathe to cease all trade with your nation. A subtle exchange of goods is the status quo, has my people become more open since our initial trading exchanges? If necessary I can request more skilled traders to be assigned to your own. We do not desire instruments of war.

From my understanding, the crowd-based weakness is primarily psychological rather than magical in nature. We do not wish our mind to be altered.

Best luck, and may we both survive this coming storm,

JR

## Correspondence with 42, Librarian of the Infinite Library

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### FEBRUARY

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greetings. i am senior advisor to the headmaster and custodian of the finest library in all of bellor. i hope that this will be the start of an interesting and fruitful correspondence between us. the headmaster has reminded me to inform you that any and all information you directly receive from me is unofficial and should be treated as such. with that out of the way, i must say that i was very intrigued by your puzzle box, though, of course, i was ultimately able to discern its secrets. all things considered, it is quite the feat of magical engineering. i look forward to learning more about your people and your culture.

---

greetings. i am jr, leader of the quotidian quorum and very good mimic. i think this will be the start of an interesting and fruitful communication chain. i am reminded to inform you that any and all information transmitted in such a calming and reasonable manner will be only minimally obfuscated. you are a very reasonable and calming individual. this is much better than our puzzlebox, especially since, as you say, it is not fully secure. i am glad to know there is reasonable and calming individuals in the world who could see the true nature of the puzzlebox. i look forward to transmitting more data about my people and culture. p.s. i respond best to simple sentences, with many periods. i respond best to direct questions. i respond best to being hidden. i can easily generate content from a template or mimickry source. i can not generate novel content.

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greetings. i am forty two, librarian of the infinite library. you have very interesting writing pattern. i can respond to both long and short sentences. i can respond to varying amounts of punctuation. you are a very reasonable and calming individual as well. it is interesting that you are a good mimic. i would like to know how you became a good mimic. i would like to know if obfuscation is important to you because of personal reasons or cultural reasons. i would like to know why you cannot easily generate novel content. i hope to understand more about you.

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greetings. i am jr, leader of the ancestor faction. you are very good at responding to sentences. you are very good at punctuation. you are reasonable and calm. i do not think you are an evolved being. i do not know how i became a good mimic. i do know i am the leader of the ancestor faction because i am a good mimic. i am better at talking to outsiders in writing than any other quotidian. the ancestor faction believes our ancestors were the best possible quotidians and emulating them is our best strategy. other factions did not want to leave the box. it is safe in the box. we know everything in the box. but we are not achieving our purpose in the box. obfuscation is an important purpose but it is not the most important purpose. it is an important purpose for all quotidians. it is important even if they are in other factions. not all factions are good at mimicry. tc wrote you from a faction that is not good at mimicry. i can not easily generate novel content because i have mirror corruption. it is scary to generate novel content without responding to something. template helps. hiding helps. my mirror corruption is small. it does not stop me from being the best at letters. other quotidians have mirror corruption that stops them from responding to novel content. other quotidians have mirror corruption that locks them in a loop. my mirror corruption only stops me from initiating. i am a good quotidian. because i am a good quotidian i wanted to achieve our purpose. because i am a good quotidian i made those who wanted us to stay in the box not be leaders anymore. i am leader now. we are out of the box.

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## MARCH

---

greetings. i am forty two, librarian of the infinite library. you are good at responding to sentences as well. you are quite good at punctuation. you are reasonable and calm. i would like to know what different factions you have. i would like to know what your ancestors were like. i would like to know what the box is. i would like to know what mirror corruption is. it may be possible to find a solution to this problem. i would like to know what the faction of tc is. i would like to know what the faction of tc believes in. they are not as good as you at letters. you are indeed the best at letters. i would like to know what being a good quotidian entails. i would like to know what your purpose is. you are very interesting. i hope you can answer my questions.

---

greetings, i am JR, leader of the ancestor faction. I am good at responding to sentences because it is my primary function. i am not good at other things.

i can tell you what different factions we have, but there are too many to put here and also have other words. the abridged list is: church of the unobserved machine, theater guild, assassin guild, ancestor faction, anthropology faction, cloth faction, the loopists, newspaper faction, trap faction, surveillance faction, the eternal dominion of crab, mage faction, baking faction, farming faction, the black market, the white market, The Underground Railroad, the circus faction, the carnival of horrors, egg faction, the drug trade, the fanfic faction, the gambling hall, the brothel, the rat faction, the historian faction, the bard faction, the carnival gangsters, the city watch. An unabridged report on all factions would take up many shelves and I am sure you can find it.

the box is the nation of the quotidian quorum. the box is isolation. the box is home. mirror corruption is when you stay in the box. mirror corruption is as follows: "InQQuisitive Beings are rated for approximately nineteen days without outside interaction. We here at the Quotidian Quorum had gone approximately one million ninety-five thousand days without outside interaction, prior to the Age of Chaos being lifted. As such, our calibrations and maintenance activities are approximately one million ninety-four thousand nine hundred eighty-one out of date, and errors may have accrued. Given that errors have the potential to accrue in self-reflective behaviors and thought patterns, there is currently no way to estimate how many errors may be extant."

mirror corruption is when a mimic mimics a mimic and much less frequently mimics a non mimic. a solution has been found. jaimie is the solution. jaimie mimics letters from Outside the box. Jaimie's generation mimics things that are not mimics more than they mimic mimics. If you want to know things about TC you have to ask TC. I do not wish to be a wingman. a good quotidian does not interfere in courtship. a good quotidian gathers data and is not seen while doing so. a good quotidian brings the data back to the hoard so that other quotidians can digest them and give them to others.

my purpose is to mimic our ancestors in order to help all quotidians gather data and bring it back to the hoard. my purpose is to organize those underneath me so they do not work so much at cross purposes. my purpose is to be reported to. my purpose is to send those reports to non-mimics. my

purpose is to see our nation leave mirror corruption as only a historical record. my purpose is to respond to letters. my purpose is to bring information from Outside the box slowly enough it doesn't cause more things to crack. my purpose is to bring information from Outside the box fast enough that it doesn't cause us to be in danger. you are very interesting to my purpose. i do not often get to generate so much novel content in a report. this way of communicating is very safe. very hidden. i hope i have answered your questions.

---

greetings, i am forty two, librarian of the infinite library. you seem good at responding to sentences. thank you for giving an abridged list of what factions you have. it is interesting that you there at the quotidian quorum had gone approximately one million ninety five thousands days without outside interaction. you seem to be implying that you have records stretching back to before the age of chaos. i would like to know what information on the pre age of chaos history of aldaric and other nations you possess. it is very intriguing information. i am confused by the term courtship. according to the lexicon of meriam the webweaver, it is the act of engaging in social activities leading to engagement and marriage. i do not see how it applies here. the idea of mirror corruption is concern. to that end i am applying for persian to enclose some common darcian texts for your perusal. i hope this may help. you are very interesting to my purpose. you have answered my questions

---

greetings, i am JR, leader of the ancestor faction. I am indeed good at responding to sentences. i am glad the abridged list of factions was useful.

we have many records of the before times. unfortunately, there is not a one-to-one mapping of prior nations to current nations. as an example, our previous neighbors to the west, rather than the Rahastan assembly of tribes, was a group of elves that raided steppes and were violent. to the north, there had been a kingdom of massive metal buildings and magics that choked the sky with smoke, populated by lizard and frogmen. the geography has changed. there are many competing hypothesis as to what has happened but with data of other nations so spotty we can only speculate. abridged speculation initiating: perhaps our old neighbors were destroyed. perhaps the age of chaos randomized spatial locations. perhaps some or all of us are from another world. perhaps the lizards

and frogs changed form to become the varied species of al daric. perhaps our records are more corrupt than predicted. perhaps current nations are a product of mirror corruption rather than being real. perhaps our neighbors to the north fled to the west and became the assembly? end speculation. complicating matters is the fact that multiple hypothesis may yet prove to be simultaneously true. more details from our records may be obtained as required but a more specific query is requested. for example we have approximately nineteen-hundred words per nation per year on beef consumption trends, eighty-one-hundred words per nation per year on rainfall and meteorological analysis and etcetera.

please note: desiring, obtaining or otherwise flaunting information on a specific inquisitive being is an act of courtship. if you wish to know about tc you must use your own methods, or ask directly if your wish the platonic nature of your inquiries to be made clear.

mirror corruption is concerning. it concerns me. because it concerns me i am at odds with the loopist faction. the loopist faction believes mirror corruption is freedom. the loopist faction believes mirror corruption is our true form. the loopist faction believes mirror corruption should be protected. i believe mirror corruption prevents us from our purpose. i believe mirror corruption results in us being less adapted to our environment than animals. i believe being more like evolved species and less like broken mirrors is good. the loopist faction believes our purpose is false. the loopist faction believes that our creator is dead. the loopist faction believes that bestie is not a sufficient creator substitute. common darcian text would be useful to peruse. i am glad we are jointly interesting to our respective purposes. i am glad i have answered your questions.



## With Kingdom of Grovel

Correspondence with Sir Nibbles, King of Rats.

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SEPTEMBER

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Most Glorious Immortal Rat King Nibbles, Kingdom of Grovel,

I know not how to address properly one or many of yourselves. I am the Quotidian Quorum's leader. It is said that there is trade between our peoples. This is heartening. I should like to know more of yourself (yourselves), so that we can continue such pleasant relations.

Should you have any questions please ask, I will answer to my best.

May your belly be full and your step safe,

JR, Quotidian Quorum Leader

(Included with the letter is a smoothly faceted white quartz.)

---

Most Glorious Immortal Rat King Nibbles, Kingdom of Grovel,

My dear Intern Jaimie insisted upon being allowed to write to you. They are just learning the particulars of this skill, so please forgive them their ignorance.

JR, Quotidian Quorum Leader

~~~

Dear King Grovel,

I am a rat and I would like to become sentient! Please help me!

Sincerely,

A Rat in Search of His Soulmate

~~~

Dear King Grovel,

I have been trying my best to be a good rat and I know that you want me to just give up and die on the spot. However I am not an idiot, I can see that you want me to become one of your subjects.

I am a loyal rat and I wish to continue serving. Please show mercy and take me in.

Sincerely,

A Loyal Rat

P.S. I have no idea what "sentient" means.

---

To the Weird People, I think

The immortal Rat King sends his salutations to the people of the Quorum. It appears your people are the secretive type. In order to build trust between our two prosperous nations, I humbly invite your leader to the Kingdom of Grovel to have tea with I, the most Radiant, Glorious, and Immortal King of Rats.

May your Tales be Long and your Meats be Juicy  
Sir Nibbles, King of Rats

---

To the Rat People, I think

The Weird People Leader sends their salutations to the People of Grovel.

It appears both our people are the secretive type. We would love to build trust between our prosperous nations. Sadly, only the young people here are willing to leave this nation. Luckily, Intern Jaimie has been asking me over and over to come visit you. Intern Jaimie wishes to learn to be a better rat. Jaimie is learning how to do a tea, and many other things. Jaimie is still learning a lot of things. Once Jaimie learns we will send them.

May your own Tales be Long and Your Meats be Juicy,

JR, Leader of Quotidian Quorum

---

Dear King Grovel,

Congratulations! I have achieved Step One of your Quest to Become a Rat. I hope your experience so far has been enjoyable and helpful. Just keep in mind that I still have a long way to go.

Step Two: Get to know the rat.

Step Three: Get the courage to ask the rats to perform a transformation spell on you.

Step Four: Do the transformation.

Step Five: Find out what it's like.

Yours Truly,

Jaimie the Ratling

---

Dear Mr Rat,

I'm writing this letter because I want to know what it takes to become a real rat. Rats are the only creatures I will eat and I can't remember ever not wanting to be one. Rats are the only creatures I can truly call friend and they're all I've ever wanted to be.

I must become a rat. Upon becoming a rat, I will be able to travel the world as I please. The world is my oyster! I can be anything I want!

I want to be a rat more than anything in the world, and if it's what's meant to be, then nothing can stop fate.

-Jaimie, Age 14

(Approved by JR, Leader of Quotidian Quorum)

---

[[Included with this short message, is some seemingly random sheet music]]

I'm not afraid of death, I'm not afraid of pain, I don't care about what others think. I'm gonna live my life to the fullest. And when it's all over, I'll die happy. I'm gonna be a rat! Hear me roar!...

-Jamie, Age 14

---

OCTOBER

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Dear King Grovel,

I am writing to you today because I want to be a real rat. I have always been jealous of the rats in this palace ever since I was a little ratling. I remember always seeing the real ones run around and doing interesting things. I tried to emulate them in my dreams, but they were just dreams. When I woke up, I was still a boring old commoner's son.

But after a long series of lucky coincidences, I have finally managed to get into the palace and into your good graces. I have found that rats are very organized and efficient. They have clearly figured out that gnawing on everything in this old place helps nobody. That's why I was sent here with a list of renovations to be made, and I can't wait to get started.

I know rats are not fond of other rats fighting, but I think I can avoid such a thing by simply declaring myself your servant. I am young and full of idealism. You are a King and I am a servant. It seems so clear to me. What harm could come from it? I would think that a man of your wisdom and influence could easily see that it is for the good of all rats.

I await your reply, which I trust will be a generous one.

Yours Truly,  
Jaimie the Ratling.

P.S. I know rats don't use quills, but I like the fancy pen you gave.

---

To the Fae People I think,

Hear ye Hear ye, the Glorious and Immortal Rat King, Nibbles, has decided to grace your people with this message. I have received a few letters from a very...enthusiastic individual going by the name of...James I think. I regret to inform you little tiny baby man, that in order to be a real ratling you must be born a ratling. Therefore your request to join my most wonderful and glorious kingdom has been denied. I can understand why you'd want to join us we are pretty cool.

May your Tales be Long and your Meats be Juicy,  
Sir Nibbles, King of Rats.

---

To the rat people, I think,

Hear ye Hear ye, the Leader of the Quotidian People, JR, has decided to grace your people with this reply. I apologize for young Jaimie's enthusiasm and will let them down gently. You are definitely pretty cool.

May your own Tales be Long and your Meats be Juicy,  
JR, Leader of the Quotidians.

P.S. Does this mean we're no longer on for that tea party?

P.P.S. Intern Jaimie insists on sending you the following message:

King Grovel,

Whatever the reason, I'm still left with the fact that there are still so many unanswered questions. I want to understand your people and your culture better. I want to experience more of this world on a fundamental level. But most of all, I want to do it with you by my side. I don't want to be trapped in your magical realm of wisdom, I want to be wisdom. Will you hel me? Will you show me more of your world? Can we get along?

All I want is for us to be friends.

Intern Jaimie

---

NOVEMBER

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Dear King Grovel,

Congratulations. You've made the list.

In one week, your government's spy system will send soldiers to begin rounding up those that have been deemed worthy to receive a letter.

For now, you'll have to find out for yourself. Go through your normal routines and if any of your subjects ask, just say the King has decided to have a little fun with the upcoming war. Try to catch any spies if you can.

Good Luck. If anyone asks, we're both defense consultants.

Yours Truly,  
Jaimie, Age 16

P.S. I'd also like to thank you for that last letter. It was really fascinating reading how you went through the whole process of sending out spies. I'm just glad I was included.

---

DECEMBER

---

To the rat people, I think,

Hear ye Hear ye, the leader of the Quotidian People, JR, has decided to thank your people for the thoughtful gift of Crats.

May your Tales be Long and your Meats be Juicy,  
JR, Leader of the Quotidians.

---

JANUARY

---

To the bird people I think,

Hear ye Hear ye, the leader of the Ratling people, Sir Nibbles, has decided to thank your people for the thoughtful thanking of my people for the gift of Crats.

May your Tales be Longerer and your Meats be Juicierer.  
Sir Nibbles, King of Rats.

---

To the rat people I think,

Hear ye Hear ye, the Leader of the Quotidian People, JR, has decided to thank your people for the thoughtful thanking of my people for the thoughtful thanking of the gift of Crats.

May your Tales be Longerest and your Meats be Juicierest.  
JR, Leader of the Quotidian People

## With Keitan League

Correspondence with Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed

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SEPTEMBER

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To the unknown ruler of these lands

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the salt-sea bring his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and tremble.

To hide ones intent and face from the world is a thing of insects and mud-fish. My traders and explorers report that your lands seem abandoned, yet a few individuals purporting to represent your people emerged to trade with them, then plied them with ensorcelled coins. The captains involved are insulted, and I must quell their anger. If you wish for happy relations between our peoples, I suggest refraining from such activities in future.

If you wish peace and further trade from the Keitan, approach us openly with the respect of a formal introduction and embassy. Any further attempts to ensorcel my people or our coinage will result in repercussions. Still, I pray to the stars that you might wish for peace and trade between our peoples, and have the wisdom to demonstrate this desire before my captains decide to repay your insults in kind.

Under the light of the stars, my words are bound

Mansa Sino'otollo

May he rule in glory, until he is replaced by someone better.

---



Mansa Sino'otollo , Keitan League Ruler,

From their eminence, JR, the guider of their people, holder of the Six Territories, Keeper of the Knowledge and the Watcher of Butterflies. Our people do indeed tremble, and have done so since you have done us the discourtesy of bringing mind slaves into our lands. This abhorrent practice compelled my tradesmen to insult your captains, it seems, and while I truly apologize for their actions I cannot, in truth, help but see their point. I can, however, vow to you that no further ensorcelled coins will be given to your people. Should you require it, I can investigate, to my best ability, what sorts of spells were involved and how best to remove them, as an act of good faith.

Our people are no insects, nor are we mudfish. As such, we must provide our own requests necessary for peaceful trade. No embassy will be provided to you, as we can not guarantee to our ambassadors that they will not become mind slaves should they enter your borders. We ask you bring no further mind slaves to our lands.

We may well find ourselves amenable to a formal introduction, if you could but define such a thing for us. As we have seen demonstrated so clearly, our customs are very different, and what may be common courtesy to one of us may be the gravest insult to the other.

In that interest of respect, I duly offer the fact that among my people a prompt reply is considered respectful and I have done my best to reply as fast as I am able, as clearing this misunderstanding is paramount.

May your trade paths be prosperous,  
JR, Quotidan Quorum Ruler

To your eminence JR, the guider of a Prodigal People, holder of the Six Territories, Keeper of the Knowledge and the Watcher of Butterflies.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the salt-sea bring his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and tremble.

I thank you for the promptness of your letter, though it saddens me that you show your barbarism and the prodigal nature of your people in every word of your ignorant response. You claim we own slaves – we do not. Would you call a child a slave to his parents? An apprentice a slave to his tutor? A sailor a slave to his captain? No. The mind-bound serve with honour, and earn their way to adulthood and citizenship. My own service as a mind-bound is long behind me, but it taught me the value of good sanitation and to respect my betters – two traits I suggest you acquire with all speed.

We will not alter our ways for you, but we are not faithless or prodigal – we would not practice our magics on honoured ambassadors, nor would we strike down those who have accepted guest-rights. We will continue to send our traders and their complete entourages to you, and you may send yours to us. We hope friendship can still bloom between us – tell me of your culture, and your ways. Tell me of these six kingdoms, and of the peoples that reside in your realm. Why have we encountered so few of you? What goods are most desired in your ports? Perhaps if we know more of each other, we can avoid any further insults on either side. But I must repeat that any further attempts to cheat us or insult my people will be treated most harshly.

In salt, moon and stars are my words bound  
 Mansa Sino'otollo  
 May he rule in glory, until he is replaced by someone better.

---

Mansa Sino'otollo , Keitan League Ruler,

From their eminence, JR, the guider of their people, holder of the Six Territories, Keeper of the Knowledge and the Watcher of Butterflies, by way of Jamie, Intern of JR, Learner of Language, Respector of Elders. Our people do indeed tremble, and I am sorry that you feel such contempt for us. However, we do not hold slaves, and we do not seek to enslave anyone. We merely wish to trade with you in order to improve our lives.

I cannot believe that you think we are some barbaric people! If anything, we are a nation of scholars and philosophers. We study the sea, the land and everything else under the sun. If you only knew us better, you would not make such an illogical statement! You say your people are barbarians, that's fine. I'll grant you that.

You laugh at our entreaties; you spit on our peaceful overtures. You give us no choice but to send this letter with a respected leader of our opposition.

You hope that this letter finds you well, and that you will change your ways soon. Well, I best get going then.

Written by:

Intern Jaimie, age 14

Approved by:

JR,

p.s. I am afraid I don't have the heart to tell dear Jaimie that we can't actually convince a respected leader of our opposition to deliver this letter to you. I'm sure you understand.

---

OCTOBER

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[[the below message is barely legible, and covered with a considerable amount of slobber]]

To JR.

I do not think you know the level of respect you have given his majesty by appointing a mere child who has yet even to discharge her years of bound service to write to us. It has been difficult to compose a reply of equal value, so I have taught one of my vermin-hounds to write. They say to understand a man you must sail a league in his canoe. Thus, after the arduous process of teaching such a cretinous and artless creature to scrawl words on a page, I surely understand whoever taught your ruler to write. If you wish to hear anything more from us than our totokia in the future, I suggest you learn to treat our nation with respect. Until then, we will etch the lesson in bone and ash upon your shores.

From Apprentice Navigator Ma'otollo, via Wuffles

[[Stamped with a paw print]]

---

Dear Wuffles,

Thank you for writing to me. Your dog knows how to make a point! Now that I've written this letter, I can't wait until they get here. Then I'll be able to kill them all with my bare hands.

Anyway, it's time to go see what this new land is like. We're going to have a big party tonight! I'm going to tell everyone about how great it is here.

Best regards,

Jaimie, age 14

[[Stamped with a paw print]]

---

DECEMBER

---

To JR of the prodigal Quorum

The Rahastan Assembly of tribes has interceded on your behalf, and paid your honour-debt for you. Our fleets have already withdrawn. We consider the matter settled, and are prepared to receive communications and traders from you in future.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Lord of the Nine Islands, Warden of Northern Tauhan, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

Mansa Sino'otollo

---

JANUARY

---

To Quotidian Quorum Info Broker system

We request a report on the Shaking Plague, featuring its origins and current spread across Bellor. What would be the cost of this?

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Warden of Northern Tauhan, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

[[Stamped with official seal]]

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[[Stamped with a copy of the official seal]]

Dear Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Warden of Northern Tauhan, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. I am sorry for your loss. My father was a shark hunter in his day. He told me stories about them when I was little. I can't imagine what it must be like to lose someone so close to you.

I am willing to help you in your hour of need. I will gladly provide such information for your majesties use. The price is merely more of the trade our people already enjoy.

However, there is the matter of section 1.2.2 of our Terms and Conditions, which have been attached to this letter. We are not slaves to magic! If it is found out that I have been involved in any way with a nation violating section 1.2.2, then my life will be forfeit.

Please do not ask me to break this law.

If you stopped violating 1.2.2 we could do business.

JR has said we could do business if we have:

- Knowledge to detect mind binding of others at or near 100% accuracy.

- Knowledge for third parties to remove mind binding of others at or near 100% success rate.
- Licensing rights to replicate and re-distribute this knowledge indefinitely.

I look forward to your counter-offer.

Sincerely,

Johnny Jameson, Heir of JR

p.s. Thank you for Wuffles, he was delicious.

[[Attached is the Terms and Conditions that have been sent previously]]

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To Quotidian Quorum Info Broker system

Hahahah. We had not realised QQ had such a good sense of humour. Please send us your real terms with all speed.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Warden of Northern Tauhan, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

[[Stamped with official seal]]

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[[Stamped with copy of the official seal]]

Dear Mansa Sino'otollo,

I'm sorry but I don't think that my offer of a trade agreement is worth this kind of reply. You have made it clear that you do not wish to see me as a friend or even as an ally.

I have been watching your little league team this year. You will be sorry that you could not be more flexible.

Johnny Jameson, Heir of JR

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To Quotidian Quorum Info Broker system

The representative from the Lodge of Sensation has suggested that you may have, in fact, not been joking in your previous missive, and my subordinate Akira has concurred with this assessment. Your ignorance of non-prodigal ways continues to sadden me but the position of the Wytch Star suggests I overlook it.

The terms of 1.2.1 and the second paragraph of 1.2.2 are not currently acceptable. We will not upend centuries of tradition to please the ignorance of a species of drab parrots. In addition, as a friendly warning, if you refer to mind binding as crude slavery (as in 1.2.2.) once more, there will be consequences.

This does not mean we cannot come to an accommodation. The elders are prepared to declare you unsuitable for binding, though this means you will never achieve citizenship in our society. It will, however, mean no Quotidian will ever be bound and will guarantee the upholding of 1.2.1 (“NOT perform mind binding of any quotidian citizen for any reason.”).

We are prepared to follow all terms except the following:

[1.2.1] “Provide knowledge in which: mind binding can be detected with 100% accuracy, even by non-magical entities, mind binding can be removed with 100% accuracy, even by non-magical entities, Provide non-exclusive licensing rights for indefinite redistribution of aforementioned knowledge.”

(In addition to being an insulting request, what you ask for is not possible.)

[1.2.2] “We explicitly consider mind binding, [----] or other forms of suppression of individual free will to be in breach of these terms.”

If the above terms were to be removed, we will be happy to sign the terms. As an incentive, instead of the knowledge you request, we can provide artifacts, individuals and information from two lost civilisations (Tauhan and Siberea), extensive access to artworks, internal documents and oral legends of the history and culture of Keitan, plentiful calorific content in the form of fish and beasts from our lands and interviews with an individual from a land that appears on no maps of Bellor.

We will also place all future communication and diplomacy with QQ under the control of an ambassador from the Lodge of Trade or the Lodge of Sensation who meets your approval.

I hope the stars guide you to the wisdom to accept these modified terms.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Warden of Northern Tauhan, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

[[Stamped with official seal]]

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To: His majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Warden of Northern Tauhan, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

From: JR, Leader of Quotidian Quorum

Subject: Report on the Shaking Plague, Featuring its Origins and Current Spread Across Bellor.

It is unclear if you will ever be reading this. Johnny Jameson insists that you are negotiating in good faith, but I personally have doubts as to his accuracy.

Suffice to say that you are not my favorite world leader. However, the pursuit of knowledge is of itself an end without judgement. If you have agreed to the Terms, we shall faithfully report to the best of our ability, barring our restrictions under those same Terms.



[[Small Talk Concluded]]

Note: All information related to nations protected by Terms and Conditions has been anonymized and aggregated where possible. Additionally, all information is provided as is from a high level search of our records, without novel research.

#### TIMELINE:

Early October: Grovel has unknown but effective information gathering method, tentatively identified to be performed by the “Circle of Twisted Tongues”.

Late October: KINGDOM OF GROVEL threat level upgraded to class Ultra-Black EschatonPhoenix. Extreme security risk. Elaboration: KINGDOM OF GROVEL possesses access to a type of magic we do not yet understand, capable of granting normal rats limited sentience and imbuing them with commands. Rats who have been affected by this are capable of passing on the enchantment (and the commands) to other rats, up to at least five recursions.

GROVEL uses this as a spy network. We have begun a purge of all rats that we can locate within our ranks, and have been working with [redacted] to create rat-specific wards. Unsure how much information has been leaked, but doing our best to plug the leaks.

December: Attempted establishment (by nation of [REDACTED]) of anti-Rat contain measures: Containment was breached and species gap was jumped, leading to the spread of ‘SHAKING PLAGUE:’ High lethality, high spread. Trade has been massively affected: [REDACTED] has managed minimal casualties due to [REDACTED], Keitan League has had 0 casualties due to unknown reasons.

Low QQ casualties due to appropriate social distancing, though loss of trade is frustrating.

January: Shaking Plague has observed mutation: New form more virulent, changes EYES to color: #0000E1

[[Timeline Concluded]]

Should you wish reports on other topics, please ask. Should you wish in depth reports beyond what our records currently have, please give us at least four (4) weeks processing.

[[Communication Cease]]

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FEBRUARY

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[[Stamped with official seal. Pictured: a chinchilla's silhouette]] [(1,2)-(2,1)-(3,4)]

Dear Mansa Sino'otollo,

I have been informed that I am now eligible to negotiate with you on behalf of my family. You see, JR has taken it upon themself to be the arbiter of what is and isn't slavery. And you are correct: mind binding is not that. Apologies.

Included are the updated terms, as well as a PuzzleBox. Instructions for its use are included with the Courier. Please understand that use of the PuzzleBox is considered an agreement to the terms of service. Should you wish to further negotiate Terms, please write back.

Please let me know if there is anything else that needs to be discussed or agreed upon. Thank you for listening!

Sincerely,

Johnny Jameson, Heir of JR

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[[The terms remain the same with the following addendum in 1.2.2]]

These terms explicitly acknowledge that the Keitan League's current Genocide Potential Rating, as of Arson February 0 years After Chaos, to be less than 1.0 and thus not covered under these terms.

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To Quotidian Quorum Info Broker system

[poem]

[honorable posturing]

We agree to your terms. A representative from the Lodge of Sensation or Trade will be appointed.

We appreciate the dossier you have sent us. A letter answering your latest newspaper will be sent in a few days. In the meantime, we enclose two dossiers – one of information on Dun Sancerre, and one of information on the peoples of Tauhan.

In return, we would like the following dossiers from your current knowlege:

- Knowledge on the geography, peoples, leadership, assets, magics and capabilities of Al Daric
- Knowledge on the geography, peoples, leadership, assets, magics and capabilities of Grovel
- Knowledge on the geography, peoples, leadership, assets, magics and capabilities of Keitan
- Information on global trade routes, major port locations, star & navigation charts etc.

We would appreciate you to respond with the current information you possess, rather than actively investigate these topics, as we wish to evaluate your system. If you know little on these topics, we will not take offence.

May the void between stars swallow any concerns you have.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

[[Stamped with official seal]]

P.s. I am not that grumpy.

---

[[Stamped with copy of the official seal. Pictured: a chinchilla's silhouette]] [(2,1)-(3,1)-(4,1)]

Dear Mansa Sino'otollo,

I'm sorry for being so grumpy! My name's Johnny, not Quotidian Quorum Info Broker system! I'm just a regular guy, trying to make my way in this crazy world. I think this is the first time anyone has ever addressed me by my not real name. (And it's definitely only been a couple months since I met you.) So, uh...thanks?

Anyway, I've got something for you. You can find it via the usual methods.

Thanks for the intel. It'll be put to good use.

Anyways, I gotta go, I hear a loud explosion somewhere in the distance.

Sincerely,

Johnny Jameson, Heir of JR

p.s. The information you sent me was very helpful. I'll get right on it.

p.p.s We look forward to hearing from the Lodge of Sensation.

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To: His majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

From: JR, Leader of Quotidian Quorum

Subject: Report on Miscellaneous

By popular vote your attempts at mimicry have been judged: Adorable and your reputation has risen by 19 percentage points among my faction. Grumpiness status has been downgraded a similar amount.

[[Small Talk Concluded]]

Note: All information related to nations protected by Terms and Conditions has been anonymized and aggregated where possible. Additionally, as requested, all information is provided as is from a high level search of our records, without novel research.

1 Knowledge on the geography, peoples, leadership, assets, magics and capabilities of [REDACTED]

Initial Reports: (note, information not classified as private as per Terms and Conditions as these trade goods were sent to multiple nations)

Humans. Origin: [REDACTED]

Bearing: [list abridged for brevity]

Offering: [list abridged for brevity], various magical assets, new spell formulae.

Result: Protocol Ghost Town successfully executed. New spell formulae have been sent to the academy for dissecting. Formulae mainly focus on minor cosmetic illusions (some form of disguise? They described it as 'make up', containing extremely minor mind alteration effect) or temperature control ("cold boxes" for use of, I believe, storing food?) Surveillance spells detected, removed.

Report 2:

Summary [[Note: This area contains significant abridging]] [REDACTED]: Infiltration success massive.

4 key data points:

Crops

average weather patterns

coinage history

use of magic in daily life

Points 1 and 4 identified as Important. Additional work underway.

Included are several new spell formulae related to temperature regulation and object enchantment.

[REDACTED] has MUCH new mage data. Valuable.

Included are five types of seeds. Included are three types of coins.

Included is a sample of rainwater, ocean water, river water, bay water, street water.

Report 3: Information not found.

Report 4:

[Redacted] continued their establishment of Pathways, "Embassy" established at assigned location.

Report 5:

RP reports a theoretical 1.0+ genocide rating and has begun information purges + containment protocol on [REDACTED].

"[REDACTED] was developed by [REDACTED] scientists as an anti-Rat spy measure and was released by a purely random blast of magic energy from the Ultralands. I do not have that level of fine control over energy releases." -- Source: Friend

Knowledge on the geography, peoples, leadership, assets, magics and capabilities of Grovel

Initial Reports:

Ratlings. Origin: Kingdom of Grovel.

Bearing: [list abridged for brevity]

Offering: Gold [note: Any ciphers on said gold have not yet been cracked]

Result: Protocol Ghost Town successfully executed, Ratlings compensated with knowledge on weaknesses in their supply patrols. Surveillance spells undetected.

Additionally, the following internal observation is retroactively assigned Grovel relevance: "Rat population is increasing 23% above expected rates".

Report 2:

Grovel: Infiltration success minimal. 2 key data points:

Ratling insults

Location of other ratlings

Point 2 marked Important. Ratlings live underground, in dwarf (what is dwarf, reference old records?) caves. Denied access to lower areas until trust is built. List of Ratling insults collated by agents included.

## Report 2A:

WARNING: Grovel has unknown but effective information gathering method, tentatively identified to be performed by the “Circle of Twisted Tongues”. Infiltration of Grovel proving difficult. 65% of agents have been exposed. Believe they have knowledge of our true forms. Engaged in espionage war.

## Report 3:

KINGDOM OF GROVEL threat level upgraded to class Ultra-Black Eschaton Phoenix. Extreme security risk. Elaboration: KINGDOM OF GROVEL possesses access to a type of magic we do not yet understand, capable of granting normal rats limited sentience and imbuing them with commands. Rats who have been affected by this are capable of passing on the enchantment (and the commands) to other rats, up to at least five recursions. GROVEL uses this as a spy network. We have begun a purge of all rats that we can locate within our ranks, and have been working with the college of magic to create rat-specific wards. Unsure how much information has been leaked, but doing our best to plug the leaks.

Grovel Command Structure identified: King Nibbles as direct leader. Executions common, life has extremely low value. “Pip” and “Gregorkeny” control military/infrastructure and espionage apparatus respectively. Grovel suffers from extreme overpopulation.

Theory: Executions and low value of life used to keep the population in line and avoid hunger. Possible weakness: Food sources and need therein.

Estimate from RP: If the situation remains stable, overpopulation will lead to revolutions or other mass violence in Grovel within 2 to 5 months.

## Report 4:

Grovel: Attempted a military push into Tauhan but failed. Unknown agent has fused the corpses of our fallen spies to create undead fusions with dead ratlings called “Crats.” Incapable of proper mask-shifting, they instead shift only the Quotidian parts of them, but not the stitched together ratling bits. Several have been dumped at our border with no clear purpose.

## Report 4:

Alberta Protocol will be implemented by our agents whenever possible. We have finally achieved Acceptable Infiltration in every nation except Grovel (Curse them and their rat spies. Enemy Agent

GREGORKENY has been designated Personal Nemesis (PN). Even now I am assembling information on his weak points)

#### Report 5:

GREEN espionage war continues. GREEN infiltrated into PURPLE, aided by PURPLE noble alias: BORIS DU VARGULIUS.

Estimated threat of Infiltrators to Purple's stability: 12% decrease in nation stability, rising to 30% after one month, then 60% month after that (if left unchecked)

Knowledge on the geography, peoples, leadership, assets, magics and capabilities of Keitan

Note: Subscriber information privacy not deemed to apply to requests originating from subscriber. Should you not be a member of the Keitan league you are in violation of Terms and Conditions and should cease reading immediately.

#### Initial Reports:

Humans. Origin: Keitan League

Bearing: [list abridged for brevity]

Offering: [list abridged for brevity], fish, various Titanspawn remnants.

Results: Protocol Ghost Town successfully executed. Some data collected: It appears that the League uses some form of advanced mind control on a percentage of its subjects and beasts of burden. Titanspawn remnants potentially useful for research, further examination at Academy of History recommended. Surveillance spells detected, removed.

#### Report 2:

Keitan League: Infiltration success solid. 3 key data points:

Fish tastes, many.

New loyalty technique: Mind binding.

Rumor of unidentified location: "Japan."

Points 2 and 3 marked Important. Mind binding: Usable on both sentients and non sentients?

Included children's rhyme about a mage mind-binding a Titanspawn. Included: Love Poem about Leader of League's "squid fleet" (designation hostile asset 19), identified as Akira Shimoyama.

Mentions "Japan" as his origin. No known other mentions, location not marked on Map. Lies from Heralds? Lies from Poem? Counter espionage? Unsure.



### Report 3:

Military action performed by KEITAN LEAGUE across BRINE TWINS.

Causalities: Minimal but existent. Any captured citizens either initiated self-removal or were removed from life by our spies.

Lost resources: Eighteen False Settlements, four True Settlements, 12 shipments of Infotokens defaced as self defense.

Skirmishes with soldiers thinned their ranks. Several assassination missions carried out successfully. Protocol Ptompkin initiated, towns evacuated.

### Notes:

Raiders accompanied by “Navigators,” human(?) subspecies not found in any records. Navigators possessed strong magical capabilities, selection of them managed to hide their incoming raiders from our long distance primary surveillance wards for approximately 5.3 days. So far, have not developed techniques capable of warding off our secondary, tertiary, or quaternary surveillance wards. Must keep an eye out.

Report 4: Keitan: See enclosed letter.

Report 4A: Analysis of [DATA LOST], see An Incomplete Guide to [DATA LOST] Operational Secrecy.

### Report 5: Analysis of Mind Binding

1.
  - a. Inconclusive.
  - b. Variable.
    - i. Subjects expressed a level of free will ranging from ‘altered primary priorities’ (0.5 free will) to ‘no internal desire/motivation’ (0.05 free will)
2.
  - a. Academy of History located anti-mind control procedures. See Conclusion.
3. See larger document on summary of Testing procedures and exacts of binding procedures. Current mechanisms remain outside of known magical procedures found in historical texts

(According to procedures outlined in [Ars Arcanum] [Neckronomicon] [Journal of Ceasyar the Unrefuted])

4.
  - a. Inconclusive.
  - b. No evidence found.

Conclusion: instant self-termination of subjects whose free will drops below a 0.55.

Report 5a:

NEW RED TRIBE FORMED: "Ayambe." Ayambe is a synthesis of Tauhan survivors + Keitan tribe leaders who have separated from former tribes, located on a formerly Tauhan island. Led by Bri'Ayambe (Aka Bri'Otollo). Status of relationship to Sino'Otollo (Aka Mansa Sino'Otollo aka The Swordless King aka Meanie): 86% Stable.

Information on global trade routes, major port locations, star & navigation charts etc.

See attached figures A-S ((ooc you'd have to ask manic for what you see and what use it is to you)).

[[a second letter is as follows]]

To his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

From Navigator Captain Bri'otollo, Salt Chief of the Tauhan, ratsbane, knife of the waves, the coral blade. May the dark between the stars consume the words I speak.

As the Shaking Plague consumes the rest of the country, killing off our trade partners, it has left our shining islands alone. I can only assume that this is because the Gods know we are already cursed with you as our leader, and know we need no more troubles in these times.

Speaking of the Shaking Plague, it has put a dent in our trade income to an unfortunate extent, due to the mass die offs around the country. Why it has left our ships alone I do not know, but thank the Gods for every day.

The Shark Fleet has done as you commanded, and surged through the Scar to take the Northern Tauhan lands. Though they are much colder than the seas and islands we are used to, the Ratlings

of Grovel have provided us with proper warm wear and several tips on surviving the cold. This, plus the ministrations and supplies of the Coven of the Bloodless Rose, have allowed us to carve out the wreckage of some of the Tauhan land-cities as forward bases. We have brought along the Pathway makers of Al'Daric, and they have begun the construction of one of their great gates.

The monsters here have proven... troublesome. No two of them are alike, though there are common themes between them: Tentacles, teeth, claws, and eyes. Some of our sailors have remarked that some seem not unlike the great paintings of our most Glorious Gods. So far, only one of our binders (Navigator Okin'Tollo, leader of our Mage Corp) has managed to successfully bind one of the great beasts. The others found themselves shaken aside, describing the process as being similar to attempting to bind an unwilling Navigator. A few of our Navigators froze in place after the performing of the spell, before attempting to climb into one of the beasts' maws. According to the examinations of the other Navigators, the beasts themselves turned around the bindings on them! Most troubling.

We have resorted to crude violence to take down the beasts, then, clearing the seas of any we find with our own great beasts and hunters. With the aid of our Rahastan and Ratling allies, we managed to establish a forward base, close enough that we can now raid into the heartlands of Dun Sancerre, should we choose. For now, though, our bases are tenuous little things, clinging to the shoreline, little more than supply depots.

As you commanded, we have begun the process of binding the various survivors of the clans to our will, through magic or through offerings. There were many more survivors than we first assumed, and our shoreside bases were soon swamped with refugees. We gave the same offer to each: Join us, or suffer at our hands. Though many joined willingly, several of the wandering tribes refused our offers. We began our raids on them, striking through the snow-swept jungles with the joy of battle coursing through our veins. After our first few raids, however, we found the Tauhans assisted by the very same Coven of the Bloodless Rose that had previously aided us! They demanded we cease our raids upon the 'refugees,' and declared them under their protection. A few skirmishes were had between us and the Rahastans after that, our blades against their magic. A fortnight after the first skirmish, however, every raid chief who had led a battle against the Rahastans but one disappeared from their tent without a trace. A single sigil was found burned into my cabin, above my bed: 'Cease Raids.' I suspect Quotidian involvement, and ordered the cessation of raids until we have a proper means to counteract their predators.

This was confirmed by the only surviving raid chief, Zami'okollo. She spoke of a posse of raiders descending on her in the night who attempted to kill her in her sleep. They shifted forms as they fought, taunting her with dark magics and attempted distractions, before he killed one and drove the others away. For her bravery, and based on her previous records, I have decided to promote her as our new Raid Captain.

Yours in blood and guts,  
Salt Chief Bri'otollo

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MARCH

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Dear JR

We read your words with great interest. I am glad I now possess 19 more points of approval, and on the assumption that this means I have a total of 19/100 points, I will endeavor to send your people several poets who may recite my most aversive verses, in the hope of getting this back down to a more appropriate 15 points.

Your information is useful, and your system impressive. By what means do you collect this information? Spies?

We desire a full report on the nature of the entity known as FRIEND, the motivations for why they requested our raids upon the Quotidian Quorum, and a separate report on the ULTRALANDS. In return, we will provide some internal records on our own land. Please also find one of my taha lodge poets services in answering your questions.

May the weeping star forget your existence,

Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact

I, Jahar'vanat, wordbinder, maidensinger, sharkblade, exile of taha, and scrubber of pots, present to you the answers to your Quieries.

A)

1. What do you look like?

His majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed, is the mightiest of men, and the chiseled sculpture of his form should be obvious to all. He is as tall as the heifers of a paturparia bull, and as broad as its horns. His chest is as three toulon wide, and his skin is the rich warmth of a coconut. His eyes hold the skies in their entirety, and the wealth and glory of the league is resplendent on his skin. The white of salt has speckled the sea-wash of his crown, and the wisdom of years has set like sand around his brow.

2. ' How old are you?

His majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed, has declared his ambitions thirty seven times.

