

*There is little time left to me.*

*I am Servilius of the Hand of Glory. You do not know me. Your name is one of those on the list I recovered from the corpse of Vileck. Vileck is dead. So are almost the entirety of the rest of the Hand. I am not sure if I am all that is left.*

*You will have been recruited via one of Vileck's stupid schemes. I don't know the specifics of what he will have told each of you in his letters, who he will have claimed he was or what we were doing - whether we were archaeologists or researchers or what else besides. He will have offered you induction, maybe made you swear oaths. All obfuscation, unnecessary lingering remnants of how we once operated.*

*We were the Hand of Glory. We were what was left of the secret circle that served Nicovar. After his fall, some of the officers of his secret police swore an oath - to see him returned. That was the Hand's focus, its goal, the purpose to which it turned its efforts.*

*The Hand's research took it to the Spire of Bells and Flags in Ankra, Spiral. We found there the final piece of the puzzle - no more than a curio, a little piece of Nicovar's possessions that he had owned and kept around him for so long that it would serve as a proper anchor for a summoning, a casting of the Black Gate to truly conjure him forth despite the gap of years.*

*And then the Grendel fell upon us.*

*They are all dead, I think. It is just I, and I will not survive for long. I am sending this via Winged Messenger to each of those names on the list that foolish, hopeful Vileck had. There will be a conjunction here soon - I have woven the divinations and sensed it coming. We were being pursued by agents of the Silent Bell, chasing our trail. They will have reported back to the Council of Nine by now - telling them our purpose, our intent. The Grendel now have that curio.*

*If you hold any true allegiance to the Hand's cause, get yourselves through the Sentinel Gate. Get the curio, and use it for what the Hand has striven towards. Call up Nicovar once more, and invoke him to come to the Empire's aid. The Council will be sending their own expedition - place yourself amongst their ranks if you can. There is no guarantee the Nine will see the wisdom in summoning the Emperor; but if they just will, then they can speak with him, and see what our own hidden history has told the Hand - that he was not the monster painted in the muddled records that followed his reign, but a visionary who yet holds truths that were forever lost to us when he perished. The Empire needs to benefit from what he knows. It needs to see the man he truly was.*

