

To the Honourable and Virtuous Avisena i Kharizmi i Guerra,

Firstly, my thanks to you for facilitating the meeting that took place last season. The success of our plan to contact you has already gained me and my colleagues much credit among our people. We were able to find and speak with Juevar, who visited Anvil and became your friend. He was overjoyed to hear that you are well, and asks us to pass on his best wishes. Sadly his health has suffered in the years since you last met, and he has now stepped back from his position as a negotiator to focus on supporting his family. Nonetheless, he wishes me to say that your example has been an inspiration to him. He was even able to convince his sister to name her daughter Avisena in your honour! It's only her middle name, but the gesture still stands.

To business. We have spoken to the other leaders of our people. As you no doubt would expect, compromises have to be made. There is no chance that any Imperial citizens could enter our land to learn about our people, the Jotun would be outraged if we allowed it. If you were inclined to seek out evidence of our history it would have to be in your own lands, or through ongoing dialogue. We may be able to send you some of our stories, but that depends on us having the time and ink available. In the same way, there is still caution around opening official dialogue with the Empire separately from the Jotun as a whole. While we are confident in our Loyalty, many among our friends still view us as needing to prove ourselves.

There may, however, be a diplomatic path, though it goes indirectly. The Jotun believe that the Empire is fundamentally fragmented, and hold onto the idea that they can separate the different nations from one another to secure their own strategic and political aims. Based on this, if we are able to convince them

that we are dealing with the Freeborn specifically rather than the whole Empire, we may be able to get away with more open contact. I know that this may go against your principles of Honesty, and we respect that this may be difficult, but Wisdom involves knowing when to speak and when to remain silent on certain matters. It's just an idea at this point. Together we can see where it goes.

We are continuing to work on our own projects internally, but there are some things which would make our lives easier. Getting the Navarri away from us would be a good start. Send them to fight the Druj, Virtues only know they deserve one another. The less we have to deal with their bloodthirsty 'pragmatism', the better for all concerned. Also, if you could get the Fire Of The South to stop whatever that awful magical thing they were doing was, that would be good. War is never pleasant, but it doesn't have to be an exercise in unrestricted brutality. A Virtuous soul can overcome any suffering our enemies can inflict, but that's no reason to cheapen ourselves with sadism.

Speaking of matters of Virtue, our opinions continue to fix on a certain stance. We are grateful to the Empire for teaching us of Virtue, but we have no desire to join your Synod and accept your authority over us. We are a Proud people, and we are also Wise. We seek to ask and answer our own questions on the nature of Virtue. The Doctrines of the Empire are written by and for humans, and while we accept the words of the Skywise that times are changing, we do not wish to start from the same point as you. We wish to chart our own path across the stormy seas of Virtue. Perhaps our Ancestors and your Paragons will meet one day and compare notes. Until then, we ask that you respect our judgement.

Now let us talk of missionary efforts. We have discussed this among ourselves, and we have an idea of how to proceed. The Jotun, as you may know, worship

their ancestors directly. They try to emulate their deeds, make offerings, and say prayers to them. The mightiest of these ancestors have fundamentally shaped Jotun society by their example. We have been able to hear once again the voices of our ancient ancestors, the strongest and most Virtuous among them. If we can construct a mighty Kirkja - the temples where this ancestor worship takes place - in honour of one of our mightiest ancestors, godhi will come from far and wide to venerate them. There are two problems with this. One is that this would require a lot of white granite, and we do not have a lot of white granite. The other is that this would definitely have severe negative consequences for the Empire.

Allow me to explain. The mightiest and most Virtuous of our ancestors was the one known as Hessar Escuta, of the same Escuta who joined the Jotun so long ago and have only recently rediscovered their heritage. I shall be blunt: Hessar Escuta killed the First Empress. We have their axe, which we recovered during our campaign in Segura. We have done the divinations. We have heard their voice. The first and mightiest war leader of the Empire fell in battle at the hands of our ancestor, in battle in Segura. If we build this Kirkja then Hessar Escuta will be venerated quickly as a faðir. Many Jotun will be inspired by their legend, and be eager to learn of the Virtue that they represent. They will also be inspired by their legend to fight harder and more ferociously against the Empire, and if you appoint another Throne, many will seek to emulate Hessar's example. But perhaps for some Thrones this will be an attractive proposition. Don't we all love to be the centre of attention once in a while? Anyhow. Building a mighty Kirkja will be incredibly effective for us, and have serious negative consequences for you. It is up to you to exercise your Wisdom in this matter. We trust your judgement. If you tell us that there is an appetite for this, we can begin looking

at arrangements to, let's not mince words, illegally smuggle white granite across the border. We have contacts.

Now I definitely am ending this letter. I say again in closing, we may take arms against you, we may take your riches for our own, we may seek to conquer your lands, but we do not hate you. The Virtuous know that death is not the end, that any loss can be overcome, and that knowing how to deal with loss can be as powerful as the greatest victory. You taught us that. Perhaps we shall teach you the same.

*Virtue Guide You,
Lucero Mithril-Shield of the Hierro*

PS

I said that I was ending this letter, only to realise that I left you no clear way to contact me! I can receive Winged Messengers at:

Lucero Mithril-Shield

Grismont Township

Bastasor

Reinos

Please do not give this out to any fool who asks. We trust you. Those who you vouched for at our meeting we might, and I say might, be willing to converse with. Others will take time. Now I am going to hide the rest of my good writing paper so I cannot continue remembering things and end up sending you a small book.

Archmage Edmundo,

I've done my calculations and I'm terribly sorry to say that I won't be able to bypass the auction and offer you exclusive rights to the Loom. The wording of my contracts is just close enough to the edge that I cannot take the chance of a breach. I have, however, whispered into certain people's ears that you might be interested in securing access for yourself, or for your Order, or for your Nation, and I've been hearing encouraging noises coming back. I hear that Prospero is making quite a collection of favours from the Imperial Conclave these days, so the chance to work more closely with your Order might suit him quite well!

Of course, a good step in this direction is the Empire demonstrating its commitment to accessing the Loom of Spells. By which I of course mean, big bids from big cartels. The market for Imperial currency is fluctuating a little - nothing for you to worry about, purely internal Realm business - so the more ingots and measures I can put into my portfolio, the more serious you look.

Respectfully yours,

Sanwar Isk

Ashborn Trosk,

Well done. Flint has been carried away in chains, and the City of Locks is in turmoil. Turmoil that I am ideally placed to exploit. It will take me a little while to cement my control, but by next season I should be firmly installed as ruler of the City of Locks, and the new Basileus. I'll send you an invitation to attend my investiture, watch out for more messages!

Sadly I won't be able to keep paying you the Vis stipend, and once this is done, our working relationship will have to end. I may have benefited from your treachery, but I don't intend to give you the opportunity to do to me what you did to Flint. I'm sure you understand.

Regards,

Basileus Brazen

THIS POSTSCRIPT ADDED BY ORDER OF THE LICTORS

*ASHBORN TROSK IS SUMMONED TO GIVE TESTIMONY REGARDING HIS INVOLVEMENT
IN THE ARREST OF BASILEUS FLINT.*

*ASHBORN TROSK IS TO ATTEND THE HALL OF WORLDS AT 21:00 ON FRIDAY TO GIVE
ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF.*

*ASHBORN TROSK MAY BE ACCOMPANIED BY TWO ADVOCATES TO ADVISE HIM AND
SPEAK IN HIS INTERESTS.*

REWARD AND/OR PUNISHMENT WILL BE DETERMINED.

BY ORDER OF THE LICTORS, WARDENS OF THE GREEN IRON PRISON