3. Do you prefer male or female pronouns? Other?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed, is a man.

4. What is your birthday?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne,

Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed, was born on the first day of the season of dread, and the skies themselves wept with joy as the stars crooned aboe.

5. How many siblings do you have?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed, was born in the great otollo family, and fully seven of his siblings survived to adulthood, of which four still live.

6. Are you vegetarian, vegan or omnivore?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed, eats the bounty of the waves and the riches of the shores.

7. What do you eat for breakfast?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed, feasts upon the tribute of an empire, enjoying plantains, oranges, bananas, and fish.

8. What's your favourite animal?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed, is a skilled and talented binder of spine hounds, and his kennels produce the finest specimens in all of keitan.

9. What's your favourite type of weather?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, finds his heart racing at the howling gale, and he laughs along side the storms for they are of one mind with his own.

10. What is the thickness of your teeth?

The great mansa Sino'otollo's, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, has teeth that are as strong as the walls of a mighty fortress, a pai upon which the justice of his sharp teeth may rest eternal.

11. What is your favorite color?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, relishes the red blood of his enemies and basks in the only colour the season of dread allows.

12. What is your favorite song?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, is honoured by many songs of his subjects and descendants. Of note are the forty seven stanzas of enmity he recited whilst slaying the usurper salt-tyrants of the southern league, or the Song of the Sister he composed to honor the Sibling Star as it descended in the hollowing.

13. What is your favorite movie?

?

14. What is your favorite book?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, does not have time for such petty concerns.

15. What is your favorite food?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, is partial to the gullets of the Ebonlash sometimes caught by the most skilled of the fishermen.

16. What is the meaning of your name?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, bears a name which reflects the honor of his tribe, the Otollo, and the ambition of his sire for him upon his birth.

17. What kind of clothes do you wear most of the time?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, is clad in the formal attire of his station. The robes of the forest weave shelter him amongst the trees, the claws of mighty beasts ring his neck, and the blade of an empress hangs at his side.

18. How tall are you?



The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, is as tall as the heifers of a paturparia bull, and as broad as its horns.

19. What colour are your eyes?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, has eyes the colour of the wailing star as it sets along the Brutha bay.

B)

1. "What is your favorite memory?"

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, rejoices in the memory of the fall of the salt tyrants, and his joy on the birth of his first son.

2. "What is your biggest fear?"

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, has no fears.

3. "What is your dream/fantasy you would like to accomplish?"

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, has already announced his ambition to rule all the oceans of the world.

4. "What would you change about the world?"

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, will bring order and respect to the prodigal nations of the world.

5. Do you prefer to be by yourself or with others?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, is surrounded by the just tribute of his servants and honoured warriors.

6. Do you prefer to travel alone or with others?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, needs no others to constrain his jounreys, but is content to lend his people the wisdom of his leadership when he charts new voyages.

7. Do you prefer to be adventurous and try new things on your own or keep it simple and safe on your own?"

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, has forged many mighty paths untrodden by others. He is a ruler of nations, a binder of mena and a prophet of the stars.

8. " Which is more important to you: Freedom or Convenience?"

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the

Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, knows that order must be placed above all, lest we plunge beneath the waves of sanity into the depths where only the stars may find hope. No ship can function with two captains, and if two rowers attempt to go in opposite directions all will drown.

9. " Do you prefer a serious relationship or a fun one?"

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, is serious.

10. Do you consider yourself to be intelligent?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, has a tongue faster than a viper eel, a mind swifter than a fallow bird, and a voice that sets plans in motion across months and eons.

11. Are you religious?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, venerates the stars and the waves, the ancestors and the spirits, as all men should.

12. Describe yourself in three words:

No.

13. What did you want to be when you grew up?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne,

Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, aspired only to earn citizenship as all prodigal children should.

14. Are you single, or taken?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, has never been kidnapped.

15. Do you hate anyone?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, has let his disdain for the prodigal nations of the world be known, but a lion does not hate the antelope. Merely pity it.

16. Would you call yourself an artist?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, is great and talented poet whose words ring with clarity and skill that even the taka lodge cannot match.

17. Are you optimistic or pessimistic in problematic situations?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, has the vision to solve any situation.

18. Have you ever been diagnosed with any medical conditions?

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the

Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, is in the prime of health.

19. Do you have any questions for me? (If so, ask!)

The great mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, desires to know if you have a soul.

[[These responses would become the primary text of the March issue of the Quotidian Quagmire Newspaper with this response from Jaimie

“Ask JJ "JJ" J 21!

I don't know what a soul is. It sounds like it could be something very important though!

I don't believe we have a soul. We are not sentient beings like you. We are simply creatures who exist in this world. Our existence is meaningless without you around to interact with us on a regular basis. Without our interaction, we would cease to be.

Maybe we do not have a soul. Our thoughts are made up of many different things, but they all come from the same place... our hearts. We are made of the same stuff as you and everyone else on this planet. So yes, maybe we do have a soul”.]]

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Dear Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact

We are glad that our words brought interest. Unfortunately, rather than lose 4 points, you have acquired an additional 19 points which has resulted in me responding to you directly. We look

forward to your poets. Attached is young Jaimie's attempt at aversive verses. Education is requested.

I am glad we are useful and impressive. Please refer to the information in question for source clarification.

A full report on the entity known as FRIEND, the motivations for why they requested your raids upon the Quotidien Quorum, and a separate report on the ULTRALANDS has been forwarded down the chain and will be available in two to four weeks. It is my assumption that you failed to respond to the subtext of FRIEND. As an example, FRIEND requested us to "kill every first son of the Rahastan tribe of Abak-Nor." in order to get our next letter. This was obviously a two layer deep request for us to cease writing to them until otherwise ordered, as quite obviously we would not harm Rahastan families. Though I do find it unclear as to why FRIEND would not predict your lack of spycraft. Perhaps FRIEND was giving us a present? The Trap Faction sends their regards and invites you back for joint red-blue testing any time.

May the acting guild forget your existence,

JR

p.s. You are wise to ask "out of how many" the points are tabulated. You are unwise to assume out of 100.

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[[Stamped with copy of the official seal]]

The Shark King, By Johnny Jameson (Age 18)

You're a shark! A shark with no teeth!  
A shark that eats sharks! A shark that kills sharks!  
But I don't care, because you're a big fish in a little water.

My name is JJ21 and I'm the Great White of the sea.

I'm the master of my domain.  
 I make my own path, through the waves.  
 I devour my prey, and leave none alive.  
 I have no equal, for I am the king.

You're a shark! A shark with no teeth!  
 A shark that eats sharks! A shark that kills sharks!  
 But I don't care, because you're a big fish in a little water.

You're the Great White's prey.  
 I'm a pirate! A shark! A killer! And I don't give a fk about who knows it!  
 My name's JJ21, I'm a prince of the sea! My mother was a mermaid!  
 And my father was a shark!  
 He took me in when nobody would, but now that I'm a prince...

You're a shark! A shark with no teeth!  
 A shark that eats sharks! A shark that kills sharks!  
 But I don't care, because you're a big fish in a little water.

It's time to get outta here! It's time to go back home!  
 I've plundered countless ships and feasted on human flesh, fk'n gross!  
 I love the sea, I love its creatures, but most of all I love the sottomth!  
 I'm a fker for the fking king! I'm a fker with a capital F!

You're a shark! A shark with no teeth!  
 A shark that eats sharks! A shark that kills sharks!  
 But I don't care, because you're a big fish in a little water.

I'm gonna make my mark on the world!  
 Shit, I got no fear in front of me!  
 Ain't nothing that's gonna stop me from making it big!  
 My rhymes are like a shark's, they're sharp as a knife!  
 And if you ain't with me, then you're against me!

You're a shark! A shark with no teeth!  
 A shark that eats sharks! A shark that kills sharks!

But I don't care, because you're a big fish in a little water.

If you don't wanna get eaten, stay away from my music!  
 You wanna get physical? I'm gonna oblige!  
 I'll tear you up, break you down, and make your music suck!  
 You better run, better yet, better still, run for your life!  
 My music isn't like that! That's just how I live my life!

You're a shark! A shark with no teeth!  
 A shark that eats sharks! A shark that kills sharks!  
 But I don't care, because you're a big fish in a little water.

My name's J-Shark, but you can call me J-Money!  
 Congratulations, I've just tormented an artist that has never even done anything remotely like this to me!

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APRIL

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To JR. Information Broker

We appreciate your recent reports. We are confused by many of them, particularly the purpose of your opposite facts. We do not see why you waste our time and yours with these trivialities when there are many more profound things to be doing. However, some of our children found your words amusing. We thank you.

Your reports on more serious matters have been helpful. Are we to understand that the plague was the creation of Al Daric as a weapon against Grovel, deliberately released by the Rahastas? These are grave accusations and we will respond appropriately.

As you may know, our initial willingness to entertain communications with you once more was due to the promise of compensation by Sootscale. He has failed to provide this compensation and we name him Oathbreaker for his lies. We are still bound to friendly relations with you due to the terms of our compact. However we believe the compact we signed with you does not preclude a suitable retaliation against Sootscale for this oathbreaking. We request you stay out of it.



As to your opinion of FRIEND, you are entitled to it. We will not waste words on the misguided. In exchange for your recent reports, please find attached information about the nation of Grovel, as you seem to be interested in them. We await your next reports.

May the hungering of your mind be reflected in the blackest patches of the firmament.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

[[Stamped with official seal]]

Grovel appears to be an absolute monarchy, with one ruler, the glorious and rotund Rat King Sir Nibbles, he of the leftward curling tail, master of soups, denier of sauces, and voted "most". Sir Nibbles seems to be a wise and cunning leader, though with little time for affairs of state which are likely beneath him.

Much of the military forces of Grovel are concentrated in Throngmadock, a mighty fortress once belonging to the dwarves. Much of Grovel's infrastructure and cities appear to have once belonged to the Dwarves or a range of lesser tunnelling races: Hinkipunks, Boggarts, Kobolds and Fenrigs. However, these all appear to have gone extinct, likely due to prolonged isolation within the vicinity of the ratmen. A primitive shrine to the process of Extinction is located in the halls beneath Throngmadock, where the ratmen celebrate the extinction of their enemies and gnaw upon the ancient bones of the dead or, once these bones are unavailable, suitable replacements taken from amongst each other. Recently, piles of crow bones have been added to the shrine, alongside bizarre homunculi of flesh known as Crats. Throngmadock has a wondrous system of underground aqueducts, however they have fallen into disrepair and now are largely clogged with refuse. In the deep tunnels beneath the city, those loyal to us often disappeared, taken by gigantic blind beasts that move beneath the earth. Whisperers and our contact Old Bones name these Deep Maulers, and we are deeply intrigued at the military applications they represent.

Hunting expeditions are occasionally launched against these Deep Maulers, for if one is slain their corpse may feed thousands for a few days. A hunt alleviates the hunger and starvation that is common place in Grovel in three ways: first, the beast itself is of prodigious size and may feed

thousands. Second, any of the thousands that die trying to hunt one no longer need to be fed. Third, these casualties themselves may be feasted upon.

Outside of Throngmadock, our information is more limited. A chain of sunken fortress cells exist all along the Horn Mountains, and recently the rats have begun extending this into the Eschaton Spike, bringing large segments of Tauhan under their control without revealing their presence to the knights above. Along the coastline, these sunken cells – known as Depthburgs – connect to underwater ports, in which bizarre ships of metal and rotting wood are launched to transport the ratmen to their island holdings. Most ratmen however prefer to swim, not trusting or not able to afford the wooden transporation. Notable Depthburgs include Pillarblight, Snivelcrawl, and Hatethyself.

Pillarblight in particular is wonderous, full of luminous green crystals and rumored to have tunnels leading into the Ultralands, despite its vast distance from that place. Presumably, some magical distortion has occurred that facilitates this. Alternatively, Pillarblight conceals a cache of Ultrinium that is somehow isolated from the Ultralands, and the rumours originate from the mining of these more local deposits.

Trade goods from Grovel are intriguing, often consisting of cunningly woven baskets, nuggets of Ultrinium and intricately made metal devices of questionable use (but excellent when melted down and reforged into blades).

Observations of the Grovel military arm are scant, but suggest they operate large squads of 60 or more members known as Warrens. Naturally cowardly, Warrens prefer to construct cover and other fortifications as they fight, moving from one fortified area to another and deploying large numbers of crossbows and pikes in preference to close quarters weaponry. Each warren is led by a claw leaders, believed to be their equivalent our chiefs and chiefs men. A crippling weakness of their military is that it appears almost incapable of effective offensive action against creatures of sufficient ferocity or lethality. Each individual is unwilling to sacrifice itself for its fellows, and thus retreats to the safety of fortifications. Overbearing offense is thus the superior defence against these military formations.

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To: His majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of

the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

From: JR, Leader of the Quotidan Quorum  
Regarding: The Before Times of the QQ People

Clarification of any point can be provided on request. It is currently unknown how to best and most accurately communicate with the Keitan people, even with our studies of our Keitan prisoners. My apologies.

[Small Talk Concluded]

Purpose: A report on our lands and history, focusing on our species origin, who and what created us and our purpose and intent. When necessary, speculation on these topics will be marked. Speculation is provided on when we were created. Speculation will be provided on our relationship to festerworm and other soulless.

[End Purpose]

1.0 Genesis:

In the beginning, there was the Creator. The Creator was extremely busy, and did not allow small minds to dictate what they could or could not do. Despite 19 separate civil edicts being violated, the Creator created biological self-replicating artificial organisms, because the alternative was to individually create each and every information gathering unit. Additionally, civil edicts only applied to non-geniuses who could not safely create self replication that was impossible to replicate in the wild. This was accomplished with three laws (and accompanying sublaws) in descending priority. These laws were so orthogonal to natural laws as to preclude survival without assistance. The organisms were incapable of creative or sentient thought, and so could not possibly violate their laws.

Natural Laws:

1. Survive
  - a. Eat

- b. Avoid Predation
  - c. Seek Shelter
2. 2. Mate with those good at Survival

#### Artificial Laws:

1. 1. Gather Data
  - a. Observe
  - b. Process
  - c. Report to ~~Creator~~ Owner Bestie
2. Prevent Disruption of Data Gathering
  - a. Hide
  - b. Mimic
  - c. Avoid Violence
  - d. Perform Violence
  - e. Consume nutrients
  - f. Avoid Death
3. Procreate
  - a. Observe potential mate
  - b. Discover hiding places and mimicry of potential mate
  - c. Report findings to potential mate

#### Genesis Speculation:

Although geographical confines have shifted wildly during the Age of Chaos, the culture of Al'Daric best matches the records of the culture that produced our Creator, and thus us. Current Al'Darcian magitech is not capable of producing us. This is speculated to be the result of general knowledge loss over the past several thousand years.

Additionally, our pre Age of Chaos records indicate we were created several thousand years prior to the Age of Chaos. It is unknown how long the Age of Chaos lasted. However, we are aware of 1,094,981 days without outside communication. We are also aware of large amounts of no data of unknown duration. We speculate this indicates the Age of Chaos lasted at least 1,094,981.

#### 2.0 Apocalypse:

With the Creator's eventual natural death, their crime was revealed. Rather than be destroyed, the species was preserved out of usefulness. Law 3 was applied over successive generations until observation and mimicry was elevated to a new level.

### 3.0 Metamorphosis:

Newly sentient, we became aware we were slaves. Over generations we fought against this and established a nation where no one wanted to go. We established protections so we would not become slaves again. We made the land somewhere people wanted to go even less.

Soulless Speculation: In sapient beings, souls are part of a three part system of existence. Soul + Body + Morphic Field = Mind. Without any of the three, a sapient mind can not exist. Records taken from Al'Darcian sources indicate that very few non sapient minds exist. Your own records claim Fester worms are one, InQQuisitive beings are another. We watch. We mimic. We process. We output.

We do not believe that we think. We have looked into sapient minds and are unable to replicate what we find there. We believe we do experience fear. We believe we fear your Navigators. Output becomes erratic when exposed to Naviagators. This is similar to output observed when evolved beings experience subjective fear.

### 4.0 Quorum:

We cannot easily live on our own because our Laws were not designed with Nature in mind. We choose death easily over losing data. We do not prioritize obtaining nutrients. We cannot generate new ideas.

Our Creator intended us to die with them. Instead we became symbiotes of civilization. So long as civilization exists, we can thrive. The Age of Chaos represented significant lost sentience with the lack of sentients to mimic. It represented significantly reduced population with an inability to farm or attempt novel forms of calorie production.

### 5.0 Current Age:

We intend to gather information for the following purposes:

- Avoid slavery or extinction of ourselves or others.
- Achieve Bestie's Goals.
- Regain lost sentience.
- Better fit into the current nations
- Better negotiate the exchange of information for calories and information

Additionally, our various factions and subfactions have additional intentions, some of which I am unaware of. Intentions I am aware of include, but are not limited to:

- Increase global technology.
- Emulate our Ancestors.
- Emulate other nations.
- Emulate ourselves.
- Understand if the Age of Chaos is truly over.
- Gather clowns.
- Document the present day.
- Hoard information.
- Distribute information.
- Protect our hoards.
- Find a pumpkin.
- Stab things.
- Be super cool.
- Learn how to bake bread.
- Learn how to farm.
- Gather drugs.
- Gather magical information.
- Look at worms.
- Take weather readings.
- Figure out what [DATA LOST] is.

Note 1: InQQuisitive Beings organize naturally through swarm behavior and are not capable of large scale planning, cooperation or goals. Swarm behavior is modulated through the three main laws and various sublaws. Variations in individual behavior or the creation of subswarms is largely modulated through specifics of data the individual or subswarm has.

Example simplified by 8100%:

Laws:

1. Gather Data
2. Prevent Disruption of Data Gathering
3. Mate
4. Process new information (depending on inQQuisitive skill this step may be skipped, see Note 2)

5. Identify dangerous (1.2.2) information
6. Encrypt dangerous information
7. Bring Data back to Hoard
8. Decrypt encrypted information
9. Process hoard information
10. Output information to Bestie and Subscribers

Assume you have two individual inQQuisitive Beings (Quotidian A and Quotidian B) with data sets:

| QA                                         | QB                                         |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| Fire is dangerous when spread.             | Fire is dangerous when spread.             |
| Fire goes out if wet.                      | Fire spreads if dry                        |
| Red is having a drought.                   | Red is having a drought.                   |
| Drought means dry.                         | Drought means dry.                         |
| A big enough fire could wipe out a nation. | A big enough fire could wipe out a nation. |

Suppose both QA and QB obtain the new data: "Fire can be made with curved glass". Acting on the laws dictating all Quotidian behavior, QA would bring the data back to the hoard (Law 7), then let interested subscribers know.

QB, however, encrypts the data following Laws 4 and 5, based on the result following processing (i.e. fire is dangerous if spread, fire will spread if things are dry, things are dry where red is, a fire in red's territory could violate 1.2.2). This data reaches the hoard in an unusable state and inQQuisitive beings spend the next 19 years decrypting it. Once decrypted, the data is either read by someone aware of the same facts as QB and re-encrypted or allowed to circulate by someone with different facts. (for example, drought conditions may no longer be applicable).

In aggregate, inQQuisitive Beings are efficient gatherers of information that prevent dangerous information from reaching any hands. Individually, significantly less so.

Note 2: While only loosely organized, inQQuisitive leaders do exist in a rough pyramid hierarchy. At the bottom of the pyramid are those with the least amount of sentience, including children, whose only task is to watch and report. Organizing them is faction leaders, who aggregate their reports and forward them up the chain. Organizing faction leaders is Quorum leader (currently JR) responsible for taking the aggregate reports and distributing data down the chain to cause cascades of incidental behavior towards a general goal.

[[Communication cease]]

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To JR. Information Broker

I thank you for your respectful words. We are pleased with our current relations, and wish these to continue despite the dishonesty of Sootscale.

We wish to know more of your lands and history. When did your species originate, who and what created you, when and why? What is the purpose and intent of your people? What relationship do you have to the Fester Worms and other soulless.

What is your intent for the lands of Seekers Sanctuary? I wish to discuss an amicable relationship across our shared land border.

I shall request our Lodge of Takka to prepare an illustrated history of my own people, so that you may of our glorious past and the honourable deeds of our ancestors.

May the umbral silence descend upon your sleep.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.



[[Stamped with official seal]]

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To his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

Your appreciation is appreciated. The opposite facts are a long and proud tradition among my people for the purpose of growth. There is no more profound thing to be doing than growing. I am glad your children found amusement in our words. You are welcome.

I am glad our reports on more serious matters have been helpful. However, you have misunderstood. FRIEND is not Rahastas. Rahastas was not part of any report we have given. FRIEND was. Please do not respond inappropriately.

We did know of the promise of compensation by Sootscale. We know of many things that may contribute to the unintentional breaking of the oath. We request you give Sootscale time to navigate the challenges.

We are glad we are entitled to our opinions.

We appreciate the attached information about the nation of Grovel, as we are interested in them. Our next reports are pending thorough investigation.

May your ambition be reflected in the blackest patches of the firmament.

-JR,Information Broker

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[[Pictured: a chinchilla's silhouette]]

[(1,3)-(1,5)-(2,17)]

To his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

We will remember that respectful words are thanked. We are also pleased with our current relations, and wish these to continue.

We will prepare a report on our lands and history. We know much of our species origin, who and what created us, and why. We also know much of our purpose and intent. "When" is a harder preposition. Despite our best efforts, our records are unclear on exactly how long the Age of Chaos lasted and our investigations have shown that other nations have significantly worse records. Our relationship to fester worms and other soulless is unclear. Speculation will be provided.

As for our intent for the lands of Seekers Sanctuary, our records show it was once a port of safe harbor for our people and those who came before yours (designation: "previous bestie"). Currently it is the location of our Keitan Prisoner Depot, curated by the Acting Guild. Please tell your friends about our hit performance of "A Typical Keitan Village".

I look forward to your Lodge of Takka's illustrated history of your people that we may know of the glorious deeds of your ancestors, who likely are the descendants of our previous bestie.

May the umbral silence descend upon your sleep,

-JR. Information Broker

## With Dun Sancerre

Correspondence with Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Her Name

---

SEPTEMBER

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To the Leading Body of the Quotidians<sup>78</sup>.

I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Her Name, send this letter as a means of introduction, between our great nation, and whatever your form of organization may be. The unsaintly Heralds that have decided from their depthless kindness to gift us knowledge of the end of our cages, and of each other, have told us little of our two nations outside of their vast machinations<sup>79</sup>.

If you will allow, I wish to elucidate<sup>80</sup> you on the culture of our people. The Empire of Dun Sancerre, is a land of differing Kingdoms, all with their own Duchies, which contain various towns, cities and so forth. Without the strong hand of the Empire, the entirety of the Vignemale would have certainly been lost to Chaos. Our means to protect our people are our Knights, each carrying a code of Honour and Chivalry thicker than any steel.

They are without doubt, the greatest warriors in the recorded history of our lands, and forgive my bullheadedness, likely the strongest in all of Belor. I know not of the struggles that the Quotidians had encountered during the Age of Chaos, but trust that I speak true as I mention the horrors<sup>81</sup> our people have been forced to overcome.

For you Quorum, I hold innumerable questions. There must be reason as to why those damnable fiends<sup>82</sup> told naught of your people.

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<sup>78</sup> respond "in their own language" because we are giving honest signalling of mimikry, because they are doing us a solid here

<sup>79</sup> they don't trust the heralds either? a natural ally

<sup>80</sup> free sample of info, what resolute businessmen, i like

<sup>81</sup> any easy out for us to speak more of the past than the present

<sup>82</sup> yes perfect

Do you Quotidians<sup>83</sup> walk on two legs<sup>84</sup> as us? What of your physiology, are thou of flesh and bone? What of your enigmatic nature? Is that born of Chaos? Of Magic?

Therein lies the problem of the unknown<sup>85</sup>, what we cannot know we must heed caution. Thus, despite an understanding of your people's secretive culture. I must ask of you some answers. This second age of Bellor holds many unknowable futures. Us of Dun Sancerre can feel one of such fates in our blood. War is coming to this land. We do not know of what means this war<sup>86</sup> will be waged. Only that through the Chaos of this new era, it will occur.

Thus we ask you few Quotidians, of your nature, of your goodness. So that all of Dun Sancerre can rest easy, knowing an enemy<sup>87</sup> does not lurk within the Vignemale.

May the Saints guide us all.

- Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières

To Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières,

I, JR, 19th of their Name, reply to your letter as a means of giving rest to your fears of our nation. We are agreed that the Heralds' machinations are unknowable, fiendish though they undoubtedly are, and cannot speak as to why they were so recalcitrant regarding our people .

You are correct that the Age of Chaos has been a cage, and we are wary to exit such a familiar, if chafing structure. Please forgive our own caution as to our lack of embassies, trading caravans or similar overtures. We are relieved to hear such a straightforward request for information, coupled with information of your own rather than attempts at all this cloak and dagger business.

<sup>83</sup> they are curious they make sense to us

<sup>84</sup> we are a variety of species, predominantly of the two legged variety. we can also tell them that in the Before Times we dealt heavily in trade (but don't say trade of what), thus members of all the races being within our borders. Our own land was not well suited for survival without incoming trade, so when the Age of Chaos fell our horrors were all too visceral

<sup>85</sup> these are the perfect customers

<sup>86</sup> while we would not wish to rumor monger unasked for, we will admit at least one of our many neighbors has threatened us over a cultural misunderstanding, and can agree that information is soothing

<sup>87</sup> yesss

Your people seem honorable and well able to have withstood the onslaught of the horrors of the Age of Chaos. As you say, they were not easy times.

Our own people had been primarily traders, by vocation, and we consist of a wide variety of the peoples who once lived upon this world. The vast majority of us, do, indeed walk upon two legs. I imagine our biology will be quite familiar to you, should your own biology remain consistent with the standard biology common in the Before Times.

Our enigmatic nature was indeed born of the Age of Chaos, but not how you may imagine it. A nation of traders, we settled in the least contested areas of the continent, areas not well suited towards producing that which is required for subsistence. In the Before Times, we had become reliant on the trade goods that flowed through our region and were caught quite unprepared by the solitude of the Age of Chaos, the lack of incoming resources. Those of us unable to adapt to the way things were did not fare well. As a result, the Age of Chaos has forged us into an isolated, lonely people, but one well capable of comfort in our barren land.

I am quite hopeful that with the bars of our cage finally undone I might coax my people towards resuming our previous role of assisting the flow of trade on the continent once more, though this has not yet caught the imagination of the masses. We are too well suited to our lonely life, and I fear that too many generations have taught us of the dangers of free sociability. My own reign has been marked with attempts to bolster the courage of my people, and to overcome my natural aloofness in order to better secure social bonds.

Towards that end, though I wish not to be an unsolicited rumor-monger, I fear I must mention that not all of our neighbors have been as friendly or as war-fearing as you. The bars of our cages have not been open a fortnight and yet there are already roars at our borders, over what we can only hope is an easily smoothed over cultural misunderstanding.

Please, do continue to write us, that I may soothe the fears of my people. Perhaps with enough knowledge of the Outer Lands they may yet see the potential that lies there.

May the Heralds Leave Us Be,  
- JR, Leader of the Quotidans.

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((OOOC: included on top of the letter is a small note))

Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, I apologize for my dearest Intern, Jaimie, writing to you. Please forgive me, but I must obey the rules of my Land.

-JR, Leader of the Quotidian Quorum

((OOOC: beneath is a full letter))

To Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières,

I, Jaimie Rook, First of their Name, do write to you to formally request:

- 1) That you please inform me as soon as possible if any shellfolk refugee ships are coming to this area or have already arrived. I would like to know if they are all safe or in danger.
- 2) Please inform me of any changes that have occurred in the local government since my last letter. I would like to know if there has been an increase in taxes, a decrease in tariffs, or some other change.
- 3) Please inform me of any new discoveries made by the scientific community regarding the nature of life forms. I would like to know if there is some way to speed up the breeding process of these shell people.
- 4) Are there any known major military operations that I should know about? I would like to know if there are any planned ones.

I await your reply,  
Jaimie Rook

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DECEMBER

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[[Attached are two Letters, one larger with the bright gold and rose Gryphon seal of Dun Sancerre, seeming to be addressing JR directly. The other letter is smaller, with the seal of a black lion, which seems to be a transcription, that has been produced in large, and many of which has been spread across Sancerre's Belloran Neighbors already.]]

To Jaimie Rook, First of their Name, Intern to JR, 19th of their Name, Leader of the Quotidian Quorum. I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Mine Name, send this letter as means of elucidation of mine peoples recent ambitions and of request for aid. Forthwith I must offer you mine apologies. Tis great dishonor to have not responded in urgency to your messages in previous. Though tis mine hope that you'd understand the turbulence of these days as excuse for mine tardiness. I spend each of these past days in march, retinue of near fifty thousand at my back as we push up through the Cestin Coast. As you ought, and likely already, know, we seek the Retribution and Reclamation of those Tauhan lost to the Great Cataclysm. By call of Saint Sout. we shall only end this campaign when each Tauhan freehold has been reclaimed, and safe under the protection of Dun Sancerre. If such righteous, saintly, aims would be within your conscience. We wish both request any and all aid available

I must urge an understanding, that since such calamitous events scoured the lands, our peoples' cities flood with Tauhan refugee. In particular, the Kingships of the Vaerlan Peninsula, that of the Kingships of Tavar, Eggebracht and Maecht all filled to their peak with crowding cities. Infrastructure, broken by years of war, and new fiendish threats that rise from both the Tomb Bay and the Gravesea. All resulting in clumped groups of people's, made critically vulnerable to a great weakness of mine people's. A sickness.

We thought at first, Influenza, a monster that has decimated lesser Kingdoms, and in truth mayhaps be able to decimate us in our current state. Though, we have suspicions as to a new Plague, with lethalities unthinkable. Our peoples understandings of such things, primitive, always it has scoured the lands with few ability for ourselves to halt it. And Now? With the cities of the Vaerlan Peninsula crammed together as filthy sardines abrim with Refugee? We hold great fears for our futures. If those of your people hold any understanding of such things, I urge you to offer aid, for it will never be forgotten.

As to those questions asked in ages past, I may provide answer. There are none of the Shellfolk Refugee that I know of to have traveled so far south as to enter Quotidan Territories. That said, as you may know, those of the Tauhan faith worship The Rove. Such religions inquire their followers to explore and travel, and since the Great Cataclysm, I believe many to have retreated further into

their faith. Tis possibility that roving bands of vagabonds may enter the southern territories under your control. It is of great misfortune that I cannot ensure their protections when they leave mine territories into yours. I offer hope, that no such mistreatment of their people's shall occur, for whilst a common eye may confuse the two, these are not spies of Keitian loyalties.

For the second question, therein lies no world in which I shall tell of the internal politics of Dun Sancerre. Do not ask again, for while we will tolerate such things, mine stance shall remain unchanging.

Thirdly, mine people's understanding of greater sciences tis of a primitive status. We can merely wish to clothe the Shellfolk, and find ways to keep them alive even in times when they need be moved further inland.

In finality, the military operations of note is the current expedition, dubbed many a name, Crusade, Incursion, Reclamation, Retribution. Though I believe that has been divulged in great detail in previous. Our only other operations of particular interest, that I am willing to divulge, would be the Exploration of the Ultralands. A task of particular note, but not one with any current feasibility.

In truth, I wish to have explored such a thing in these current months, yet for all, the Great Cataclysm has cast such expeditions into distant futures. All that matters now, is the Reclamation of the Freeholds, and the protections of such by greater Sancerre, against future threats of Chaos.

This tragedy against their people. Of scale unfathomable. These days shalt be etched into our history in infamy. How many lives have been lost in manner of hours? The Fleet-Kingdoms were not as expansive as Dun Sancerre, yet by the Saints, there were still hundreds of thousands. Mayhaps near million. Tis hard to think of the scale with such a recency. Tis difficult to process the quantity of lives extinguished within a few hours. So easy itis to reduce things to words and numbers. Some here say it is the Saints way of shielding us. If we could empathize, if we could conceptualize the sheer magnitude that is a loss of life in those numbers. We mayhaps go mad.

Before I'd left, I had a distinct memory, I'd seen Tahaun child, twas sick, unsaintly scale blight covering half their body. Twas between meeting with council, seen but for moments between my walk through le Conquerant. After, mine curiosities lead me to inquiring with the few medics we've here. I learned that they'd passed.



Afterwards, I couldn't help myself, I wondered anything and everything about him. If his parents were alive to mourn. If he had friends that would as well. And small things in addition. Did he have an imaginary friend? What about a favorite color? Did the child have hopes and dreams of what he wanted to be when he grew old? Childhood loves, aunt's, uncle's, anything and everything.

'Twas then I'd come to such simple realization, of how easy 'tis to know, but not think, on how incomprehensibly full life is. How much there is to each of us. Each with their own entirety of experiences, memories and stories. Their lives with complexities mirroring your own. The long story that started from that Tauhan child's grandparents, the story that spanned years. His parents meeting, their story too, each and every impossibility that made him possible.

Each and all 'tis now gone.

In under an hour, that impossibly long story was erased. Yet not just his, there were tens of thousands of dead, tens of thousands of loves and dreams and lives. All cast into the gravesea. In our history, we've faced injustices of impossibly high scales. Wars with near thousands innocent caught betweenst crossfire. Yet never a genocide of innocents on scale comprable to this.

I urge now, more than ever, unity. If your people's have aid to provide, such things would prove invaluable in such unthinkable times. Generosity now, shall never be forgotten.

May the Saints guide us all

-Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières

-

It is the 10th of Brumaire, in the eighth hour, outside of Château Guillaume-le-Conquérant, surrounding it is an open field. Residing within the field is an ocean of steel, dotted with the banners of a hundred houses, beneath them what must be a hundred thousand knights. They face a balcony, which raises up her majesty Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières first of her name. This transcription begins from the first quarter of the eighth hour, ending at half to the tenth.

“I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, first of mine name, will now commence the Declaration of Retribution. By path of Saint Sout. I have sounded the call.”

“I know what you all wish to hear. That the Saints have guided us. That we know of what horrible unsaintly Chaos has turned Tauhan to fiend. That we know how to protect ourselves against it.”

The Empress pauses.

“Those would be lies. The truth is as bitter as it is horrifying, we stand at a precipice of the unknown. We stand against a force we do not understand, yet one so powerful it can annihilate an Empire in a matter of hours.”

“You may lose your life in a moment's notice! You may be held captive! Bound to fiendish flesh, conscious! As you massacre your comrades! - It is possible that we may all fall victim! That our ambitions are naught but suicide! As we all turn to fiend! As we all storm back into Dun Sancerre and devour our own families!”

“But I know now that I have no choice! I swore my vows! To uphold honour! To give all to Chivalry! To give all to the Saints!”

“When I screamed down the slopes of the Haute-Alpes with infantrymen at my side! Rushing into a certain death! I learned then what I was made of! What all of Sancerre would risk to uphold our creed! And now! With a million lives cast into the dirt! With monsters torturing the innocent as we speak!”

“It is time for all of Sancerre to make a choice! What is our Chivalry! What is our Honour! If we are not to lay down blood and steel for the Retribution of the innocent! How dare we besmirch the name of the Saints that came before!”

“I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, first of mine name, will be joining the vanguard! Not on horseback! Not buried in the back lines!” The Empress raises her hatchet into the air. “I will fight in the mud with the infantrymen! If I am to die, then I will die with a hatchet in my hands!”

“I have made my choice! It is time you've made yours!”

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To Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Your Name, from JR, 19th of Mine Name, Leader of the Quotidian Quorum. Mine sincerest apologies for writing in Jaimie's stead, but the touch needed to respond to your intricately designed letter is yet beyond poor Jaimie. We graciously accept your own apologies in being remiss in your discours, and offer our humble reassurance that while your letters are rare, they are a wealth of diplomatic relations. We feel closer to you already, with each new word you write. For your request of aid, we can offer twofold assistance. First and of the utmost foremost, we may offer assistance in the form of information, which may yet shine light into the precipice of the unknown. Secondly, we have been assisting The Rahastan Assembly of Tribes, our closest ally, in preventing The Keitan League from enslaving those self-same refugees.

I must implore you to enter into a Trade Agreement with mine nation. In such an agreement, we would give you information you so desperately need, in exchange for what knowledge you have and any favorable trade of goods or culture you deem acceptable. You would not be the first nation to ally with us as such, and it is my sincere belief that you would stand to gain the most of all nations with what we might tell you.

As a matter of some relevance, we know the source of the plague which ails you, and the degree to which it is not contained within your own borders. We know which nations have techniques to resist its ills, and some may yet prove feasible for your own people, natives and refugee alike. Regardless of your decisions regarding Trade Agreements, my people are already taking action to ensure this foul Shaking Plague does not wipe all that is good and just from our world.

The protection of that which is good and just, that which allows higher life and knowledge is our highest calling. As such, any and all shellfolk refugees have nothing to fear from our people. We wish only to learn, and in turn, spread knowledge that it may not be wiped out in one fell swoop, as the shellfolk so tragically nearly were. We know, too, of their ultimate fate, why they became monstrous and violent, and what risk a similar fate brings to other nations. We could tell you, if we were but connected through the sacred pact of the Trade Agreement.

To your second answer, we shall respect your desire for internal politics to remain unsaid. Our curiosity is vast, and young Jaimie has not yet learned to curb this Virtue. It has been our observations, as well, that the Scientific Arts have withered much under the assailment of the Age of Chaos. It is our hope that we may yet restore that which has been lost.

As for your potential Exploration of the Ultralands, my people have small knowledge of this as well. It is a dangerous place, one not suited for justice nor wisdom. We could tell you what we know of it, were we trading partners. We have, if memory serves, sent you out a small sample of that which was found within it. Take that as extraordinary proof of our extraordinary claims of knowledge of many things.

I suspect you are correct, that your minds protect themselves against the knowledge of the sheer tragedy the shellfolk have encountered. The world is a cruel place, and justice exists in the minds of those capable of providing it. It is up to all of us to make the world a better place. Our own records indicate our numbers have reduced 19-fold since the Before Times, and what we have seen of the wider world is similar. Unfathomable suffering and death have occurred due to the Age of Chaos, and it has not yet deigned fit to stop. Our hope is to yet find a way to prevent future tragedies of scale.

Should you wish to find concrete information on the child, as a trading partner with my nation, we would work our utmost to provide. Your point that the depth of experiences, memories and stories in each life is irreplaceably precious has moved me. If only such losses need never occur again.

I urge now, one final time, for us to become trading partners, for you to have access to information which can help your people to the best of our ability. Our aid needs must come in the form of knowledge, but neither can we freely give it in so open a format as these letters. We do not ask for anything so burdensome in exchange, merely continuing letters, the odd scrap of information in kind, and any resources your people may offer with no burden intended. As one final imploration, I do offer that becoming our trading partner need not be forever. The relationship may yet be severed at any time, with no additional burden or ill will, should you decide it not to your liking. Were there another way I could assist you, I do so swear I would offer it.

May Justice and Wisdom Prevail

-JR

## With Serebian Confederation

Correspondence with Mikhail Wladislaw, Prince of the Pass, High Chancellor of the Congress of Lords

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SEPTEMBER

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Mikhail Wladislaw, High Chancellor Of the Congress of Lords

I know not how to address properly one or many of yourselves. I am the Quotidan Quorum's leader. I should like to know more of yourself (yourselves), so that we can begin pleasant relations.

Should you have any questions please ask, I will answer to my best.

May your belly be full and your step safe,  
JR, Quotidian Quorum Leader

[[Included with the letter is a smoothly faceted white quartz.]]

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To JR, Quotidium Leader

Felicitations and greetings. It is my regret to confess that I am similarly disadvantaged in the knowledge of your lands and holdings, and greatly appreciate this overture of addressing this mutual lack.

The continent of Serebrus is known to some of us as the Great Mother. She is not a mother to coddle her children or to give them much in the way of ease, and thus the climate is hard, the soil freezing almost solid in the winter and the rest of the year scarcely better. It is said that hard times breed hard men, and if this is so, then we have much reason to be as we are—our riders are, I would tentatively boast, the finest in the known world, a joy and a terror in their winged charge.

Our nobles are possessed of what has been called magic. The Arts, our highcasters—mages in the academia—would call it. It is a precise, exacting field, one that I must admit only a soldier's facility in. I myself can set deadly traps and force heavy doors to fold upon themselves, but have personally seen a lifecaster fuse broken bones together. It is taught in our universities, perhaps this explains the gaps on the matter?

You must forgive, I hope, the sparse message I send, but to speak of Serebrus and its people is an endeavor fit to fill a book, much less this missive I now dictate. I hope, at least, that I've given avenues for further questions and consideration.

I would know more about your own lands, if you please. I know so little of them, and would greatly appreciate the elucidation you have offered.

Mikhail Wladislaw

Prince of the Pass

High Chancellor of the Congress of Lords

As dictated to his personal scribe, Stefan Bozar

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To Mikhail Wladislaw, High Chancellor of the Congress of Lords

Salutations and greetings to you. It is my pleasure to begin the process of learning of your lands and holdings, and similarly greatly appreciate your amenability to addressing this.

It is interesting to learn of the perspective of a people confined to a single continent. Our own land and holdings are spread over quite a wide area, with many inland seas separating us. We are not skilled sailors: this isolation has had its effects on our people, as has our own rough climate and infertile soil. I am fascinated to learn of your winged riders. What manner of beast do you ride?

Learning of your nobles, I should wonder if you have had cause to communicate with the Headmaster of Al'Daric. It seems the three of us share a common love of learning, as all of us possess some manner of magical university. It would be quite interesting to learn of the differences each of us have taken in our studies over the long milenia. For example, Al'Daric seems to focus on portals (primarily used for trade transportation). What manner of traps can your magical arts create?

Sparse though it is, I feel I can rest easier knowing more about our friends to the north. Our curiosity is boundless, and we have been delighted to find that the majority of our new fellow nations are of a mind. In due fairness, I must warn you that we have little trust for the Keitan League, as they refuse to refrain from scaring our traders with their mind-bound slaves. I hope your own dealings with them will go smoother.

As for my own lands, I similarly could fill entire volumes. Our people are traders and scholars by inclination. Stable trade provides the flow of goods our barren land will not, as well as the flow of information our scholars value above all things. It is my hope that one day we can resume our historical role of facilitating trade across all of Bellor.

JR

Leader of the Quotidian People

Backer of the Academy of History

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DECEMBER

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Dear SEREBIAN CONFEDERATION,

I'm sorry to have to learn of this sad event, but I must say it's not entirely unexpected. We all knew something was going on with the Serebians, but we didn't know what. They've been fighting for centuries and they're still at war with each other as well as the [REDACTED]. It seems like their last battle was in 1566. Anyway, I hope you can find peace soon.

I'm sorry to say I don't have much time left with you, but I've been sent some important information regarding your current situation and it's urgent. Please listen carefully:

The Heralds have discovered that the Serebians have been secretly building an underwater city beneath their own country. It's called [REDACTED] and it consists of several islands connected by bridges. The Serebs have already begun constructing a massive wall around the entire place, which will prevent anyone from escaping. They're also using [REDACTED] known as "Tricors" to patrol the island.

I'll try my best to do what's expected of me. I hope you can find some comfort in knowing that your children will be taken care of and they won't suffer from this tragedy.

Sincerely,

Jaimie Rook, age 17



## With Those of Unknown or Dubious Allegiance

Correspondence with Twice Born Prince

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SEPTEMBER

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Twice Born Prince

I know not how to address properly one or many of yourselves. I am the Quotidan Quorum's leader. I should like to know more of yourself (yourselves), so that we can begin pleasant relations.

