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*Dear Gralka,*

*I was disturbed to read of your predicament. I spoke with our diplomats to the Realm of Day, who spoke with our friends and contacts there (we consider most of the Eternals of that realm to be our friends, save Zakalwe, who has always had little interest in us, and, of course, this one that has now arisen). They warned against any contact with this "Cold Sun": that this being would revile from openness and understanding, and surely seek to destroy us: once it has finished its current work, that is. I hope against hope that this does not happen - you know that I have little love for the People of the Horse, but I would not wish upon them such a terrible foe. I understand it to be an ancient flame, now unbound: I hope you have the strength to resist its cold fury. The realms are the reflections of the world we will into its becoming, and there is much fury in the world.*

*I have been told that, for now, you remain the Archmage of Day. As such, I want to make you an offer: use your power of, I am told it is called "plenipotentiary", and request of an Eternal of Day that they set aside a chamber in the realm for us to meet (we are good friends with the Eternals of Day, but they will not be minded to grant us this without this power, I think). As long as it is not Zakalwe (or the Cold Sun!) I am sure they will oblige. Even if you happen to no longer be the Archmage of Day when it comes to pass, the space will be made for us. Of course, Imperial "justice" may see you end before that, but I believe you will endure. If we can, I was hoping you and some others could join me in a guided session of meditation and calm reflection, conducted by one of our adepts, and we could talk more in person about all the things that do not fit into a letter.*

*There is something else I may be able to do for you, if you do come. We have an infusion of sorts, prepared from a plant unique to the mountains around Visoko, known like the plant as zaboravi. Like the magic of Night, it can pluck memories from the mind, but far more potently: better yet, it gives one the ability to fully relive and reflect on one's life up to that point. I think you carry so many, many burdens, and it creates a great discordance in your heart. With the use of zaboravi, properly prepared and in the right spiritual and mental frame of mind, one can find great healing. This would be my wish for you.*

*If you would like to understand more of our beliefs here, by the way, seek out Ikis of the Redhand, also of your people. I have also been writing to them: I think sharing your understanding would help you both. Anyway, yes: to effect a meeting, choose the Eternal of Day you most trust to prepare a space for us, and use your plenipotentiary power. We will sort the other arrangements.*

*In understanding,*

*Sage Kristoph*

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**You should have received a small, ribboned token along with this note. The ribbon should have ID 38033. If you have not received this, please let GOD know immediately and the relevant member of crew will be contacted.**

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*To the Imperial Consul, Jarrick Orzel, of the Casinean Empire of the Bay of Catazar:*

*After receiving your last letter, I went back to our archives and re-read the last I sent. I wrote, I think, "our customs are our customs and our ways are our ways". I should have also said, it seems, "our laws are our laws". You said, in your reply, "we understand that they have broken your customs" - meaning the individuals dwelling on the Isle of Zabor. I want to make it extremely clear: they did not break our customs (in actual fact, they have more or less been peaceful during their time here, respecting our strongly-held beliefs). They broke our laws.*

*The distinction is this: customs are something a people have, and we, the people of Tsark, the Luge, the People of the Moon, are certainly one people, orc and human alike. But we are also a sovereign nation, like any other nation of the world, to be respected in our sovereignty. Other sages I showed your letter to were appalled at your wording, and it is only my review of my previous letter to you, which I can only assume is where you got the word "custom" from in this context, that prevented a less furious response.*

*No exception can be made. However: I recently received a very polite and helpful letter from Cadeus, the Senator of our neighbours in Zenith. In it he mentioned the intention to construct a fortification in Lustri, but rejected Tsarkian aid precisely because he did not feel the Empire could guarantee keeping your part of the bargain that Sage Apollion, in his ancient wisdom, proposed to you, the People of the Horse. Fair enough. This was a polite and considerate letter for which I would like you to pass along my thanks: but it also got me thinking. You might be able to help us!*

*Of course we would prefer not to keep the prisoners we do, but they have seen so much of life here, far beyond anything your spies could intuit. They cannot be permitted to return to you with their memories intact. Unfortunately, while many happily, over the years have chosen to join the Luge or to return to the Empire cleansed of all memory of this place, the ones that remain are particularly stubborn. They cite the virtues you adhere to - Loyalty, often, sometimes also Wisdom - and in some cases emphasise that they will neither betray their Empire by joining us nor give up half a century of memories by returning to you.*

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*What I was thinking is that perhaps you could arrange for letters to be written by, say, the nice Cadeus, any other Urizen Senators who want to write, the Loyalty and Vigilance Cardinals: that sort of thing? Indeed, the heralds of the Conscience-of-Kings inform us that a new Empress is to be crowned in your land: perhaps even a letter from her? Obviously, these letters would not be to me, or my fellow People of the Moon. Rather, they would be to the People of the Horse who dwell here, urging them to give up their memories and return to you. If the great voices of Urizen and the Virtue of the Empire, perhaps even the highest voice in your imperialist hierarchy: if they all speak as one, asking these people to cast off their memories, we truly believe it will persuade even the most stalwart hold-outs to give up.*

