

Zabira,

This is the third time I've started this letter, here in these dreadful army camps in the Semersuaq wastes, hopefully this time I'll manage to finish it before my tears make too much of a mess of the page.

"Send news of the campaign," you said as we left the farmstead.

I was sure it would be good news. For all we were only a few of us left with symbols of falcons not just flames marching this time, with Alvar and Faraj by my side I thought we could find a place alongside the Fire in the South, that we could keep the Jotun out of Sermersuaq, drive them back into the Gullet or North or somehow away. I suppose Emperor Guntherm and the armies might yet do that. But us! Oh, that brings me to my first news.

Alvar is dead. And though we Kohan wear our loyalties lightly enough, I know and you know, how deep his ties to the Red Hills Coven went, and I know that you will grieve with me.

But it is more than that I have to report. Faraj will likely not make it home to the shifting sands of Gambit either. As for me. What am I without them both?

I would return if I could. Honour our contract. Lead you back to the lost Inspirational Tomb of Badir I Durr I Riqueza. But it was not my sense of direction that found that long forgotten place from your vaguest of directions when we went there last - truth be told we fell into when Alvar stumbled between rocks in the most remote barren reaches of Gambit on some strange hunch. So even if I do make it out of these frozen wastes alive, I am not sure I am capable of doing what is needed.

And if I could manage that what good would my doing so achieve? I am scared. Even if you gather your best Htakima, what guarantee is it that they are proof against whatever magic and spirits were awoken there - the dancing dolls, the strange feelings, the collection of funeral goods oddly bound up with lace?

So I beg you, release me from the contract, and know that I release you - I don't need you to remain silent on what you suspect is there any longer so that we can be among those who claim the prize of discovery. I lay no claim to that honour any more. If what you believe is true find yourself others to seek the tomb with the Hakima, others to untangle the clues and work out if the divining crystal was ever even there or not, as we could not.

If you find others to look, tell them to walk with care. We entered the tomb when some of its ceiling came to pieces under our feet. The fall was not far, but none to gentle either.

I am sorry we have wasted your time, by asking you to await our return from campaign. We left Kahraman with far more ambition and courage than is left to me now.

I have to go, Faraj's marrowart is wearing off and he is beginning to mumble. If I can't get more doses soon it will be screams.

With love

Nunia I Guerra

May your fires burn bright