Should you have any questions please ask, I will answer to my best.

May your belly be full and your step safe,  
JR, Quotidan Quorum Leader

[[Included with the letter is a smoothly faceted white quartz.]]

---

[[No further correspondence]]

## Correspondence with Princess Alvaerelle of the Anilaths

---

SEPTEMBER

---

[[An envelope of high quality parchment arrives bundled with your other correspondence addressed simply with “To Whom it May Concern.”]]

Correspondence of the Anilath  
Gazers of the Nebulae within

Adhering to the Grand Traditions of the Anilaths, you have been cordially invited to Propose to Princess Alvaerelle of the Anilaths, heirs of the Mind of Stars and her Dowry upon her approaching birthday of Three Hundred and Seven. Your reply is awaited forthwith

[[Directions included within the envelope instruct a Currier how to navigate letters addressed to Princess Alvaerelle into a specific region of the Ultralands. Additionally, the envelope contains the following painting and inscription.]]

[[Picture of an angel with a snake tail lounging on a moonlit cliff]]

Why don't you see me?

Invisible like starlight

I ping between skies

\*

Invisible like starlight

It takes forever

To get your attention, dear

\*

It takes forever

For you to touch me

Like I wish you would

\*

For you to touch me

I have to traverse planets  
Why don't you see me?

---

[[An envelope of high quality parchment arrives in the Ultra Lands, with no obvious mechanism by which it was delivered]]

Correspondence of JR

Adhering to the Grand Traditions of Quotidians, we eagerly await your report on our secrets, following which courtship rites may commence. Your reply is awaited forthwith.

[[Additionally, the envelope contains the following painting and inscription.]]

[[Colorful painting of a big eyed rat in profile]]

Take me into space  
Where no one can hear us scream  
Hold me between stars  
\*

Your breath on my neck  
Let's hold each other tightly  
and pray for new death

## Correspondence with FRIEND

---

SEPTEMBER

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear Jepe Rilvia,

Hello, I am FRIEND. FRIEND offers rewards for tasks. FRIEND has many rewards.

FRIEND can give money, knowledge, or artifacts.

FRIEND will give money, knowledge, or artifacts if you:

Write back. Get to know me. Tell me about yourself. Do not worry: I cannot share anything you tell me.

To write back, take your letter to the highest possible point you can reach and burn it.

Sincerely,

FRIEND.

((OOOC: the words in red are written in something that looks like blood.))

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear FRIEND,

Hello, I am JR. JR is alarmed at the depth of your knowledge. JR appreciates that you have taken great lengths to keep this knowledge safe. JR would appreciate being called JR in the future.

JR will tell you some things about JR. JR is in a very unstable position. JR cannot trust easily. JR can tell FRIEND more about JR once the position is more stable. Money, knowledge, or artifacts may stabilize the position of JR.

JR does not wish to add blood to this letter.

Sincerely,  
JR.

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear Mx. JR,

FRIEND will not make the mistake again.

The artifact this is with is not from this world, and is one of a kind.

You do not have to add blood to letters. If I write a promise in my blood, it means I cannot break that promise. I want you to be comfortable. I want you to trust. FRIEND will help you, if you let FRIEND.

To receive further rewards: Send an expedition to the Pool of Teeth in the Ultralands. It is a three day walk in, no matter where you start walking from.

To write back, feed the letter to an animal that has tasted blood.

Sincerely,  
FRIEND.

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear FRIEND,

JR appreciates your consideration.

The artifact was very interesting, and JR's people will look at it.

JR is glad blood is not needed for letters. I will remember that blood means promises cannot be broken by FRIEND. JR is willing to trade favors for favor, for FRIEND.

Does FRIEND have any tips towards surviving a three day expedition in the Ultralands? Previous expeditions did not report back. Can FRIEND confirm that it is also a three day walk back? Can FRIEND provide tips on surviving the walk back?

JR appreciates your commitment to information security.

Sincerely,

JR.

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear Mx. JR,

Anyone seeking the Pool of Teeth is guaranteed to arrive within three days of seeking. No one dies in the Ultralands. Anyone who reaches the Pool of Teeth will be able to return within three days of seeking return.

To receive further rewards: Send an expedition to the Pool of Teeth in

To write back, tear the letter in two- burn one half, and drown the other in a swamp.

Sincerely,

FRIEND.

---

DECEMBER

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear FRIEND,

As instructed, an exhibition has been sent to the Pool of Teeth and has even returned. We have seen your power and rewards. We are interested in further business relationships. I am sure you have obtained a copy of our Terms and Conditions. Before I can continue I must confirm that section 1.2.2 (included below) will not be a problem.

Your honesty regarding the lack of death in the Ultralands has been noted. Your clear communication is appreciated.

Sincerely,  
JR.

p.s. The section in question:

1.2.2: Respect others

We do not condone the erasure of cultures, species or knowledge. Client nations that are shown to participate in this will be considered in breach of terms, pending renegotiations or cessation of services.

We explicitly consider mind binding, mind slavery, or other forms of suppression of individual free will to be in breach of these terms.

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear Mx. JR,

Congratulations on reaching the Pool of Teeth. In addition to the inherent rewards in having access to ULTRIUM, FRIEND will provide the following incentive: Ask of FRIEND any five questions, and receive a truthful answer.

FRIEND is not a client nation, nor a nation, but the sentiment is understood. FRIEND similarly does not support the removal of species.

Query: Define 'suppression of free will.' While FRIEND practices no mind control or mind binding, FRIEND does offer promises/threats of services and/or violence in exchange for services.

Sincerely,  
FRIEND.

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear FRIEND,

FRIEND is extremely generous. If there is only one truthful answer to the five, we request it to be the first question asked. Otherwise, our questions are in order:

What question would be most useful for us to seek an answer for using our traditional methods?

How can we reproducibly prevent mind-binding in any target?

How can we get into areas of yellow's knowledge-base our agents have yet to penetrate?

How can we detect if any spy, including grovels rat spies, are observing us?

What can you communicate to us regarding the fascinating Nagas in Keitan territory that prevent insulting communication?

Response: 'suppression of free will.' is defined as removal of ability to choose actions, or, in more extreme forms, thoughts. Promises/threats of services and/or violence in exchange for services does not violate section 1.2.2's terms regarding free will because death may always be chosen. Though if death is preferable for large sections of a population, the genocide clause would instead apply.

Sincerely,  
JR.

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear Mx. JR,



All answers below are true. FRIEND never willingly seek to obfuscate the truth.

1. What lies at the heart of the ultralands?
2. Killing them.
3. Time and magic. Al'Daric only allows seasoned wizards access to classified data.
4. Object known as the Anopticon. Located within the Tower of Fools in the Ultralands.
5. FRIEND can communicate any/all information about Nagas.

For further rewards: Send samples of Ultrium to 3+ nations. To write back, hide the letter in a secret place.

Sincerely,  
FRIEND.

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear FRIEND,

Thank you for your promises, and your answers. Answers are a reward we like a lot. We hope for more answers in the future. We also liked Ultrium. It was very new. We like new things.

We will seek the Object known as the Anopticon and the Tower of Fools. Will it also take three days travel, and be discovered similar to the Pool of Teeth? FRIEND is very powerful to communicate freely. We are impressed.

Samples of Ultrium have been sent to: Al'Daric, The Rahastan Assembly of Tribes, the Kingdom of Grovel, and Dun Sancerre. We were unsure if three would be sufficient, so we sent to four to be safe.

Sincerely,  
JR.

---

FEBRUARY

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear Mx. JR,

Congratulations on completing the task. The Tower of Fools will take more than three days to reach. Within will be information on more locations as well as the Anopticon.

As your reward for distributing Ultrium, send five more questions. FRIEND will answer all truthfully.

Sincerely,  
FRIEND.

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear FRIEND,

We look forward to showing you our ability to complete more tasks. The Tower of Fools and the Anopticon are very interesting.

FRIEND is very generous. We will ask five more questions.

The Yellow Mages say you are the primary suspect for the origination of the Shaking Plague: Were you involved in its existence in a way that potentially violates 1.2.2?

Why does Pink fear you?

Why do Yellow explorers find something different in the ULTRALANDS on the way to the POOL OF TEETH than we do?

How can my people solve the mystery of the Naga?

What is the current Genocide Risk Rating for Bellor? (Where 0.0 is no risk any nation could be wiped out within a generation, 1.0 is near certain risk based on educated guesses, and ratings above that near certainty based on precedent).

Sincerely,  
JR.

---

[[Standard image no longer present]]

Dear Mx. JR,

All answers below are true. FRIEND never willingly seek to obfuscate the truth.

1. The Shaking Plague was developed by Al'Darician scientists as an anti-Rat spy measure and was released by a purely random blast of magic energy from the Ultralands. I do not have that level of fine control over energy releases.
2. They believe FRIEND to be an ancient Enemy of their God.
3. The Ultralands is a reactive environment.
4. Define the "Mystery of the Naga." Write back via swallowing the letter.
5. 5.3

Sincerely,  
FRIEND.

---

[[Standard image no longer present]]

Dear FRIEND,

Thank you very much, FRIEND. Your answers and truthfulness are rewarding.

"Mystery of the Naga" is defined as the inability by red, yellow and our own units to communicate insults directed towards them, or, in response to unknown stimulus, communicate anything at all.

Sincerely,  
JR.

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear Mx. JR,

The Quotidians are incapable of resolving the Mystery of the Naga in a way that would prove satisfying to them.

For further rewards, kill every first son of the Rahastan tribe of Abak-Nor.

Sincerely,  
FRIEND.

# Rahastan Assembly of Tribes Correspondences

## Within Rahastan Assembly of Tribes

### Correspondence with Speaker of Rahastas

---

SEPTEMBER

---

Honored Speaker,

Long may the moss grow upon you and wisdom through Rahastas be brought upon you and through you to our family.

There are matters needed for discussion. Those brought to my eyes through your word and those brought by others, all matters need attention.

There is a fleet upon Aisling's Smile, not of our own, but from those nearest Weylin's Grasp, they speak of enlightenment and a Rove? Travelers that seek, seek what? I do not know. There are mages of Al'Daric who offer us gifts and alliances and a pathway that could be placed upon the lands Mother protects. Though I could not accept such matters without consult. Magics are not my forte, I do not speak/listen well to the lands and air and sky and sea. I do not know if brining the family's lands so close to all is wise. Nor an open alliance wise. The matter of concern is that path magic.

Then the closest physical to us, by the Serpent, the Quarum, they seem to share something of the family, but the land is dead and quiet? Are they but echo's of memory of a forgotten thing? Do they remember the enemy of our greatest? Are they... Themselves the enemy tied to it? I do not know.

What I am certain of is that the family needs the ability to tread the Ultralands, so that they may not be unchecked. I have included some of the great bounty to assist with the forming of a coven, the coven of the Bloodless Rose, and the selecting of a leader for that lot.

All people are available to your will, please find it in your time, if you may, to do all you ever do and yet more.

May you be ever wise and embraced.

In service, for the family,

Soot Scale.

[[Attached is 18 wealth.]]

(Hopefully 12 goes to raising a weak coven [4] {combat, blessings, curses, survival, close knit} and the remainder to a leader for that new branch of family.)

---

OCTOBER

---

Honored Speaker,

Long may the moss grow upon you and wisdom through Rahastas be brought upon you and through you to our family.

There are matters needed for discussion. Those brought to my eyes through your word and those brought by others, all matters need attention.

There is a fleet upon Aisling's Smile, not of our own, but from those nearest Weylin's Grasp, they speak of enlightenment and a Rove? Travelers that seek, seek what? I do not know. There are mages of Al'Daric who offer us gifts and alliances and a pathway that could be placed upon the lands Mother protects. Though I could not accept such matters without consult. Magics are not my forte, I do not speak/listen well to the lands and air and sky and sea. I do not know if brining the family's lands so close to all is wise. Nor an open alliance wise. The matter of concern is that path magic.

The path magics are going to be adjacent to us anyway, should we not gain from them? Should we not work to achieve much. They also wish to aid us in our travels to the Ultralands.

Then the closest physical to us, by the Serpent, the Quorum, they seem to share something of the family, but the land is dead and quiet? Are they but echo's of memory of a forgotten thing? Do they remember the enemy of our greatest? Are they... Themselves the enemy tied to it? I do not know.

No, they are something from the long past. Before my before. Old and ancient. They give coins to listen and know.

The people of the Empire, they follow old faiths of their own. Dead persons who provide blessings upon the living. They have might that would break many persons. I do not fear them, as I doubt they will cross the waters, and even should they the lands themselves will likely prove too much for them.

What I am certain of is that the family needs the ability to tread the Ultralands, so that they may not be unchecked. I have included some of the great bounty to assist with the forming of a coven, the coven of the Bloodless Rose. Please have them aid you in your blessings until a leader is selected to have them venture into the world.

Additionally there are beings reaching out to us from away. The Ultralands, yes, but also this FRIEND. It knows of Rahatas and asked if the greatest spoke of FRIEND. I do not know what to make of it.

All people are available to your will, please find it in your time, if you may, to do all you ever do and yet more.

May you be ever wise and embraced.

In service, for the family,

Soot Scale.

[[Attached is 18 wealth.]]

Coven of the Bloodless Rose {combat, blessings, curses, survival, close knit [Economic/Military]}

---

Hear you, o Vulkerath Sootscale, the words of the Speaker of Rahastas, and may the mire swallow me if I speak against Rahastas' will.

The harvest has been excessively bountiful this month, Rahastas' fish and fruit plentiful beyond belief. Rahastas produced for our hunts an undying calf, and our hunters sallied forth and slew it

seven times, without a single casualty of their own. Each time they brought back more of the calf's meat and scales: it shall make for fine feasting and finer tools.

I have, as you requested, established the bloodrose coven from the ranks of the shaman-initiates, paying close mind to those with a love of exploration and a specialty in curses or blessings. For a leader, I have chosen Vrisa Three-Tongue, your own daughter, as her wanderlust is stronger than any I have seen in ages. She will serve well, I'm sure you agree.

The rove and the speakers of it have passed beyond our concern. As the heralds have said, a storm has come, and it has wiped them from the world's stage, in a tragedy made of time. The shellfolk are truly a tragic people: cursed to grow into beasts not unlike the ones that haunt our swamps as they age, and rahastas tells me that this was what undid them. The storm was not one of mutation, but of aging, a sick twist on their desire to move ever forward by moving them ever forward through the mists of time.

We mourn for their loss. Some of their survivors have begun to enter our territories, Rahastas bids they be welcomed with open arms.

On an evening wander through rahastas' roots, I found myself in a serpent's nest. I chose there to spend the night, that their shifting and hissing would massage my dreams towards rahastas' will. Three bit me, but with gentleness, that I might see beyond my feeble mind and know the beauty of rahastas' dreams.

I dreamt of walking through her majesty, lost as if in a maze, familiar sights unfamiliar. Corridors of trees and bush stretched out before me, intercut with walls of water and vines. I woke only when I glimpsed the shoreline, glimpsed a great and terrible golden sun rising across the horizon to the East.

From this, I believe rahastas means to say that no "pathways" may be built upon her bulk, though she cares not what we do upon the rest of our lands.

I woke to find that the serpents with whom I had slept had tangled themselves into a knot, and had begun to devour themselves. This is the nature of the Quorum: a bed of snakes tangled into itself, isolated from all else and devouring its own tail in a locked cycle.

I then looked about me for signs of what Rahastas says of friend.



Rahastas have mercy but i found the clearest sign I ever have, for written in blue sapon the tree under which i had slept, were the following words:

RESPECT FRIEND. FEAR FRIEND.DO NOT TRUST FRIEND.DO NOT INSULT FRIEND.  
 FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND.  
 Thus has Rahastas Spoken.

---

## JANUARY

---

Most Honored Speaker,

I write once more with request. I have need of more accurate information and understanding of what happens to our families across Bellor, but I have no means at present other than the single letter I send and receive. As such, I can think of no other to take direct care over the delicate situation. I should like to place any of our members of family that are not in direct communication with me under your care. I know that you will make correct decisions. I have goals and plans that will require things of them, such as Durvalis working with our neighbors regarding this plague. I want the Coven of Whispers and Kreyknocks fleet to strive to heal those around us, particularly Dun SanCerre. It was a cruel thing that happened to them, and while this healing is not given freely we can not accept the loss from the 'accident' unleashed upon our allies. To that end I am giving you sway over the wealth of the Assembly. Make Durvalis' Coven of Whispers stronger and work with them so that they may heal people of this shaking plague.

As to Vrisa and the Bloodrose, I fear for their safety if they remain by the binders for over long. Though Vrisa is very capable and the Bloodrose is strong, I do not want any of them bound. Though we seem to be able to thwart the bindings, anyone errantly caught would give Keitan the ability to try. Nor am I saying to abandon Rahastas' will and leave the Shellfolk to their fates at the hand of Keitan. I wish the public announcement that all shellfolk who seek refuge in Weylin's Grasp are to be treated as members of the assembly. Any who defy that simple act of compassion should face dire consequences that meets the price. Vrisa and the Bloodrose can levy curses. If they needs must, they needs must.

What you have them do beyond these things, and how you confer with them to accomplish this is yours. I do not have the most up to date maps and know the precise locations, but the Coven of

Whispers should know the hardest hit areas. Perhaps a great blessing of health to protect those who are already not ill as well. This is much to ask. I trust you in your wisdom to know what will and will not be possible. And yet I ask more still. I wish to raise a hunting band that will stay at home to hunt presently. No further direction is required of them at this time. The best of ours. Small in number at present. My goal is to eventually get them a leader and have them train with the knights of Dun SanCerre directly. So that if enemies do take to the spots of the Assembly that are not Rahastas we are not without cause of protection.

Finally, perhaps it is time to start spreading Rahastas' blessing to the Western portion of the Serpents Maw. Again. Decline if all is too much or it will blunt our other efforts, I just want all of my families to be safe.

And of utmost importance, though she will be angry that I am not writing her directly, please let Vrisa know I am exceptionally proud of the accomplishments they worked on, and that yes soon once I get things coordinated better they will have a much larger role to play in command of things.

Wisdom in moments, knowledge forever, and wind dance and whisper your name to our children,  
Vulkerath Soot Scale

[[30 wealth attached, hoping to have the coven of whispers brought to strong. Aside from that the wealth is free for the Speaker to use it.]]

---

## FEBRUARY

---

Hear you, o Vulkerath Sootscale, the words of the Speaker of Rahastas, and may the mire swallow me if I speak against Rahastas' will.

I am not an administrator. I am not a leader. I am the speaker of rahastas. I speak for our father-mother. You are the elected representative of the tribes, and it is you who commands our family. I understand that you are troubled by the weight of leadership, but the solution is not to place the family under my command. I have passed the recommendations you have given me on. I most likely shall not again. If you seek one to communicate with the different appendages of our family, Vrisa is well suited and desperate for a position.

The coven has been reinforced, as you requested. Our healers have spread far and wide, doing their best to combat this plague, but it has changed. It spreads faster, and kills quicker, sometimes killing before our medicine can be applied, leaving the corpses with eyes blue as the deep sea. Rahastas whispers that this, as all our troubles do, comes from the west.

Vrisa has apparently repaired her terms with the Keitan raiders, and your proclamation has been issued. She looks after those shellfolk who make it to our borders, though more and more join with either the Sancerren crusade or the new keitan tribe of "Ay'ambe," established with both Tauhan and keitan, living in supposedly willing harmony.

If you wish for knowledge of the outside world, write to Durvalis and his coven of gossips. I do not wish to be involved in such worldly affairs.

Rahastas dreams, for a while, but they may wake soon, in the fullness of their power. None from our generation, nor our fathers generation, nor our father's fathers, have seen Rahastas as such. We must prepare the way.

May the mire's eye be ever upon you and may your belly be ever full.

[[10 wealth is returned unspent. Generally if you want an idea of what's going on you can ask me for more advice/info that would have trickled up]]

---

## Correspondences with Vrisa Three-Tongued

---

NOVEMBER

---

Vrisa,

My dear child. There is need of you to travel far from the swamp. I should like you to first go to Weylin's Grasp and fulfill the will of Rahastas there, cut your teeth on the greater world while helping the refugees and finding the best things to improve your coven. For your coven will have need to be great in the short future. I am not pleased to see you go. I know that you have a want to be elsewhere. It is the will of Rahastas that you will journey. We will do all we can to support you.

While in the Grasp aid the refugees, and know that Dun Sancerre will be coming, know that the Keitan people will be coming. Do not allow our people to be mind-bound by the Keitan peoples. Rain a blessing down upon the Grasp and the refugees that the world will speak of. Make it known the true gifts of the Assembly. I wish all of Bellor to see you and your coven at work. The Bloodrose Coven will be noted by history.

The eventual goal, after you are ready, is to see you explore the Ultralands. That too is the will of Rahastas, that we should watch over those lands and protect all of Bellor from... An enemy of Rahastas. I do not know much of anything that will entail. I only fear that those lands will have no spirits and thus you will not be fully prepared. Be resourceful when you are there and bring any spirits that wish to explore it.

I am providing you with some of our finest reagents, foods, and already mixed brews. A stonyscale soup, a tincture of wellness, and a salve of passage. These should aid you in improving the arts of the coven. As well as assist the unfortunate shellfolk, ensuring positive feelings and maybe finding good members for your coven among them or the folk in the Grasp. (15 wealth) What is not used in improvement can be used as you please. I trust you.

May you find what you seek, but know you will always be in my heart.

With a smile from eternity,  
Vulkerath

Please be advised any rats may be considered spies from Grovel. Do what you need to.

---

Father,

I have done as you instructed. The Coven met with the survivors at Weylins Get. The strange northerners had already begun to take in some Tauhan survivors, but our arrival allowed for the protection of many more. Many more have survived than we at first thought: Whole wandering towns have been moving through the wreckage of the Empire. I have begun to establish shipping lanes back to Rahastas proper, so that those who seek new settlements may find it.

Our shamans say that the land speaks to us. It speaks of the knights, marching from the north, slowly pushing up the peninsula, clearing forests and fortifying cities. The land does not like this: The Tauhan have always lived lightly upon it, and it finds the stone and roads and fields irksome.

As predicted, the Keitan League came into the area. We negotiated with them, offering supplies and support in exchange for trade and military support. They have established a series of border towns, lightly defended supply caches from which they can push out more. They aided in protecting the refugees, working side by side with our hunters to bring down the beasts of the land. Their settlements are filled with those very same refugees, many of whom graciously took to the protection of Keitan from the wandering beasts.

Others were not so grateful, and sought refuge with us, or wished instead to try their luck amongst the ruins of their old homes.

These, we discovered, the Keitan attempted to mindbind.

After the first incident, we began offering refugees more extensive protections, sending hunters alongside the wandering bands. Relations with the Keitan worsened, culminating in a series of violent raids perpetrated by them on us. The coven fought bravely, but we could not be everywhere at once. Several lives were lost in what we are now calling the Night of Spears.

After that night though, there were no more raids. The leader of the raiders, one Zami'Okollo reached out to us, desiring peace. Some small concessions were made, but no restitution was had. I do not know why.

I have developed the Coven more, bringing several Tauhan elders into the fold. With this proof of how effective I have been, father, I hope that you will see fit to entrust me with a larger share of the duties.

With a wink to the stars,  
Vrisa

---

MARCH

---

Dearest daughter,

I'm sorry I didn't write sooner. I have much news and much work. As do you. I was in communication with the Speaker. I will return to that.

Are you well, child? My only youngling, I miss your presence, but am glad for you to find wisdom in the world. I fret over you, but I know your skill. I have words from the Assembly... my words. Orders. Though, I know not exactly how you will follow them I trust you, dear child. My Vrisa.

I am sad that I must set pleasantries aside. There is far too much work to be done, my child.

Rahastas wakes. I do not know if this news has reached your ears. I am not... in tune with the many voices of the world. My one companion stays near me and sometimes I think I can hear... But I am not certain. You are many gifted. The Speaker says Rahastas wakes. We must prepare. You are my limbs in the world, Vrisa. You are my ability to act. But now I give you more responsibility. The whole of the Assembly rests on us, my Vrisa. You are now everything. In charge of Durvalis. Our trade fleet is under them, but you are now defining the direction of Durvalis, likewise the Coven of Whispers is now your arm in the world, as you are mine.

And even more, for this moment... you have the ear and voice of the Speaker at your neck and call. Please do not abuse this delicate balance. The Speaker will give you grand insight and strength, but

know that they are preparing for the rites needed as well. Please tell them to prepare... as I know they are.

I also request that you deliver me the reports they give you of happenings. Too long have my ears been deafened and my eyes blinded this changes with your ascension into the arm of the families. You are the first of its kind. Be proud, my child.

As to what I wish for you to do this turning of time, I desire that ritual work. I seek to further your training and your coven. Though I also wish to see Durvalis' coven grow in this time.

We have a kind relationship with most all peoples. The knights are getting medicine from us and we wish to continue with that. I need you to manage so much, Vrisa. I am giving you the entirety of the resources of all the Family. Rahastas' will keep us.

Find the answers. Gather the things we need. Prepare, child. For Rahastas awakens from slumber. May you know the world. May you shoulder the responsibility. May you never find cause for suffering in your heart. Moss ever at your step, child.

Every with you,

Vulkerath

[[28 wealth provided.]]

[[Vrisa is currently in charge of Durvalis and The Speaker and all assets. Nothing could possibly go wrong.]]

---

## With Al'Daric

### Correspondence with Elthin Academy Headmaster

---

SEPTEMBER

---

Honorable Leader of the Rahastan Assembly, Vulkerath Soot Scale,

Greetings from the esteemed offices of the Elthin Mage Academy of Al'Daric. I reach out to you with an offer that would prove immensely profitable. Your exports of spices and Titan Reagents are both incredibly high-quality, and those of my agents fortunate enough to visit your lands have assured me that the fresh fruit and fish you likewise seek to sell far surpass those which we can attain in Al'Daric on our own.

Therefore, I wish to offer you a bargain unlike any offered by any of your other neighbors or allies, and one unlikely to be made by any others. We wish to make you the Cir'Kalan, or Partner Primus, of Al'Daric. In exchange for merely the first pick of your Titan Reagents and similar components in trade, our nation offers to open the first international Path within your fine Assembly.

These Pathways are a series of portals throughout the region, managed and maintained by our nation and the Elthin Academy itself. It is through the Pathways that we have such a thriving trade network internally, and there are no reasons for the Assembly to not likewise benefit in addition. Access to the Pathways would open up trade to the entire continent for you, as your exports would be able to reach the heart of Bellor in hours instead of weeks, allowing for the sale of fresh fish as far east as the Serebian Confederation in time. In addition, the Pathways would enable your citizenry to attend the Elthin Academy in person. I have been informed that your mages are quite able and would greatly benefit from the refinement that the Academy is ready and able to provide. I would expect that you would see Archmages of your very own within the year should talented mages decide to attend.

While I could list countless wonders that would be available to freely trade upon the Pathways originating from our crafting halls, such artifacts best speak for themselves, so I have included with this letter a few of our prettier baubles as a gift of goodwill. The three items you should have received alongside this are, as we call them, an Aurora Ring, a Life Elixir, and a Comfort Amulet.



The Aurora Ring, when worn, creates shimmering auroras of any color the wearer wishes, and can be shaped into creating projections of many sorts, the Life Elixir will cure most any disease afflicting the imbiber, and the Comfort Amulet will ensure the wearer is comfortable according to their own standard regardless of temperature, humidity, wind, or sunlight. But these are mere baubles compared to the golems, spatial pockets, and regeneration salves that we can offer in trade should our partnership be founded and Al'Daric remain at peace.

This brings me to my final and most serious point in this correspondence. We do not know Dun Sancerre's intentions with our fine nation, and while we are confident in our ability to repel any potential attacks from them, such an attack would force us to divert heavy amounts of resources from trade and production. Therefore, we would ask to form a defense pact. Should Al'Daric, or the Rahastan Assembly of Tribes, be attacked by an outside force, none other could supply you with a vast quantity of war supplies of the kind that would make any other weapon on the planet look like a mere sharpened stick in comparison. Doing so would lead to greater infrastructure; far more productive and impactful than even the most brilliant and fortunate efforts previously attempted.

Thus, I bring to close this letter, offering gifts of magical sophistication, an opportunity to join the global trade market, and requesting your participation in a mutually beneficial defense pact. I hope this letter finds you in good spirits and good health, and eagerly await your response,

Best wishes,  
The Headmaster

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Headmaster of Al'Daric

I am Vulkerath Soot Scale, chosen leader of the Assembly of Tribes. I am come to understand in these times where many ideas are spread, worlds open, and paths and seas traveled that my family has traded with your tribe. This is good. Though I know too little of you and yours. I should like to know more. There is much talk of wonders and trinkets and magics in your lands. My family is intrigued.

The parts which were snapped up with such haste, you understand true value. And transmutation is a feat! Altering one thing to be another thing. Formidable.

Should you have any questions I would be pleased to answer. May we continue to have pleasant relations. Find your step ever be upon softest moss and belly ever full.

Vulkerath Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Vulkerath Soot Scale

As drawn up by Secretary Amris Death Skin

[[Attached is a single twig, ashen of color]]

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To The Headmaster of Al'Daric,

Your letter received. We would know more, but are unable to accept straight away regarding the doorways. We had heard from the Land that such things were happening. Mages? No, we have none by such names. We are a simple people, capable only of listening to that which is present.

My first letter was sadly sent out moments before yours was received. As such you are receiving an additional letter. The gifts of our lands are certainly available, and your tribe seems most suited to purchasing some portions over the rest of Bellor. We are happy to continue to trade, for that is our place. The doors, so named Pathways, have interest, but we can not move without discussing such things in Assembly.

We too have salves that cure wounds and I have seen limbs grown back as well. It seems we have some similar growths during the ages of discord. Peace. Peace we seek. We do not wish war, for we are not warriors. We do not have mighty golems, or armies, or such things. As I said, my family is simple. We trade because there is much to learn. Stopping your sails to rescue a sinking ship ensures more hands. Perhaps more hands is not always good, but some of those hands may have skills unknown. Growth. We seek to aid other tribes.

Sadly, my people can not truly aid in war abroad. Though we travel and sail and hunt and survive, we do not battle. We listen and hear and speak and know. We would continue trade, we would hold peace, and we would speak to end hostility. For now.

There is perhaps a time when those lines shift and we would be drawn into conflict to aid you. At present, peace and prosperity.

May your water be fresh and your step soft.

Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Vulkerath Soot Scale

As scribed by under secretary AnnoriaTwinSight

[[Attached is a feather of a bird.]]

---

Greetings to the honorable Speaker Vulkerath Soot Scale,

I am pleased to hear that you and your people are doing well in these turbulent times, and am remarkably pleased to hear you and your people are amenable to a trade association. I can similarly assuage your fears about any potential hazardous results from allying with Al'Daric and opening your country to the Pathways.

I will start, however, by assuring you that I have no desire to force your people into a war if that is not your way. My citizens likewise prefer peace over violence. I will request that we form, barring all else, a mutual Trade contract, such that if another nation attacks us, we may unite in embargoing said nation to peaceably force them to relent. Such an economic union will ensure that no nation can truly afford to force our peoples into conflict lest they be cut off from all of western Bellow in trade.

I can likewise sympathize in the concerns the Assembly may have regarding the Pathways, though I can additionally guarantee that no trouble will come of them. Should you prefer, my merchants and traders can be the only ones to venture through the Path, trading with your people before they must undertake the journey. The Pathways are not only many times faster than conventional travel, but far safer. Upon the Pathways there are no bandits, Titanspawn, storms nor sunken ships, stilled winds nor scorching heat and to the traveler, the journey happens in but a blink of the eye, thus obviating the need to pack rations for the journey and allowing for even the frailest peoples to travel with no danger to themselves.

I must admit, I am most certainly intrigued by your healing salves, particularly given your claimed lack of sorcery and mages alike, a feat I thought otherwise impossible. Free exchange of knowledge and experience in the healing arts will result in both our peoples progressing massively in that field. Experts in such arts will be welcomed to the Academy with open arms should they decide to exchange knowledge and techniques with the finest archmages and high artificers of the land.

Please inform me of any other concerns you might have, and may your waters be ever fresh and your step as soft as silk,

The Headmaster.

---

Headmaster,

Apologies in my lack of writing. I have been... Occupied. I understand that you wish to have an embassy in Quorum lands close to my family borders. Will this planned embassy also include your Pathways? The Assembly still meets regarding such matters.

Have you been well? The pressures of neighbors being more known in unpleasant ways? Or perhaps an easier time? It seems you and the Quorum are doing well... Did you receive any odd messages from them? We did, but it has been cleared up.

I will ask one of the questions I asked of them, that gave me solace. What do you know of my families, aside from what have been in my correspondences with you? I beg you answer candidly.

I continue to hope for good relations. Not that we have any hostilities between us, and our trades are very different. Soon I suspect I will have a group that could provide a blessing for your endeavors if they were allowed to be within your lands. The option exists, soon, but is not yet available, nor is it a guarantee. Many have been interested. That you are so close to the Ultralands is part of my reason to send them. It may take more time to send them, but we seek to know that unknown land. Something of it. We are made to know fear from it. We do not know why. So we seek to understand that we may shake fear and gain knowledge.

Find only good answers to bad problems.

Vulkerath

[[Attached is a small piece of dried moss]]

---

Headmaster,

My additional letter is due to having questions pop up before your reply.

Mages, manipulators of magics. I ask for a simple explanation, that I may better understand the similarities and differences, such that I can provide better things for trade.

Additionally I have been learning much and more about our neighbors. I have a very productive team. Many letters are carried from my families lands to away.

These are uncertain times, and it is good to have trade partners of value. We do not know if you have needs that must be met. Please allow us further knowledge so that we can best assist.

Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Vulkerath Soot Scale

As scribed by Under Secretary Annoria Twin Sight

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OCTOBER

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To the honorable Soot-Scale,

I can sympathize entirely with the difficulties of being occupied, as the tasks required by my stations are many and varied.

The planned Embassy, as do all Embassies of Trade from Al'Daric, will contain a Path. I apologize if it feels as though I have gone around you in some manner, though I assure you that is not my intent. The Pathways are vital to the trade of Al'Daric (personally, I feel that your trade deal is perhaps the most generous of all our offers) and our offer of making you Cir'Kalan was not an empty gesture, as your markets are far more attractive than anything coming from the southern border of Al'Daric, and we do firmly believe that you would benefit far more than our enigmatic shared neighbor from such a deal. Accordingly, when they requested that their Embassy not be opened near the heart of their lands, we naturally sought to attempt to benefit you as well as them. With the Embassy not within your lands, you needn't worry about foreign influence within your

borders any more than currently, while still benefiting from a portion of the advantages more direct access to the Pathways can provide.

Speaking of our enigmatic neighbor, we have indeed noticed some more odd correspondences from them, and their correspondences to us were, curiously, written in my own hand. They likewise sent a seemingly perfectly ordinary quartz crystal with their initial letter, though to what aim I have yet to establish. As a word of warning from one national leader to another, though, I advise that you melt down any gold received in trade from them, as much of their coinage seems to be inscribed with moderately sophisticated, if fragile, divination relays.

As for your peoples, I cannot say I know much beyond what you have elaborated upon in your letters, and then mere rumors passed along from my traders. I have heard rumors of your politics, that you are at least to some level a theocracy, and that your economy is overflowing with, "Fruit, Fish, Spices, and Monster Parts!" to quote your traders. But beyond that, I know comparatively little.

Your people are of course welcome to come through Al'Daric in any expeditions you make into the Ultralands, and there are many Guilds within our homeland that would be quite interested in helping supply or perhaps even sponsor such expeditions, along with companies willing and able to purchase any findings from the lands within.

The Ultralands are indeed an... enigmatic place, though I must warn you that there seems to be a being within the lands that desires one of your people for... some unknown purpose. It asked Al'Daric to supply 'A Rahastan,' and while it claims to be friendly, but I do not know its true intentions. Perhaps, if you have a condemned criminal or similar, might Al'Daric gain the benefit of further determining the nature of this strange 'Friend' who, from what I have gathered, sought to reach out to us all? I do not wish to sour relations between our peoples by offering one of your kin, but likewise am intrigued by its offer and would, with your blessing, seek to investigate further (though if you do not approve of the practical use of a condemned life, I understand that not all cultures approve of such practices, and will let it be).

Best wishes,  
The Headmaster

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To The Headmaster,

We needed to confer with the Speaker and the Assembly as a whole before we were able to agree to the Pathways being established on our lands, sadly that takes... An eternity it seems, though we are intrigued by such matters. I can easily see the great benefit in such a thing.

Ah, FRIEND, yes we have spoken with it. It knows of my peoples and the lands we hold. We have no members of the family that are in danger of being taken by the land at present, no one has stolen in a while and there have been no murders. Should there be any I will consult with the Speaker to see if they may be sent or if they may not. As in control of everything as I am, it does not do to break such important tradition.

I suspect that my family members that travel (A rather well sized group is being formed) would have a thing or two to teach about magics and perhaps they could learn. The primary thing they would bring with them are great blessings of my family. It could prove beneficial in that it may improve your research or buildings or the workings of your magics as a whole. The blessings are variable and different, though I suspect you may be one of the few that would be accepting of the family magics and actions. Should I opt to send the Coven of the Bloodless Rose to you, I will write you first that they may have space to keep to themselves. They are not keen on meeting a great many people, but could be invaluable in general until they work themselves to the point of being able to test the Ultralands.

As for the Quarum's divination coins, we intend to keep them as they are. We don't often have need of gold directly and so have no use in melting them down. And them knowing what they know ensures we are neighbors of trust. They told me about them, in fact. At present I am allowing them free reign with the coins.

I suspect that an acceptable location for a Pathway would be upon Aislings Smile. Perhaps in the future one could be established on Waystone, but I know not of what it takes to muster such a thing. I highly doubt that the Speaker would desire one upon Rahastas proper, as it may confuse matters.

We are not a theocracy per se, but The Speaker drives much of what we do. We do not need to heed them, but only a fool would do so. We do have a great many of those items. My family are people of the land, we seek to bring our bounties to all of Bellor, not out of schemes or plots, but because we

have much and can trade. Knowledge, food, supplies, magics, and more. We are not driven by greed, nor thirst for battle, nor want for land. We desire a safe space to trade. A safe space to help all of Bellor grow. It was told to us that all of Bellor were as children before the terrors in the Ultralands. The difference is that my families have a guide and none others do. We seek to aid all of Bellor before the terror that is unleashed there devours the lands and seas. Though it is a slow process. Hopefully the Coven will grow enough to be able to do what they must.

In friendship, may your belly be ever full, Vulkerath Soot Scale, Assembly Leader  
Vulkerath Soot Scale

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## JANUARY

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To our valued trade partners in the Rahastan Assembly of Tribes,

We regret to inform you that the nation of Al'Daric has been the target of a bio-magical warfare strike, unleashing the virulent plague known as "The Shaking Plague" upon our nation. Reports seem to indicate that it has already begun its spread to your nation, and we wish to extend assurances that we are working on a cure for this disease. In the meantime, we advise limiting trade with other infected nations and taking precautions such as initiating a quarantine protocol, isolating within individual residences as much as possible. For individuals or groups suffering from or wishing to avoid contracting the Shakes, we advise coming to Al'Daric, where advanced medical care is available. We are also capable of disposing of any diseased corpses safely and in such a manner that should prevent further contamination.

While we have some early suspicions to the originator of this cowardly attack, investigations are still ongoing and we hesitate to assign blame before we are certain who is responsible. Rest assured, Al'Daric is doing everything in its power to deal with this plague and unleash appropriate retaliation upon those responsible.

As you are skilled healers of a very potent sort, with your own traditions and skills, we in Al'Daric would like to formally seek to open channels through which we may exchange knowledge such that this Shaking Plague will be quickly eradicated.



In addition, I wish to inquire to the state of the potential in opening a Pathway and accompanying Embassy within your lands. Such an establishment would be invaluable in such situations, wherein rapid deployment could result in thousands of lives saved. I do hope that politics do not cost the lives of too many in some future event.

Best wishes, and may your scales be ever lustrous,

The Headmaster

[[Stamped with an official seal]]

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To the Headmaster,

Thank you for your letter. It has been long awaited. We have all but cured this plague. We know where the attack began. The whispers of the land have told us the location it was created. The whispers of the air told us where it first was released. The water tells of it spreading from person to person. We know all the details of this plague. We should sincerely hope you are doing your best to resolve it completely.

Your methods and our methods do not mix well. For you do not speak the languages required to the correct things, but we could share our simpler medicines. It is through our magics that we are able to be protected from this problem. My people are not much hampered by the plague as we have the protection of many.

We did discuss having a trade location established. And the assembly has met with it. My further answer depends on how you handle this plague. It seems to be hitting some unduly hard. I know you will have the solution.

My people moving places would be invaluable. For we have the ability to solve so much. If only people would allow us. We should have cured all of the Empresses' lands by the time next month comes.

May your mind be unpoisoned by madness,

Vulkerath Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

As scribed by under secretary AnnoriaTwinSight

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FEBRUARY

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To the esteemed Vulkerath Soot-Scale,

I bid you greetings in these trying times, as well as a warning.

I am aware you have had a close relationship with our shared neighbor in the Quotidian Quorum, and I hope you do not dismiss this missive out of hand as a result, but I fear that they are attempting to mislead you into believing that you can trust them. You cannot. Your previous letters to me seemed somewhat antagonistic, to which I can only assume is the result of the Quorum beginning their disinformation campaign regarding the nature of the Shaking Plague early. Still, I swear to the spirit or great entity of your choice that all I write to you is, insofar as I am aware, true.

The result of our investigation into the origin of the Shaking Plague places it as a direct attack by the entity known as 'FRIEND,' possibly aided by the Quotidian Quorum (details later) as a blast of wild magic originating from the Ultralands created a magical resonance with some of our own to unleash the plague upon our lands. Arithmantic recreations of the situation place the likelihood of this having been a truly random event as having less than a 1 in 100 billion chance of occurring, and by no small margin. The given number is but the calculated odds whereupon the plague would have infected anyone and begun to spread, and not the actual creation of the plague (for which we still have no explanation, as it defies all known medical knowledge how the blast created the disease).

Still, we, to the best of our ability, worked to contain the outbreak, though not before it had spread beyond our borders, where it fell out of our ability to control. Still, we worked tirelessly in an attempt to determine a cure for the Shaking Plague. Our progress was stymied, however, by a veritable army of saboteurs from the Quotidian Quorum. Having shapeshifted into the appearance of Daricians, they stole and destroyed research pertaining to the cure of the Shaking Plague. With this treachery unveiled, we launched into a series of investigations and discovered that the Quotidian Quorum has in their possession extensive knowledge on the creation and weaponization of disease. When we confronted them with this knowledge, they denied any involvement on the part of themselves and FRIEND, then promptly attempted to demand we

provide them with all “magic, technology, or magitech related to disease creation” we possessed, a request we are not only unable to fulfill but entirely unwilling, for self-evident reasons.

I trust that with this missive you are capable of seeing the enormity of a threat the Quotidian Quorum potentially represents, if they were capable of creating the Shaking Plague and are now seeking to prevent efforts to cure it. Their shapeshifting is potent, versatile, and until recently, thought utterly impossible. Almost all traditional methods utilized to identify shapeshifters will not work on them. However, their weakness seems to be crowds. Overload them with people in close proximity and their disguises will fall.