*The hold-outs are led, as I alluded to in my last letter, by Ursula of the Hall of the Risen Sun, so if the messages were addressed to "Ursula and those that follow her", and it persuaded her, that would probably be best. Remember that the last thing she will remember is being a young woman climbing in the mountains during the time of Emperor Ahraz: she will awaken as an old woman, with no memories of the intervening years, accompanied with care by our cuvari to our borders. In truth: I do not think this would be pleasant for her. But if your senators and cardinals and Empress believe that the freedom of those kept here against their will is more important than their memories of that captivity, you must persuade them. I will see to it that the letters are delivered.*

*Now, how to send the letters: well, as I mentioned, we are on good terms with Lashonar, who grants boons in such matters. They have agreed to act as a go-between: I enclose with this message a small token that they have imbued with their power. If this token is invoked at your Imperial Regio by a magician casting operate portal, it will disappear, along with any written materials held alongside it, and be delivered to me. It will work only once, of course.*

*Of course - you could forge these letters. I would not know, and neither will they. But I will relay them in good faith, and I hope you will do the same: I am extending you the compassion of trust. I want to help you in this, Consul. I understand why this worries you: we understand. That is why we are so pleased to offer this opportunity.*

*In understanding,*

*Sage Kristoph*

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Dear Fintan,

I will visit Anvil on the Saturday of the coming summit, arriving at around the hour of 4, and I shall bring the shield. If you intend to proceed, have the new artifact ready along with all other necessary materials, and we shall find somewhere private to formally make the exchange and conduct all other necessary business. If you do not intend to proceed, I will be in my lodgings in Fishguard on Friday: please let me know, and it will save me the journey with the shield at least, though I will probably still come for us to talk in person.

I wanted to let you know how moved I am at the idea of this exchange. While the three spiritual forces I cleave to are equally important to me, the potential of a relic of understanding to Axos can not be overstated. We have much Vigilance and no little Wisdom, but understanding... since Solokha's fall, well, it has never truly been in fashion, not really. You are doing a brave and good thing. I want you to know how much I respect you for that.

In friendship,

Theodosia

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Hello, Clèrabéla.

I represent a coterie of mutual friends who share an interest and a certain other circle of friends with you. We were recently approached by a servant of those august personages, and have been encouraged in our work within the city of Apulian, spreading the interests of those self-same shadows.

Now, we know a passageway that leads to a secret place under the Palace of Apulian. There, we tend to meet and talk and discuss our business. It was quite a surprise to learn - from another such servant who visited - that a fateful opportunity exists on this very solstice, for parties from Anvil - 4 or 5, we think - to join one or more of us in that self-same hideaway.

That servant advised us of your existence, and bid us approach you as we are here, telling you of this occluded conjunction, which you will find on no prognosticator's report, and inviting you hence. If you wish, bring others who you can trust to bring into your confidence in this matter. We seek to plan a strategy for the advancement of the interests of our associates in the city, as I believe you suggested, and we would dearly love your advice. You will understand the politics better than us, we think, even as we know the secret ways one travels at night.

Travel, therefore, at 20:25 on Friday of the Solstice, to 'the deepest basement under the Palace of Apulian', in Apulian, in Spiral. That should be enough information for you to use the Gate, I think.

I am,

Mairi (maybe) xoxo

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*Dear Redhand Ikis,*

*Full is your heart with questions! Let me try to answer some. It is true that some ancestors cannot be heard - but we do not believe they are ultimately lost. It is probably true that they are, in a sense, "dissolved" into the Cacophony of the Morass: those without a strong will, worldview, and connection to the world seem to slip away so easily. In Tsark, because we have for so long promoted one way of thinking and one set of beliefs, we generally find that most are remembered and find a voice to call to us: every orc and human who has ever lived in Tsark is carved into the great wall that surrounds the sacred ground of Visoko, also, and so by their forms and names they are also remembered, and this does assist with hearing them. The bones of the wisest of us are preserved in Visoko, and it is these voices we tend to hear loudest.*

*Please, do not put yourself down. While you have been stricken by slavery, I am sure that you would have much to teach me that I do not understand. I have been touched by your open heart. I am writing to Gralka, another of your fellows, and inviting her to request a meeting with representatives of Tsark by the power of plenipotentiary. There will certainly be an opportunity for at least one other orc to come if she chooses to do this: if you can, persuade her to let it be you. I will attend the meeting, arranged for us in a chamber: so perhaps we will meet, after all. Let this be the first step in a road towards friendship, perhaps.*

*Incidentally, you mention a substance known as Black Lotus. I have heard old tales of this substance, said to be able to grant unparalleled insights into the Once-and-Future-Creator: but it is not cultivated here in Tsark. Please let the people who plan to violate our borders know this.*

*In understanding,*

*Sage Kristoph*