

Greetings, Juba the Varushkan.

My name is Skogr, known as the Red, warlock of the Thule. I am told that, until an embassy is built, it is with you whom my people have had fair dealings - with you that we find some measure of trust. I have dealings that need to be made!

I possess an item of value to your Empire. It is called the bloodcloak, and it is an artefact of some power to healers. It was passed down from my master to me, and from her master to her, and so on and so forth back to when it was seized as spoils in payment for the aggression of your Winterfolk some century or so ago.

I am a fair orc. To me this cloak has worth - it is a source of pride, and a reminder of the heroic lineage of my own teachers. Yet its magic is of little use to me, and I know that there are those in the Empire who value it highly - particularly your Winterfolk. And now, are we not in an era of peace? Surely, a fine era for fair dealing, and without some of the painful aches of our past conflicts stopping us from all benefitting together.

I have been engaged in some negotiation with various Winterfolk for the cloak, but given the removal of that bandit Dogri and the growing foundation upon which diplomacy between us is being built, I have been advised to move to the closest thing to official channels that we have until an embassy is built - that is to say, yourself. I would ask you to serve as a middleman in any negotiations with the Winterfolk from here on forwards - or, perhaps, you might wish to purchase it for your own reasons. It is of little consequence to me as to who receives it, as long as I receive a fair deal for it.

I am asking the sum of forty four rings of ilium for the crimson cloak itself. Before you wince at the price, let me assure you - this is the sum of ilium used in its creation, which should give you fair impression of its power in the hands of a physick. Therefore, I am not asking for an unfair price - no, I am asking for less than it is worth, as I only ask for the ilium used in its creation. What could be more fair than that?

I would accept wains of mithril in place of ilium as well - one wain replacing two rings of ilium, which I think is a fair deal indeed.

As well as the cloak, the Winterfolk were interested in purchasing my release of indentured workers who fell into my service when captured in war. I have some fifty labourers in my mine, and I will accept a single ingot of weltsilver per one released. I don't know whether this matter will be of enough interest to you to warrant your own desire to purchase their freedom, but the Winterfolk may well ask you about it.

I have sent letters to those I was negotiating with before, and have been assured your Imperial civil service will ensure they arrive in the right hands. These letters instruct them to look now to you to serve as the intermediary in these deals.

There is one last matter I consider worthy of telling you. The Winterfolk told me that there was some sort of meddling in our negotiations by a witch of considerable power, one of your *volodny*. She goes by the name of Bas Celik; I cannot fathom her reasons, but she seems to be attempting to drive a wedge between us and you, to stir up a fresh war. Something to be wary of, I would imagine.

Skogr the Red