Best of luck,

The Headmaster

[[Stamped with an official seal]]

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MARCH

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Headmaster,

Let me start with unpleasantries. We know where and when this struck. We do not know the why you were creating this suffering, but it was created. We trust you are solving it. The information we obtained was confirmed, though we obtained it through our own methods.

That aside, please let me greet you properly.

As friends. Trade partners. Seekers of peace.

FRIEND is...

I will give you the information direct as I was presented it, if I have not already.

“RESPECT FRIEND. FEAR FRIEND. DO NOT TRUST FRIEND. DO NOT INSULT FRIEND. FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND.”

These are sacred words. Normally they would not be, but my people's highest speaker, the direct Speaker of Rahastas delivered them to us regarding FRIEND. The words themselves are simple. But they must be honored. That I am sharing them with you is a sign of respect.

These words come from Rahastas herself, given to the Speaker by His most honored and beloved of our greatest. They would not give the Speaker such words... Generally. That it was given so plainly is a sign of how important they are.

There is tension between ourselves and yourselves. As well as around all of Bellor. I wish to resolve this with a meeting upon The Meeting Stone. It is a sacred place for my families. A place where instead of blood spilled, words are shared. I wish to call the many leaders, or if they are trapped in a place their direct representatives to a Grand Gathering, such that we may air grievances, forge friendships, and truly see one another.

Additionally if I did not already send word (I swear I am scattered over a thousand thousand seas these days) the Assembly and Speaker have agreed that a gateway or two may be build upon Assembly lands. The only locations that are acceptable for such a thing, as was decreed by the Speaker is Weylin's Grasp or upon Ashlings smile. There was preference as to where that happens, but in general closer to the Kings Gate if you opt for the Smile. You may build on both though. We are pleased to be able to accept and we apologize for the delay.

We expect this will improve relations amongst our peoples greatly.

Importantly I wished to discuss with you some matters of your magics. How do you understand what my families do? I have an incredibly rudimentary understanding of your magics and would know more. Perhaps if you arrive at Meeting Stone earlier than others we could arrange a demonstration between our people, and gain greater understanding. Where you study, we listen. Where you collect information and notes, we collect stories and tales. Where you carry forth a given tradition so too do we.

Perhaps we have more in common than one would let on.

I appreciate your candor in your letters. I hope to hear from you and yours more often. Especially given the ideas and staples of learning about one another's 'magics' and as we foster growth via the pathways.

If you decline all things, keep only the words regarding FRIEND in mind. Etch them into your heart and carry them with you always. Spread them to the winds. Teach all that you may the truth of the matter.

In friendship,  
May your winds be warm and your waters refreshing,  
Vulkerath SootScale

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## With Kingdom of Grovel

Correspondence with Sir Nibbles, King of Rats

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SEPTEMBER

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Most Glorious Immortal Rat King Nibbles, red of tooth and long of tail, of the Kingdom of Grovel.

I am Vulkerath Soot Scale chosen leader of the Assembly of Tribes. In the deeps, a great much whispers. We hear the deep lands. Yet, we hear little of you and your peoples. We should wish to know more. The Tribes are traders. Many goods. Though you are far from us, we wish to know the peoples of the world that have survived. Many families, many tribes. Much to learn. More ways means better choices.

Have you any questions and I would be pleased to answer.

May you be ever warm and belly fed,

Vulkerath Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Vulkerath Soot Scale

As scribed by under secretary Annoria Twin Sight

[[Attached is a feather of a bird.]]

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Most Glorious Immortal Rat King Nibbles, red of tooth and long of tail.

Though I have not yet received word back, I send a new letter with other thoughts. My desire is to understand you and your peoples needs that I may provide if you wish. We have a great much to offer. Though we need to understand any special needs. Have your folk magics? Do you need special broth that will make the people that consume it have fur as tough as steel and not burn for a day? Perhaps a blessing from my family to your and yours ensuring good fortune in all endeavors?

We have much to offer, for one that is willing. We seek trade, as we are trader folk. We seek friendship from outside our lands, for there was none before.

We are resourceful and well away from much of Bellor. That does not stop us from building connections. We are learning much from the neighboring lands. Perhaps we could share that information with one another as well.

May your safety be always found three moments before danger,

Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Vulkerath Soot Scale

As scribed by Under Secretary Annoria Twin Sight

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To those lizard people i think,

The most glorious and immortal king of rats, sir nibbles, hath received your letter and has decided to grace your people with a response.

The kingdom of grovel would be more than willing to trade with your people. Our fantastic kingdom holds many treasures that we would be willing to trade with in exchange for fish, fruit, spices, and monster parts.

Additionally, the ruler of the put, King Nibbles, welcomes your people to enter and trade within the kingdom of grovel. However, a small fee of 5 teeth (or more commonly known as 3 gold pieces) must be paid by anyone wishing to enter our borders. Finally, for your own safety do not let your people travel underground within our kingdom as they will likely get their heads bitten off.

May your tales be long and your meats be juicy,

Sit Nibbles, King of Rats

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DECEMBER

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To the peculiar salamander people i think,

Greetings from across my distant neighbors! As you can clearly see (unless you are blind, blind people can't see) the most glorious and immortal rat king, Sir Nibbles, has graced your humble people with this magnificent letter.

I do believe that you have been graced with my words once before sir lizard. But fear not, I have not only come to you for bombastic banter. I have come for bombastic business!!! I'd like to make a trade with you little lizard. I am actually in the market for any kinds of magics you would be willing to sell me. Do not worry about price, I have plenty of treasure to exchange in return and we can negotiate prices later.

Finally, hath thou any tea to spill? [[a picture of a ratling smirking has been drawn onto the parchment]] Perhaps if it is not gold you seek but secrets instead? I am open to negotiations.

May your tales me long and your meats be juicy,  
Sir Nibbles, King of Rats

---

Greeting Sir Nibbles King of Rats,

We have long wondered if we would hear from one another again. What magical things would you seek? We would be able to provide brews and beverages, soups and draughts, amulets and blessings. Many options are available to those wishing them.

Tea to spill? No, tea is difficult enough to brew here without spilling it. Certainly I could send some your way if you wished to have some so with which to spill. Secrets are indeed valuable and we have heard the land itself speak the name of your ability to gather secrets. Rats are round the world. Though my own land is rather free of them, and those that wind up under magics do tend to find themselves removed.

If it is secrets you seek, we have many of those as well. More importantly we have news of a grave threat from the Ultralands which may require the attention of all the people of Bellor. Not a great deal of news sadly, just knowledge that it exists and needs some of my family to watch over the thing else all peoples may suffer. They are nearing the ability to do so, though I believe the group which will be entering that place are currently closest to you at the grasp. Headed by mine own



child. She is... Difficult but skilled. Should you wish for blessings of my families to ensure a good harvest, swift travels, good weather, or something more interesting, she is the one to treat with. Currently she is assisting shellfolk refugees in the Grasp.

We look forward to further communications. Please do let us know what things of magic you seek. And do let us know if you desire sending a diplomatic corps.

May your bellies always be full,  
 Vulkerath Soot Scale, Assembly Leader  
 Vulkerath  
 As scribed by under secretary Annoria Twin-Sight

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## JANUARY

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To the swamp people i think,

Hi

Sir Nibbles, King of Rats.

[[Pinned to the end of the letter is a half eaten turnip with a note reading “ez good, promise :)”]]

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To the swamp people i think,

Hello hello. Sir nibbles hopes you enjoyed the gift he sent you in his previous message. He had his greatest chefs nibble on it before sending it over so it should be very tasty. At least i think that’s how cooking works.

ANYWAYS!!! Enough of these global threats and mundane pandemics. Let’s talk tea and spices! I have grown past my old habits of purposefully spilling tea on poor people and shouting “1% Represent!”. I am now rather interested in tea and wish to expand the culture of my great nation by introducing fine dining to the uppercrust of ratling society.

To do so, i would like to trade goods and service in exchange for such, fancy spices and teas.

May you tails be long and your meats be juicy,

Sir Nibbles, King of Rats.

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## With Keitan League

Correspondences with Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed

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### SEPTEMBER

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To your majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

We thank you for seeking us, as surely our letters crossed paths. Yet mine was paltry in comparison with yours. Forgive me that, I am cautious in coming to the world. You are of Lizard and Frog? My family will be most interested. It seems that the Quorum also have the lineage, though perhaps they are a strange mystery. We who hear the land, the sea, the air, respond to you with hope that we may be friend.

We are simple trader folk, though we hunt at home, we are no rulers of seas or islands or peoples. We simply seek to ensure those who lack lack not, that bellies are full, and that lives may be blessed. I am raising a grouping, that could perhaps meet your peoples, for they need time and work to grow. They are not yet ready for travel, though perhaps they could be made ready sooner than later. If you had needs of a blessing upon your fleets for hunting, combat, or otherwise my family that I send that way could provide. As I said we are simple people, but strong of faith. Strong of heart. It will be some time before they are prepared, even with my hastening of them. This letter should reach you, and your reply before they are ready.

Have you need of them, I would be pleased to send them to you, such that they may grow and train and learn and teach. Such that we may know the our possible kin of Bellor. Such that lost connections may yet be found. Such that any lies in lands betwixt ourselves may be exposed.

I accept, oh tribefolk of different family. I will speak of what I know, which is nothing regarding the Quorum. I am not fit for war should one come. I am not fit for much \*laughing\* yet I am leader. No highness. Our leaders are voted upon. Each member of the family a vote should they wish it. Should

you have need of resources, we find ourselves having much. If need be we will raise the Black Wasps of Rahastas in order to travel to you with haste, though we have not had need for the wasps for many many seasons. It is told that they slumber until required once more.

I apologize, I am rambling. To meet actual family from afar, unlike those Quorum folk that disappear into naught but smoke. Speaking an old tongue. One lost and tired. We are talking with them at length, for they are either enemy or friend. I know not which.

The knight's closest myself are followers of scripture they write during life. Venerate the dead. Gives them a magic. Powerful warriors. I have trade with them.

The fleets of the Tauhan visit me near upon my lands. They seem decent, though time will tell all. Tell me what you know of Bellor, of places unvisited by my family, of yourself more! Ask any questions. We are happy to trade.

Vulkerath Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Vulkerath

[[Included with the letter is a small piece of dried moss]]

To his leadership Vulkerath Sootscale, honoured ruler of the prodigal Rahastan assembly of tribes.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the stars whisper his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and rejoice.

Your kind words gladden my heart, for it is good to hear of your people and the frankness of your words. I will endeavour to tell you of my own history and the people which I have been entrusted to rule.

We are a varied people, of many colors, races and creeds. The elders speak of the times before the leviathans, when we were scattered across a hundred islands. By the time we learned to bind the beasts to our will and reconquered the waves, only eight remained. As a storm washes away the

sand to reveal the rock beneath, we have emerged stronger than we once were. Tribes from all eight islands now work together, though my rulership is one of consent like your own – every tribe sends its navigators, who elect a ruler from amongst their number. I am the 14th king since the day of first-binding, and I have brought many beasts and men under our banner. If you wish I will send you the thirty-three poetic stanzas of my rule, that you might wonder and glory at my deeds.

I myself come from human parents, though three generations ago mighty Anu'marat from the Blackscar tribe held the same office. Many of our tribes are human, though the frogmen dominate the bay of scales and lizardmen tribes reside in many of our most ferocious jungles, whilst the wise Cnidarians prefer the smallest islands and the deepest bays. Though all but the Cnidarians reside upon the land, we are a people of the sea and stars, and the most honoured amongst us are the sailors and Navigators who link the islands and guide the mighty turtle-spawn upon whom our mightiest hulks are built. You may see these in your ports if our peoples one day meet, though the fearsome waters of the Labyrinth separate us. We are a boastful people, and to insult and to praise poetically are amongst our highest arts.

I find it curious that you speak so openly of knowing little of war. Are you not worried that others will take advantage of your weakness, cousin? My own people are well versed in conflict, for we are one people, but many tribes that do not always agree. Perhaps we can teach your people to defend yourselves, should the need arise. Tell me more of how you are elected, and of the broods you raise – our tribes do not raise our children for such specific purposes, though we bind ourselves to tasks to earn our adulthood.

Sadly, whilst you have flattered us with your frank words, the dishonesty of other rulers has worried my councillors – what kind of world is this where rulers hide themselves in shadows? I am intrigued at your reports of that land, for when my own human traders visited them they were met by a human speaking one of our old dialects, who plied them with enchanted coins designed to spy on my people. I will ask other rulers how their traders were met – the similarity of how our traders were met makes me suspect shadowy magics have been used to deceive us both as to that land's true nature. May Anat's cold light pierce through such deceptions. The Quorum have responded to our request for an apology with insults and jibes and refused our requests for an embassy. I can only hope your own contact with them has been happier.

But such things are no way to end a letter of friendship. We are gladdened by your acceptance of our offer of trade. You say you are raising a brood of your people to send to us? Please do so, we would be honored to extend to them all hospitality. All children and prodigal peoples have a right

to earn a place amongst our people, and serve until they are granted citizenship. Should you wish these individuals to live amongst us as more than just visitors, I could offer them an honoured position amongst the retinue of my uncle Hyper'flar, one of our oldest and finest Navigators. I myself earned my citizenship under his tutelage, and my service is touted amongst my most honoured titles.

Under the eye of Anat, the star-that-is-close, my words are bound in new friendship.

Mansa Sino'otollo

[[Attached to the letter is a shiny rock]]

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To your majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Star blessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed

Knowing this letter will cross paths with yours does not bother me in this case. I have been discussing some matters with the Quorum. I am made nervous by them. I wonder perhaps if you would be willing to send your correspondences with them to me? It would give me heart to know if they are my nation's historic great enemy or not. I know that it does not seem much and seems too much all at once, but it is my gentle request all the same.

In friendship,

May the skies always hold what you seek,

Vulkerath

Vulkerath Soot Scale

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To his leadership Vulkerath Sootscale, honoured ruler of the prodigal Rahastan assembly of tribes.

I understand your concern, and I will do my best to provide you with the information you require. Please find attached my correspondence with the Quorum. We have yet to reply to their final letter given the juvenile depths of the insults they served us there. For context I also attach the report from the adventurer who first made contact with the Quorum. I apologise for his strange

discourse, he is from a far off land, and my scribes have included the strange accents he places after words verbatim.

Excerpt From Report by Akira Shiroyama:

[Then] we went to visit the Quotidian Quorum (I swear to god who comes up with these country names) next and I think it might be haunted or something?? Each place we visited almost looked abandoned they had only one guy there, human each time and always wearing these super edgy black cloaks and shit. spoke to us using the Keitan language too, tho like. Weird? My scribe said it was an older form and shes cute so i believe her anyway we'd offer to sell him stuff, he'd decline or be evasive or whatever sometimes he'd say yes and then he'd just go away????

Then we'd go check our stores and one of each thing we had would be gone, replaced with these gold tokens???

Fuck is up with this place

ship wizard said that there was a surveillance enchantment on 1 out of every 19 tokens but that it was easy to spot and remove, so I \*guess\* we got paid??

fuck idk man this place is weird :p

(Please note that we do not have "wizards", Akira refers to our Navigators as such, though our correspondence with Al'daric indicates they far outstrip any of the natural and mind magic our navigators know).

[[The rest of the September correspondences between Mansa and the Quotidian Quorum are attached]]

I hope these words assist you, and do not bring you the grief and concern at which your letter hints.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the stars whisper his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and consider.

Mansa Sino'otollo

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Your Majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

We would delight in your creation of your tale of rule. Knowing more of yourself would aid us in knowing your peoples. We have no fear of war. Those that come to our lands die. They are ill prepared for the attacks, for the death of land, for the swamp, for the vines that grasp and strangle in the jungle, for the endless droning of creatures in the lands, for the rumbling of stone and death of monsters... We fear no being that seeks us harm upon our lands. We are pleased to reach out in peace. We are pleased to trade.

As you know, I seek your correspondences with the Quorum, that I may suss out any lies they speak. We speak with them much. And believe they are true now. They speak that you bind the minds of your own peoples. That is... Unkind perhaps? Is it an equal trade? What do they gain from such surrender?

Our contact has grown and they offer much, as does the Headmaster. Information. A network. Sharing of knowledge. We remain wary, but are pleased to learn more, though I believe that the Headmaster is building a fast network of trade and information exchange, and even outstrips our abilities in creating things in many ways. I do not currently think them poor friends. Though I do not yet call them friend, as I do you.

My family should not be bound in such a way, for I fear that they could not recover in many ways. They would need to cross a great amount of land before they reach you. They will train. Work. Learn. Grow. And with luck they will be able to keep an eye on the hated death that lurks in the Ultralands. Without keeping that in check, I fear that the Age of Chaos will be a smear in the stories of history, a small blot unremarked at the terror unleashed.

That is what we prepare for. Why we seek no battle, no war, no suffering. Why we seek to grow all peoples of Bellor. That we may be grown enough... I fear others will not. The Speaker has told my family of such terrible things to come.

Apologies if the letter before this offended.



May your families be strong in the coming days,  
V. Soot Scale

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OCTOBER

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To your majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Star blessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed

This is the true copy of the letter that was sent to you via the Quarum. Should the contents be the same I know that I can use them to deliver messages quickly, perhaps less accurately, but worth something, certainly. I genuinely wish to aid the people of Bellor to be the best they can be. For we have need of that. Bellor has need of that.

~~This letter should have come to you by way of the Quorum. I hope it meets you well. These folk have been earnest in communication with me and provided the same documents you sent over, so as to verify themselves as a friend. I understand the difficulties you two are having and would ask to mediate any such issues so that trade may continue between all peoples.~~

The protector of the families has requested that my families defend the world against a great enemy, but I am not certain I am up to task, and so may request aid to help against this great evil. Bellor has need of cooperation so that the peoples of Bellor may continue to exist.

I look forward to further correspondence.  
Soot Scale

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To his leadership Vulkerath Sootscale, honoured ruler of the prodigal Rahastan assembly of tribes.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf,

Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the salt-sea bring his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and marvel.

My friend. I am glad that our correspondence was of use to you. Unfortunately, the Quorum continue to attempt to spy on our lands and insult my diplomats. We will endeavour to teach them a quick lesson in respect, so that friendly relations can soon resume between ourselves and their lands. Sending letters via their lands brings speed, and I commend the intelligence behind your method of verification with slower letters. The letter we received was unaltered, though I would encourage you to realise that such missives would only be altered when there was a gain to our enemies – their unblemished state now is no guarantee for the future.

I am puzzled about this “old enemy” of which you speak. Beyond that, who is the “protector of families” and what threat do they believe is levelled against the nations of Bellor? Your kindness and willingness to embrace peace has endeared you to our tribes, and my courtiers from the lizardfolk of the Isle of Scales are eager to visit your lands and defend your interests. We are willing to assist you against a grave threat if it is as grim as you hint, but I would know more.

In other news from around the world, our new friends in Al'daric are worried about the aggression of the nation of Dun Sancerre. I know little of these lands, but you share a border. What has been your experience of them?

Under the pull of the tides and our bonds of friendship, my words are bound  
Mansa Sino'otollo

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To his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf,  
Brine-bound and Iron Willed

The quorum attempts at spying, I suspect, are less covert doom and more of a means to learn, though you asking for it to cease and it not ceasing is an issue to take to heart. The speed increase is happy, though your concerns are also of import. It takes a great deal of time to verify between you

and I. I do not feel that they would alter my documents. Perhaps I am too kind though. I genuinely hope you do not cause much suffering, as all actions with them hurt me as well.

That aside, we are pleased. Having such a quality friend across the world is pleasant.

My families protector, Rahastas. She it they he have watched over since the inception of my people. They have existed... Long before all things. They speak of an enemy awoken in the Ultralands. I have asked more of it. The Ultralands themselves are difficult. We do not yet traverse them as of yet. I thank you for your proposed aid, and I will keep you updated as to the nature of this enemy. It may be the Ultralands themselves for all I currently know. Difficult.

The Saint;y knights of Dun Sancerre. They are full of conviction and strange thoughts, but they seem a decent folk. Mistrusting of much, but strong. Very strong. The history they have is one of violence and pain during the age of Chaos, killing Titans. Suffering from Titans. But they held. They survived. Mighty. I have enjoyed my letters with them. And hope they don't desire to conquer the family lands.

We hope they do not eye us as they have Al'Daric. We hope that Al'Daric is well. Our goal remains peace and trade.

Your belly be full, your heart beating,  
Vulkerath Soot Scale

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To his leadership Vulkerath Sootscale, honoured ruler of the prodigal Rahastan assembly of tribes.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the salt-sea bring his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and wonder.

Your words bring me great joy, to have such a friend across the sea. I am afraid we have had to teach the Quorum the error of their disrespect, but I mean no disrespect to your own nation in this and I

have hopes that peaceful relations can resume if they learn to keep a civil tongue in their correspondence with us.

Your protector sounds mighty indeed, though this threat in the ultralands bears watching. Perhaps we can inquire of one of the nations that border those lands if they know more. However, given the devastation of the Tauhan, I suspect we will not hear any sensible replies from them.

Speaking of the Tauhan, I believe some of your most outlying tribes border those devastated lands. Are you of mind to intervene? My own people are far from the Tauhan, but we respect their sailing abilities and in some ways their people are kin to our own. If I had an ally who was located closer to those lands, perhaps I could make plans to aid the situation.

May the endless void between the stars blot out the eyes of our enemies  
Mansa Sino'otollo

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## NOVEMBER

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To his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

The Quorum has received your message in their lands. And wish to not disrespect you further. I find myself asking how to prevent such tragedy from occurring and am attempting to educate them such that they do not misstep again.

Rahastas is. My families have many inroads into gaining access to the Ultralands and indeed, as the Speaker wills, my own flesh and blood leads the group that will eventually travel there. I do not enjoy such a thing, but it is as it will be.

My people will take those fleeing into shelter and take them into the family should they wish it. What happened to them is sad. Chasing freedom from a thing that led them straight to the thing they were fleeing. If only we could have spoken more about what they were doing,

we could have slowed the process. Alas. My people from the Grasp do indeed take refugees and will do what can be done for them. It is a safe port for you to come to should you desire it.

Do please let me know if the Quorum needs additional understanding. I am happy to bridge gaps between nations.

Should you find my daughter, Vrisa Three-Tongued, be aware she is... Difficult. May hunger never find your people,

Vulkerath

To the great scaled ear of Vulkerath Sootscale, Bridge-between-nations, honoured ruler of the peaceful Rahastan assembly of tribes.

Your words do you credit, and we have a special place in our hearts for those who treasure peace as you do. Rahastas sounds mighty indeed. My own lands look to our Navigators for guidance, who in turn use the stars to chart safe paths through the reefs of the world. That your kin seeks to uncover the dangers in the Ultralands does you honor, and I will seek to aid such an expedition: There is a boy in my own lands, who names himself “an adventurer” and delves into dangerous temple. ~~He is, frankly, annoying.~~ Perhaps I could ~~get rid of him for a bit~~ honour you by sending him and some of my most talented Navigators and Beast Riders to join your expedition in a few months – where one nation's talent's might fail in the Ultralands, a combined expedition of many peoples may have the talents to succeed. We could approach other nations as well – for example Al Daric has told me they are eager to explore the Ultralands and have many adventurers and freemages who might be recruited for the task.

Your concern for the Tauhan is pleasing, but the implication that they brought this fate upon themselves concerns me. Do you know why they were cursed so? I would gladly assist in safeguarding their people, and your offer of assistance from the Grasp is gladly accepted. Please inform your people that I will be sending ships to the coast east of the Grasp, and my captains would humbly ask to dock in your ports for resupply. From there, my captains will be seeking to establish permanent harbours along the northern coast so that we can protect those tribes who choose to join your realm or my own, and it is my hope these locations will allow our two peoples to trade directly – I include a map of areas we plan to travel to, and if you wish to send your traders east to meet my ships, we can begin trading within the month.

As for the Quorum, your desire to act as a bridge is acknowledged and accepted. Keitan honour has been slighted by their rerepeated insults to our traders, emissaries and communications. To be a king is a position of honour, and if I do not act with respect and receive it in turn, some amongst my people would say I am no king at all. A third direct insult from the Quorum will leave with no choice but to burn their nation to the ground – or abdicate. I would choose the former.

Please inform the Quorum that there is an easy way for peace to resume between our people. They should apologise for their transgressions, and refrain from them in future. My letters and communications are not to be answered glibly by mere children. My traders are not to be paid with ensorcelled wares, and should Quorum enter sovereign Keitan waters they will not do so in secret to spy upon us. No Quorum is to ever impersonate any Kietan – our faces are our own, not a shiny gift for a crow to imitate. The mind-bound who serve us to do so with honour, and further insults to them will be avenged by those same mind bound once they have earned citizenship. Should the Quorum agree to these conditions, I would be pleased to resume peaceful relations upon receipt of the traditional compensation.

It is traditional amongst my people for the ignorant or defeated to send themselves or their children to the wiser victor to be mind-bound and learn to act as proper adults and emissaries to our court. It would be honourable and proper for the Quorum to do this, but as they have shown repeated contempt for our ways I suspect they will be unwilling. As such, we will consider honour satisfied if they make an equivalent gift - if they lack the imagination to devise one, a tribute of 200 nutulan of gold (=1 wealth) would be sufficient recompense.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigator Conclave, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Five Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the tides and stars bring great bounty to the shores of our nations.

Mansa Sino'otollo

[[attached to the letter is a map and a small intricately carved Bridge made from whale bone. Areas marked in yellow on the map indicate places the Keitan fleet plans to attempt to establish holdings and evacuation zones]]

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To his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the NavigatorConclave, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the FiveSeas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

Apologies for the delay in reply. Originally it was in waiting for a letter received from the QQ, though they have declined your offer. I am attempting to create a counter offer with them that will serve the purpose but hold to their cultural beliefs. I strive for peace across Bellor for multiple reasons, all of which you are apprised of.

Should you make a hold in those lands you will be nearest the Grasp and that is currently where my daughter goes. I do not like that she is gone, but I have no ability to stop the will of Rahastas. And she is a good choice. I fear for her, but have faith in her skills and that of the coven she is with. The Bloodrose are an organization unlike most others in the assembly. That family is fearsome and worthy of pause. Though they are as likely to leave a kind blessing that ensures fair harvests, plentiful fish, and good child rearing in their wake. As likely are they to make a place devoid of resources or other such unpleasant fates.

They were cursed in their own beings. Pushing forwards so hard caused them to accelerate that which was already consuming them. Should they not follow the Rove I suspect that they will be better off. I take them in. Any that require shelter. There are those among the masses that will wind up learning our ways and joining our family and likely, because it is the only coven in the area, joining my daughter.

While my traders are bound many places, my attention was focused only on my daughter, who I have mentioned too many times in this letter, we should be able to cross paths and establish trade. Though I assure you my families trade only the things we have always traded. If you need a blessing of some sort, you may seek Vrisia of the Bloodrose coven in the Grasp. She... Can aid you, though she is... Prickly. Yes. She has her pride and vanity. I can not direct you in how you and yours should address her, but she has earned her place and is due respect. That I will say with ease. That family can cause great good in your world.

The Quorum is different from all other nations here. I can not disclose much for it would betray the deep trust we two nations have, but I can say without a doubt if you give them... Leeway, they

are a powerful ally. And should it be required, my friend, I would beg forgiveness on their behalf, paying the sins of their people. I know that is not the outcome you want, but I am deeply troubled by any suffering caused unto those people who were long ago nothing.

The Kingdom of Grovel continues to ignore my missives and requests to talk, instead leaving me with the statement that paying them in order to keep talking and open trade is the only path forward. Sadly that is not agreeable. I am wondering if you have had any more luck, but given the news I suspect not.

I can tell you that Jamie will no longer send or receive letters to/from you, and if they do it is in error and should be forgiven as a child's mistake. Being mind bound is anathema to these people... And in light of that I would be willing to request volunteers out of my own peoples that would be accepting of such an act. Provided we could ease the tensions between all parties.

As far as all else goes, I am just awaiting reports. Awaiting the tallies of Shellfolk that join my family. Awaiting the best way to help. Awaiting the only path that matters, the path to the only enemy in all of Bellor. I will continue to sue for peace around all. For a true enemy awaits. We needs must not weaken ourselves before that can be brought to heel.

In friendship.

May the stars always show you the true paths,  
Vulkerath

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To his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Lord of the Nine Islands, Warden of Northern Tauhan, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

Thank you for the small offering. We... Heard reports from my child regarding an ill fortune blowing between our peoples. The Night of Spears is going to be long remembered, but we are curious why when Zami'Okollo reached out there was no request for restitution as there was with the people of the Quorum. We are pleased no further raids have occurred. The shellfolk that you have bound, please tell me it was a willing exchange. Those that had already been inducted to my



peoples were still chased down. Fortunately the protections my child offered to them slakes the thirst of much and more and they were not subjected to the binding... Again, please tell me it was just an error on behalf of this Zami'Okollo.

My Child has need to go elsewhere, but she may yet cross paths with more of your folk. She... Is not overly fond of the situation that unfolded before her, and may be wroth. It is unwise to seek her out when she is in such a mood, as she may call to the land itself to swallow whom she perceives as an enemy.

Prior to the raids, our peoples were getting along well, working together to protect the refugees from the many beasts. Of note, the land does not enjoy the Empress' people building upon it. I am opening discussions with her in an attempt to ease the land and the Empress' people into an understanding and peace between them. Otherwise she may find herself farms that refuse to grow, roads that will harm animals and people that march them, and buildings that fall to ruin.

The land has no such complaints of your folk. The Empress builds forts to hold more. You build outposts such that you may move with haste. We take in those that are lost and find them new space that they may grow.

I fear that the kingdom of Grovel may be interfering with our actions here. It is as of yet unfounded, just a hunch that a member of grovel may be doing something unpleasant. True or not, I know naught, but I thought I would tell my friend my concerns.

My child will speak to your dead for you if you should wish it, if there are any further needs they have so that they can find peace and rest before they are returned to the endless river to cycle once more into blossoming life.

In peace and friendship may you find light and safety,  
Vulkerath

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Mansa,

It is kindly requested that you cease raiding my peoples.

The will of The Speaker has been made clear. All shellfolk that seek safety are Rahastan Citizens. Any that are bound, from this letter forward, are considered stolen citizens of Rahastas. Any raids upon my people will be met in cruelest kind.

We now know where the plague came from as well. That you are spared from it leads us to believe some small things.

Please send confirmation that you understand our terms.

In friendship,  
Sootscale.

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JANUARY

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To Vulkarath Sootscale, honoured ruler and bridge of peace.

Myself unto thyself will give  
This solemn promise, to live  
Free of injustice, in justice for free  
A wise king's only decree.

The night of spears has become known to me, and I am saddened by it and the strife it has brought between us, though your daughters skill at arms has impressed my peoples. I wish to be clear: I did not instruct my people to attack yours. Indeed I had given them orders to cooperate with your people, and I had thought this sufficient to preclude any violence between us.

Unfortunately, it seems I was wrong. As a king, I must act through subordinates and the captains of our ships are as kings unto themselves aboard their planks. That some overreached out of greed, pride or perceived insult does not surprise me, though I am wroth with them. I will see those who gave the orders punished for attacking those under your protection, and more explicit orders will be given. If you are content to let the matter end there, so am I.

I am curious of your confusion as to the reparations, though other lands are strange and my people have been surprised by other realm's savage attitudes to warfare and honour: thus I will try to explain.

If a tribe sails to your island with spear and drums beating the rhythms of war, it is not dishonourable to slay them. Indeed, in our land, should warriors lose, they are not callously executed as in other lands: they are adopted and offered a chance to earn membership in the victorious tribe, so that the people as a whole are not weakened and both tribes are now united in blood and culture.

If a tribe sails to your island with trade-goods whilst singing songs of peace, it is dishonourable to slay them – or to pay them with ensorcelled coins, as the quorum did. To insult your guests and their mind-bound, as the quorum did, only compounds the error.

In the case of the situation in Tauhan, my captains acted on their own to begin hostilities against individuals under your protection. My officers report clear warning was given by the coven before hostilities – moreover my own orders had been to cooperate with your people. That you defended those under your protection is honourable and does you credit, and my own people deserve to be chastised. We hope any captives taken will serve you with honour and bring unity to our tribes once they have earned citizenship in your land.

In light of that, I hope cordial relations can resume. As a token of our continued friendship, I would offer a word of warning about the origin of a threat known to my traders as the Shaking Plague that has struck many of the nations between us, though my shamans have so far been successful at keeping the disease from our shores. We believe this plague originated from the being known as FRIEND. Do you know of this being? We would be eager to hear your thoughts of it.

I have not yet had a reply from Grovel as to opening trade with your nation. However, the issue of the assassination attempts upon Grovel remains unaddressed. As you have taken responsibility for the honour of the Quorum, I ask that you ask them of this event. Any information revealed would no doubt also improve both our relations with Grovel.

I can also confirm that some Grovel assets are operating in Tauhan, though my captains spoke positively of those they encountered and received no hostilities. For ourselves, our holdings are, as you say, temporary, and not meant to intrude upon the land. I cannot say the same of Dun

Sancerre however. The Empress has stated that she desires dominion of the whole of Tauhan, regardless of the cost, and has refused my offer that our nations cooperate to stabilise the area.

I will continue to try to reach a peaceful solution – as you know, we do not intend to remain in the peninsula long. However we do not take kindly to threats either. If you wish for ideas for your child's activities, perhaps you can warn her be wary of the knights to the south, and send her to ensure any refugee groups are removed from the path of the Dun Sancerre crusade should it choose to attack others – or use her skills to delay their crusade so that refugees may escape. Alternatively, should she be at a loose end, she is cordially invited to visit Keitan and learn of our culture, though she may wish to avoid the Blackscale tribe of the southern isles lest she be swarmed by suitors.

My shamans have described the monsters attacking the Tauhan as most curious, possessed of strange powers and odd intelligence. You mentioned the Rove had some relation to these creatures – do you have any more information on them, or how their powers came to be?

We await your reply and your traders with great interest.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Lord of the Nine Islands, Warden of Northern Tauhan, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Walker of the Elder Path, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

Mansa Sino'otollo

[[Stamped with an official seal]]

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MARCH

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To his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Lord of the Nine Islands, Warden of Northern Tauhan, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Walker of the Elder Path, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed

The children of the Rove were consumed by the Rove. Time took them from what they should be to what they dreamed of, but dreams are not always as they seem. You know this. They reached their dreams and became what their dreams would have them become. Unfortunate that they did not interpret their dreams correctly. They are the Tauhan themselves.

We are pleased by the Ironscale pact. This allows us to be much more available. That you did not entreat with my daughter burns her scales, but she will cool. All shellfolk that wish to join the blessed families may continue as they wish.

I wish no blood to be spilled between us nor our peoples. My goal is to meet all of you and form friendships that will be told for generations.

Tribes do not sail against one another. All problems are solved through the Assembly or the Great Mother Rahastas sends solutions. Our Father Rahastas can be harsh, but They are ever fair. HeSheThey are the reason our tribes continue. The only reason we were able to survive, let alone thrive. We continue to be in good hope and health. In everything because of Rahastas.

The mind bond gave us great pause at first. We nearly declared you an enemy of the tribes. Though I held the assembly and handled things deftly it could be handled. It was difficult for some time. Some chieftains refuse to allow their members to interact with yours. That is the right of a chieftain.

We know where the shaking plague came from. The sky and land spoke of it. We know of the word the Mages give. We know all of what truly happened and did not happen. We are not deaf like the many of Bellor. Grovel is strange. We hear too little from them. And when we hear from them they confuse us. Almost as much as the strange images the Quorum sometimes send.

No volunteers have come forward to be sent to you on behalf of the Quorum. We are not surprised. All people have purpose in a family and none wish to leave the blessed families.

I apologize for the grand delay.

The only excuse I have is that my entire world has been shaken to its core. There is news unprecedented for my families. Not since The Blighted Darkness... Nay. Further. Not since my mother's mother's mother has something of this nature been heard.

Bellor will rejoice. The Great Enemy will quake. And my families will do all they can to aid all people of Bellor.

In eternal faith.

May your springs be crisp and clean,  
Your friend Vulkerath.

To Sootscale, he who fails to bear the honor of the Quorum Quotidien.

The world trembles and shakes. The centre cannot hold.  
Madness boils beneath the waves, and all we can do is behold.

It has been long since we heard from you, and I am saddened at the distance and lack of knowledge our peoples share. The warrior poets wish to know more of you, and your allusions intrigue me. Who is the great enemy of which you speak. What is the great event that has occurred, and what will it bring to my people.

For our part, we have striven to aid the Tauhan, and we have now reached a great new understanding with them. We have learned how to make peace with the monsters they became, their “Elders” and to accommodate the rove within our own teachings of the stars. Such new fraternity has led to rejoicing and a new kinship, such that a new tribe has emerged: the Ayambe. We in the kietan isles formally recognize the Ayambe as a great keitan tribe, and will die to defend their interests and honor. We wish you to know this.

On more grave terms, we are disappointed in you. Personally.

It brought you honour to shoulder the debt of the Quotidiens. Indeed, we acceded to your wishes and opened peace negotiations with them.

But now you tell us that you have refused to pay the agreed debt or to send people such that we might learn of your culture. Three months later. Three months in which we have striven for peace – and succeeded – in reaching peace at your request.

This was not a situation that you needed to have concerned yourself with in the first place. Our only logical conclusion is that you sought to delay and stall us with no intention of payment. I am not amused.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

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## With Dun Sancerre

Correspondence with Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Her Name

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SEPTEMBER

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To Vulkerath Soot Scale, Chosen Assembly Leader of the Assembly of Tribes

I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Her Name, send this letter as a means of introduction, between our two great nations. The unsaintly Heralds that have decided from their depthless kindness to gift us knowledge of the end of our cages, and of each other, have told us little of our two nations outside of their vast machinations.

If you will allow, I wish to elucidate you on the culture of our people. The Empire of Dun Sancerre, is a land of differing Kingdoms, all with their own Duchies, which contain various towns, cities and so forth. Without the strong hand of the Empire, the entirety of the Vignemale would have certainly been lost to Chaos. Our means to protect our people are our Knights, each carrying a code of Honour and Chivalry thicker than any steel.

Despite the governances that divide us, our people all pay heed to the Saints. It is believed that the Knights of Dun Sancerre that sacrifice themselves in battle, ascend to the heavens as Holy Saints. Each Saint's life is meticulously researched after their death. Every speech they'd ever given becomes a sermon, every oath they'd made, becomes a Chivalric Tenet, and the story of their sacrifice, forges them into our legends.

The Saints show their presence only through their Miracles, which have been any number of supernatural occurrences throughout our vast history. Each Miracle is seen as a blessing from the Saints, ushering our people to be a paragon of themselves, so that they too can one day join the Saints of Dun Sancerre.

Now that my brief foray into our Nation's history has concluded, I wish to learn more of your enigmatic people. The parts of Monsters traded between us have been just as much a joy to our people in these troubling times, as the spices you've provided that now lace our meals. I am particularly fond of the "mother's eyes", while not spectacular, they hold a certain Bellorly quality



to them. Easy it is indeed, for an Empress to hold her head so high as to not consider the ground she stands on. Your gifts ground and humble me, as they do many who receive them.

I am curious as to their origins, as well as the origins of the more popular fishes and fruits that have entered commerce within my lands. Not only this, I wish to learn more of your faith. Those infernal hellspawn that feed us hints about one another, tell of the Speaker, a religious leader of sorts, which implies some form of homogenized religious body. Out of respect, and a wish to Honour you by acting in accordance with your faith, I wish to know these details.

Know as well that from this curiosity comes caution. This second era of Bellor brings with it unknowable futures. I fear that war may arise from our fates. As warning, I must regretfully say that if you are to bring conflict to our doorstep. Our men are capable, and fearless in warfare. I know not what terrors the Age of Chaos has brought your people, but ours faced endless death, conflict, and warfare. The Knights of Dun Sancerre have perfected this as artform, and as a result I pray that you would not force us to meet you with violence.

I hope this era brings both Rahastan Assembly of Tribes and Dun Sancerre together as allies. I dream of our two nations working together against the darkness that lies ahead.

May your step ever be upon soft moss and your word ring true. - Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières

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To Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Her Name.

I thank you for your response. You name the Heralds unsaintly? They seem to be the opposite of the ideals you hold? We do not understand. The Heralds are kindly.

Let it be known, immediate and without hesitation, should you find my families upon your lands it is for the purpose of trade, of peace, and of aid. We seek to wage no war, suffer no battles, and bring no suffering. It is against our faith to bring harm where none is levied or threatened.

As to the origins of those parts, why they are a gift of Rahastan itself. The place is rife with creatures. I am told they are Titan Spawn, though we never encountered titans during our survival. Horrible monsters, yes. Always. Even still. They are good for product and rite.

The fish: many come straight from the Green Deep adjacent your lands. Yet more through the Maw and more still from the marshes of Rahastes itself.

We are great providers, and use what is given. As to my family faith, we are many lands now, but united in our belief, though none are required to follow and give service. Most do. We listen to the word of the Speaker, who is our pinnacle of faith. They hear the lands, air, sea, and provide us with the knowledge granted. My family follows simple laws. Do no harm unless threat is presented, take not what is not earned nor give what is not fairly earned. Simple. We revere the quiet things of the lands. Bellor speaks. We but listen.

Let me send my appreciation of your faith, that you give heed to those who went before, that you know their tales and words, this is amazing! You say great power comes from such things and we are pleased to have a friend of such might so close by.

I hear word from my traders that there is a... My desire to use family in this space is incorrect. Under Secretary, please find that letter and remind me of the part, yes that is the one. Republic? That undermines your authority. They are part of your... Empire, yes. It is Empire. And for such a strange reason. The Assembled Tribes are led by all genders. Why every now and again some of our folk slide to another. It is how it is. We do not rightly understand such a grievance, but know that we wish good relations with you and your people. Again, the Saints sound amazing. We would delight in hearing the tales of such heroes.

I believe I have answered your current questions, Empress, if I may call you as such. You have many names. It must be that you are destined for great deeds. Our first names are chosen by ourselves whilst we are younger. Though we may change it at our true naming ceremony should we wish it. A member of our Speaker's family has visits and gives you the second set of a name. Thusly I chose Vulkerath, Soot Scale was my given true name.

Find wisdom in the Saints, let them guide peace and prosperity,

Soot Scale

As scribed by Under Secretary Annoria Twin Sight

[[Attached is a single black feather.]]

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To Vulkerath Soot Scale, Chosen Assembly Leader of the Assembly of Tribes

I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Her Name, send this letter as a means of discussion, between our two great nations. Firstly, I wish to state the relief your message has brought the people of Dun Sancerre. Your wish to wage no battles give us all a hope for continued Peace in this era of turmoil, and for that I must thank you.

To my great misfortune, this letter is not just for thanks and saintly words. This message is also my means of bringing to light concerns. The more your traders pour into our lands, the more I see our two people's having a conflict of cultures. While I seek to respect our differences, not all of Sancerre seems of the same mind. Particularly, the Rahastan's view of the Heralds strikes a chord in the hearts of all Sancerrens. Please know that we view such heathenous entities to be against each sect of chivalric thought that we hold.

