

*This letter is for the eyes of Tyburn Weaver of House de Rondell, Grandmaster of the Shattered Lantern. If you are not the aforementioned person, please stop reading this now. Thankyou.*

*The plan we executed has begun to come to fruition. The situation is changing quickly. I will attend Anvil on the Friday of the forthcoming summit at 23:00. I understand that the Hall of Worlds is in use for a Plenipotentiary at that time, I will wait by the Imperial Regio for you or a representative who can present proof that they speak on your behalf. I will trust you to find us somewhere to meet that is secure.*

*I will have the journal with me. My colleagues have been informed that the matter is in your hands, which has quelled much of the complaining.*

*Neirin Light-And-Shadow*

Florence i Fuego i Erigo,

We haven't met, but you have done me a significant service. I am Kaige, Chief Facilitator of the Matchmaker's Forum in the City of Locks. I understand that you recently participated in a confidential ritual within our fair City which shifted the balance of power among the factions somewhat. I am bound to thank you for this, as the Matchmaker's Forum, long sidelined by those in power, has experienced a resurgence in importance! I myself have been invited to join the Five Pillars, the council of advisors who assist our fair Basileia in the execution of her duties. The fact that I have acquired the personal favour of the Basileia herself is simply a happy bonus - whoever ends up matched with her will be happy indeed!

Warm words may swell the heart but they will not discharge an obligation nor fill your pockets. As such, I have sent you a gift. A robe that will enhance your ability to call upon our realm once per day, I gather that your Empire knows how to make something similar already. Hopefully this will be suitable recompense for the favour you have done me, whether or not you intended to.

Lastly, a word of advice: Ashborn Trosk is cunning and ruthless, but not as clever as he thinks. He stabbed Flint in the back the second an opportunity presented itself, and I have little doubt that he would feed you to the dogs with little more hesitation. You can do better. Perhaps you and your four colleagues who accompanied him could cooperate more without him pulling the strings? What a fun little conspiracy that would be! Perhaps you should check in with them, see how they are?

Hush Hush,

Kaige, Chief Facilitator of the Matchmaker's Forum

Enchanter Edmund Torawyr,

My name is Orlando, and let me say, I am a big fan of your work! Not your work in the Empire, you understand, although I'm sure that must be frankly magnificent. No, I refer to your work in the City of Locks recently! Ashborn Trosk may have brought you in, but when the decision was in your hands, you chose right! We both understand the importance of rewarding good behaviour, so I trust my gift has made its way into your hands. A nice robe for you to use, one that will enhance your ability to call upon my realm once per day! I think your Imperial artisans can craft something similar? Anyhow, I trust you shall get good use out of it.

Forgive me, I have quite forgotten to offer context! I am the President of the Benevolent Association of the City of Locks. We organise the gathering of donations from the well-off and their distribution to those most in need. Or most in need of persuading, I should say! And wouldn't you know it, just after you made your most well-informed choice, a large donation happened to end up in the hands of Basileia Brazen, who has rewarded us with a position on the Five Pillars, her council of personal advisors! Extremely personal, if you catch my drift. She does know how to reward loyalty!

I should offer a word of advice to you, for what it's worth. Your 'friend' Ashborn Trosk is not a good bet. He's getting a little clingy for the Basileia's tastes, and is starting to make demands beyond what he has earned. You can do better. The four others who travelled with you to the City might be worthy companions - Trosk certainly saw something in all of you, so imagine what you could do without him holding you back! You should talk. I'm sure we'll have many opportunities to profitably cooperate in future!

Love and Kisses,

President Orlando of the Benevolent Association of the City of Locks

Irontide Rus,

The militia of the City of Locks remains powerless and subservient. Good. I do not know why you made the choice you did and I do not care. You have benefited us. When throats need to be cut, we will retain the power to cut them. For this I send you a reward suited to your skills. Strike down the weak and unprepared. But only when it will benefit you.

I am Mistress Alabaster of the Guild of Accountants. We are the ones who track the price of a life in this City. After your choice was made we were granted a position on the Five Pillars. This is Basileia Brazen's advisory council. We are respected and listened to. We will provide our services when the price is right. Understand that assassination is a business of precision. We come when called. We come for specific targets. If Trosk has a target for us he can tell us. Otherwise we will wait.

We must speak further of Trosk. He is no longer your best ally. We know that when your time came to choose it was Bloodcrow Udoo whose words you listened to. Trosk is overconfident and believes that he controls what he does not. If you wish to advance your goals then you had better seek Udoo and the others who came to the City with you. They will serve you better than the one who betrayed Flint.