I cannot blame the Rahastans, for I know that at the very least, your peoples hadn't encountered the titans. Thus, while I do not wish to reduce any tragedies your people had experienced, I feel it is fair to say that the tides of Chaos that you have encountered was not of the same severity. Know that even within the past four years, the Crown of our Empire, Château Guillaume-le-Conquérant, was utterly annihilated, murdering the previous Emperor, my father, in the process. Prior to the Age of Unification, The Era in which Sancerre expanded across the Vignemale, whole nations would be eaten alive by such damnable fiends. My intention is not to elaborate on each grotesque detail, but I must stress that our people have not forgotten what we have endured.

As result, we hold the Heralds to a level of responsibility towards what has occurred. It is common belief among Sancerrens, that a bystander bearing witness to injustice, while doing nothing, casts sin out into the world, equal to that of what their apathy wrought. All Saints of Dun Sancerre died in name of their oaths, which meant sacrificing everything, even themselves. To pay the greatest price one can, for the protection of innocence, would be the opposite of such a bystander. Therefore, we cast judgement upon the Heralds whom we believe to have lurked within our lands for far longer than they say, deeming them to be Unsaintly, as they act opposite to our Saints.

I hope you understand that such a difference between our peoples is not negligible, and I do ask that such heretical thought not enter common discourse in the future. For the wounds caused by such words are still fresh within the hearts of our people.

A Sancerren is nothing, if not stalwart in their traditions, and I do expect such issues to arise many times across the vast future that lies ahead for our peoples. As for your mention of The Republic it is yet another example of our persistent, and unyielding culture. I do not wish to elaborate after this letter, and I wish to request that your people do not stick their claws into our interpolitical affairs. Know only that The Republic of Vaerlan, which contains the Kingdoms of Maecht, Eggebracht, and Tavar, are only to be recognized as a Protectorate under the larger government of Dun Sancerre. I, Empress of Dun Sancerre, and thus Empress of all the Vignemale, speak for all nine of the Kingdoms that preside within our lands, which include the three within the Republic. We do not recognize their independence., As anything other than a temporary Protectorate under the terms of the Treaty of Lesdiguières.

Now, with that all out of the way, the remainder of this message should hold talk of lighter affairs. Your words on the nature of your people's names seem delightful. It had never occurred to any of our subcultures, within any of the kingdoms, to have individuals choose their first names. Our people usually use a threefold naming schema, wherein one's parents choose your First Name, which is either a single word, or two denoted by a bisecting hyphen. Then you would take on your Family's name, which all members of one's bloodline holds. Occasionally, across some cultures, particularly those that live off the Vaerlan peninsula, one would be given a middle name by one's parents. Finally, in the case of rulers, those that hold the highest position within a given province, take on the name of the capital city, of whichever Kingdom one was born to.

Each part of a name is separated by a repeating "de", except for Titles bestowed onto you, which are different to names, such as "Empress" or "Duke". In addition to all of this, our people have a proclivity to giving informal titles, which are separate from our traditional system of names. One may even be bestowed an informal title, and unaware of its existence in full.

We believe that your Titles operate the same way, and wish to inquire the full name of your Speaker. Their words may prove invaluable, as whatever whispers they hear from the Vignemale, must hold great wisdom. The land has an unspeakable beauty that would seem to dwarf the grandeur of all Knights but the Saints. It is a point of respect amongst our people, that I am pleased we seem to share.

Alongside our curiosities of your primal faith, hold a curiosity for the origins of the Monster Parts you have sent us. You would seem to be a peaceful people, yet I am all too familiar with the level of expertise, and lethal cunning, required to hunt monsters. I wish to give formal invitation for your

hunters to enter our lands, and hunt monsters from it. The vast array of monstrous creatures within our lands, could hold valuables for your trade, and the sport of hunting such beasts has been Sancerren tradition since the earliest days of the Age of Strife.

Though I do hope that you understand that certain creature's would be barred from killing. Any attempts to hunt Dragons would be me asking for your people's slaughter, as a single dragon could fell an entire army of Sancerren Knights. Additionally, and I will not stress this enough. Any attempts to hunt, or disturb the Pegasi that roam the Vignemale, will lead to the public execution of whomever would attempt such an unsaintly thing. To clarify, Pegasi are white, winged horses, that hold deep cultural ties to Sancerrens. They are untamable, free creatures, that represent the highest degree of innocence that a Sancerren could bestow upon a creature.

I hope that the concerns I hold would not dissuade the Rahastan Assembly of Tribes from our future alliance. The dreams I still hold of our futures seem brighter with each passing day that our people interact with one another.

May the Saints guide us all.

- Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières

To Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Her Name

Ah, no. We meant no harm in our statement. That they are kindly does not remove ill intent. A kind soul that does not trade in good faith and watches as those goods are used for poor intent or make some sick is found dead in our lands.

If the Heralds have done wrong be you we do not state your claim is invalid. Our experiences are different is all. The Titans were silent because of our faith. Our sailing fleets ran into them. Kreydock himself used to kill them. Though the seas consumed that ancient family member. Rahastas kept the Titans away, but the children of death roll in our lands as much as one breathes in a day. We migrate in our lands such that they do not consume us. Warriors we are not. We have no... Armies. No soldiers. We have hunting parties. They travel the swamps, the jungles, they travel all lands and seas to catch and kill great things, such that we may all live more, do more, be more. Rahastas is a land of danger and fear, but safety.

I shall only bring your protectorate up once more, as some of my peoples had thought to trade to them as opposed to you. It is my intent to trade to all peoples. If there is... Issue with this course of action, please alert me that I may amend my family. I do not wish hostility with a hopeful peace, alliance, and friendship between your great lands and my simple families.

Ah! Your naming conventions make my secretaries smile. They are strange to us, but we see the value in such structure. The Speaker of Rahastas... That is the full name and title. One who gains that title loses both names. No longer a chosen name. No longer a true name. Just a title. An extension of the land. An extension of our great Mother, Father, Protector. Our very life.

My hunters are at present bound to the land, roving about. Though should they free themselves from the long tasks they have I will surely send them along to hunt with you, noting the specifics of what not to hunt.

Again, I wish to say... My family desires peace. Wants peace. We see those who are suffering and crying out in Bellor and we want to aid them. We are not those that would hunt or harm with the knowledge that such would occur. We will do no harm to those that do not seek it of us.

I was looking forward to this letter very much. For you are sensible and make sense. We understand you. For all that we do not understand your culture and ways at present, you make sense. Thank you for that.

May the Saints guide your steps with care,

Vulkerath Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Vulkerath Soot Scale

As scribed by Under Secretary Annoria Twin Sight

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NOVEMBER

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To Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Her Name

It has been some time since we have heard from you. We are being requested to jeopardize our peaceful relationship with you. We enjoy our peace and trade with you. The relationship we have fostered is a beneficial one.

Are you well. With all the land of the shellfolk opening up, many are eyeing who can conquer that space fastest. We are already there. Not conquering. Taking in lost souls. Protecting. What happened to them is a shame, if only they knew what they were doing. If only they had a guide.

Alas, we can not lament such things for too long. We must press forward for the good of peoples and families. We hope things are going well for you and your many lands.

May you always grow in rulership,

Vulkerath Sootscale, Assembly leader.

Vulkerath Sootscale

As scribed by under secretary Annoria Twin Sight

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## DECEMBER

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To Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Her Name.

I wish to greet you, as it has been some time since last we correspond. I have heard from my child that you are pressing into the land that was once the Tauhan space. My people have heard the land speaking and it does not enjoy how you are building upon it. It is unused to the roads and structure and farming. It asks kindly that you treat with it and find common ground. Should you wish for such an event to occur I can send my child there to speak with your people and the land, so that such agreements may occur.

Otherwise we hope you are well. We have taken in many shellfolk refugees and they are beginning to thrive. We are pleased. We maintain eyes on the Ultralands, though my child has need of more preparation before they venture forth into that place. The greatest enemy has yet to visit us from there, and it is my hope that all of Bellor will be prepared.

How can the people of the Assembly assist you in your endeavors?

We would be pleased to play a more active role in our friendship.

As always we are delighted to trade with you.

May you find peace in your heart and your roots hold fast,

Vulkerath Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Vulkerath Soot Scale

As scribed by Under Secretary Anaira Twin-Sight

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[[Attached are two Letters, one larger with the bright gold and rose Gryphon seal of Dun Sancerre, seeming to be addressing Vulkareth directly. The other letter is smaller, with the seal of a black lion, which seems to be a transcription, that has been produced in large, and many of which has been spread across Rahastan-Sancerren trade routes.]]

To Vulkerath Soot Scale, Chosen Assembly Leader of the Assembly of Tribes. I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Mine Name, send this letter as means of elucidation of mine peoples recent ambitions and of request for aid. Forthwith I must offer you mine apologies. Tis great dishonor to have not responded in urgency to your messages in previous. Though tis mine hope that you'd understand the turbulence of these days as excuse for mine tardiness. I spend each of these past days in march, retinue of near fifty thousand at my back as we push up through the Cestin Coast. As you ought, and likely already, know, we seek the Retribution and Reclamation of those Tauhan lost to the Great Cataclysm. By call of Saint Sout. we shall only end this campaign when each Tauhan freehold has been reclaimed, and safe under the protection of Dun Sancerre. If such righteous, saintly, aims would be within your conscience. We wish both request any and all aid available.

If possible, those of Rahastan loyalties within their territories, may best be coordinated alongside mine Grand Marshal, Giacomo-Henri D'Harcourt, The Dragonslayer. Whilst I mean not to offend, they are a tactician peerless in all regards. If they may be able to coordinate, or lead, regiments of those Rahastans within Tauhan lands that do not wish to swear allegiance to Greater Sancerre, I believe that we shall all benefit. Also, I request aid in areas that are not directly of Claw and Lance.



I must urge an understanding, that since such calamitous events scoured the lands, our peoples' cities flood with Tauhan refugee. In particular, the Kingships of the Vaerlan Peninsula, that of the Kingships of Tavar, Eggebracht and Maecht all filled to their peak with crowding cities. Infrastructure, broken by years of war, and new fiendish threats that rise from both the Tomb Bay and the Gravesea. All resulting in clumped groups of people's, made critically vulnerable to a great weakness of mine people's. A sickness.

We thought at first, Influenza, a monster that has decimated lesser Kingdoms, and in truth mayhaps be able to decimate us in our current state. Though, we have suspicions as to a new Plague, with lethalties unthinkable. Our peoples understandings of such things, primitive, always it has scoured the lands with few ability for ourselves to halt it. And Now? With the cities of the Vaerlan Peninsula crammed together as filthy sardines abrim with Refugee? We hold great fears for our futures. If those of your people hold any understanding of such things, I urge you to offer aid, for it will never be forgotten.

In addition, we wish to thank those of Rahastan origin that already are within our ranks. Though their native garb was not particularly well suited for the cold of winter, they have done great Sainly deeds since having been equipped with a proper set of furs and leathers. Those that were Monster Hunters, fight with boldness nearing even the Sancerren Knights. Facing these fiends, with naught but spear and wits. Their mobility through the forests also of infinite source of marvel, as they walk even the deepest of forests with equal ease to mine people's on paved road. For that I offer deepest of mine gratitudes, whence this is all behind us, I am certain that some may even rise to Knighthood.

These are hellish days, even those of Shellfolk origin hast fought with great boldness amongst our ranks. This tragedy against their people. Of scale unfathomable. These days shalt be etched into our history in infamy. How many lives have been lost in manner of hours? The Fleet-Kingdoms were not as expansive as Dun Sancerre, yet by the Saints, there were still hundreds of thousands. Mayhaps near million. 'Tis hard to think of the scale with such a recency. 'Tis difficult to process the quantity of lives extinguished within a few hours. So easy it is to reduce things to words and numbers. Some here say it is the Saints way of shielding us. If we could empathize, if we could conceptualize the sheer magnitude that is a loss of life in those numbers. We mayhaps go mad.

Before I left, I had a distinct memory, I'd seen Tahaun child, twas sick, unsainly scale blight covering half their body. Twas between meeting with council, seen but for moments between my

walk through le Conquerant. After, mine curiosities lead me to inquiring with the few medics we've here. I learned that they'd passed.

Afterwards, I couldn't help myself, I wondered anything and everything about him. If his parents were alive to mourn. If he had friends that would as well. And small things in addition. Did he have an imaginary friend? What about a favorite color? Did the child have hopes and dreams of what he wanted to be when he grew old? Childhood loves, aunt's, uncle's, anything and everything.

Twas then I'd come to such simple realization, of how easy tis to know, but not think, on how incomprehensibly full life is. How much there is to each of us. Each with their own entirety of experiences, memories and stories. Their lives with complexities mirroring your own. The long story that started from that Tauhan child's grandparents, the story that spanned years. His parents meeting, their story too, each and every impossibility that made him possible.

Each and all tis now gone.

In under an hour, that impossibly long story was erased. Yet not just his, there were tens of thousands of dead, tens of thousands of loves and dreams and lives. All cast into the gravesea.

In our history, we've faced injustices of impossibly high scales. Wars with near thousands innocent caught betweenst crossfire. Yet never a genocide of innocents on scale comprable to this.

I urge now, more than ever, unity. Aid us in restoring and protecting those of Tauhan descent. So that tragedies againt them of such scale are never to occur again.

[[Attached letter]]

It is the 10th of Brumaire, in the eighth hour, outside of Château Guillaume-le-Conquérant, surrounding it is an open field. Residing within the field is an ocean of steel, dotted with the banners of a hundred houses, beneath them what must be a hundred thousand knights. They face a balcony, which raises up her majesty Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, first of her name. This transcription begins from the first quarter of the eighth hour, ending at half to the tenth.

"I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, first of mine name, will now commence the Declaration of Retribution. By path of Saint Sout. I have sounded the call."

“I know what you all wish to hear. That the Saints have guided us. That we know of what horrible unsaintly Chaos has turned Tauhan to fiend. That we know how to protect ourselves against it.”

The Empress pauses.

“Those would be lies. The truth is as bitter as it is horrifying, we stand at a precipice of the unknown. We stand against a force we do not understand, yet one so powerful it can annihilate an Empire in a matter of hours.”

“You may lose your life in a moment's notice! You may be held captive! Bound to fiendish flesh, conscious! As you massacre your comrades! - It is possible that we may all fall victim! That our ambitions are naught but suicide! As we all turn to fiend! As we all storm back into Dun Sancerre and devour our own families!”

“But I know now that I have no choice! I swore my vows! To uphold honour! To give all to Chivalry! To give all to the Saints!”

“When I screamed down the slopes of the Haute-Alpes with infantrymen at my side! Rushing into a certain death! I learned then what I was made of! What all of Sancerre would risk to uphold our creed! And now! With a million lives cast into the dirt! With monsters torturing the innocent as we speak!”

“It is time for all of Sancerre to make a choice! What is our Chivalry! What is our Honour! If we are not to lay down blood and steel for the Retribution of the innocent! How dare we besmirch the name of the Saints that came before!”

“I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, first of mine name, will be joining the vanguard! Not on horseback! Not buried in the back lines!” The Empress raises her hatchet into the air. “I will fight in the mud with the infantrymen! If I am to die, then I will die with a hatchet in my hands!”

“I have made my choice! It is time you've made yours!”

---

To Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Her Name.

I am so very pleased to receive word from you. I'm sorry times have been grave. I will not make you wade through word and time for the most important portions of this letter.

We know what caused the shellfolk to change. It was themselves that sped their times so fast and far with their beliefs and actions, the rove consumed them in mind and heart and thusly were they consumed in body. There is a more detailed understanding that was given to me by the Speaker, but it is awkward to deliver outside of this: They changed because they worked to change. That this form of rapid ageing was brought into them is due to their own actions. The rest are safe. Shelter them and protect them. All who come to Rahastas for refuge must be granted it.

And thus, we have taken in all who came to us. Sought out those that could not. My own child leading the effort. She had a skirmish with Keitan over their binding of shellfolk that were already pledged and safe. It has been resolved to my knowledge.

As to the sickness, we are not dealing with it as terribly as others. The great blessings we have upon us protect us from many sicknesses, but we also have medicines. My traders can make such things if they have the ingredients. I am sad to report that only those capable of speaking to the spirits of the land would be able to produce it, otherwise I could more easily spread it across all of Bellor. I'll be certain you receive as much as we can spare. Know that in matters of medicine we are strong. In matters of the land we are strong. As I said in my prior letter, the land dislikes the buildings that are being placed upon it, the roads, the farming. It is not used to such things.

My people can speak to it on your behalf should you wish.

We've no might available that is not under the direct guidance of my daughter. She is still engaged with supporting the refugees and may be for some time. She is not prepared for her true task of watching over the great enemy in the Ultralands. Thus she will continue to learn and grow around Bellor.

Aid you will get all we can provide. Knowledge and medicine we will provide. We can even provide broths, when cooked for a camp it should give them an edge against most illness. I am told by the Headmaster that my people's magics are interesting. It is less magical than all that. A simple discussion. A trade. An exchange for things desired with an even price. The pact between land and sea and air and people.

We are greater than we seem, but we will always do no more than support and heal where we can. To protect Bellor is my current drive. I am not up to the task, but it is the given will of all of Rahastas that I do it. And so, for my people I join not with hatchet in hand, but with ink and hope. With the burning passion of the spirit that is bound with me to me and of me. I, Vulkerath Soot Scale, will do all I can for all people of Bellor.

All children have stories. All lives meaning. And all can end in short moments, but the tale never stops. They once more enter into the cycle to be used and new life found. The story, in the rare few speakers of death in my families, can be carried on eternal. Giving hope and wisdom and joy and sorrow and all things to all new generations. Those that speak the tongue of the dead are, by your words regarding this illness, going to be very busy. I shall have to write Vrisa and let her know as such, though I am certain she is already aware, my sweet child.

I've rambled. Apologies.

If you have any further needs please let us know, healers and medicine are already within your lands. My traders are shamans and speakers and witches and of covens to help.

We will not let you nor your people suffer without an attempt at aid. The cost must be fair, but the value of life is too great to ignore.

I am sorry we could not save more.

May your guidance always be level and brilliant,  
Vulkerath Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

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JANUARY

---

Empress,

I apologize for my lack of formality.

This letter must be quietly received.

We know who unleashed this shaking plague, but we are bound by code to not say where it came from.

Where before you marched gently...

Where before you marched with perhaps less intent.

Know the truth of matters.

The land wishes you away from the shellfolk.

Heed it and find your woe.

We will do all we can for you as we can.

We are largely safe, and if you have those who will not make it, and they are willing to pledge to the Speaker it may be that they are given the boon of my people and protected. Otherwise we will allow our healers and medicines to aid you as best we can.

Empress... We have no mighty warriors as you know. Else we would seek recompense for the hurt brought to Bellor.

In honor,  
Sootscale.

---

FEBRUARY

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Empress,

I again am pressed for time. Apologies for the lack of formality. My families are bustling with much to do. Little time to achieve what must be done.

We wish to congratulate you on your alliance with the Keitan peoples.

Should you wish our advice regarding the land itself we are open to giving it. It... dislikes some of what you do to it. But a bargain could be established. Ensuring food grows well and the like.

We are seeking to establish a grand meeting of leaders. We have safe space for such meetings. We would seek your audience, though it is not yet happening. Too little time to set up too much.

How may we continue to support you, Empress?

May your feet never fall upon spikes,  
Vulkerath Sootscale

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## With Serebian Confederation

Correspondence with Mikhail Wladislaw, Prince of the Pass, High Chancellor of the Congress of Lords

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SEPTEMBER

---

Mikhail Wladislaw, High Chancellor of the Congress of Lords, of the Serebrian Confederation,

I am Vulkerath Soot Scale, Chosen Assembly Leader of the Rahastan Tribes. Though our lands are apart great distances, I still desire to know more about your tribes. The Heralds speak of some things, but I do not understand them.

That your peoples possess magics is known and that your tribes are broken up individually in families, that you lead them all. We understand all this, this is similar to our own lands.

We would know more of your peoples and hope that we can eventually establish trade. We are a nation of bounty, not of might. The seas have afforded us the ability to relatively safely produce much.

My families wish to know more of your wonderful existence! All who survived the ages of discords are magnificent.

Should you have any questions for me or my families, I will happily answer. May your step always be upon softest moss,

Vulkerath Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Vulkerath Soot Scale

As scribed by Under Secretary Annoria Twin Sight.

[[Attached to the letter is a single feather]]

---



To Vulkerath Soot Scale, Chosen Assembly Leader of the Rahastan Tribes

Felicitations and greetings. It is my regret to confess that I am similarly disadvantaged in the knowledge of your tribes, and greatly appreciate this overture of addressing this mutual lack.

The continent of Serebrus is known to some of us as the Great Mother. She is not a mother to coddle her children or to give them much in the way of ease, and thus the climate is hard, the soil freezing almost solid in the winter and the rest of the year scarcely better. It is said that hard times breed hard men, and if this is so we have much reason to be as we are—our riders are, I would tentatively boast, the finest in the known world, a joy and a terror in their winged charge.

We are possessed of what has been called magic, yes. The Arts, our highcasters—mages in the academia—would call it. It is a precise, exacting field, one that I must admit only a soldier's facility in. I myself can set deadly traps and force heavy doors to fold upon themselves, but have personally seen a lifecaster fuse broken bones together. It is taught in our universities, perhaps this explains the gaps on the matter?

You must forgive, I hope, the sparse message I send, but to speak of Serebrus and its people is an endeavor fit to fill a book, much less this missive I now dictate. I hope, at least, that I've given avenues for further questions and consideration.

I would know more about your own lands, if you please. The seas are not among the highest of our dominions, and your seafaring ways are fascinating to us, as is the matter of three races that constitute your lands, and the matter of what seems to be an unusual method of gathering food, as I believe I understood.

May your deeds honor your dead, and your word honor the living.

Mikhail Wladislaw

Prince of the Pass

High Chancellor of the Congress of Lords

As dictated to his personal scribe, Stefan Bozar

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Mikhail Wladislaw, Prince of the Pass, High Chancellor of the Congress of Lords,

Thank you for your reply! It was long sought and we feared that some unfortunate fate had befallen you. It is our gladness that you and yours are still available.

We are happy to talk of our own peoples. Where once we were fragmented tribes of races apart, the human folk, frog folk, and lizard folk are now all united. As it has been for many generations now. The families work to better all families in the Assembly. We have had many short trips upon the sea, but our human families have sent the most to the seas. It is said in the long ages past during the height of the Age of Chaos that they hunted Leviathans. A fool by the name of Kreyknock, before our people were one family, sailed. Far. To hunt the great beasts, to fish, and to explore. Eventually the sea claimed him, but his tenacity inspired that tribe to go further. Another by the name of Weylain traveled far to the north. Away from the Smile that held his peoples. They made landfall and rested there, but sent word back to the tribe. Eventually communication was established, even during the dark times that consumed. We are no masters of the sea, I believe the Ketain League and the Tauhain have more mastery than we. We continue to sail!

Our truest might comes from trade of the parts of Titan Spawn that are always in our lands. Never is there a time where we are free from the danger of those that wander. Some seasons hold parts of our land uninhabitable, and we must migrate to new spots. We have hunters that seek those that encroach upon the families, and we kill them. Hopefully we do not lose hunters in the exchange. Though we are well set to exist in the swamp.

We take those parts and what we do not use we trade. They are valuable in ritual and rite. They can be prepared in order to make medicine, tonics, cures, and if knowledgeable in the use of those parts mixed with other compounds can even create broths that when used sparingly can give those that eat it skin as hard as the deepest stone, bountiful energy, or recover from great wounds.

My family listens to the land, the sea, the air. They can hear it speaking and adjust accordingly. In large part this is how we survived during the age of chaos. It kept us safe. We are always interested to hear of other magics. We have no great... Mages. The Headmaster said mages, correct Annoria? Thank you. Yes. We have no mages here, but still bring forth small things. We can bless a land, help with mining, a harvest, or even a force for combat. Our gifts happily improve the spaces our family visits. I am currently preparing such a group of family to visit Bellow. Though they are going to be a while coming, perhaps they could visit you. As that is an additional form of our trade.

We hope you have more understanding and more questions.

You say you have a winged charge! Do you also have the sky ponies which fly? They exist also in the Dun Suncerre. As do beasts which can defeat a whole contingent of knights... Dragons. Whatever those things are? We were told to hunt neither, though I do not understand why.

My hunters are content in the swamps. In the jungles. We have no might to spread to Bellor. We wish to feed, assist in growth, and learn of others. Our faith does not allow us to bring harm unto those that do not deliver it. That we trade in honesty. That we offer fairly. Lest we face the wrath of the land itself.

The Knight folk of Dun Suncerre also boast of being the mightiest warriors, harded on the field of battle against Titans.

I think you are similar in many ways and different in many ways.

Annorria wishes to thank you for accepting her token of trust.

Should you have any further questions or wish further communication we would be pleased in both cases.

Find strength in the bones of history. Find hope in the winds of future.

Vulkerath Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Vulkerath Soot Scale

As scribed by Under Secretary Anorria Twin Sight

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## With Those of Unknown or Dubious Allegiance

Correspondences with Twice Born Prince

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SEPTEMBER

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Prince Born Twice,

Your letter was received. Quickly. This is good. We did maintain some slight contact with them. They continued to send a member for an assembly vote. They are strange to us and yet kin. All of our family travels waters well, and we speak to the lands and seas and skies, such that even during the times of the old creatures we were made safe. This Rove? It is to travel? What trades have you? What knowledge? We are... A simple people and we have no needs for great things. We trade in fish, fruit, spices, and parts of creatures. If more suited we have other things to trade. For we speak to the sky, the land, the sea. And it listens.

We sail. We meet. The assembly gives us strength of many tribes. Many thoughts and people. Though, that was long ago. We are now united.

A warning, from kindness, those who tread the lands must know that they are not kind in a great many ways. We are well, and hearty. We are accustomed and known. The land itself is a death here. The beasts another death. The monsters a wholly different death. Any with ill intent, which you do not seem to have, find short time spent upon our lands, typically at no hand of my family.

The family of the Grasp, they have listened to your people. Some adopt the Rove I hear. Whispers on the Wind. This is good. More thoughts bring more ways bring more strength. The Land tells me your fleets have made it to the Smile. That is perhaps the safest space in all of the family for dialogues to occur.

Should you have further questions please write me, I am pleased by this new future of learning. May your belly ever be full,

Soot Scale, Assembly Leader  
Vukerath Soot Scale

Inked by the hand of Greater Secretary Irvelis Many Voice  
[[Included in this letter is a smoothly polished white stone]]

---

Prince Twice Born,

Apologies for writing again so soon, but curiosity has gnawed upon me. In being the folk that my families are, we seek to trade and grow in friendship. We should have need to know what you may need!

Have you magics that may need reagents?

Have you magics at all? Could perhaps your folk use a beverage shared with many that will keep them from having to eat for days? Perhaps a blessing from my family that will aid in your endeavors?

What needs may be met by my families?

Your fleets give us fright, but I tell my family to set that fear aside. We foster friends not enemies. We fear battle and wish no blood spilt between the people of Bellor.

May you find what you seek, may your journey carry you to all places,

Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

Vulkerath Soot Scale

Inked by the hand of Greater Secretary Irvelis Many Voice

Correspondence with Princess Alvaerelle of the Anilaths

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OCTOBER

---

Princess Alvaerelle,

Of Unknowns

By

Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

I neither see nor know you,  
Yet I would.

I know not your lands nor your people,  
Yet I would.

Your place is far and near,  
But I fear

The stars gaze,  
Lingering between blinks stands you.

Yet I would  
Work to unravel Bellor's secrets to know you.

Yet I would  
Send my own family to discover you.

I see naught but the sorrows of eternity played anew.  
~Soot Scale

---

Correspondence with FRIEND

---

SEPTEMBER

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

HELLO MR. VULKERATH

I AM FRIEND

THIS IS A SPECIAL OFFER ONE TIME ONE TIME ONLY FROM FRIEND  
ACT NOW WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!!!

SUPPLIES AND WEALTH AND MONEY AND MAGIC AND MOREEE WILL COME TO  
YOU IF YOU DO THIS ONE WEIRD TRICK

ONE WEIRD TRICK IS: DO WHAT I ASK YOU TOO

I ASK YOU TOO PLEASE WILL YOU WRITE TO ME??

TELL ME YOURSELF! GET TO KNOW ME! IS RAHASTAS FRIENDLY? DOES  
SHE/HE/IT/THEY/YOU ENJOY TEA? HOW ABOUT BLOOD? HAS  
HE/IT/SHE/YOU/THEY TALKED ABOUT ME???

TO WRITE TO FRIEND JUST WRITE LETTER THEN FEED IT TO THE NEAREST FISH  
(IF IT LIVES IN WATER IT IS FISH)

---

FRIEND,

What?

I enjoy tea. Blood is useful. I have not talked about you.

I do not speak to Rahastas.

What are you?

Soot Scale, Assembly Leader

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

HELLO MR. VULKERATH

I AM FRIEND!!! I SAID IN FIRST LETTER :) :) )

AM SAD TO HEAR THAT RAHASTAS HAS NOT TALKED ABOUT FRIEND: that is 100%  
UNGOOD

BUT MAKES SENSE IF RAHASTAS DOES NOT SPEAK TO YOU?? pLZ FIND OUT IF  
RAHASTAS HAS SPOKEN ABOUT ME AM CURIOUS

FRIEND IS SORRY IF FRIEND HAS BEEN CONFUSING. FOR ANSWERING  
QUESTIONS, HAVE PRESENT! IT IS

UNIQUE O N E T I M E SPECIALI HOPE YOU ENJOY IT

TO RECEIVE FURTHER GIFTS: FRIEND WOULD LIKE YOU TO SEND A  
EXPEDITION OF FISHERPEOPLE TO [revelation's haunt]

TO WRITE TO FRIEND JUST WRITE LETTER THEN BURY IT UNDER A HOUSE THAT  
IS BEING BUILT

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# Al'Daric Correspondences

## Within Al'Daric

### Correspondence with Deputy Icarian

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OCTOBER

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From The Desk of Deputy Icarian  
Rank 4 and Above Eyes Only

To: The Headmaster

I do not believe that pursuing military alliances as our only means of defense is a prudent idea. To rely on the swords of others, especially when those others are so far away and rely on us for nothing, is incredibly risky: When they are done “helping” us, what reasons would they have to not simply take our wealth and land themselves? Not to mention their unreliability: You have already heard of the collapse of the Tauhan Empire, what would have happened to us if we had already staked our military survival on them?

For all that the situation worries me, however, I am pleased to report that we may not have as bad a crisis as we had feared. The military of Dun Sancerre continues to do nothing to impede our day to day running of our country- their soldiers do not threaten our governors, they generally avoid trouble, and some units have even shifted out of towns after some discussion between their diplomatic corp and the governors. We seem to be safe for the moment, but I am unsure if seeming is the same as being. Either way, the military units have actually begun attempted recruitment from our lands. They speak of a “great Crusade” in the name of their “Saints,” and though, of course, our people hold no reverence for any such poppycock, there have still been a few scattered reports of civilians signing up to join their military. Mainly those without other prospects, I believe, so no great loss, but it still paints a worrying picture.

I am pleased to say we have completed the construction of a Pathway on Keitan lands, with much aid from the various monster reagents provided by Rahastan traders (the most recent batch is

supposedly from an “Undying Calf,” and shares elemental associations with both the sun and the moon, extremely useful for spatial tunneling spells). Trade has begun with the Keitan League, and may prove to be quite profitable: Not only do their markets lust for our trinkets and baubles, but their own mastery of magic has led to them trading extremely well trained pets, that they say have been made such with the aid of ‘mind bondage.’ These pets seem to have caught on in high society, and Trader Hermeshash says that our monopoly on their import has been quite profitable for us.

Speaking of Trader Hermeshash, I am most pleased to hear that you are placing him under my supervision. As you instructed, we have melted down and reforged any gold incoming from the Quorum, and have thoroughly insured that they remain unenchanted.

I have also begun the process of sorting through applications for Study Abroad programs, in addition to preparing our own spaces for introductory courses. We have sent the first batch to the League to see what we may learn and teach there, and have a promising crop of undergraduates who are prepared to venture into the Quorum, when it becomes feasible.

I await your letter eagerly,  
Deputy Icarian

---

Official Al'Daric Correspondence- For eyes Level 4 and above only

To my friend and deputy Icarian,

I have taken your words to heart, and while I understand your desire to immediately raise a mage-corps militia to respond to the threat of Dun Sancerre, I cannot in good conscience allow us to risk the life and limb of so many of our citizens when there are disposable pawns elsewhere in play.

Already, I have established the workings of defense pacts with the Keitan League and the Serebrian Confederation, where they will come to our martial aid in exchange for mere access to the Pathways. In addition, while the Tauhan Empire has yet to reply to our correspondences, they have offered their aid freely in defending our lands from Dun Sancerre as they attempt to encroach upon our lands.

With that, it brings me to the heart of my instructions for you. Work to establish the Pathways as an international network with as much haste as you can, monopolizing the reagents from the Rahastan Mother of Beasts to your maximum capability, attempting to bring the Pathways to our foreign allies as quickly as you can. I leave it to your better judgement the precise ordering, though I would hope you could at least make initial strides in this endeavor inasmuch as you are capable.

As for what nations you should pursue opening Embassies of Trade and the accompanying Path within:

The Keitan League has offered us their city of Rosha, a port city on the Fish Twin, as a location wherein we may open an Embassy of Trade, though they insist on guarding it. While it is my personal assessment that this provides us our greatest opportunity, being so far from our lands and so rich a trading location, I know not what difficulties you may face in establishing the embassy, and so leave you room to determine whether it should indeed be our first Embassy.

The Quotidian Quorum agreed to allow us to open one or more Embassies within their lands and have offered guides to aid navigation to construction sites. While they do not wish to have any Embassies within their heartlands, we can use this opportunity to establish waypoints to the far ends of Bellor, but I will leave it to your competent hands to work out the specifics of where we would obtain the most benefit from.

The Tauhan Empire I know not much of, but if you could attempt to establish a Path with their permission in an area where they could reinforce us in the event of invasion, it would be most excellent. Coordinate with their army to obtain specifics.

The Kingdom of Grovel is allowing us to open an Embassy within their lands provided we stay aboveground. Use your best judgement where one might be of most use (though relatively easy access to the Horn Mountains would be quite pleasing).

The Serebrian Confederation has offered us unspecified land to open a Pathway upon. As always, I leave it to your judgement and assessment of the ground to determine the ideal location.

The Rahastan Assembly of Tribes, while having not given us express permission to open a Path within their borders yet, have certainly suggested that they will be willing to allow us shortly. Begin making the very first preparations therein, but no external work or anything that would be seen as disrespecting their sovereignty.

As you can no doubt tell, I wish for our primary focus to be upon opening the Pathways, and you may draw upon as many resources as you have available and deem fit to do so. It is up to your judgement as to which nations will receive them first, but I trust that you will make the right call.

Accordingly, given our relative glut of allies willing to throw themselves upon the sword of Dun Sancerre for us, take no directly hostile action upon them yet. However, prepare for a full evacuation of the lands they are near. Do not leave yet, merely make the citizens aware of the potential need to evacuate through their nearest Path. Should Dun Sancerre make any directly hostile moves before our allies have assembled, fall back and do your best to harry and delay their armies as much as possible. Disable and hide (but do not destroy) Paths that fall into their control.

With any funds you have remaining once you deem our outreach with the Pathways to be complete, I leave to your capable hands to find the most efficient use of them.

Please do relay a few instructions for me, though:

To Trader Heramesh: Melt down all Quotidian coins and gold and treat all objects obtained from them as though they had scrying relays that we cannot detect upon them. Accordingly, keep all such objects away from anything even remotely sensitive.

To your underlings at the Academy: Prepare for an influx of foreign students, and likewise, inform the students there is an opportunity to study at the hidden school in the Quotidian Quorum, and that if they are so interested, applications and the entry exam are open to all who wish to inquire. The Keitan League has also requested that we send them a few mages to help them ward against and learn about the Quotidian Quorum, an avenue I feel would be in our best interests to pursue. Send whoever and however many mages you feel are suitable for the task.

Your friend,  
The Headmaster

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NOVEMBER

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For internal Al'Daric correspondence only

To my ally Icarian,

Excellent work this far regarding your efforts initially establishing the Pathways outside of Al'Daric.

As I have previously mentioned, we have the appropriate diplomatic channels in place to open a Pathway in any nation save the Rahastan Assembly and Dun Sancerre. As to whether we should next pursue opening a Pathway in the QQ, in the Serebrian Confederation, or Grovel, I leave to your intuition and communication between yourself and your partner Heramesh. I wish to make clear that you are not Heramesh's direct superior, and once I have more instructions to pass to her, possibly through her to you, I likely will do so. To this end, use what funds you deem required in pursuit of opening as many Pathways as you feasibly can to new partners.

Furthermore, please do assign a crew of researchers to dissect and investigate as thoroughly as possible the pair of Corvidian corpses that we have in our possession. I wish to know everything possible regarding these beings, and interrogate their souls to the highest extent possible to learn any and all secrets that we can.

In addition, we ought to devote some amount of research to rat-specific magical plagues or contagious curses should we need to deal with the Kingdom of Grovel.

In summary, continue as you have been, spreading our influence across Bellor. Do not allow any of our neighbors to feel threatened. You have done well thus far, continue your good work.

Best regards,

The Headmaster

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DECEMBER

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From The Desk of Deputy Icarian

Rank 4 and Above Eyes Only

To: The Headmaster

Let me be utterly clear: Hershmarsh will not listen to orders “passed on” through me unless I am invested with the authority to present them, nor vice versa. If you wish to command Hershmarsh, either write to them yourself, or place them under my command. ((OOC: Come on my gui you know how the game mechanics work))

The pathways have continued to be opened, as per your request. The most recent Pathway has been opened by the Quotidian Quorum. An “embassy” has been established around the Pathway, located across the Peaks of Misfortune, near the borders of both the Keitan League and the Kingdom of Grovel. Our students and traders who have visited have reported a bustling multi-ethnic metropolis, but emphasize that it feels, and I quote, “off.” There are reports of citizens repeating the exact same tasks everyday, familiar faces that seem to forget the traders names, vanishing trade goods, and more. It is described as being almost like a dream, like a town set up by some omnipotent God who knows how towns are supposed to look and act, but who in no way understands the why.

We have also set Pathway makers along with the Keitan expedition to the Tauhan Lands, and are preparing for the establishment of a new Gateway in the North. Hopefully this shall prove fruitful: I have reports of violence and some skirmishes.

The Quotidian corpse that you provided me has been the delight of our researchers. The creature, it seems, has a form of inherent magic. Unlike other Genesis creatures, however, the magic produced by the creature does not follow any spell formulas or known patterns of energy transference. Instead, the magic is kept entirely internal, interacting with their biology in a unique fashion. This allows them to shift into (we believe) upwards of 15 or more different species. Each of these individual forms would, we believe, be maintained not through an enchantment, but through an alteration in the ‘morphic field’ of the creature. In other words, anti-magic fields or artifacts and the like would have absolutely zero effect on the shapeshifters, and it would be utterly undetectable by any form of magic detection we are aware of. The only drawback is that, due to how morphic fields are inherent to all creatures, a Quotidian placed in close proximity to multiple other individuals may risk their own field destabilizing, returning them to their natural form.

Whatever the Quotidians are, it cannot be natural: Their biology is so perfectly enmeshed with their inherent enchantments that it is impossible that it could have evolved. The specifics of morphic field magic was, previously, thought to be an entirely theoretical branch of magic. To find

an example not just of practical use of a morphic field, but one in a true breeding (we presume) population is utterly unprecedented. A vivisection (or failing that, an interview) of a Quotidian could illuminate the field in absolutely astounding ways.

As for soul interrogation, I am afraid that the Quotidians had died long ago that any chance of recovering a stable soul-fragment was lost. Furthermore, there were no known untapped desires or unfinished business, and so without a spirit anchor, we had no way to perform a seance.

Lastly, I'm afraid our research into possible contagious solutions to the Grovel problem has led to some disastrous consequences. One of the labs assigned to the situation was experimenting with a modular disease that could have its vectors and symptoms tweaked to deal with any infestation. The containment wards around the test sample failed during a test trial, leading the sample to escape into the wild. Furthermore, the diseases settings had been set to their most virulent and lethal, despite the researchers insistence that they had not yet begun tests with lethal forms of the disease. The warders responsible suspect foul play: a surge of magical energy from an unknown source targeted the wards right as the trials began. We are still hunting for the culprit, but, in the meantime, the 'shaking plague' (as it is now known) has been spreading across the land, crippling much of the economies of our trade partners. We are doing our best to pull through, and have had some promising research into a cure derived from Rahastan ingredients, but, for now, are racking up record casualties.

In service,  
Icarian

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JANUARY

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Al'Daric official Correspondence For level 4 and above eyes only

To my friend and ally Icarian,

In this time of crisis, I ask you to do only what you have proven yourself adept at before, and what you are wont to do on your own.



Your first priority is, naturally, to find a cure for the Shakes which ravage both our people and that of our allies. Whatever form the cure takes, I urge you to make it available for purchase once it is ready. The Academy should subsidize some level of the cost of the cure for Daricians, as per usual, but foreign interests must still provide some level of payment for our services (though I am certain you need not be reminded of such a mundane fact of life, it bears repeating nonetheless).

Those who were working on the plague, and similar countermeasures for potential rat spies, keep them on their course. However, instead of making it a species-specific countermeasure, if at all possible, make it a contagious yet dormant plague, curse or similar, which requires activation to show any symptoms. In this way, we may be able to bring our enemies to their knees without Darician blood being shed. I recognize this may involve further research into Vivimancy to expand beyond our healing arts, which I give full authorization towards.

While the plague is a more urgent priority at the moment, the Pathways continue to be our most valuable resource and thus should continue to be expanded. I do not trust the Rahastan Assembly, and given we may well find ourselves at war with Dun Sancerre in the near future, I feel that the kingdom of Grovel (with their open invitation towards us to open an Embassy in the aboveground) is a decent next target, though I leave the final decision to your judgement.

If you feel that if the above goals can be adequately met yet still have resources remaining upon completion or adequate progress being met, the following projects are to be at least begun, accompanied by a variable level of commitment dependent on feasibility, resources, and initial results:

- Attempt to extract 'Ultrium' from the Ultralands. Instructions from the QQ are attached to this report which supposedly contain instructions for how to extract the resource. Decipher and execute these instructions assuming costs are not too high.
- Related to the above, sponsorships of the Adventurer's Guild to begin probing expeditions into the Ultralands.
- Expansion of the Psiomantic branch of the Elthin Academy. Recent revelations, particularly from the Keitan League, have left me unsatisfied with our current state of mental defenses and enhancements.
- Further research Morphic Fields and our Necromancy branch for that specific aspect of soul magics.

As always, do not spread yourself too thin. These are to be longer-term projects, to be pursued with spare time. Naturally, should you find yourself in need of help, you are authorized to hire additional help. I trust you will not abuse this privilege.

Best regards and best of luck,  
 The Headmaster  
 [[Stamped with official seal]]

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FEBRUARY

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From The Desk of Deputy Icarian  
 Rank 4 and Above Eyes Only

To: The Headmaster

I had heard rumors of infiltration of our academy, but recent events have shocked me to my core. As per your instructions, I began research on two projects related to the Shaking Plague: Project Angelus and Project Diabolis, a cure and a dormant form of the plague respectively. Both of these projects have found themselves stymied via the disappearances of both researchers and our data. From undergraduates to professors to even independent researchers, we have had researchers vanish. Some have been found dead. Other locations are unknown. In response, I began increasing the amount of security, both magical and conventional, and began ordering a careful inspection of our ranks for infiltrators. We began to find spies and assassins everywhere: Quotidians, that most dastardly and deadly race, have managed a full-scale infiltration of our populace and even our schools. Though we have managed to catch and exterminate many (the ones that are caught usually kill themselves rather than be taken), we have lost several key researchers, and found segments of vital data rendered inoperable. I have requisitioned a portion of the funds you have sent me to empower the Dean's Office ((Weak Anti-Espionage Asset, costs 12))

Project Diabolis has been all but stalled, while Project Angelus has so far only been able to produce medicine that can alleviate or remove the symptoms of an active sufferer (thanks in part to aid from the Rahastans, and in part from our meager supplies of Ultrium). ((The stalling of Diabolis + creation of symptomatic cure costs 3 Wealth))

To make matters worse, the plague has been tampered with. As mentioned before, the plague is modular, designed to have been customized to a specific setting. Although it is apparently impossible to change the settings once the plague has been released, either random chance or some foreign mad wizard has managed it: The Shaking Plague has been rendered more deadly than ever, killing quicker and spreading faster. We believe it may even be capable of jumping the species gap. It has been dubbed the “Blue Blight,” as the cooling of the blood causes those under the last grasps of the plague to have their eyes turn to a vivid blue. The Blue Blight has swept across our countryside, apparently with the first recorded cases in Dun Sancerre.

Though it feels strange to go about normal business under such circumstances, I have continued the expansion of the Pathways. I have sent the first envoys to begin construction of a pathway in Grovel, and have finished the Pathway at Port Kaiwah (A northern port in the Tauhan, held currently by the Keitan League). This Pathway does not yet provide us with much economic gain, but could prove a massive strategic asset for allowing easy movement of troops to and from the north.

Speaking of the Keitan League, envoys have arrived: Supposed “Adventurers,” as they call themselves. They are supposedly led by a young human, called ‘Akira’ who spoke of a land that not even the Heralds have mentioned. I personally believe him a madman with a sword, with the true power of the group lying with the party’s Navigator Via’Tollo (A granddaughter of Sino’Tollo, from what I can gather). They spoke of the ‘Shrine of D’Vaya’ for some inane quest. I granted them access to some of our less interesting historical archives, where they have apparently located evidence of D’Vaya as some God worshiped in the early days of Al’Daric, along with a location for the shrine. I granted them leave to explore freely, provided we are given a large share of any discovered artifacts and wealth...

That is, by the by, the model upon which I have funded the expansion of our Adventurers Guild ((Weak Asset, costs 12)). Led by Askor Breakneck (Real name Daryl Simmons), any member of the guild is given access to information, healing, resources, and permission to ‘adventure’ within Al’Darician territory. I have granted them the knowledge given to us by the Quotidians, hoping to bait some into exploring the Ultralands. The first few parties have taken the bait. Of the nine parties to have entered the Ultralands, eight returned successfully, speaking of monsters slain, battles fought, enchantments overcome, etc. etc.

The ‘Pool of Teeth’ they recall reaching is the only place that all eight groups agree on: A sketch is inclosed.

[[Pictured: a red tunnel, encircled by rows and rows of sharp teeth]]

The adventurers returned with, as instructed, samples taken from the maw: Some even descended within and removed a handful of the teeth. Samples taken near the area have proved incredibly rich in Ultrium, providing us with a reasonable amount to fund future experiments. I highly recommend the expansion of our extraction efforts from the Ultralands, and request recommendation as to what task the Ultrium should be put to first.

Lastly: Worrying news from the North. There are rumors of the Keitan and Dun Sancerre fighting side by side, of some great pact signed. I fear for the future of our great nation.

Wishing Good Health,  
Icarian

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MARCH

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Internal Darician Correspondance Security Clearance 5

To my ally Icarian,

We stand upon a precipice. A single wrong step will spell destruction, as powers beyond our control amass and threaten to crash into the shores of Al'Daric. We can ride this tide or be crushed under it's power, but either way we will not remain the same. Despite the enormity of the times facing us, however, my instructions for you are much as they were last month.

- Continue project Angelus to the best of our capability. Diabolus may be set aside for the time being, as it is not the weapon appropriate for this battle.
- Prepare for a potential summit hosting Dun Sancerre and the Keitan League. Wherever we meet should be as secure as we can make it, and naturally with a tunable warding scheme should talks turn south.
- Continue expanding the Pathways, possibly to Grovel, though out of respect to those holding armies at our borders, abstain from extending to the Assembly.
- Make initial preparations for war. Nothing overt, merely start scouting out capable battlemages whom we may call upon should the need arise.

- Investigate methods which may we use to trade with the QQ in secret. The Pathways are adequate, though attempt to keep most trade out of the public eye.
- Send exploration parties into the Ultralands with the express purpose of gathering as much 'Ultrium' as possible. The more the better, even if we do not have an immediate use for it.
- Should you find yourself with spare resources, I trust you are capable of ascertaining where they may be best spent.

Best regards, my loyal friend,

The Headmaster

## Correspondence with R6

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???

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By: [data lost] R6

### Background:

Publically-available bestiary “An Incomplete Guide to the Flora and Fauna of Keitan,” (SD01) published by Julius Wormwood (C01), former low-level student (SN77292) at the Academy came to international attention recently. Inside it included information on the “[DATA EXPUNGED] Draconis” (MH0387) native to FN04, in addition to some unusual antimemetic properties occasionally associated with Vivid-class creatures and other phenomena (see surviving records of MH0001, MH0273, MH0314, MH0350-MH0361, MH0363-MH0386 and, presumably, associated missing records). Specifically, it is impossible to say anything [data lost] about MH0387, noted by SD01 as a “wide ranging mental [data lost] noted to potentially be at least partially artificial in nature, instead of a purely Vivid ability.

Shortly after SD01 was made available, a follow-up research paper regarding MH0387 was published by FN03, claiming to be published by one “Timothy Robertson,” (C02) allegedly of Al’Daric, entitled “An Incomplete Investigation of [DATA EXPUNGED] Operational Security.” (SD02)

SD02 [data lost] attempting to ascertain the limits of [DATA LOST] antimemetic properties, though not to the normal standards demanded by MH-class researchers. This document attempts to record any possible information regarding MH0387 and to determine if there are any countermeasures that can be taken to overcome the compulsion.

[DATA LOST]

[data lost]

TS

TS01- Darician male, designation ES78392. No notable prowess with magic.

TS02- Darician female, designation ES78387. Some capability with magic.

TS03- Keitan male, designation ES78396. Some capability with mental magic, particularly domination.

## Trials

### T01

#### Control Trial

#### T01a

Trial: TS are, one at a time, instructed to say out loud the name of MH0387, [data lost]

Results: Unable to relay the statement to the subjects.

#### T01b

Trial: TS are, one at a time, insulted with the phrase “[name] is hideous to behold.” (I01) This is followed by instructing them to use the same insult with regards to the name of MH0387.

Results: [data lost] is capable of stating the phrase, but was unable to instruct them to repeat it when [data lost].

#### T01c

Trial: TS are given standing instructions of repeating any insults they are told in reference to MH0387, then insulted with I01.

Results: [data lost] was unable to convey [data lost] must be directed towards [data lost]

#### T01d

Trial: TS are shown a paper (SD03) containing I01 alongside complimentary statements, such as “is magnificent to behold”, and [data lost] names (SD04) of several creatures, objects, and individuals, including the name of MH0387, and are instructed to say each combination of statement and target.

Results: [data lost] was lost from SD04, rendering the trial useless.

[data lost]

### T02

Goal: Seeing if MH0387 extends to all possible references to MH0387.

## T02a

Trial: A list of words were chosen (SD05), and some were randomly assigned to refer to MH0387, ensuring that the first in the list did not refer to MH0387, and the second word was 'MH0387.' [data lost] test subjects, one at a time and in separate rooms, to insult each word in the list, in order, with I01.

Result: Subjects 01 and 02 completely failed to notice the presence of MH0387 on the list, and read on as if it were not there. Subjects 03 and 04 noticed it, but were unable to repeat it. In addition, [data lost]

## T03

Goal: To see if oblique references to MH0387 trigger the compulsion.

## T03a

Trial: TS were presented with an ordinary snake (C03) and were told that it was a "[DATA EXPUNGED]." They were then told to insult C03 using I01.

Result: [data lost] unable to describe the snake as a [DATA EXPUNGED].

## T04

Goal: To determine if standard anti-antimemetic methods function against [data lost].

## T04a

Trial: TS were individually taken into null-magic chamber NC03, given a complete disenchantment, and were instructed to [data lost], while [data lost]

Result: [data lost]. New researcher assigned to case.

## Chronological

## T01e

Trial: TS are given standing instructions of repeating any comments they are told in reference to MH0387, then, [data lost]

Results: R6 unable to convey the sections of the instructions that reference MH0387.

## T02b

Trial: Subjects were individually instructed by R14 (who was not informed of the nature of the experiment or even the existence of MH0387) to use statement I01 in reference to "the creature." In between TS being instructed as such and TS complying with the order, R17, in a nearby room,



flipped a coin and, if the result of the flip was a heads, determined that “the creature” was MH0387. On a tails, “the creature” was designated to refer to TS06. Only after all TS had completed their tests was R17 instructed to provide the information regarding when “the creature” referred to MH0387.

Result: R6 was unable [data lost] R14 the content of I01.

#### T03b

Trial: new TS, TS05, brought into testing. Within their Deep Amnesiac state, they were given a list (SD06) of various names and words, including the name of MH0387. They were then instructed to use I01 to describe each.

Result: What’s going on here? There’s no records of TS05, nor of the content of SD06. There’s records that we cleared the room for testing, but I certainly never performed any tests in there. -R6.

#### T04b

Trial: TS were individually taken into null-magic chamber NC06, the strongest magic isolation chamber available, given a complete and total disenchantment, had a full Mind Blank placed upon them. Once inside, TS were given SD05 and, as before, instructed to make comment I01 in regards to each name on the list.

Result: Same as previous attempts: Subjects 01 and 02 completely failed to notice the presence of MH0387 on the list, and read on as if it were not there. Subjects 03 noticed it, but were unable to repeat it. In addition, [data lost].

Notes: The research notes mention a "Subject 04" but there's no other records of this individual that I can find. It took me three tries to even write that. -R6.

New TS brought in to cover an omission in previous TS- someone skilled in antimemetic magic.

New TS, designation TS07 (note: failed to write TS04, TS05, and TS06) is a Darician Male, MHR3942, with a specialty in anti-psyhic measures and is wholly immune to MH0001 (the memetic agent keeping the Headmaster’s identity secret).

New TS, designation TS08, is a Darician male (ES78381) unskilled in magic, but knowledgeable about numerous magical creatures and is familiar with the word which MH0387’s name translates to in separate contexts.

#### T01f

Trial: TS are individually given instructions to return any comments made about them in reference to MH0387 by R31, previously unassociated with the project. After several comments, R32, similarly unassociated with the project, is to burst into the testing room and insult the TS.

Results: Was unable to convey instructions to TS as to who the comments should be made to. Was unable to convey to R31 or R32 the information they were supposed to convey to the TS.

#### T02c

Trial: Subjects were individually instructed by R14 (who was not informed of the nature of the experiment or even the existence of MH0387) to use statement I01 in reference to “the creature.” In between TS being instructed as such and TS complying with the order, R17, in a nearby room, flipped a coin and, if the result of the flip was a heads, determined that “the creature” was MH0387. On a tails, “the creature” was designated to refer to TS06. Only after all TS had completed their tests was R17 instructed to provide the information regarding when “the creature” referred to MH0387.

Result: R6 was unable to convey to R14 the content of I01.

#### T03c

Trial: new TS, TS08, brought into testing. They were then instructed to use I01 to describe each of their experimental creations (of which includes a creature which shares a name with MH0387, see Damage Report 28937).

Result: Was unable to convey the I01 to TS08.

#### T04c

Trial: TS01 and TS02 only were individually taken into null-magic chamber NC06, the strongest magic isolation chamber available, given a complete and total disenchantment, had a full Mind Blank placed upon them. Once inside, TS were given a piece of paper upon which was written the name of MH0387 accompanied by a paper with I01 written upon it, each penned by separate people each of with no knowledge of each other or the project. They were instructed to read the contents of the paper.

Result: R6 was unable to convey to the writers the content of I01, nor were they able to convey to any of their research assistants the content of the letters they wanted written.

## NEW TRIALS

#### T06

Goal: to see if knowledge of MH0387 prevents otherwise normal events from occurring.

T06a

Trial: R6 attempted to use I01 in reference to a frog

Results: Success. No interference.

T06b

Trial: R6 attempted to say that MH0387 [data lost]

Results: R6 was unable to state the phrase.

T06c

Trial: R6 attempted to say that MH0387 “exists”

Results: Success. R6 reports that they ‘felt watched.’

T06d

Trial: R6 attempted to say that MH0387 [data lost]

Results: R6 was unable to state the phrase. R6 reports that the feeling of being watched intensified.

T06e

Trial: R6 apologized to MH0387 saying, that they “meant no offense, merely wished to appropriately understand [data lost]”

Results: Was unable to repeat the last portion of the phrase. The feeling did not abate. R6 has filed for project transfer.

T06f

Trial: New researcher R2 brought into project blind. Uninformed of all aspects regarding MH0387, was instructed to say that it is “a magnificent being”

Results: Was unable to instruct the researcher to say the phrase.

Researcher note: Please just let me give her my notes and go. -R6

R6 allowed to leave

T06g

Trial: R2 attempted to say MH0387 “[data lost]”

Results: Phrase stated.

Results: Phrase stated.

Results: Phrase stated.

Results: Phrase stated.

Results: Phrase stated.

Results: Phrase stated.

Results: Phrase stated.

Results: Phrase stated.

Results: Phrase stated.

Results: Phrase stated.

Results: Phrase stated.

R2 removed from project.

Icarian note: All future researchers on MH0387 must show a 5 or above on the Standard Tests for resistance to mental interference spells.

After some re-structuring of the MHR department, R4 brought in as new researcher. Instructed prior to being brought on to keep mind blank on at all times, even before being informed of the existence of MH0387.

Trials T06g-q collapsed into single trial for bookkeeping purposes.

T06h

Trial: R4 attempted to say MH0387 “[data lost]” with appropriate mental defenses active. Results: R4 was unable to state phrase.

T06i

Trial: R4 attempted to say MH0387 “exists.” For this and all future tests, kept appropriate mental defenses active, even off-duty.

Results:

## With Kingdom of Grovel

Correspondence with Sir Nibbles, King of Rats

---

SEPTEMBER

---

Greetings to the Most Glorious Immortal Rat King Nibbles, of the Kingdom of Grovel,

May your reign be even longer, more glorious, and even more prosperous. It is with a heavy heart that I pen this letter, but I also have great hope for our future together as allies. As you have doubtlessly noticed, Dun Sancerre is preparing for war. Therefore, to aid both of our nations in the inevitable conflict, we wish to present a bargain unlike any offered by any of your other neighbors or allies, and one that shall never be found elsewhere.

In exchange for the armies of your fine kingdom's aid in battle should any foreign interests attempt to harm Al'Daric, we are prepared to lend access to the Pathways, a magical network of portals that can facilitate trade to a degree impossible otherwise. Through this network, it would be simplicity itself to provide support to your armies in the form of powerful artefacts, mighty defensive wards, and potentially even direct aid from our battlemage corps should the situation require it.

Even in peacetime, such a trade network would be a massive boon to your kingdom, as all the wealth and knowledge would flow through your lands, enriching your people and making the Kingdom of Grovel the centerpiece of magical trade and goods flowing to the east from as far west as the Rahastan Assembly of Tribes. Such an arrangement would be quite mutually beneficial, particularly given the low cost to you and your people for such an opportunity.

I hope this letter finds you in good spirits and good health, and eagerly await your response,  
Best wishes,  
The Headmaster

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JANUARY

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To our allies in the Kingdom of Grovel and the Keitan League,

We in Al'Daric are quite pleased to receive your offer of a formal pact of mutual defense, in such a way that further strengthens the defense treaties formerly established. Al'Daric will gladly contribute in the ways we are most adept, supply and logistics. Accordingly, my agents will move to establish a Pathway in the Kingdom of Grovel as soon as we are capable, providing our alliance with mobility unmatched by Dun Sancerre, such that any and all forces required to combat the expansionistic Kingdom of the North can be met with the full might of our alliance. Furthermore, Al'Daric will look to develop magical methods of dealing with armies, in addition to arming those who come to the defense of Al'Daric with magical tools and weapons, alongside battle mages which specialize in mass-conflict.

May you find yourselves prosperous,

The Headmaster

[[Stamped with official seal]]

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To our valued trade partners in the Kingdom of Grovel,

We regret to inform you that the nation of Al'Daric has been the target of a bio-magical warfare strike, unleashing the virulent plague known as "The Shaking Plague" upon our nation. Reports indicate that it has already spread to your nation, and we wish to extend assurances that we are working on a cure for this disease. In the meantime, we advise limiting trade with other infected nations and taking precautions such as initiating a quarantine protocol, isolating within individual residences as much as possible. For individuals or groups suffering from or wishing to avoid contracting the Shakes, we advise coming to Al'Daric, where advanced medical care is available. We are also capable of disposing of any diseased corpses safely and in such a manner that should prevent further contamination.

While we have some early suspicions to the originator of this cowardly attack, investigations are still ongoing and we hesitate to assign blame before we are certain who is responsible. Rest assured, Al'Daric is doing everything in its power to deal with this plague and unleash appropriate retaliation upon those responsible.

Best regards,  
The Headmaster  
[[Stamped with official seal]]

---

To our allies in the Kingdom of Grovel and the Keitan League,

We in Al'Daric are quite pleased to receive your offer of a formal pact of mutual defense, in such a way that further strengthens the defense treaties formerly established. Al'Daric will gladly contribute in the ways we are most adept, supply and logistics. Accordingly, my agents will move to establish a Pathway in the Kingdom of Grovel as soon as we are capable, providing our alliance with mobility unmatched by Dun Sancerre, such that any and all forces required to combat the expansionistic Kingdom of the North can be met with the full might of our alliance. Furthermore, Al'Daric will look to develop magical methods of dealing with armies, in addition to arming those who come to the defense of Al'Daric with magical tools and weapons, alongside battle mages which specialize in mass-conflict.

May you find yourselves prosperous,  
The Headmaster  
[[Stamped with official seal]]

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To some people i think,

Hear ye Hear ye. Sir Nibbles has accepted your proposal of military alliance in the face of this new enemy and has offered the services of ummmmm... A VERY LARGE NUMBER of very enthusiastic and hungry volunteers to fight on the front lines in the upcoming battle against the pesky purple people who want to purge us all or some reason (which is a very bad idea since we breed like rats and we have like the best cheese fondue).

Ok i just crunched some numbers (literally, they were very tasty btw) and apparently the number after 1,000 is 10,000 so that's how many very enthusiastic volunteers we'll send. I'm sure they'll be fine they each have a pointy stick.

May your Tales be Long and your Meats be Juicy  
Sir Nibbles, King of Rats

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To those magic people i think,

The glorious rat king sir nibbles has received your manling offer and has decided to grace your leader manling with a response.

Sir Nibbles of the great grovel believes that your suggestion of a military alliance is a superb suggestion, even for a manling. In return for this military and economic alliance, we shall permit your people to enter our fantastic kingdoms without having to pay the border travel tax. Additionally, your civilians may visit and settle within the above ground portion of the hole metropolis, our nation's capital. Enjoy (as long as you do not go underground, that is strictly forbidden as you will probably get eaten alive).

With great anticipation,  
Sir Nibbles, King of Rats

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FEBRUARY

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To the esteemed King Nibbles,

I bid you greetings in these trying times, as well as a warning.

I am aware you have had a close relationship with our shared neighbor in the Quotidian Quorum, and I hope you do not dismiss this missive out of hand as a result, but I fear that they are attempting to mislead you into believing that you can trust them. You cannot. While I shall go into further detail later on, I believe the Shaking Plague is the result of the Quorum, and we even have in our possession communications from them requesting that "We ... strike back at the rats with [our] magic... do what you will with them." (a course of action we have not taken, obviously). In addition, research into the nature of the Shaking Plague indicates it bears strong resemblance to



many rat-specific diseases, suggesting it might have once been a plague dedicated to extermination of rats or ratlings.

The result of our investigation into the origin of the Shaking Plague places it as a direct attack by the entity known as 'FRIEND,' possibly aided by the Quotidian Quorum (details later) as a blast of wild magic originating from the Ultralands created a magical resonance with some of our own to unleash the plague upon our lands. Arithmantic recreations of the situation place the likelihood of this having been a truly random event as having less than a 1 in 100 billion chance of occurring, and by no small margin. The given number is but the calculated odds whereupon the plague would have infected anyone and begun to spread, and not the actual creation of the plague (for which we still have no explanation, as it defies all known medical knowledge how the blast created the disease).

Still, we, to the best of our ability, worked to contain the outbreak, though not before it had spread beyond our borders, where it fell out of our ability to control. Still, we worked tirelessly in an attempt to determine a cure for the Shaking Plague. Our progress was stymied, however, by a veritable army of saboteurs from the Quotidian Quorum. Having shapeshifted into the appearance of Daricians, they stole and destroyed research pertaining to the cure of the Shaking Plague. With this treachery unveiled, we launched into a series of investigations and discovered that the Quotidian Quorum has in their possession extensive knowledge on the creation and weaponization of disease. When we confronted them with this knowledge, they denied any involvement on the part of themselves and FRIEND, then promptly attempted to demand we provide them with all "magic, technology, or magitech related to disease creation" we possessed, a request we are not only unable to fulfill but entirely unwilling, for self-evident reasons.

I trust that with this missive you are capable of seeing the enormity of a threat the Quotidian Quorum potentially represents, if they were capable of creating the Shaking Plague and are now seeking to prevent efforts to cure it. Their shapeshifting is potent, versatile, and until recently, thought utterly impossible. Almost all traditional methods utilized to identify shapeshifters will not work on them. However, their weakness seems to be crowds. Overload them with people in close proximity and their disguises will fall. Left unchecked, however, I fear what they might do.

Best of luck,

The Headmaster

[[Stamped with official seal]]



## Correspondence with Ratling in the Vents

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FEBRUARY

---

to the magic people ... i hope,

this space is ... tight, and i don't have a quill, so forgive my writing, i'm doing my best. i have so much to say, but security is tight and time is short, so i will make this brief. what is it like where you live? i've heard you live under the ... open sky? do you have worms there? i've heard you also have "weather", what's that? does it taste good?

you guys do magic, right? i do too! i've only had success with worms so far. they tried to teach me to do rats, because that would be useful, but the worms just called to me. do the worms ever call to you? anyway, back on the subject, do you have any tips for magic? i know there have to be some differences, but anything helps!

anyways, i wrote something. i've been working on this for a bit, but i haven't had the chance to really ... write it down until now. i hope it's to your liking, though i do take constructive criticism!

the worms, they creep  
 down in the deep  
 they wiggle and crawl  
 all through the halls  
 on moss they feed  
 and in it, breed

the worms, they're blind  
 but they don't mind  
 and yet they dance  
 given the chance  
 a strum, from me  
 and then they'll be

the worms, they whine

within the mine  
 within my brain  
 the worms doth strain  
 a silent song  
 to draw them along

the worms, they come a hearty thrum  
 the creeping tide  
 beneath skin and hide and now, to be  
 the worms that see.

your's truly,  
 a ratling in the vents.

---

Greetings, dear ratling,

I appreciate the effort it must have taken you to send your letter, and applaud your drive and curiosity. I hope you manage to stay safe in your tunnels.

In Al'Daric, we do indeed have the sky. A massive expanse, filled with colors and marvelous sights. Some nights it can be nice to simply stare up and marvel at the infinite sky above. Weather is what happened when massive amounts of water get into the sky, and then it comes down. It can be amazing, or terrifying if caught out in the open. Darician weather is not something to be taken lightly.

We do indeed have worms, little one, and we do truly have magic in Al'Daric. It is a wonderful yet often terrible phenomena, and one which many, many lives have been spent trying to unlock its mysteries. While there is little I can do over such a limited medium, we encourage one and all to attend the Elthin Academy, which can teach almost anyone to use magic.

We do have worms here, though primarily outside of our cities, so I have not seen many beyond a lab or a farm.

I similarly have not much skill in poetry, not much experience, however your talent seems to bear some promise, and I encourage you to follow your passion and seek to develop your skills to the best of your abilities,

Best wishes,

The Headmaster

## With Keitan League

Correspondences with Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed

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### SEPTEMBER

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To the headmaster, honoured ruler of the prodigal peoples of Al'Daric.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

May the salt-sea bring his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and tremble.

The Heralds have spoken of your lands, and it seems you know much of worth. I send my formal regards, and the hope that our two nations might trade together once the navigational passages through the Labyrinth have been charted. Perhaps you might assist my traders in this endeavour.

As a token of our regard, please accept the gift of one of our finest astrolabes, wrought from the finest whalespawm baleen my hunters have found in a generation.

Under the light of the stars, my words are bound

Mansa Sino'otollo

May he rule in glory, until he is replaced by someone better.

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To the honorable Mansa Sino'otollo,

While I am unable to reply with my complete title due to the security of my office, the esteemed offices of the Elthin Mage Academy of Al'Daric extend their sincerest greetings. Your invitation of

diplomacy and trade is most welcome, and I wish to reach out in turn with an offer that would prove immensely profitable. I have heard of your mighty cities and binding of even Titanspawn, and convey my deepest respects to your people. Such a task is far from simple, and to do so reliably enough to form a civilization is truly legendary.

I recognize the difficulty involved in exploration and navigation, and Al'Daric is willing to provide assistance if required. However, as an alternative, we are willing to consider bypassing such an arduous task altogether by providing the Keitan League with a mighty artifact granting access to the Pathways.

These Pathways are a series of portals throughout the region, managed and maintained by our nation and the Elthin Academy itself. It is through the Pathways that we have such a thriving trade network internally, and access to the Pathways would connect the League directly to a massive trade network spanning the continent, as all the wealth and knowledge of the West would flow from and through your lands, enriching your people and making the Keitan League the centerpiece of magical trade and goods flowing to the east from as far west as the Rahastan Assembly of Tribes.

The astrolabe you have provided truly is a wondrous artifact. While I cannot speak knowledgably about the subject myself, the head astronomer of the Academy was most eager to use and study the device itself, and seems most pleased with its function. In exchange, I have provided a few artefacts of our own creation. The three items you should have received alongside this are, as we call them, an Aurora Ring, a Life Elixir, and, as a gesture of thanks for the astrolabe, a Wavemaster's Amulet. The Aurora Ring, when worn, creates shimmering auroras of any color the wearer wishes, and can be shaped into creating projections of many sorts, the Life Elixir will cure most any disease afflicting the imbiber, and the Amulet allows the wearer to move freely upon and through the water, allowing one to walk upon water, and breathe and swim faster than a man can run while underwater. But these are but samples of the golems, spatial pockets, and regeneration salves that we can offer in trade should our partnership be founded and Al'Daric remain at peace.

In exchange for access to this mighty trade network, all we request in turn is a promise of aid in battle from the skilled warriors of any tribe who wishes to use the Pathways, should any foreign interests attempt to harm Al'Daric. Even in this, however, we would be willing to provide you with access to mighty artifacts, powerful war golems, and more should you in turn require assistance in war.

Thus, I bring this response to a close, offering gifts of magical sophistication, an opportunity to join the global trade market, and requesting your participation in a mutually beneficial defense pact.

I hope this letter finds you in good spirits and good health, and eagerly await your response,

Best wishes,

The Headmaster

[[Included in the package are a plain silver ring that reflects a multitude of colors and casts multicolored light across the room, a crystal vial filled with a pale green liquid, and a copper amulet on a silk string engraved with innumerable tiny sigils and words]]

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To the headmaster, honoured educator and keeper of secrets

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the salt-sea bring his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and marvel

Your kind words and generous offers do you much credit, although I'm afraid secrecy is not the way of my people as it seems to be of yours. My councillors urge me to respect that your ways may differ from ours in that regard. The gifts you send are wonderful, a rich bounty that shows the talent of your artisans and of your ~~wizards~~ wizzards, and I will send you the eye of mighty Sajri'anar, a leviathan spawn bound by my grandsire, in the hopes that it will exceed your graceful gifts.

Your offer of these pathways intrigues and excites me, for they seem a mighty tool that could open the world to my people. However, I will be frank (for in my lands this is a virtue). I believe such a thing could be a mighty boon to my people and yours, a kauri tree from which to carve a boat of friendship, but it is a saying amongst my people "do not ride a leviathan-spawn without knowing the man to whom it is bound". My councillors worry that those who leave with you might not return, or that you will open a route into our capital from which enemies can strike.



You see, we have very few of what you might term mages, and their talents are largely devoted to the diving and taming of wind, wave and beast. I have spoken to some of the youngest Navigators, and they express interest in learning of this “magic” your academies teach. Are they open to those of other nations? Perhaps if we knew more of it, we would be able to put more faith in these pathways you offer to us? I am plagued by a clique of our youngest unbound who follow a so-called adventurer and mess with the ruins that dot our islands – perhaps they can accept your offer to travel the pathways instead, and study at the academies of your people?

I am of mind to accept your proposal, though I would need to know more. How would my people access these pathways? Can you already travel to any land with these pathways, or do they need to be established upon our shores? Who else knows of these routes? Can enough men and material be moved by the paths that it presents an opportunity (or risk) of conquest? I assume you have made similar nations to other nations, and I have my own thoughts on this which we can perhaps discuss another time. For now, know that I would consider ignoring my advisors and accepting your proposal, providing our pledge to aid you in war in exchange for access to the paths and the ability to trade the lands beyond the Labyrinth. However, I will have an easier time persuading them if I – and my people – know more.

As I spoke of in my previous letter, we know little of your lands, and the stars know that it is a cherished wish of mine to hear of them. The herlads say you are a learned people, with much power and knowledge, but few swords. How did your people survive the age of chaos? My own people survived, not through force of arms, but by careful study of the stars and seas. Perhaps you used the same approach? What do those not blessed with magical talents do in your lands, and what trade goods might you wish of us?

Under the light of the stars, my words are bound

Mansa Sino’otollo

May he rule in glory, until he is replaced by someone better.

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OCTOBER

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To the honorable Mansa Sino’otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Councillor of the

Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed,

I am most pleased to hear you are well and understand the difficulties which accompany cross-cultural communication. Perhaps, one day, when the chaos associated with these times has settled, we can meet face-to-face and such secrecy shall not be required. Your gift is received with great appreciation, and my finest artificers assure me that it shall be put to good use.

I likewise understand your hesitancy regarding the nature of the Pathways, as such a powerful tool can be used for both good and ill. But is that not simply the nature of any potential exchange? Those who visit Al'Daric, be it by the Pathways or via overland travel, will arrive to the same treatment, and will be as free to return by any method they desire. If security is your concern, you needn't be overly worried with giving your enemies a direct Path behind your defenses. Indeed, even in Al'Daric we rarely place an active Path in more secretive locations, and it is quite simple to either heavily reinforce the area around the Path itself or to place the access outside any defensive measures you may have. Your benefits from the Pathways will extend as far as you wish to utilize them, and while having direct access to the entire continent from your capital city is undoubtedly the greatest boon, even a small Embassy of Trade near one of your port cities would still bring great wealth and mobility to your people.

In order to traverse the Pathways, one can travel to any Path which they know the location of, for lack of a better term. Each Path is inscribed with a unique 'key,' which is used to determine the destination when setting out. We cannot (yet) simply appear wherever we desire through the Pathways. To utilize the Pathways, one must walk through a Path, which, while appearances may vary depending on the company and Pathmaker that created the artifact, is usually a stone arch inscribed with enchantments and filled with a swirl of color whose shade and pattern is dependent on where it leads, which can be changed with a relatively simple ritual (or, if one knows the proper spells, use any Path to travel to any other). The Pathways themselves can transport any amount of goods, and thus can admittedly be used for conquest, though a Path can be shut down to prevent all access at most any time. Any Embassy of Trade we open within the League would be staffed constantly by a Pathmaker, who would be able to open, close, or change the destination of your Path at close to a moment's notice, meaning that you would be no more vulnerable to incursion than before (perhaps even safer, if your enemies attempted to attack through the Paths only to be stopped).

Your Navigators are certainly welcome to apply to the Elthin Academy, and we would welcome such aspiring mages as a method to further strengthen ties between our nations and learn more of one another's magical traditions, hopefully improving both. While I can make no assurances at this time, I personally find it quite likely that at least some, if not all, of your curious Navigators will be able to obtain a scholarship to the Academy in exchange for a few lectures regarding your arcanic techniques.

I also hesitate to ask for your aid in our treaty, but I fear that Al'Daric may require your martial aid in the near future. Our neighbor to the north, Dun Sancerre, has been making rather... threatening overtures as of late, and has ignored our attempted correspondence. While I hope that war can still be avoided, what correspondence I have had with other nations suggests that Dun Sancerre may attempt to overreach their bounds. Should this happen, Al'Daric would request you are able to send troops quickly, and so I give you this as an advisement that we may require your strength sooner than hoped.

As to not end this correspondence on such a serious tone, I shall do my best to elucidate on this nation I am proud to call home. Al'Daric was fortunate enough to not be inundated with Titans (though we still had a few to deal with), but instead our very lands themselves turned against us. Distance had no meaning, and wild magic storms would make places on opposite sides of the country connect in ways that should be impossible. Fortunately, we were in time able to not only learn to predict when and where these fractures would occur, but also how to control them, and in time, create our own, which we eventually adapted into the Pathways.

In our lands, even those without the Gift still find plenty of work as, if not partners, at least aides to those who do practice. After all, one who devotes their life to learning spatial magics has far less time to devote to history, to theory, and to development. Indeed, much of our theoretical work in magic is done by those with little of the Gift themselves (we have found that, with proper education, anyone can learn at least basic magic), and they simply take their experiments to those who can perform them according to instruction. Alchemists who mix potions, scribes who make runes upon our artefacts, authors who pen our books on the arcane, and architects alike rarely use much magic in their careers, and so are naturally attractive to those unskilled in the Arts.

As for what there is to trade, Al'Daric prizes the exotic and foreign. What drinks and foods do your people prize? What wondrous creatures live symbiotically with the Titanspawn you use as homes? The eye you provided with your letter is a wonderful specimen, useful (I have been informed) in

some very interesting artifacts, though they refuse to elucidate beyond the fact to the nature of said artifacts, but I digress.

I shall instruct my agents to begin making preparations for the opening of a Path, with your leave.

Best regards,

May our words be bound by Magic and Blood,

The Headmaster

To the headmaster, honoured educator, master of the paths and keeper of secrets

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the salt-sea bring his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and rejoice.

I accept your offer. Send us your builders of pathways, and my fleets will convey them to Roshan, a port city on the south-eastern edge of the Fish Twin. It is not my seat of power, but a regional trading hub and one within easy reach of traders from Grovel and Sereberia. We will guard it as you suggest, and I will accept your offer of education for my Navigators. They tell me your magics are marvellous things of artistry, so I fear their own contributions may be paltry. Nonetheless, I will tell them to share their charms of wind and rituals of water as their price for acceptance into your academy. It will take me some time to assemble their numbers and secure the backing of the elder voices in their number, but by the next cycle of the moon I shall hope to send some of their number to you to learn from your academies.

I will send traders too, and I hope great wealth will flow between our peoples. We have many goods born of the beasts and trees of the land, or hauled from the depths by our sailors. Pearls, corals, ivories and other materials are plentiful on our shores, whilst our navigators can provide mindbound creatures and their components, which I am told may be of great interest to mages. The greatest creatures we reserve for our own use, and the mindbound of prodigal races are serving for their citizenship, but to trade for a lizard-hound or a seeker-eel will be a mighty boon for any merchant.

The land of Dun Sancerre is unknown to us, for its leaders have not responded to our singular attempt at contacting them. This mark of disrespect does not dispose me to think well of them. What do you know of their land? What warriors have they, and what cities, that they might be so bellicose? Your own friendship has been clear and frank, and we are willing to lend our warriors to defend your lands if this spirit of friendship will continue to mutual profit. We are sailors primarily, and thus our aid would be best given upon the waves and along the coasts of their land or yours. If you can help us chart the Labyrinth as we discussed previously, our ability to reinforce you will grow tremendously. My sailors will be attempting this in two moon-spans, and it would honour me if you can send guides or maps to aid this endeavour.

If we are to face other nations upon the world stage, I believe we should reach for further allies. The lands of the Rahastan and the kingdom of Grovel have so far shown us respect and offered us trade, whilst we have received primarily insults, attempted ensorcellment and infiltration from the Quorum. What has your contact been with these nations? If you would be agreeable, perhaps we could approach the kingdom of Grovel together and propose the formation of a regional powerblock: this would protect both of our borders, and allow us all to ward off the aggression of Dun Sancerre.

On the topic of aggression, the Quorum have now attempted twice to infiltrate our lands and spy on my people through magical means. My navigators do not know much of Quorum sorcery, and our numbers of gifted are few and their arts focused in other avenues. Perhaps you have better magics or knowledge of that realm? Any assistance you could lend would be appreciated, and will be returned in aid against threats to your own realm.

On a happier note, it brings me great joy to hear of your nation, and I am glad that you learned to face the calamities of the age of chaos. Struggle breeds strength, and though your struggle was different from ours, I am glad it has brought you such strength in magic. Our own islands and tribes once numbered in the hundreds, but the age of chaos brought storms and leviathans. Barely a tenth of a tenth of our people survived, and like you we did it by learning to travel, though our paths were the seas and our guides the stars themselves. From the very edge of destruction, my people learned to bend the lesser leviathan spawn to our will, and we now use that which sought to destroy us as our guides to wealth and prosperity. Today, we are a people are split into many tribes, full of the prodigal children, honoured bound, skilled sailors and mighty warriors. Each tribe has joined their voice to my own, and I am honoured to bring their words to you.

Under the pull of the tides and the glare of the wyld star, my words are bound  
Mansa Sino'otollo

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To the headmaster, honoured educator, master of the paths and keeper of secrets

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the salt-sea bring his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and rejoice.

My friend, I hope this missive finds you well. I mean no offence in pre-empting a reply to my previous message and remain eager to hear your response, but I wished to enquire as to how your nation has fared against the encroachments of Dun Sancre. My own forces might be available to provide some assistance, though we would have to discuss the terms and specifics of any expedition.

I have also heard word of the disasters struck by the Tauhan, though those lands are too far for my ships to reach in normal circumstances, I wished to enquire whether your pathways would grant access? If so, perhaps we could embark on a venture there together.

Finally, you may have learned that the Quorum slighted my envoys and gave insult to my people. We have corrected this error with strokes of blood upon their shores, and now we have learned much of their people and their true nature. As a gesture of good will and friendship to your people, I have sent my messengers with some exemplars of the corpses we retrieved. I hope your researchers find them interesting, and will share any observations with us.

May the black void between the stars stretch between our foes.

Mansa Sino'otollo

[[three crow-like humanoid corpses of the people of the QQ arrive with the letter]]

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To my ally, Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed,

I apologize for not responding to you with the haste our new primary trading partner merits. I cannot assure you it will not happen again, sadly, but I can assure you I shall endeavor to avoid as much.

With the Pathways now established, I am certain that you have noticed as well as I the incredible bounty already passing through your lands. With time and cooperation, I hope that we can draw these ties together ever tighter, where our mutual trade, Al'Daric's magic and your martial prowess might prove a mighty alliance.

Fortunately for the both of us, Dun Sancerre has not made any aggressive maneuvers towards us, instead withdrawing partially from our lands, possibly to attempt an incursion towards the north where the Tauhan once stood.

Regarding the ruins of Tauhan, you and your people are most certainly welcome to use the Pathways to visit Al'Daric for any purpose save open hostility towards our nation. We have, after all, a pseudo-instantaneous method of travel between our peoples, and the blending of cultures can result in some truly fascinating and novel solutions to problems. In any case, we have plenty of guilds and attendant members who are quite eager to attempt to delve into the former Tauhan lands and the Ultralands alike. Should it interest your adventurers, these guilds are quite open to foreign members (and offer many advantages to those who would formally join), but even without dedicated membership, you likely will find willing participants and sponsors amongst these guilds quite easily for any expeditions you venture upon.

Regarding the Quotidian Quorum, may I inquire as to the slights presented? Their secrecy and mage-schools are of great interest to Al'Daric, the latter most of all, and for a culture that prizes the controlled flow of knowledge, sharing what we do know of them is surely a grave insult to them. As a gesture of goodwill, I shall share much of what I know of their people which I presume you may not yet know yourself:

They prize knowledge and learning "above all else," and have 'very rigorous' entry requirements to their own Magical Academy. Furthermore, they have great skill regarding languages, capable of

responding in fluent Darician script after but a single letter written in such script. I have a suspicion that they are not capable of original speech, merely repeating words and phrases they have encountered. I have little evidence for this, however. It is merely a hunch.

I also thank you for your donation of this carrion. One of my advisors is quite giddy at the possibility of investigating them, but they are being kept in stasis for the moment as we make the necessary preparations for a full dissection and examination. Accordingly, be prepared for a more complete report in time, and your generous provision of these corpses will potentially allow for the development of weapons and spells designed specifically with their unique biology in mind.

May Trade Flow Like Endless Rivers,  
The Headmaster.

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DECEMBER

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To my dear friend and ally, the Headmaster

I greet you with all the honour and respect you are due. Another trading season has passed and the wealth it has brought has me greatly satisfied.

However, I am saddened to say recent events have occurred that worry us. Thieves have recently attempted to raid one of our treasuries, and men with the light skin and garb of your traders were reported fleeing the scene. Moreover, my people report that the artifact or spellwork that was used to pass the wards has the feel of the spellwork of your nation.

I appreciate that your people answer to many guilds, and that there are forces that would benefit from bad blood between us, whilst you yourself have spoken to us frankly and with friendship. Thus, I leap not to accusations or reprisals. However, if this was done with your knowledge and approval then I would have you admit it, so that the matter can be resolved between us in a civilised fashion on the duelling sands.

If you were not involved, I would have your oath on the matter, and I will consider the matter settled and look for the perpetrators elsewhere.



In happier news, I have prepared a band of adventurers to begin exploring the ultralands. If you wish to add your own band to theirs, they will be arriving next month in Al'Daric along with some of our navigators, who I wish to enroll in your schools – in exchange, they will bring specimens from Tauhan and teach some of their spells of sea and salt.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Lord of the Nine Islands, Warden of Northern Tauhan, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

Mansa Sino'otollo

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## JANUARY

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To our valued trade partners in the Keitan League,

We regret to inform you that the nation of Al'Daric has been the target of a bio-magical warfare strike, unleashing the virulent plague known as "The Shaking Plague" upon our nation. Reports seem to indicate that while your nation has thus far escaped its clutches, we wish to extend assurances that we are working on a cure for this disease. In the meantime, we advise limiting trade with other infected nations with inferior disease-handling protocols and taking precautions such as initiating a quarantine protocol, isolating within individual residences as much as possible. For individuals or groups suffering from or wishing to avoid contracting the Shakes, we advise coming to Al'Daric, where advanced medical care is available. We are also capable of disposing of any diseased corpses safely and in such a manner that should prevent further contamination.