Sincerely,

Mistress Alabaster of the Guild of Accountants

Bloodcrow Udo,

Last summer Ashborn Trosk chose you to be one of his companions on a visit to the City of Locks. You were his advisor on the Power of Knowledge. You were met by the Lictor known as Link at the Imperial Regio and conveyed to a seemingly insignificant basement. There you spoke on a series of choices which have shaped the future of the City of Locks. Interestingly, you effectively made two choices, choosing Spying for Knowledge and dissuading Trosk and Rus from choosing Enforcers for Violence. You also got a bit rushed on your own choice.

How do I know all of that? It's my job to know. I'm Overseer Hook of the Surveyor's Cartel. We find things out. You did us a good turn this past season. Keeping us in our position of influence has secured us a position on the Five Pillars, the advisory council to our dear Basileia. Let me tell you, friend, she treats her underlings far better than Flint ever did. I've sent you a robe as a thank-you gift. It was hard to make, considering, but never let it be said we're without resources. I happen to know that you don't dabble in our realm much.

We should speak on what the City can provide for your Empire, and what you can do to increase our power in return. Hang around the Imperial Regio at 11:00 on this coming Saturday. While Basileia Brazen speaks to the worthies of Conclave, we can talk about gathering intelligence.

One other thing: Ashborn Trosk is not the ally you need in these trying times. You heard him - the skeletons in his closet could get him killed. Do you want to get caught up in that? Talk to the other four who he brought with him to the City. They could be a formidable force, given proper information. I think they could do with some veteran guidance, don't you?

See You,

Overseer Hook

Quay Stone,

Oi oi! I hear you've been around my manor lately. I hear that you decided that smuggling was all good and proper like, evading all proper legal controls. You sound like a wrong'un. I've reported you to the authorities.

And the authorities reckon it's a fucking great idea and are all for it! 'Scuse my little joke. I'm Boss Calarook of the Union of Stevedores and Lock-Keepers in the City of Locks. When things need to get to places they shouldn't, we make sure that nobody's looking the right way. When people need to move around quietly, we make sure they can get where they need to go. And we always, ALWAYS get paid. I think maybe you know a bit more about that sort of thing than you might admit if the militia were around, yeah? I think we can do business. Especially after your decision scored me a spot on the Five Pillars - that's Basileia Brazen's advisory council. She knows how to pick 'em, yeah?

I sent you a gift. All in good fun, right? Get things off on the right foot. Get you making that money, just like we do. Hopefully that gets me a minute of your time. Get your arse down the Imperial Regio at 11:00 on Saturday, and we'll talk business. I got a few offers you might find interesting.

Word to the wise: your mate Trosk ain't worth as much as he says. He's got his eyes on the top job and he might even get it, but take it from one bastard to another, he's a bit too full of himself. Now, those other four who went to the City with you? They might be worth something. Maybe you lot could do business together. Just know when to cut the big guy out, you know what I mean? He knows a lot about putting knives in backs himself.

It's Your Round,

Boss Callarook

*Sometimes one casts the runes, follows the flight of the birds, reads the entrails, and realises that one has to leave home and do something. Rarely do the omens explain to you just how unfit and out of practice at travelling you have become in your comfortable years in the Aviary.*

*Forgive my complaining. Truthfully, it has been good to get out on the road and feel the wind in my hair again. And you could not have chosen a better cause. The defence of the sacred swamps, the homeland of our ancestors, the resting place of heroes since time immemorial, has become the updraught to send us soaring far and wide.*

*You have likely already heard of our results. The omens were fairly clear on some things - Naeve and Pallas were constantly together, pointing obviously at the Globbersnotch, often with Evrom, clearly signifying that a new beginning with the greedy old toad was possible. The hard part was finding someone owed a favour by the Black Sloth who hadn't cashed it in already. But you let enough ravens fly, and one of them will spy out what you need to find.*

*As for the Great Forest Orcs and their Navarri allies, that was a surprise, but not an unwelcome one. Still, as The Mountain teaches us, Things Are Not Easy. We know that they can build fortresses from Weirwood, fortresses that will not sink into a swamp. Who knows what other benefits they may gain us? But first we must earn their trust. As I cast the runes, Lann comes up over and over again, as do Rhyv, Zorech, and Ophis. Bargains, bound in blood, passionate, and witnessed. Whoever you*

*send to this had best be prepared to commit themselves, and to persuade our people to commit along with them.*

*Lastly, Raven Seer, the words you spoke to your guests in privacy, that I shall not write details of here. You touch on an old debate, and a fierce one, but I sense that you meant to. We all weave our skeins on the same loom, and some choose to weave a darker thread. We see you, and we know you. Some agree, and some disagree. Yet we know this: each mystic will weave and guide as they see fit. Ask what you will, for some will agree with you, but be careful if you do, for some do not. Choices are the essence of how the skein is weaved, after all.*

*-Wyr, once of the Aviary*