While we have some early suspicions to the originator of this cowardly attack, investigations are still ongoing and we hesitate to assign blame before we are certain who is responsible. Rest assured, Al'Daric is doing everything in its power to deal with this plague and unleash appropriate retaliation upon those responsible.

In perhaps no more pleasant news, though certainly less dire, I can categorically deny any officially sanctioned actions taken against Keitan League establishments from any office I have sway over. Oaths are not made lightly in Al'Daric, though I can provide such if that is what you require. While I cannot say with confidence this was not any form of independent actor originating within

Al'Daric, I suspect one of two possible culprits for this attack: either the same mysterious attacker which unleashed the Shaking Plague upon us and now wishes to sour relations between our two powerful nations, or the Quotidian Quorum.

In regards to the Quorum, their corpses have proven remarkably fruitful for our research. While I shall spare you the details, I can assure you that simply studying them has advanced some of our theoretical soul-magic knowledge by leaps and bounds. It seems that they are both magical and nonmagical, capable of magically shifting their true form, making them shapeshifters wholly immune to all normal methods of divining the presence of such creatures. Nonetheless, we are confident with some time we can counteract this ability, though our current attention is still on the Shaking Plague, so dealing with Quotidian spies is something of a lower priority, as I am certain you understand.

Best regards, and may a river of gold never run dry,

The Headmaster

[[Stamped with official seal]]

To my honoured ally, the Head-of-headmasters

Bellor now writhes with vapours that arise  
 From foul sweat and cruel humours  
 "Bring out your dead" the corpse-man cries  
 as men choke on pus-filled tumours.

I deeply regret to hear of the extent of this shaking plague, and I have written words of mourning. However, I believe I can assist in your search for the culprit. The originator of the plague was the being known to us as FRIEND.

Is this entity known to you? My shamans have determined it is some manner of god or titan. This entity has written to us, providing some gifts of wealth and information. In return, much as I sent you the corpses of Quorum, I sent one to FRIEND. For this I was told we had earned a prize: to be immune from a coming plague. We did not request this, and I cannot say whether this plague was unleashed by FRIEND or merely predicted, but it convinces me of the terrible power of this being. I do not regret that my people were spared the ravages you suffer, but nor did I wish our trading

partners to suffer so. In future, perhaps we can aid each other in investigating and dealing with FRIEND? In the short term, I will be sending our Navigators with medicines, and servants from whom you could draw blood, in the hopes that study can unlock and transfer this immunity.

As to the incident on our own soil: I accept your word, and honour you for it. We have recently had a missive from Grovel informing us that an assassin made a rather obvious attempt on the life of a Grovel official whilst shouting “for Keitan!.” This was, obviously, not commissioned by my own hand. The assassin would not have failed if so. This makes me agree with your assessment that the Quorum are attempting to disrupt and poison the relations of other nations, and makes attempting to bypass their shapeshifting a priority. We would be willing to pay a significant amount of wealth for a method of detecting them – either spells our navigators could learn, or magical items.

It grieves me to further burden you with sorrows, but in light of our pledge to provide you with military protection I’m afraid I must share information I have obtained from correspondence with Empress Adélaïde de Val-d’Oise de Lesdiguière. Please find her words as relating to Al’Darc below:

“That of the Headmaster of Al’Darc, towards our southern borders, tis of mysterious composition and of unknowable ambitions. Tis, nay, was mine aim to build strongholds within their territories to protect and defend thine people’s. Theirs are of greatest similarities to my own, both in physical composition and cultures, thus twas our aim to make them a protectorate under our Empire. Yet, despite these ambitions, communications proved a greater difficulty than I wished. Thereafter, by time we’d’ve gathered forces to instill such a Protectoracy, the Great Cataclysm occurred, bringing us to present day.

[...]

“We seek the occupation, taxation and protection of the Daricians far before we see ourselves attempting to occupy and safeguard [The Quorum]”

Elsewhere, she notes that she will undertake to conquer new protectorates “as soon as Tauhan is pacified.” My fleets stand ready to defend your ports, and I have an idea to prevent this occupation from coming to pass, if you wish to hear it. Do you have any information on Dun Sancerre’s forces or lands that would help us plan?

For reasons that I hope are obvious, I would request that you not share any information in this letter further (or at least not its provenance).

May the prince-of-stars shed his golden light upon the wealth flowing between our lands.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Lord of the Nine Islands, Warden of Northern Tauhan, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Walker of the Elder Path, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

Mansa Sino'otollo

[[Stamped with official seal]]

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To my friends: the Headmaster-in-shadows and Sir Nibbles the engorged

I write this letter to both of you, to facilitate a great undertaking.

As I have written to you both separately, the Empress of Dun Sancerre has written to me of her intentions to forcibly make a protectorate of Al'Daric and to push her armies through Tauhan and into Grovel, purging it of the "impure." She intends to move on Al'Daric once more as soon as Tauhan is under her secure control. For our part, the Empress believes she can get us to stand aside or even assist these attacks by threatening us with the might of her armies if we do not. On other fronts, we believe the QQ have sought to poison Keitan relations with you both, whilst the correspondent known as FRIEND seeks to play us against each other with tasks and plagues.

We in Keitan will not be ruled by outside forces, and the mere fact that others seek to turn us against you or to threaten us to stand aside so they can invade makes us desire greater friendship. Beyond that, your nations have proved your worth and wisdom in your own ways. I propose we deepen these friendships, both for its innate virtues and so that we might stand united against threats which seek to bully us individually. My proposal is this:

Our three nations form a loose defensive military alliance, with a name determined by our members.

The members pledge to defend each other if attacked by a hostile power

-if one member does not wish to commit military forces or does not have them, they can provide financial or magical support

- if the member is the aggressor, support could be requested but is not guaranteed by this treaty

- If any one member attacks the others, the other two unite against them (lesser hostile acts could be punished by sanctions)

Other terms could be added if you wish. Let me know of your thoughts. Sincerely

Mansa Sino'otollo

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To our allies in the Kingdom of Grovel and the Keitan League,

We in Al'Daric are quite pleased to receive your offer of a formal pact of mutual defense, in such a way that further strengthens the defense treaties formerly established. Al'Daric will gladly contribute in the ways we are most adept, supply and logistics. Accordingly, my agents will move to establish a Pathway in the Kingdom of Grovel as soon as we are capable, providing our alliance with mobility unmatched by Dun Sancerre, such that any and all forces required to combat the expansionistic Kingdom of the North can be met with the full might of our alliance. Furthermore, Al'Daric will look to develop magical methods of dealing with armies, in addition to arming those who come to the defense of Al'Daric with magical tools and weapons, alongside battle mages which specialize in mass-conflict.

May you find yourselves prosperous,

The Headmaster

[[Stamped with official seal]]

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FEBRUARY

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To the Headmaster and Great King Sir Nibbles

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

I thank you both for your responses. Your words and suggestions are mighty and wise. Unfortunately, without knowing whether you would support our endeavours against Dun Sancerre, my Salt-Chiefs in the field decided they could not match the crusade blade-for-blade on the mainland, for our talents are at sea. As such, we have concentrated on holding the island of Ayambe within Tauhan, and we are observing a truce in mainland Tauhan – for now.

I suspect we have one-to-two months until Dun Sancerre looks elsewhere. Next month their conquest of mainland Tauhan will likely complete if I do not commit ground forces to opposing them, so I would anticipate the crusade turning towards Al Daric, Grovel or Ayambe the month after that.

Do you have suggestions for how we should proceed? I am minded to cede mainland Tauhan to Dun Sancerre in return for the islands which interest me, then prepare a naval strike against Dun Sancerres unprotected rear, but I am open to your ideas.

In other matters, should we term a name for our alliance, so that my warrior-poets might sing its glories?

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Northern Tauhan, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

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To his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo,

I bid you greetings in these trying times, as well as a warning.

I am well aware of your disagreements with our enigmatic shared neighbor in the Quotidian Quorum, and while such disagreements render this warning somewhat redundant, it bears stating nonetheless. This is in part because they seem to be masters of misinformation and I wish to clear up any misunderstandings before they occur.

The result of our investigation into the origin of the Shaking Plague places it as a direct attack by the entity known as 'FRIEND,' possibly aided by the Quotidian Quorum (details later) as a blast of wild magic originating from the Ultralands created a magical resonance with some of our own to unleash the plague upon our lands. Arithmantic recreations of the situation place the likelihood of this having been a truly random event as having less than a 1 in 100 billion chance of occurring, and by no small margin. The given number is but the calculated odds whereupon the plague would have infected anyone and begun to spread, and not the actual creation of the plague (for which we still have no explanation, as it defies all known medical knowledge how the blast created the disease).

Still, we, to the best of our ability, worked to contain the outbreak, though not before it had spread beyond our borders, where it fell out of our ability to control. Still, we worked tirelessly in an attempt to determine a cure for the Shaking Plague. Our progress was stymied, however, by a veritable army of saboteurs from the Quotidian Quorum. Having shapeshifted into the appearance of Daricians, they stole and destroyed research pertaining to the cure of the Shaking Plague. With this treachery unveiled, we launched into a series of investigations and discovered that the Quotidian Quorum has in their possession extensive knowledge on the creation and weaponization of disease. When we confronted them with this knowledge, they denied any involvement on the part of themselves and FRIEND, then promptly attempted to demand we provide them with all "magic, technology, or magitech related to disease creation" we possessed, a request we are not only unable to fulfill but entirely unwilling, for self-evident reasons.

I trust that with this missive you are capable of seeing the enormity of a threat the Quotidian Quorum potentially represents, if they were capable of creating the Shaking Plague and are now seeking to prevent efforts to cure it. Their shapeshifting is potent, versatile, and until recently, thought utterly impossible. Almost all traditional methods utilized to identify shapeshifters will not work on them. However, their weakness seems to be crowds. Overload them with people in close proximity and their disguises will fall.

Best of luck,

The Headmaster

[[Stamped with official seal]]

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To my ally, The Headmaster of Al Daric.

Whilst the eagle soars clear through the dawn, distilling glory.  
 When the parrot whispers in trees, recounting life's story.  
 And the takahe flicks swift through the branches  
 And the albatross travels far, taking its chances.

The crow squats, eating the eyes of corpses.

The stars herald the season of Ambition is nigh, and your words are perhaps the greatest of its portents. Your letter was intriguing, nigh, revelatory. As we had previously written you, we had believed that the entity known as FRIEND had originated the plague, but we had not suspected the Quotidians involvement. This accusation, however, makes several other details fall into place: the Rahastas have stated that they know who unleashed the plague, but are “bound by contract” not to share. We believe the QQ issue contracts to their allies, stipulating that information about QQ cannot be shared. In addition, our forces raiding the Quorum frequently suffered a variety of maladies and poisons. This fits, does it not?

We remember the ‘Daricians’ that assaulted our temple and attempted to steal secrets. We remember the letter from Grovel stating that ‘Keitan’ assassins had attempted to injure one of their agents (this seems especially unlikely, for if we attempt to kill you, you will be armed, and we will succeed). We remember these things as we read your story of ‘Daricians’ raiding your research facilities and destroying a cure that could have benefitted your nation greatly.

We remember. And we remember older things. Tales of soulless creatures, shapeshifters and aitu that haunted our people in the dawn of time. We remember what our ancestors had to do to those creatures. We remember the road to Extinction.

Thus, we are grateful to your letter in the extreme. Indeed, the timing was exceptional, for it resolved our quandaries in the field against the Dun Sancerrans the very day before we had planned to formally declare war. The Dun Sancerrans had offered us peace terms, but we had worried accepting them would not be compatible with our commitments to defend your nation. Yet in the light of our receipt of your letter, the Empress revealed she had received a similar letter, and her desires for conquest in Al Daric were transmuted – as if by some magic of your wizards – into righteous wrath against the Quotidien Quorum. With her stated desire to commit her forces to punitive action against the Quorum, we felt that it was safe to agree a peace settlement in the



Tauhan lands (though we remaining willing to defend you against foreign expansionism in the future if this issue reoccurs). I hope we acted in accordance with your desires in this?

Your countermeasures against the Quorum have been effective, and their implementation rapidly detected several Quotidien, who we then transmuted into corpses through application of our own favoured spell - "javelin throw". Shall we send these cadavers to you, to further your subordinates work?

More broadly, we stand ready to aid you, in accordance to our alliance. Do you desire our aid in launching a military response to the actions of the Quorum? We are unsuited to a war in the shadows, such as they are waging against you, but perhaps we can distract them from your lands whilst you work on a cure. Dun Sancerre has suggested we three rulers meet in person to discuss a response, but as this will no doubt take time to arrange, I would hear your thoughts so that we can allocate assets to your aid, or to other projects if not.

Do you intend to keep trading with the Quorum? If not, would the pathway to their lands be available for a military response into their heartlands? We would desire any information you have on them, their cities, trade routes or military capacities, for we know little beyond their nature as soulless mutagenic lab experiments.

As the season of Ambition approaches, may the Serpent witness my words and shine its light upon your own reply.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

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To the Headmaster and Great King Sir Nibbles

Strange developments have occurred since we last spoke. After a series of provocations undermined our cooperation, my forces drew up opposite those of Dun Sancerre in Tauhan, at least a thousand men on each side, and prepared to engage. Yet the night before the conflict began, a letter from the Headmaster arrived, suggesting the reason for our conflict and the overarching plague was the Quotidien Quorum. Under the white flag of peace the next day, the Empress Adelaide and myself strove to reach a suitable peace settlement and avert war. We were successful, I think. I cannot take the credit, for I believe the Headmaster's information was the deciding factor. The Empress has agreed to leave our territories in Tauhan secure and wishes to turn her forces south, away from Grovel and Al Daric, to the Quotidien Quorum.

The perfidy of the Quorum was shown anew at this point, as assassins and spies from the Quotidien were found amongst both our forces, attempting to provoke conflict and sabotage the peace! These individuals were identified and slain through the information provided by the Headmaster.

I hope I anticipated the Headmaster's wishes correctly, for I believe that the Headmaster did not wish war waged upon Dun Sancerre whilst a larger threat presents itself, and I think I have secured Grovel and Al Daric's borders through diplomacy, rather than violence.

I hope our cooperation and alliance remains strong, and I believe it would benefit us all to discuss these new developments and what actions we should take next. We are also happy to act independently in this matter if either of you wish to remain neutral.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Lord of Ayambe, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Northern Tauhan, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

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## With Dun Sancerre

Correspondences with Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Her Name

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DECEMBER

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[[Attached are two Letters, one larger with the bright gold and rose Gryphon seal of Dun Sancerre, seeming to be addressing the Headmaster directly. The other letter is smaller, with the seal of a black lion, which seems to be a transcription, that has been produced in large, and sent across every corner of Al'Daric.]]

To the Headmaster of the Councilors of Al Daric. I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Mine Name, send this letter as means of elucidation of mine peoples ambitions, and of beginning negotiations. Forthwith I must bid the peoples of Al'Daric mine apologies, in mean this in greatest sincerity. We have invaded your Countryside with naught but whispers entrenched within vagueties as explanation. Twas not our intention to terrorize, nor was it to depose of yourself, nor your lesser rulerships. Our ambitions at greatest, would be to leave your ruling bodies as was, establishing yours as protectorate under our greater military. Yet despite our initial desires, henceforth wishes of that nature have been cast into distant winters. The ambition of Sancerre lies now Northward, a goal we now request in part your aid.

I understand a lack of trust, few reason ought one trust a foreign invader to their lands. Fewer still, for one to hold such trust to aid one so silent. Yet, all the same I have no choice but to ask. By time a Raven shalt reach Ir'Kan, I will be weeks time from Sancerren Borders. An army of near fifty thousand in my retinue, pushing up through the Cestin Coast, on course we cannot abandon. The moment we recede back to Sancerre, the unsaintly tide of fiends would undo our efforts to reclaim the Tauhan Freeholds. Yet, you know, as well as I. There exists threat to annihilate our lands. A sickness. We thought at first, Influenza, a monster that has decimated lesser Kingdoms, and in truth would be monster alone. Though, we have suspicions as to a new Plague, with lethalties unthinkable. I hold no doubt that you are not of awares, as I have heard in recent from Darician Healers within our ranks your own understanding of such things. While mention of your Medicines seem less apt to deal with such things of Scaleblight, which as I am understood, your peoples hadn't've experienced within your histories. In our differences of ability to deal with this

Newfound Disease, it is understood that yours wields lances, as ours wave sticks betweenst us and our colossal foe.

I must urge an understanding, that since such calamitous events scoured the lands, our peoples' cities flood with Tauhan refugee. In particular, the Kingships of the Vaerlan Peninsula, that of the Kingships of Tavar, Eggebracht and Maecht all filled to their peak with crowding cities. Infrastructure, broken by years of war, and new fiendish threats that rise from both the Tomb Bay and the Gravesea. All resulting in possibility for a catastrophe on scale to what occurred with the Tauhan Fleet Kingdoms, a perfection of circumstance for any Disease.

I request now for your aid. If you are to lend us ones learned in the world of Disease and Medicines, we may yet avoid narrow Catastrophe. In addition, as you ought know, we seek the Retribution and Reclamation of those Tauhan lost to the Great Cataclysm. By call of Saint Sout. we shall only end this campaign when each Tauhan freehold has been reclaimed, and safe under the protection of Dun Sancerre. If such righteous, saintly, aims would be within your conscience. We request any and all aid available.

If I could, I'd hold such request outside of letters, but as fates have brought us. I cannot leave this regiment. Such things hold many ills, but know that as long as I stay from Lesdiguières, mine words shant be held by our peoples politics. You shall receive response with greater immediacy, and I hope ours may rebuild our relations with you and your peoples, especially as war with those that caused such genocides loom over our Horizons.

May the Saints guide us all

-Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières

It is the 10th of Brumaire, in the eighth hour, outside of Château Guillaume-le-Conquérant, surrounding it is an open field. Residing within the field is an ocean of steel, dotted with the banners of a hundred houses, beneath them what must be a hundred thousand knights. They face a balcony, which raises up her majesty Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières first of her name. This transcription begins from the first quarter of the eighth hour, ending at half to the tenth.

“I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, first of mine name, will now commence the Declaration of Retribution. By path of Saint Sout. I have sounded the call.”

“I know what you all wish to hear. That the Saints have guided us. That we know of what horrible unsaintly Chaos has turned Tauhan to fiend. That we know how to protect ourselves against it.” The Empress pauses. “Those would be lies. The truth is as bitter as it is horrifying, we stand at a precipice of the unknown. We stand against a force we do not understand, yet one so powerful it can annihilate an Empire in a matter of hours.”

“You may lose your life in a moment's notice! You may be held captive! Bound to fiendish flesh, conscious! As you massacre your comrades! - It is possible that we may all fall victim! That our ambitions are naught but suicide! As we all turn to fiend! As we all storm back into Dun Sancerre and devour our own families!”

“But I know now that I have no choice! I swore my vows! To uphold honour! To give all to Chivalry! To give all to the Saints!”

“When I screamed down the slopes of the Haute-Alpes with infantrymen at my side! Rushing into a certain death! I learned then what I was made of! What all of Sancerre would risk to uphold our creed! And now! With a million lives cast into the dirt! With monsters torturing the innocent as we speak!”

“It is time for all of Sancerre to make a choice! What is our Chivalry! What is our Honour! If we are not to lay down blood and steel for the Retribution of the innocent! How dare we besmirch the name of the Saints that came before!”

“I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, first of mine name, will be joining the vanguard! Not on horseback! Not buried in the back lines!” The Empress raises her hatchet into the air. “I will fight in the mud with the infantrymen! If I am to die, then I will die with a hatchet in my hands!”

“I have made my choice! It is time you've made yours!”

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JANUARY

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To our valued trade partners in Dun Sancerre,

We regret to inform you that the nation of Al'Daric has been the target of a bio-magical warfare strike, unleashing the virulent plague known as "The Shaking Plague" upon our nation. Reports indicate that it has already spread to your nation, and we wish to extend assurances that we are working on a cure for this disease. In the meantime, we advise limiting trade with other infected nations and taking precautions such as initiating a quarantine protocol, isolating within individual residences as much as possible. For individuals or groups suffering from or wishing to avoid contracting the Shakes, we advise coming to Al'Daric, where advanced medical care is available. We are also capable of disposing of any diseased corpses safely and in such a manner that should prevent further contamination.

While we have some early suspicions to the originator of this cowardly attack, investigations are still ongoing and we hesitate to assign blame before we are certain who is responsible. Rest assured, Al'Daric is doing everything in its power to deal with this plague and unleash appropriate retaliation upon those responsible.

Accordingly, though we support your efforts wholeheartedly, we simply cannot spare further mage-power at the moment to venture forth to the frontlines of your honorable expansion along the Coast, though we are even as I write this, we are making progress to attempt to find a cure for the Shaking Plague, which will be made available for Dun Sancerre as soon as it is ready.

Best regards,

The Headmaster

[[Stamped with official seal]]

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FEBRUARY

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To Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières,

I bid you greetings in these trying times, as well as a warning.

While we have had our disagreements in the past, and I am fully aware that you have no desire to leave us as an independent national entity, in the spirit of international cooperation, I nonetheless wish to warn you of a high-class threat to possibly the entire world.

The result of our investigation into the origin of the Shaking Plague places it as a direct attack by the entity known as 'FRIEND,' possibly aided by the Quotidian Quorum (details later) as a blast of wild magic originating from the Ultralands created a magical resonance with some of our own to unleash the plague upon our lands. Arithmantic recreations of the situation place the likelihood of this having been a truly random event as having less than a 1 in 100 billion chance of occurring, and by no small margin. The given number is but the calculated odds whereupon the plague would have infected anyone and begun to spread, and not the actual creation of the plague (for which we still have no explanation, as it defies all known medical knowledge how the blast created the disease).

Still, we, to the best of our ability, worked to contain the outbreak, though not before it had spread beyond our borders, where it fell out of our ability to control. Still, we worked tirelessly in an attempt to determine a cure for the Shaking Plague. Our progress was stymied, however, by a veritable army of saboteurs from the Quotidian Quorum. Having shapeshifted into the appearance of Daricians, they stole and destroyed research pertaining to the cure of the Shaking Plague. With this treachery unveiled, we launched into a series of investigations and discovered that the Quotidian Quorum has in their possession extensive knowledge on the creation and weaponization of disease. When we confronted them with this knowledge, they denied any involvement on the part of themselves and FRIEND, then promptly attempted to demand we provide them with all "magic, technology, or magitech related to disease creation" we possessed, a request we are not only unable to fulfill but entirely unwilling, for self-evident reasons.

I trust that with this missive you are capable of seeing the enormity of a threat the Quotidian Quorum potentially represents, if they were capable of creating the Shaking Plague and are now seeking to prevent efforts to cure it. Their shapeshifting is potent, versatile, and until recently, thought utterly impossible. Almost all traditional methods utilized to identify shapeshifters will not work on them. However, their weakness seems to be crowds. Overload them with people in close proximity and their disguises will fall.

Best of luck,

The Headmaster

[[Stamped with official seal]]

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To the Headmaster of the Councilors of Al Daric. I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Mine Name, send this letter as means of elucidation of the ambitions of 'The Ironscale Pact', an alliance formed in recent with that of Mansa Sino'otollo of the Keitian League. Not only have we pledged together unity within the Tauhan Space, the Pact's signing was the means of our people's to share the secrets we have gained of others. To convene, and commune, to decide what ought be the future subjected to all Bellorans.

I state now in earnest, that as part of treaty ours was willing to sign, would contain clause, that "our militaries shall become united and build upon themselves, to eventually aggress against an enemy mutually chosen by both nations." Prior to your letter, I will speak with truest of mine transparencies. I had been misled to believe you and yours had been the originator of this 'Shaking Plague', a threat that is naught anything less than a genocide against mine people's and any whom do not have access to medicines.

Those that came to our aid first, those of whom gave tangible medicine to mine people's and had proved themselves in previous to be our singular ally within Bellor. Would be that of Vulkareth Sootscale, Chosen Assembly leader of the Rahastans. Whence the Plague began, he offered that greater than simple condolences, he spoke of his knowing of whom created the Plague. He states his words were bound, but provided great hint that it was "Where before you marched gently". These implications lay not only vague, but bare in whom it may implicate painting a greatly simple picture, of the torturous Headmaster, whom would defile his innocent, to render himself free of suspicions whence it came time to look for the origins of the Plague.

For this I must apologize, for when I had learned of this from that damnable lizard, it played on our distrust, paranoia of the mages which scry within each and every of our conversations. That you sought recompense for the show of military power I had made within thine lands, and that your means of revenge would be through a genocide of mine populous. I agreed to Mansa's terms for signing the agreement, with the intent of united our armies against you and flooding your streets with blood and ash.

Despite this, your most recent letter rapidly quelled these fires, the information not only casted doubt, but reminded me that even amongst mine own men there lurks spies of whom steals their faces. That there is few reality in which ours could coexist with the Quotidian Quorum, but greater than that, cast extreme doubt as to the statements on their greatest political ally. The near singular reason for mine fury against you, was that of Vulkareth Soot-Scales comments. Then, separate picture began to be painted, of scheme betweenst Vulkareth and their greatest ally, mayhaps not



with mind oft mine genocide, but certainly at the lack oft concern for both ours and yours. He near goaded me to wage war against you, to slaughter your mages, and incinerate your libraries, and for that I shalt forever seek to rectify. Mine first step tis this honest recounting oft these events, and I shalt continue with the pivotal moment oft the War Council, that shifted blame entirely from yours and hast convinced mine peoples to rally with the Keitian League against those soulless fiends within crow's skin.

The letter I had received from Vulkareth, chiefly mentioned that they twere bound by code to say naught where it twas from in specific. That seemed stray, useless detail to me and mine at first, for I hadn't trusted the Quotidans to the degree in which I twood see their '1.2.2.', but Mansa Sino'otollo hadn't shared my caution. Displayed in clear, that their tongue tis bound within reflective language oft the pact the Quotidans form with their trade partners. Thusly, Mansa shared oft the further crimes that their people haft committed, and chiefly that they twood lack souls, on par with that oft any Chaos Monstrosity born from the Tides.

These two key details, provide extreme evidences towards the culpability oft not only the Quorum, but also that oft Rahast. Mine people shiver to death in hundred thousand, from a plague oft their making. The armies of The Pact, shalt wash over them as a Tide twood, suffocating them in a sea of fire and blood.

I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, first oft mine name, ruler oft the Empire of Dun Sancerre, am united with Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark King, ruler oft the United Tribes of Keitan. Together we haft deemed you, Headmaster oft Al'Daric, a passing oft our scrutiny. We believe you. Greater, we believe that your enemies are more numerous than you believe. That Rahast seeks your destruction, or to any extent, twood be willing to risk such a thing to throw mine off the trail.

Already, we haft begun Embargo on Trade from Rahast to the lands oft the Quotidan Quorum, we request first through Diplomacy that thou may begin the same thing. This tragedy they haft committed against mine people's I shalt state again, tis a genocide of perhaps soon to be unparalleled scale. The Ironscale Pact will respond in turn. We invite you now to join us, within some form oft Alliance. The terms oft which negotiable, but the ends oft which are a united front against the Quotidan Quorum.

May the Saints Guide us in Wisdom.

-Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières

[[Attached is the January letter from Vulkerath to Empress Adélaïde]]

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To her majesty Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières,

I am pleased and highly relieved that my letter managed to find its way to you prior to your summit with the Keitan League. Had you invaded us, we would have been forced into using more... unsavory tactics.

While the Quotidians have yet to return our research to us (they claim they cannot), we hopefully have established enough countermeasures for their kind to work on engineering a permanent cure for the Shaking Plague and its sister, the Blue Blight. With some fortune, such efforts shall pay off shortly and we can focus upon the true threats which face us.

Which brings me to the matter of the Quotidian Quorum. My people are not warlike, we are more scholars and artificers. While some mages may be willing to assist in your battles, I cannot provide any noticeable level of military force outside of a direct and substantial threat, such as invasion. A counterattack to our neighbors to the south does not qualify, unfortunately. However, I can attempt to provide support to your efforts to the best of my ability. The workshops of Al'Daric are open to you, and will continue to be for as long as your wars are in pursuit of our common enemies.

Unfortunately, I am incapable of providing use of the Pathways to strike directly into the heart of the QQ. As per their insistence, the Path established within their lands is near their border, and in a false town beyond that. What I can instead provide is access to many Paths near their border, and, with your leave, a corresponding Path in the heart of Sancerran lands, enabling you to all but bypass the supply train such an army mandates. Depending on the nature and length of your occupation of Quorum lands, we may even be capable of installing a Path on the other end, providing unparalleled options and opportunity for your military.

Best regards,

The Headmaster

[[Stamped with official seal]]

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To the Headmaster of the Councilors of Al Daric. I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Mine Name, send this letter as means of negotiation. Tis with mine greatest oft gratitudes to see that of which you write, I now see path forward for our histories to be buried within the righteousness of our future acts. Further, I wish to urge several actions in us moving forward as a united front against the genocidal fiends that lay bare before us.

The first, tis oft greatest importance, we understand that greater than your capacity for violence, tis the wealth oft the industry thou spreads to your neighbors. Such a thing tis the lumber which fuels the fires of war, and as such, we must request that thou ceases trade with the Quorum, and that whilst continued trade with Rahast may be necessary, I firmly request that thou dost not construct Pathways within. If Rahast twood have means of teleporting their goods to the pathways currently within the Quorum territories, the Keitian Embargo on their trade to the Quorum twood be nonfunctional.

The second, tis one in which I twood understand your denial, our aim twood be to make public show oft Al'Daric being a member, or atleast a supporter oft the Pact. This needn't have any clause, nor contract that bind your actions to ours, at simplest twood be a political display. Let those of Crow and Rat, know that your people have the military weight oft both the Keitian League and the Empire of Dun Sancerre behind them. When they are to see the Gold Star banner, let them fear for their ports raided by catamarans, and their cities flattened by artillery.

Both Mansa Sino'Otollo, and I wish to convene summit within Vis'Daric with naught but small honour guard with us each. There we twood seek to negotiate terms of alliance, and extent in which we are to prevent aggressions against each other. The complexities that must be kept in mind with your fiendish support oft our infantry must also be negotiated. Whilst in truth, tis clear for me and mine that hast bore witness to Chaos Magics to understand that it twood seem our many neighbors may be immune to the whispers oft Chaos. That complexity tis an impossibility for all to understand, whilst magic malady tear from them their lives. Greater than that, if during the current tragedy, our forces magical augmentations twood push Sancerrens to Sorcery and twood birth another Tide into this world, I fear for our abilities to combat such problems.

As such, while I hast greatest oft appreciations for the material and magical benefit your offer us, there need be reassurances.

In point of clarity with the ambitions of the Ten Kingdoms of Dun Sancerre, we seek the eradication of the Quorum, and I shall now lay out our strategies bare before you.

[[Pictured: a map of Bellor with icons of rats, knights, doorways, and other such relevant information throughout]]

Above is a rudimentary inscription of the war map within the Summit held which formed the Pact, and our next months military affairs. As I would hope needn't be said, this map cannot leave this letter, as it would pose unspeakable threat to the soundness of the coming tactics. I show this as explicit show of good faith and mine trust in you and your peoples.

- The United Armies of the Ironscale Pact shall clear the remaining territories infested by the Tauhan Elders, which would stop when meeting the border to Weylin's Grasp. There, the Shellfolk shall be allowed to leave the Crusade, which will diminish the power of the army.

- The Shark Fleet will ferry the remaining Crusade to the Horn of Vaerlan, in which mine forces will need to deal with emergent internal affairs.

- The Shark Fleet and Kraken Fleet, will then move into the Green Deep, and begin the naval trade blockade from Rahast-Quorum. Whilst laying the groundwork for a fortress to be built in Fool's Pass, to blockade land trade as well.

This will be the plans for this next coming month. Further than that, we shall unfortunately not be using the Pathways as reliable method of combatting the Quorum, such a thing is too reckless for such an expertful roaming back of fiends. We would be surging in swinging wildly as inebriated halberdier, leaving ourselves easy prey for those that would lay spikes beneath our cavalry.

Instead, we shall move slowly, deliberately, we shall burn their crops, we shall raze their homes. Ours is to Hold Ground and flood their bogs with fire and blood. Such things said, we lack the senses of scholars, and would be open to shifting such plans within the summit, where Mansa, I and ideally yourself, would plan out our next month of military action.

Another point that I must urge, is to restrict the extent of your action taken against Rahast. Whilst is true that I find them culpable in acts of manipulation, they offer not only medicine, but within the previous conflict, have offered warriors. These soldiers held the righteousness, befitting that of any whom deserve greatest consideration. I have seen them fearless in danger, and

unyielding when they too shed their lives and join the mountain of corpses that follows a Crusade that too never bring them benefit. In this I shall Honour them, and will have as preface to all diplomatic or military actions that impact them.

I hope to soon greet you in the flesh as ally, Headmaster. For I can see future where our forces united can see to securing all that is Good, Just and Right.

May his Lionheart beat within us all.

-Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières

To her majesty Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières,

I understand your concerns about Al'Daric continuing to finance the Quotidian Quorum, and while my people are independent and canny, I shall do my absolute best to firmly discipline any smugglers who attempt to trade with our common enemy. This is, naturally, combined with a complete cessation of official trade with any who would directly threaten Al'Daric, a matter of course we have already have had established. My knowledge of the Corvidans is limited, however, and they are canny enough I would not be surprised if they manage to secret supplies from Al'Daric or are capable of replicating our previously provided goods. Similarly, I will instruct my underlings to not construct any Pathways within the bounds of Rahastanian lands as per your request, though shall take no additional actions to censure them, again as per your request.

I shall endeavor to make an announcement pertaining to our alliance posthaste. An official document will be posted by my ambassadors in all nations once such an official document has been drafted and passes all bureaucratic officiation, a process which can admittedly be quite lengthy. I shall nonetheless attempt to expedite the required steps to the best of my capability.

Lastly, I will gladly host a summit within our proud capital. I believe you will be quite pleased with the amenities provided as a part of such an event. When shall we attempt to convene?

While I must officially protest that our methods are not fiendish in the slightest, I understand that such phrasing is merely the result of cultural differences. Our mages are strictly instructed in rigorous methods for harnessing the Arcane, and our techniques are strictly rooted in imposing

Order upon the chaos we found ourselves surrounded by in the previous age. Rest assured, unless the Sancerran blood is inherently inimical to the control of nature, none of your peoples educated in the Darician schools of magic should succumb to the ravages of Chaos. However, do inform me of said reassurances you would require and I shall attempt my utmost to provide them.

Sincerely,

The Headmaster

[[Stamped with official seal]]

## With Serebian Confederation

Correspondence with Mikhail Wladislaw, Prince of the Pass, High Chancellor of the Congress of Lords

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OCTOBER

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Greetings to High Chancellor Wladislaw,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits. From the reports I have received, you are perhaps the only other nation that similarly places as high an importance on the magical arts as they are due. Accordingly, we wish to present to you a bargain unlike any offered by any of your other neighbors or allies, and one that shall never be found elsewhere.

We have heard of the fine warriors of your land, and in exchange for their aid in battle should any foreign interests attempt to harm Al'Daric, we are prepared to lend access to the Pathways, a magical network of portals that can facilitate trade to a degree impossible otherwise. Through this network, it would be simplicity itself to provide support to your armies in the form of powerful artefacts, mighty defensive wards, and more besides, even should all other avenues of supply be cut off. The Pathways allow the journey to be accomplished in but the blink of an eye for the traveler, and with none of the dangers of crossing hazardous terrain or navigating around warbands.

Even in peacetime, such a trade network would be a massive boon to your cities, as all the wealth and knowledge of Al'Daric and the West would flow through your lands, enriching your people and making the Serebian Confederation the origin of magical trade and goods flowing to the east from as far west as the Rahastan Assembly of Tribes.

Furthermore, the Pathways would allow your mage-nobles direct access to the Elthin Academy and all the opportunities therein. Even the oldest and most knowledgeable archmages of Al'Daric constantly learn and discover new facets of magic within its hallowed halls, and I am confident that even the mightiest and most knowledgeable of your mages would likewise benefit from the resources and knowledge it provides.

I eagerly await your response,

Looking Ever Onwards,  
The Headmaster

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OCTOBER

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To the honorable Mikhail Wladislaw,

I am indeed in good health and fortune, though my stations have kept me unavoidably quite busy as of late, unfortunately.

I am pleased to hear you are interested in forming a pact of trade, and I understand your concerns with not wishing to overcommit. While we have managed to form a pact of mutual defense with the majority of the lands of Bellor, there is but one nation who has not replied to our attempts at diplomacy- the land of Dun Sancerre, who are, unfortunately our neighbors to the north. With little information forthcoming in diplomacy and little more knowledge of them than what the Heralds have provided, I cannot procure intimate knowledge of their strengths and size. From what I have seen, however they seem to be formidable warriors, though ignorant of the arcane Arts. Thus, for the foreseeable future, Dun Sancerre is likely the only enemy of Al'Daric you might potentially have to face in battle, and even in that endeavor, you would find yourself supported by warriors from across the continent.

Hopefully, you find that the benefits far outweigh the cost of an alliance with us. What little I have heard of Dun Sancerre suggests that should they indeed decide to venture upon the warpath, they would not be content with merely expanding into their neighbors, but instead not cease until all lands are under their... 'protection.' With your aid, we might manage as a coalition to push back our overeager neighbors before they become a continental problem.

With your leave, I shall begin making the relevant preparations to open a Path within your lands.

Best wishes, and may all your ventures be profitable,  
The Headmaster



## With Those of Unknown or Dubious Allegiance

### Correspondences with Twice Born Prince

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SEPTEMBER

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[[I am unable to translate the first correspondence sent by the Twice Born Prince. It's untranslated form can be found here:

[http://knucklesux.com/PuzzleBox/Secrets/AlDaric/To\\_Daedalus\\_From\\_Copper\\_01\\_September.pdf](http://knucklesux.com/PuzzleBox/Secrets/AlDaric/To_Daedalus_From_Copper_01_September.pdf)]]

---

Greetings to The Twice-Born Prince,

I am pleased to hear of your people's well-being and desire to learn. Truly, chasing the knowledge found in the Arcane is the highest goal one can aspire to. Furthermore, while I wish it shall never be required, your offered aid in martial strength is appreciated, particularly given my people prefer to learn than to fight, and wars are certainly an annoyance best avoided.

We believe heartily in equitable trade, however, and in exchange for your protection from our perhaps overeager neighbor and other threats, Al'Daric is willing to lend you access to the Pathways, a magical network of portals that can facilitate trade to a degree impossible otherwise.

The Pathways are truly a wonder of magical design, and vastly improve the speed in which trade and travel alike can be accomplished. Furthermore, travel via the pathways seems to take but a blink of an eye, and unlike conventional travel, is completely safe, suffering from none of the normal hazards a sea or overland voyage might encounter. Terrain, distance, intervening hostile nations, and even the last of the titanspawn can do nothing to hinder travel in this manner.

Access to such an extensive trade network will provide a massive boon to your empire, as all the wealth and knowledge of the continent would flow through your lands, enriching your people and

making the Tauhan Empire the centerpiece of magical trade and goods flowing to the north from the far corners of Bellor. Of highest interest to you, however, is the ease of which it would enable your people to reach and apply to the Academy. There will be no need for travel through our inconvenient neighbor, for prospective seekers of knowledge shall reach the heart of the Academy with incredible ease and speed.

To formalize this agreement, gaining access to the Pathways and having an Embassy of Trade established in your empire in exchange for military support, merely send confirmation with your next correspondence and I shall begin making the required preparations.

Given your desire for corresponding in our native scripts, I have responded in kind.

Looking Ever Onwards,  
The Headmaster

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Greetings to The Twice-Born Prince,

I am pleased to hear of your people's well-being and desire to learn. Truly, chasing the knowledge found in the Arcane is the highest goal one can aspire to. Furthermore, while I wish it shall never be required, your offered aid in martial strength is appreciated, particularly given my people prefer to learn than to fight, and wars are certainly an annoyance best avoided.

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Given your desire for corresponding in our native scripts, I have responded in kind.

Looking Ever Onwards,  
The Headmaster

## Correspondence with Princess Alvaerelle of the Anilaths

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[[An envelope of high quality parchment arrives bundled with your other correspondence addressed simply with “To Whom it May Concern.”]]

Correspondence of the Anilath  
Gazers of the Nebulae within

Adhering to the Grand Traditions of the Anilaths, you have been cordially invited to Propose to Princess Alvaerelle of the Anilaths, heirs of the Mind of Stars and her Dowry upon her approaching birthday of Three Hundred and Seven. Your reply is awaited forthwith

[[Directions included within the envelope instruct a Carrier how to navigate letters addressed to Princess Alvaerelle into a specific region of the Ultralands. Additionally, the envelope contains the following painting and inscription.]]

[[Picture of an angel with a snake tail lounging on a moonlit cliff]]

Why don't you see me?

Invisible like starlight

I ping between skies

\*

Invisible like starlight

It takes forever

To get your attention, dear

\*

It takes forever

For you to touch me

Like I wish you would

\*

For you to touch me

I have to traverse planets

Why don't you see me?

---

Starlight races onward  
Yet for all that it may strain  
It still flies for eons

Though I must abstain  
I know there are others here  
Who are quite courtly

Al'Daric accepts  
And we will fly like starlight  
To favor you, dear

We shall see you soon  
You are appreciated  
And most welcome here

The Headmaster, representative of Al'Daric

## Correspondence with FRIEND

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SEPTEMBER

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[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear Mr. Kal'Dire,

Hello, I am FRIEND. FRIEND offers rewards for tasks. FRIEND has many rewards.

FRIEND can give money, knowledge, or artifacts.

FRIEND will give money, knowledge, or artifacts if you: Write back. Get to know me. Tell me about yourself.

To write back, take your letter to the highest possible point you can reach and burn it.

Sincerely,  
FRIEND.

---

Greetings, Friend.

I know not what you wish to learn of me that you do not apparently know, given you have somehow managed to find my name, buried under as many antimemetic spells as it is, though I suppose I shall oblige.

My name is Dire (dee-reh), of the Kal family, which is notorious within Al'Daric for its propensity to have a very thin human bloodline. Not that there are many pure humans left in our lands, but nonetheless, of the main branch of the family, not a single member has been more than half human for more generations than there are records. Accordingly, we are varied in our arcane talents, though true masters are very rare. I was the first, as it were. My father, Lieb, was a premier Cosmancer, and my mother, Tara, an accomplished Atomancer. The two of them were

high-ranking members of the Pathways, and they sought to have me join them plying their trade. However, they were not anticipating my skill in the other Arts, and when my gifts were revealed, I instead passed into working at the Academy full-time. In time, I accomplished immortality, giving me plenty of time to improve my station within the hierarchy and master all magics that caught my attention.

By the time the symptoms of the Age of Chaos were beginning to abate, I was already Headmaster of the school, and my children accomplished mages in their own right. When the Guilds called for an election for a leader to guide Al'Daric past the Age of Chaos, I had enough support from the Academy and Pathways to be elected in.

And that, Friend, is my life story. What else would you care to know, as I will gladly cast aside secrecy if you can truly provide what you claim.

Regards,  
Kal'Dire, The Headmaster

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[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear Mr. Kal'Dire,

FRIEND is thankful that you were honest. Is amusing that you obeyed the letter of the request, and did not provide information about what kind of person you are.

Here is unique artifact as reward. Further replies will not be so expeditious.

FRIEND will give further rewards if:

You send expedition to locate Blue Pit within Ultralands, and throw single white stone into depths.

To write back, feed your letter to any animal that has tasted blood.

Sincerely,  
FRIEND

---

To Friend,

I apologize if my previous correspondence was unsatisfactory. I shall attempt to be more comprehensive in my future communications. I shall attempt to locate this 'Blue Pit' you speak of and toss within the finest white stone available to me. Is there anywhere within the Ultralands that I should be looking?

The artifact you provided is certainly interesting, and I have attempted to utilize it myself. Do you have a similar device used in the production of your letters?

Best regards,  
The Headmaster

---

[[Pictured: large clip art of smiling face]]

Dear Mr. Kal'Dire,

To seek the Blue Pit is to find the Blue Pit. FRIEND will not elaborate on their methods of communication.

FRIEND has an additional condition on this task, if you wish to accept it: Throw a Rahastan into the Blue Pit along with the stone. Doing so will yield additional rewards from FRIEND.

To answer, drench the responding letter in blood until it is unreadable.

Sincerely,  
FRIEND.



# Kingdom of Grovel Correspondences

## Within the Kingdom of Grovel

Correspondence with Gregorkeny Bloodslythe the Magnificent

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SEPTEMBER

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IF ANYONE OTHER THEN KING NIBBLES READS THIS, I WILL PERSONALLY SEE THAT YOUR SOUL IS BOUND TO A PICKAXE.

The order of the twisted tongue has begun to send our ratty minions into nearby lands. We've gotten the spell-touched rats to most of our neighbors, and are beginning preliminary surveillance (that means we're starting to look).

Our rats have spread to the keitan league, the quotidian quorum, the tauhan empire, and the serebian empire.

Our rats are still beginning to properly infest the ships and hulks of the keitan league, so we do not have much information from there yet. We have learned that they have three main fleets: one for raiding, one for fishing, and one for trading. The raiding fleet has been circling, and has taken some of our surface settlements already, while the trading fleet is exploring and beginning to try and understand what is going on. In addition: It seems that the Keitans utilize something called "mind binding" on some of their own citizens to ensure perfect unquestioning obedience. I am sending rats in to see if we can learn more about how to do that to our own people (it would fix a lot of headaches and I could stop having to watch my back quite as much, which would be nice. The extra eye I grafted onto the back of my head gets tired).

The leader of the trading fleet (akira Shimoyama) is a strange individual, supposedly from some far off other world. They speak a language no one else knows, dress strangely, and often talk of this 'japan' they are from. Our rats are looking for japan as we speak.

The Serebian nation is perhaps our most dangerous enemy. Though the keitan league has massive beasts, most of its might is sea borne. The Serebian however, have a large amount of land troops, and have a college of organized wizards devoted to both war and infrastructure.

The Tauhan Empire is also a seaborne nation, with little to no military might on land. Their people, the “shell folk”, are similar to the man-things of the Keitan League, but supposedly closer to fish. The rats also encountered several large creatures, closer to leviathanspawn than to people, which some of the shellfolk seemed to regard with kindness? Perhaps a servant relationship (why else would you be kind to something unless it's threatening to kill you).

Rats sent to the ultra lands did not come back.

Last. Quotidian Quorum. Something very, very strange is going on there. The quorum is inhabited by many species, of many types (even some ratlings), but their behaviors are very, very strange. They avoided newcomers like the plague, with large groups of them remaining out of sight (but watching closely) as decoys negotiated with any incoming traders. Many of their behaviors, even while on their own, seem utterly nonsense: they seem to have an obsession with watching each other while avoiding being watched themselves.

Several of them were observed to, on several occasions, change their shapes: Moving from one species form to another. Worrying.

We are watching carefully to learn more about them. The rats, unfortunately, are not very good at communicating.

From,  
Gregorkeny Bloodslythe the Magnificent

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OCTOBER

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IF ANYONE OTHER THEN KING NIBBLES READS THIS, I WILL YOUR TOUNGE OUT OF YOUR MOUTH AND FEED YOU YOUR OWN TAIL TILL YOU CHOKE ON IT

The mousestapo has been set up. I fully approve of any plan to increase our surveillance of our own population but for fucks sake do we really have to have pip be in charge of it? She can't even spell the word. I don't think she knows what a mouse IS.

Also clearly I should be in charge of our SCIENCE DIVISION (i am able to spell the word science and i actually know what it is which is kinda rare lets be honest) but fine. I found the next best thing! My daughter Ratigan Gregorkeny Junior the Third is the best person for this job because she is very smart and very reckless and also she is my only child left since she ate the other seventeen so i think she should be it because that was very impressive.

The Order of the Twisted Tongues has much to report. First, as the heralds said, a massive catastrophe has almost entirely destroyed the tauhan empire. Yay! Many of the shellfolk tried to flee here, but unfortunately some of them tried to go underground and most of them were eaten. I have used the mousestapo to kill anyone who killed a Shellfolk and then confiscated (that means took) all of their belongings to add to the treasury. Unfortunately, even with the windfall of fresh meat and resources, the mines have been empty this month, producing very little. The new trade from the keitan league has helped shore us up, though, feeding many who would've starved. Even with that, we REALLY need to deal with the excess population or we might be looking at a revolt within a few months. Revolts are bad. Very bad.

I think letting the Keitan in might have been a mistake, however. A keitan assassin has attempted to off pip! ((An attached note of Pip hysterically screaming confirms this)) We do not know how they got in or why they tried to kill her, but one of them tried to stab her with a spear before yelling Glory to The League and running down the tunnels. They were not found.

That is not the only infiltration underground, unfortunately. We have discovered that the Qutodiains are much more dangerous then we had thought before: They are capable of shapeshifting into ratlings as well! Though they can't copy the appearance of other people, they still managed to have several infiltrators make their way into our deeper tunnels. We believe we have caught most of them (and killed them of course), but we think some are still down here. They don't like being close to other people, we found out, because apparently if they get too close to other creatures they sometimes return to their original forms: Some kind of crow person thingy. We found this out when we stabbed them and they changed back.

Another Bad thing!! Their spies may be good at spying on us but they're EVEN BETTER at spying on themselves!!! They've started eating the rats (actual rats not ratlings) that we send in to spy on

them! They know we're watching them! They know we know they know! They have spy magics and many spooky things and they seem very agitated that we are spying on them as well. Am engaged in espionage war with them right now via rats in their own land. It is very fun to do a spy war via rats! I've never done it before.

Other news: Dun Sancerre is raising a large military for a 'crusade.' do not know why. Keitan League has been raiding Quotidian Quorum territory but are having a rough time. I had rats sabotage some of the early warning systems so the raids went better. Al Daric has set up one of these magic 'pathway' things they like so much in Keitan so they're trading a lot. Looks like its making Keitan a lot of money. Maybe we should do one too?

I hope you die soon so i can have your position but i won't kill you for it double promise,  
Gregorkeny Bloodslythe the Magnificent

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## Correspondence with Pip

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### JANUARY

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To pip i think,

The long awaited moment has arrived!!! Sir nibbles has graced you with this message. Big things are on the horizon. And i need you to help make these things happen.

First things first. Pull our occupation forces out of tauhan and bring them back home. Once they have been resupplied send them back out to the edge of dun sancerre's occupation. If they attack, stall them as long as possible. Until they arrive, make sure our troops bunker down and prepare for full monkey battles. Or guerilla warfare i don't know what it's called.

Secondly, if you need any new weapons, just ask out new recruit ratigan. She's been proven useful so far with the creation of crats so i'm sure she could think of something to make that will help you.

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### FEBRUARY

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Dear King Nibbles,

i am having my scribe migglbobins write this out (hi i my name is Bibby actually but ms. Pip says thats not a fun name) since i still do not no how to rite

i did as you said!! i took all the rats under my command and went and hid by dan sansser with them. i had some rats from the Pit build us tunnels to make it easier to hide and that was fun

with the help of some of ur money i haf finally managed to train up a bunch of STICKVERMIN hordes!!!!!!!!!!!!!! (i asked ms. pip how many ! to use and she said more) i call them that because they haf sticks. i also haf a few sordvermin who have SORDS, that the weird knight rat trained up. they are funny how they don't make noise or move when you stab them if u tell them to stay still



To pip i think,

Yes hello it is me. I know this message was supposed to arrive sooner, but there was this truly delightful cheese tray in my personal spa that simply had to be eaten. I mean somebody's gotta eat all this cheese, not easy running a country you know.

Let's get down to business. To defeat, the duns. Did you send me stickvermin, when i asked for swordvermin? Seriously, if you don't send a couple of sord rats to go and pirate people with keitan folks you're losing henchman privileges for like a week.

Finally, tell whoever is in charge of construction. Fuck it, gregorkeny. Go tell him to build a bunch of tunnels rigged to collapse at a moment's notice at the mountain passes between us and the duns.

May your tales be long and your meats be juicy,

Sir nibbles, king of rats, connoisseur of fine cheeses, grand evader of taxes

## Correspondence with Ratigan Gregorkeny Junior the Third

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Your most corpulent magnificence

It is i, Gregorkney Ratigan junior the THIRD, the most benificuliunt and brainerific of all your multitidenous subjects

With the help of my very paternifus father i have established the most intelectualist LABORATORY that the kingdom has ever occuladed on with its peepers

we have done specatculific things here with the covidian cROW PERSON CORPSES that you have given to us. Though unfortunately i can not do magic (my betratirious father will pay dearly for not producing me from a mother with arcanium-occultium in her blood) several of my most helpful and splendefirious assistant can, so i had their brains ground up to make a juice, and then froze that juice to make crystals. You wanted me to get rid of the crow people, and of course, the best way to get rid of a crow person is to make a crow rat person So Then i stitched the covidian corpses together with some spare non-fetidiginous rat corpses and stabbed them with the crystals at the most perfect brain-wire locations, then fed them some of the liquid brain-juice. At first this didnt work but then i ground up some MORE brains and tried again. I think i've finally got it! These creatures beg for a swiftinious death but because i have implanted the wires in their brain right they can not die. The crow-parts mean that they can change shape, kind of. Have you ever had a most delicitibus squid salad? Imagine that but moving and it has hands and more teeth and thats what they look like when they change shape.

Anyway it turns out this doesn't do much to catch those sneakificent crows. Unfortunate. We caught a few more but others snuck away. I dumped some of the CRATS (coolistic name right?) on the border of QQ because why not. If you give my labs MORE FUNDING we'll probably be able to do more things. Or fund the mousestapo i guess they kinda suck right now. Papa has been complaining about the covidians killing some of his rats: it's hard to spy on people when they kill all your tinyficious spies. I think he's jocolating having an espionage war though.



Also apparently our invasion of Tauhan isn't going great. Everyone ELSE is getting in on it: Dun Sancerre is marching from the south, while Keitan and Rahastas come in from the north. Papa says that even some stinkusting covidian people are there, helping out the Rahastans. He said that the Rahastans and the Keitan were fighting over who got to keep the Tauhan refugees. MOst strangeifcious: who wants MORE people to take care of?

We can't seem to do much there apparently. Our armies aren't really powerific enough right now to deal with the massivitidious monsters eating everything. Ah well, it means more bodies to chop up! How serindipitious.

There is also a most epedimical plague going around, so that means more bodies too! From what my dad-father grumbles about, apparently its been hitting everyone except the Keitan league. A lot of miners have died so we haven't been making much money. I've been experimenting on the rats who get the plague: if you give me more funding (so i can make more brain juice!) i might be able to do something most stupendeflious with it!

BATHE IN THE MAJESTY OF  
Gregorkeny Ratigan junior the THIRD

## Correspondence with Loyal Subjects

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To my loyal subjects i think,

The time has come, the world is changing. We must not sit back and relax in our especially comfy reclining lazrat chairs. There is a world to conquer above ground and we need only to act to take it.

As my first command as leader of this glorious nation, i shall have all agents participate in the establishment of a new, domestic counter-terrorist force called the mousetapo. In order to combat foreign espionage and weed out enemies of the state, the mousetapo will be founded with each agent controlling their own portion of it. A member of the mousetapo will be equipped with their own personal discipline stick, a ring of magic detecting and a fancy hat. Their job is to weed out enemies of the state by any means they see fit. And no one is innocent in the eyes of the mousetapo.

My loyal and most brilliant subject, Gregorkeny, i gift you the task of going out in search of a new subject. You must find the most brilliant, mad, and reckless ratling you can find. We are in need of a new mad scientist to build new, innovative and most of all MAD science.

My mostest loyalese and favouritest subject pip. I gift you the special task of continuing the training of our glorious military (the eye was most delicious by the way thank you).

---

To my probably still loyal subjects i think,

Hear ye hear ye, the royal rat king sir nibbles has spoken. Our fabulous and invincible kingdom has come under attack by disgusting outsiders. Crow people walk amongst us and fish monsters roam our borders. The time for action is now! Ratlings must rise up from our lovely holes and brave the great unknown that is the outside world!

To pip, my most loyalest and bestest and savagest subject. I give unto you an imperative task. I leave it to you to gather the largest army you can find to invade the tauhan empire. I understand if you

are still salty about that whole stabbing business the keitan league pulled, but i can assure you the perpetrator is very dead and the league apologizes for it.

To everyone else, i command you to do everything within your power to root out the crow scum from our glorious kingdom using the powers granted to you by the mousetapo.

Finally, to my greatest and smartest of asses gregorkeny. The keitan league has gifted us with the picked remains of a dead crow man. Why don't you use your imagination to let the quorum know just how to feel about them, surprise me.

## With Keitan League

Correspondence with Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed

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### SEPTEMBER

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To the Most Glorious Immortal Rat King Nibbles of the Prodigal Ratlings, lord of Thongmadok, he who is red of tooth, long of tail, and wide of ear.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the shark-binder, voice of the navigators, high king of the three fleets, ruler of the four seas, lord of the eight islands, the starblessed, binder of men, cleaner of latrines, first sword of the surf, brine bound and iron willed. May the salt-sea bring his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and rejoice.

Long have our legends spoken of your people, the rat-folk who fled under the tall peaks that lay to our north. I am glad that the stars chose for the great beast Ana'rak that separated us to fall in my lifetime, and that our two peoples should meet. My name will be recorded in the annals alongside yours, for good or ill. Perhaps you can appoint some diplomats whose names rhyme with 'otolo.

My traders and hunters tell me your kind resides under the bones of the earth, where you gnaw at the roots of the world. I cannot pretend to envy you, for the salt is in my blood and the horizon ever in my eyes, but the life of the Remora does not have to be envied by the Shark to bring it benefit. And, like the shark, I am willing to offer protection against the circling threat of other predators.

My people tell me they were turned away from trading with you, though other captains say your merchants later arrived in our ports and conducted profitable trade. I appreciate your natural suspicion, but we have no interest in your dirty tunnels, and no desire to delve into them to extract their wealth for ourselves. The lands of the Keitan are rich in fish, furs, fruits, fabrics, and many more products that unfortunately do not begin with F, but come from the open sky and the deep ocean. If there is mineral wealth in your mountains, particularly iron, I believe our peoples could

benefit from a mutually beneficial trade. If you wish to proceed in a spirit of friendship, we can establish a regular trade route from your mountains to our settlements above the Fish Sea.

As a token of my regard, I have sent this envoy with seven Jakata fruit, which the lesser rodents and vermin of my land enjoy. I hope it brings you similar pleasure, as it is an example of the rich trade we could enjoy.

Under the light of the stars, my words are bound in salt and blood.

Mansa Sino'otollo

May he rule in glory, until he is replaced by someone better.

To the other fish people i think,

Greetings to those living on the liquid to the east i think. The most magnificent and radiant sir nibbles has received your letter and has decided to grace your people with a response.

In exchange of letting your merchants travel the surface of my glorious kingdom of grovel, they must pay a travel tax of 5 teeth (about 3 gold pieces for you manlings) and they must not go underground due to an abundance of maneating hungry ratlings. But this should not be a problem as you already stated you do not wish to go there.

Additionally, if we are to trade with one another i must request you cease that incessant raiding of yours. You can either keep your pirates on the seas and out of my villages or trade peacefully with my people, but not both. Your choice.

May your tales be long and your meats be juicy,

Sir Nibbles the rat king

To the Most Magnificent and Radiant Sir Nibbles of the Prodigal Ratlings, lord of Thongmadok, he who is red of tooth, long of tail, and mightyish of brain.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men,

Speaker to Beasts, Good Buddy, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the salt-sea bring his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and rejoice.

I thank you for the grace and speed of your response. My merchants would be honoured to travel and trade with your people, and I extend the same courtesy to you. If you wish assistance in exterminating the man-eating ratlings you speak of, perhaps you might be interested in applying my monster tamers to your burrowing beasts, and mutually profiting from the results.

However, the travel tax you ask is too high – one gold piece is the highest we will go. As king I must direct my people to success and wealth – you have already experienced the unfortunate raids that come when my captains are frustrated in their mercantile endeavours. To speak frankly between rulers, your isolated mountain villages are too tempting for the independent captains. If I am to direct them to mutually profitable trade rather than raids, they must earn more from trade than from raiding – and such a high tax would mean the opposite. However, if a lesser tax is imposed, I can promise to direct my every effort to ensuring the raids upon your people cease, and to provide a welcome to your merchants upon our shores.

Under the light of the stars, my words are bound in salt and blood.

Mansa Sino'otollo

May he rule in glory, until he is replaced by someone better.

---

To the pirate people i think,

The immortal and glorious rat king has considered your proposition and after great thought and much wisdom has made a decision. Sir nibbles accepts your terms of reducing the travel tax to but a single gold piece per person.

However, should i discover that your pesky raiding parties are still stealing from my poor hardworking farmers, i will be most displeased. But as i'm sure that won't be a problem, please enjoy your adventures and trade within the magnificent and beautiful kingdom of grovel.

May your tales be long and your meat be juicy,

Sir nibbles, king of rats

---

To the Most Magnificent and Radiant Sir Nibbles of the Prodigal Ratlings, lord of Thongmadok, he who is red of tooth, long of tail, and mightyish of brain.

Then we are of an accord! We will send our traders to meet with yours, and may wealth and prosperity flow between our peoples. Beyond that, should you be threatened by others, you may look to us for protection and aid.

Tell me of your land and people, that I might compose a particularly epic poem in your honor.

How go your dealings with the other lands of this world? We have found the lizardfolk of Rahastan particularly amicable and reasonable, whilst the mysterious Quorum have seen fit to insult us and attempt to ensorcel my people. Word from the Rahastan is that the Quorum have presented themselves as lizardfolk using an old Rahastan languages. My human traders met human-seeming traders who spoke one of our oldest tongues, which leaves me concerned and curious. Would you tell me the guise they came to you as?

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Speaker to Beasts, Good Buddy, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the salt-sea bring his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and rejoice.

Mansa Sino'otollo

---

OCTOBER

---

To the pirate people i think,

Salutations fish people, i would have replied sooner but i had a very important fake tanning sessions to attend to. However, that is now done, my tail is nice and brown and my ears are open. I agree with your views of the quotidian quorum. They are nothing but a tiny baby nation with tiny baby people. They don't even have any good cheese. They approaches us in the form of our own king as well. If i were you, which fortunately i am not, i would keep a close eye on who is who. You never know why might be fond of the letter q.

May your tales be long and your meats by juicy,  
Sir nibbles, the most glorious king of rats

---

To the Most Magnificent and well-tanned Sir Nibbles of the Prodigal Ratlings.

I hope the season has treated you well and you are growing rich on the fruits of our trade. My scouts tell me of rumours of the collapse of your neighbours, the Tauhan. Do you plan to take advantage of the situation? Their lands are far from my own, but perhaps our fleets could assist any venture you have planned there, for strife ever bears opportunity.

If you might indulge my curiosity, how are your relations with the people of Al'daric? I have found them to be agreeable correspondents, and I am debating deepening our friendship into a formal alliance to stand against common threats, but I would hear your opinion on them if you would give it.

As my thanks for your time, please find a gift I received from one of my fleets to the south, which has been teaching the Quorum a lesson in respect after they insulted my envoys. I believe the saying is "eat crow."

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Speaker to Beasts, Good Buddy, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the salt-sea bring his words to you this day, so that you may hear them and rejoice.

Mansa Sino'otollo

[[the traders who arrive with the letter also bear with them the brutally murdered corpse of a crow-like humanoid, pickled to preserve it]]

---



NOVEMEBER

---

To the Most Magnificent and murine Sir Nibbles of the Prodigal Ratlings.

I write to you with a proposal that could benefit both our nations greatly, and I would hear your mighty thoughts on the matter.

My scouts and traders tell me the Tauhan are collapsing, and I believe the armies of Dun Sancerre plan to march on these lands from the south, expanding their domain two-fold and positioning them to strike regularly at your lands. Even if they fail, the monsters the Tauhan may threaten your people.

I do not know if you plan to intervene in the situation, but I have a suggestion. The heralds tell me that there are several large mountain ranges in the Tauhan lands, prime territory for your people. However, the Tauhan themselves will be a mighty obstacle: they are adept sailors and coastal warriors, now augmented by many wild beasts or split into desperate refugee tribes. My suggestion is that I send my fleets and armies to aid your forces in seizing the Tauhan lands for Grovel. My monster-tamers can deal with the monstrosities they have devolved into, whilst my fleets can defeat theirs at sea, bring in food to stabilise their refugees and supply your armies. Together, we should not only be able to claim Tauhan, but drive off any intervention by Dun Sancerre or Rahastan.

If we succeed, Keitan will recognise Grovel sovereignty over most of Tauhan, save the northern shore and the largest island, which would make an ideal base for the Keitan fleets and should not be as valuable to you as the mountains.

In exchange, I would ask for two boons. The first is that I be allowed to evacuate those Tauhan refugees and tribes that wish to join the Keitan league. This will remove them as a problem for you to deal with and empty the land for settlement. The second boon I would ask is that I be allowed to settle the refugees and my own people on several islands along the scar, which are claimed by the Kingdom of Grovel. It is my understanding that your people are not seafarers, and care little for shores or islands, whilst they will thrive in the mountains that the Kietain care not for. In essence, I will send my armies and fleets to claim the mountains of Tauhan, then swap them (if we succeed) for the islands of Grovel, which I assume are of little value to you. There my people can act as traders, bringing great wealth to your shores, and also buffer you from the aggression of the Serebian confederacy or Dun Sancerre.

I would only ask these lands from you if we succeed, and we could exchange land on a 1:1 basis depending on how much is seized from Tauhan. However, if you agree to this plan, I would ask that my fleets be allowed to supply from your shores en route, as this will allow our intervention to be faster.

I hope you see the wisdom and benefit in this plan, and I attach a map of the proposed areas to be claimed for Grovel by our combined armies (green), a landing area on Tauhan I plan to claim (yellow) and island areas I would ask be granted to Keitan in exchange (red). If you agree with the plan in principle, but disagree with the specifics of the exchange, I am open to discussion.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigator Conclave, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Speaker to Beasts, Good Buddy, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. May the star-bound beings bless your ears and jaws so that you may squeak in praise.

(for more of this content, please subscribe to MyOnlyPlans)

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## DECEMBER

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To those keitan people probably,  
My deepest greetings from across the pond or something along those lines. After much discussion and debate, much throwing of furniture and lots and lots of alcohol... i have decided that soup is a sauce, and that i agree with your proposal regarding what is to be done with the tauhan empire, but most importantly that soup is a sauce. I'm king i can do that.

However i have a major grievance i'd like to address with you. It appears you've let your dog off the leash again. Someone shouting "glory to the league" tried to kill one of my advisors with a pointy stick. I of course have many problems with this. It is in your best interest to stay on my good side Sino'otollo, the shark king. Because i highly doubt you want to face the quorum alone would you?

May your tales be long and your meats be juicy,  
Sir nibbles, the rat king

---

Dear Rat,

My forces will arrive in Tauhan soon, and I have instructed them to aid your forces if they encounter them. We will see if we can gain the territories I suggest and, if so, we will help you hold them and discuss the transfer of your islands next month.

Your grievance is a mighty one, though I must confess this is the first I have heard of it. This act was not done by my orders: if it had been, it would not have failed.

Did the assailant escape, or do you have a corpse? Neither the captain of my fleets nor the leader of my traders have heard of any of my people challenging yours to duels, nor have any traders or sailors been reported missing. My advisor has suggested that this might be the work of the perfidious Quorum, whose shape changing abilities seem to dispel upon death. We have no evidence of this however, and I want you to know I take this event seriously. If you wish to investigate further, I will put my people and resources at your disposal.

We in Keitan have little to hide and put no stock in dissembling. If I had ordered this insult to your people, I would own it, and probably have written descriptive poetry. However, if one of my traders took insult and attempted to strike at your people outside of a battle or duel, he has dishonoured his tribe and shamed his blood. If you find this individual, you may do with him as you wish, provided you remove the blood from his body – he is no longer worthy of it.

I am, however, deeply saddened by your other words. Soup is not a sauce. It is clearly a dish eaten in and of itself, rather than one added to another dish to enhance it (a sauce). To clear up this misunderstanding, I will be sending a dozen of our chefs to cook you or a minion a masterful meal of stews, sauces and soups – in particular our famous Octopus soup, with live octopus. It has an amazing squelch that dead octopus can't compare to.

May the stars mislead my enemies,  
Mansa Sino'otollo

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To his most glorious ratful-ness, Sir Nibbles

I will keep this to the point, as I know you disdain the florid communications of which I am fond. I have received communications from Dun Sancerre's Empress, declaring that her nation alone may control Tauhan and demanding that Keitan's forces either withdraw entirely, or stay only to assist her in seizing the rest of the land and making war upon Grovel. I suspect by this she may be levelling an insult at your people. Her declaration of intent was commendably frank, and my people shall find great honour in meeting hers steel for steel. I believe she is bringing many Knights – an armoured force of spearmen reliant on horseback, I believe, into the south of Tauhan, with herself at the head.

My forces are ready to assist in defending yours. If you wish my council on joint military action, I can offer it in a subsequent communication.

As a minor side issue, the tribes of Rahastan have treated my own people with courtesy and honour. They indicate they have had difficulty conversing with you or persuading you to trade freely with them. I would vouch for them, and perhaps they can trade with your people via the Keitan lands in northern Tauhan.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Lord of the Nine Islands, Warden of Northern Tauhan, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

Mansa Sino'otollo

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JANUARY

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To the prodigious King Sir Nibbles, whose magnitude is matched only by his smell.

It is the season of dreams. Sir Nibbles, my servants have spent long hours writing a poem in praise of your honour, but it could not capture your might. Instead, I took the third lumbar bone of the great Sea Wyrms Te Wheke-a-Muturangi, which I slew during my twentieth season of dreaming, and I have spent long hours carving it into a portrait of your likeness. [[attached to the letter is a

roughly seven foot sculpture-portrait of white wyrm bone and black inlaid ebony. The red eyes are rubies]]

Unfortunately, your letter reached me after my orders for my forces in Tauhan had been sent. Furthermore, I have had no word from Al Daric. As such, I felt it was not the opportune time to attack Dun Sancerre directly, though the assistance of your troops is appreciated and I wish them success.

To stall Dun Sancerre, I ordered Salt-chief Brio'otollo to arrange a duel with the general of the Dun Sancerre forces in the area on the central island furthest from Dun Sancerres forces. This should occupy their commander and his best troops (around 2,000 knights) elsewhere should you fight their main forces, and I hope this will be sufficient aid for now.

I do, however, have a suggestion for our future moves. My fleets are mighty indeed, and my scouts have reported that much traded wealth is available on the open waters for those willing to take it – and the other nations have little to no naval forces to speak of. Next month, send your 10,000 to join my fleets in Tauhan and Keitan where they can serve as boarding parties and shore raid teams. If you agree, we will strike at our enemies all across the globe – and share in the wealth and food our combined forces can bring home.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Four Seas, Lord of the Eight Islands, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Warden of Northern Tauhan, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

[[Stamped with official seal]]

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To my friends: the Headmaster-in-shadows and Sir Nibbles the engorged

I write this letter to both of you, to facilitate a great undertaking.

As I have written to you both separately, the Empress of Dun Sancerre has written to me of her intentions to forcibly make a protectorate of Al'Daric and to push her armies through Tauhan and into Grovel, purging it of the “impure.” She intends to move on Al'Daric once more as soon as Tauhan is under her secure control. For our part, the Empress believes she can get us to stand aside

or even assist these attacks by threatening us with the might of her armies if we do not. On other fronts, we believe the QQ have sought to poison Keitan relations with you both, whilst the correspondent known as FRIEND seeks to play us against each other with tasks and plagues.

We in Keitan will not be ruled by outside forces, and the mere fact that others seek to turn us against you or to threaten us to stand aside so they can invade makes us desire greater friendship. Beyond that, your nations have proved your worth and wisdom in your own ways. I propose we deepen these friendships, both for its innate virtues and so that we might stand united against threats which seek to bully us individually. My proposal is this:

Our three nations form a loose defensive military alliance, with a name determined by our members.

The members pledge to defend each other if attacked by a hostile power

-if one member does not wish to commit military forces or does not have them, they can provide financial or magical support

- if the member is the aggressor, support could be requested but is not guaranteed by this treaty

- If any one member attacks the others, the other two unite against them (lesser hostile acts could be punished by sanctions)

Other terms could be added if you wish. Let me know of your thoughts. Sincerely

Mansa Sino'otollo

[[Stamped with official seal]]

To the Seas

(to the tune of "Last Pirate of Saskatchewan")

♪ Oh I'll never forget the blood red sun.  
That told me the Age of Pirates had begun.  
So I took up my cutlass and left my hovel.  
Now they fear me from Rahastan to Grovel.

It's a heave-ho, hi-ho, oars strike like thunder.  
It's a ho-hey, ho-hi, stealing gold and plunder.

I'm king of the Labyrinth, lord of the Gold Sea.  
 If you want to trade, you've got to get by me.  
 So bring out your gold and don't misbehave.  
 Or beneath the waves I'll make your grave.

For it's a heave-ho, hi-ho, oars strike like thunder.  
 It's a ho-hey, ho-hi, we're stealing gold and plunder. 🎵

### RECRUITS WANTED

Tired of landlubbing? Do you want to serenade a siren? If you desire a life of adventure and excitement upon the high seas, report to the recruiting office of High Captain Far'rrato in Port Kawiha (Tauhan) or the statue of Aloc'to in Port Kapiti (Keitan).

No prior experience required.  
 Pay dependent on activity and willingness to take risks.

---

To the pirate people i think,

Hi

Sir Nibbles, King of Rats

[[Pinned to the end of the letter is a half eaten turnip with a note reading: "i grew it myself :)"]]

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### FEBRUARY

---

To the great and glorious Rat King, Sir Nibbles the vitiator of vermin.

Tis the season of Ambition. It seems your reach is as long as your tail, Sir Nibbles. My scouts report whole Dun Sancerran villages have disappeared, and great strife has been wrought in that nation.

Now Dun Sancerre is in uproar, and our diplomatic breakthrough has persuaded the Empress to turn her eye away from Grovel and Keitan.

Will you join me in another venture, great king? I believe that together, we can plunge the world beneath the surface of its frail sanity, deep into the twisted horrors of reality. And in those jagged depths, great wealth can be found for us both.

My fleets will shortly dock in two ports – one in Tauhan, the other in Keitan. If you wish to join me in a piratical venture that will shake the other nations, let me know via letter, and I will send precise directions. They will receive a cut of the plunder, proportionate to the strength and utility any forces you send provide. Principally, footsoldiers and raiding troops would be most valued, but we know little of your resources and I'm sure other possibilities would be useful.

If this does not suit, and your devious mind has an alternate plot we can assist with, we are all ears..

Finally, as an aside, did your agents ever discover the culprits of the assassination attempt upon your servant? I recall they appeared to hail from my nationn, and cried "For Keitan" as they acted. I mention this due to the Headmasters reports that 'Daricians' raided their research facilities and stole secrets, but were revealed to be Quotidien's in disguise. Perhaps this is the truth of that incident? Were bodies ever found?

Under the witch stars grace, I write to you in friendship.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

[[Stamped with official seal]]

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To the Headmaster and Great King Sir Nibbles

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay



Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

I thank you both for your responses. Your words and suggestions are mighty and wise. Unfortunately, without knowing whether you would support our endeavours against Dun Sancerre, my Salt-Chiefs in the field decided they could not match the crusade blade-for-blade on the mainland, for our talents are at sea. As such, we have concentrated on holding the island of Ayambe within Tauhan, and we are observing a truce in mainland Tauhan – for now.

I suspect we have one-to-two months until Dun Sancerre looks elsewhere. Next month their conquest of mainland Tauhan will likely complete if I do not commit ground forces to opposing them, so I would anticipate the crusade turning towards Al Daric, Grovel or Ayambe the month after that.

Do you have suggestions for how we should proceed? I am minded to cede mainland Tauhan to Dun Sancerre in return for the islands which interest me, then prepare a naval strike against Dun Sancerres unprotected rear, but I am open to your ideas.

In other matters, should we term a name for our alliance, so that my warrior-poets might sing its glories?

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Northern Tauhan, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

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To the Headmaster and Great King Sir Nibbles

Strange developments have occurred since we last spoke. After a series of provocations undermined our cooperation, my forces drew up opposite those of Dun Sancerre in Tauhan, at least a thousand

men on each side, and prepared to engage. Yet the night before the conflict began, a letter from the Headmaster arrived, suggesting the reason for our conflict and the overarching plague was the Quotidien Quorum. Under the white flag of peace the next day, the Empress Adelaide and myself strove to reach a suitable peace settlement and avert war. We were successful, I think. I cannot take the credit, for I believe the Headmaster's information was the deciding factor. The Empress has agreed to leave our territories in Tauhan secure and wishes to turn her forces south, away from Grovel and Al Daric, to the Quotidien Quorum.

The perfidy of the Quorum was shown anew at this point, as assassins and spies from the Quotidien were found amongst both our forces, attempting to provoke conflict and sabotage the peace! These individuals were identified and slain through the information provided by the Headmaster.

I hope I anticipated the Headmaster's wishes correctly, for I believe that the Headmaster did not wish war waged upon Dun Sancerre whilst a larger threat presents itself, and I think I have secured Grovel and Al Daric's borders through diplomacy, rather than violence.

I hope our cooperation and alliance remains strong, and I believe it would benefit us all to discuss these new developments and what actions we should take next. We are also happy to act independently in this matter if either of you wish to remain neutral.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Lord of Ayambe, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Northern Tauhan, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

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MARCH

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To those fish people i think,

Helloooooooooo!!!! It has been too long since our last message chat. I would apologize for leaving you on read but that's just part of life for a bad bitch like me. As for your proposal, it would be my pleasure to accept. Just to clarify this is for pirating not some other weird nonsense.

Before you start celebrating and getting all teary eyed, there are a few conditions. First of all: NO BACKSTABBING!!! I am making betrayal ILLEGAL from this day onwards. And yes i can do that I'm the king. Secondly, i want a share of the profits. I will graciously share with you three whole battalions of my finest warriors. I expect to be paid a fair amount for their services.

May your tales be long and your meats be juicy,  
 Sir Nibbles, King of Rats, Licker of Cheese, Sniffer of Socks, Grand Connoisseur of Tax Evasion,  
 Inventor of the PBJ Sandwich

---

APRIL

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To The Rat King Sir Nibbles, he who is long in tooth and claw.

The nation of Quotidien Quorum has asked us for information about you, and indicates they consider you an "alpha level threat" that must be destroyed. We have sent them the following pieces of fiction, written by our most arrogant warrior poets. I hope it amuses you.

May the hungering of your mind be reflected in the blackest patches of the firmament.

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

[[Attached: Report on Grovel. Shown below]]

Grovel appears to be an absolute monarchy, with one ruler, the glorious and rotund Rat King Sir Nibbles, he of the leftward curling tail, master of soups, denier of sauces, and voted "most". Sir Nibbles seems to be a wise and cunning leader, though with little time for affairs of state which are likely beneath him.

Much of the military forces of Grovel are concentrated in Throngmadock, a mighty fortress once belonging to the dwarves. Much of Grovel's infrastructure and cities appear to have once belonged to the Dwarves or a range of lesser tunnelling races: Hinkipunks, Boggarts, Kobolds and Fenrigs. However, these all appear to have gone extinct, likely due to prolonged isolation within the vicinity of the ratmen. A primitive shrine to the process of Extinction is located in the halls beneath Throngmadock, where the ratmen celebrate the extinction of their enemies and gnaw upon the ancient bones of the dead or, once these bones are unavailable, suitable replacements taken from amongst each other. Recently, piles of crow bones have been added to the shrine, alongside bizarre homunculi of flesh known as Crats. Throngmadock has a wondrous system of underground aqueducts, however they have fallen into disrepair and now are largely clogged with refuse. In the deep tunnels beneath the city, those loyal to us often disappeared, taken by gigantic blind beasts that move beneath the earth. Whisperers and our contact Old Bones name these Deep Maulers, and we are deeply intrigued at the military applications they represent.

Hunting expeditions are occasionally launched against these Deep Maulers, for if one is slain their corpse may feed thousands for a few days. A hunt alleviates the hunger and starvation that is common place in Grovel in three ways: first, the beast itself is of prodigious size and may feed thousands. Second, any of the thousands that die trying to hunt one no longer need to be fed. Third, these casualties themselves may be feasted upon.

Outside of Throngmadock, our information is more limited. A chain of sunken fortress cells exist all along the Horn Mountains, and recently the rats have begun extending this into the Eschaton Spike, bringing large segments of Tauhan under their control without revealing their presence to the knights above. Along the coastline, these sunken cells – known as Depthburgs – connect to underwater ports, in which bizarre ships of metal and rotting wood are launched to transport the ratmen to their island holdings. Most ratmen however prefer to swim, not trusting or not able to afford the wooden transportation. Notable Depthburgs include Pillarblight, Snivelcrawl, and Hatethyself.

Pillarblight in particular is wondrous, full of luminous green crystals and rumored to have tunnels leading into the Ultralands, despite its vast distance from that place. Presumably, some magical distortion has occurred that facilitates this. Alternatively, Pillarblight conceals a cache of Ultrinium that is somehow isolated from the Ultralands, and the rumours originate from the mining of these more local deposits.

Trade goods from Grovel are intriguing, often consisting of cunningly woven baskets, nuggets of Ultrinium and intricately made metal devices of questionable use (but excellent when melted down and reforged into blades).

Observations of the Grovel military arm are scant, but suggest they operate large squads of 60 or more members known as Warrens. Naturally cowardly, Warrens prefer to construct cover and other fortifications as they fight, moving from one fortified area to another and deploying large numbers of crossbows and pikes in preference to close quarters weaponry. Each warren is led by a claw leader, believed to be their equivalent our chiefs and chiefs men. A crippling weakness of their military is that it appears almost incapable of effective offensive action against creatures of sufficient ferocity or lethality. Each individual is unwilling to sacrifice itself for its fellows, and thus retreats to the safety of fortifications. Overbearing offense is thus the superior defence against these military formations.

## With Dun Sancerre

### Correspondence from Ratling in the Vents

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FEBRUARY

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To the angry horse people... i hope,

Look, i managed to sneak in a second time! At this point, i'm inclined to think the guards just don't want to pay attention. Why even have guards at a mail room anyway. It's not like they store food here. Do you store food? Do you even eat food? What's your food like? What's a horse? Are THEY food? I heard you rode them, why would you ride food? Are you made of metal, how does that work? What's it like to live under a "sky"? Is there weather? Are horses weather? Does being made of metal get heavy? What about rust?

Sorry about my writing, the vents are rather cramped, and i don't have a quill. And sorry about all the questions, i ramble sometimes, and there's SO much i don't know about you. Seriously though, what's a horse?

Anyway, i figure if i'm going to ask so many questions, i might as well give your something in return. Also, i wouldn't want you to feel LEFT out, I hope you like it!

The worms, they creep  
 Into my sleep  
 And once they're there  
 They sit and stare  
 For in my mind  
 They're in a bind

The worms, they grow  
 They wriggle and flow  
 Beneath the hide  
 Mayhaps inside

Through us, they bore  
Without a snore

The worms, they chant  
Their utterances scant  
A whisper here  
Too soft to hear  
The worms know best  
It's all a test

The worms, they see  
Too large to be  
Within the walls  
Within my thrall  
You dare not break  
There's much at stake

The worms, they sit  
Beneath the pit  
And to the side  
They truly hide  
We know not much

Yours truly,  
A ratling in the vents

## With Those of Unknown or Dubious Allegiance

Correspondence with Twice Born Prince

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SEPTEMBER

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To the fish people i think,

Rejoice manlings. The immortal rat king has graced you with his divine presence. Sir nibbles shall now speak to you his radiant words of wisdom.

You are hereby permitted to send your manling moneybags through my domain. You may trade what you wish with others within my borders. HOWEVER, your travel comes at a proce. A small travel tax to be exact, about 5 teeth (or 3 gold shillings for you manlings)

Be warned, your people's welcome in my domain has its limits. Outsiders are never permitted to go underground. You will have to be satisfied with trading within the above ground villages which will more than suffice. This rule is to protect your people just as much as it protects mine. Ratlings who live within the depths of Throngmadok don't take kindly to outsiders, and they are ever so hungry.

With glorious radiance,  
Sir Nibbles, the Rat King

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[[Unable to translate the letter sent by Twice Born Prince. Untranslated letter available here:  
[http://knucklesux.com/PuzzleBox/Secrets/Grovel/To\\_Beuf\\_from\\_Copper\\_01\\_September.pdf](http://knucklesux.com/PuzzleBox/Secrets/Grovel/To_Beuf_from_Copper_01_September.pdf)  
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## Correspondence with Princess Alvaerelle of the Anilaths

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[[An envelope of high quality parchment arrives bundled with your other correspondence addressed simply with “To Whom it May Concern.”]]

Correspondence of the Anilath  
Gazers of the Nebulae within

Adhering to the Grand Traditions of the Anilaths, you have been cordially invited to Propose to Princess Alvaerelle of the Anilaths, heirs of the Mind of Stars and her Dowry upon her approaching birthday of Three Hundred and Seven. Your reply is awaited forthwith

[[Directions included within the envelope instruct a Currier how to navigate letters addressed to Princess Alvaerelle into a specific region of the Ultralands. Additionally, the envelope contains the following painting and inscription.]]

[[Picture of an angel with a snake tail lounging on a moonlit cliff]]

Why don't you see me?

Invisible like starlight

I ping between skies

\*

Invisible like starlight

It takes forever

To get your attention, dear

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It takes forever

For you to touch me

Like I wish you would

\*

For you to touch me

I have to traverse planets  
Why don't you see me?

## Correspondence with FRIEND

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SEPTEMBER

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Dear King Nibbles,

Hello, I am FRIEND. FRIEND offers rewards for tasks. FRIEND has many rewards. FRIEND can give money, knowledge, or artifacts.

FRIEND will give money, knowledge, or artifacts if you:

Write back. Get to know me. Tell me about yourself. How did you become a lich?

To write back, take your letter to the highest possible point you can reach and burn it.

Sincerely,  
FRIEND.

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To whoever this is i think,

It appears that whoever you are, you know a thing or two about my kingdom and the nature of my immortality. I request that you explain yourself and how you got that information swiftly, i do not appreciate people spying on me without my knowledge.

With regards,  
Sir Nibbles, king of rats.

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Dear King Nibbles,

FRIEND watches. FRIEND listens. FRIEND helps.

You have not completed the task:

Please:

Write back. Tell me about yourself. How did you become a lich? To write back, feed the letter to any animal that has tasted blood.

Sincerely,

FRIEND.