

*Soot Scale,*

*We thank you for your continued correspondence. It has been fulfilling to hear a new voice after so long. I cannot say that all of us yet live, for it is known to me that there are those who do not. Their echoes, as you say, remain. It is my hope, but not certain knowledge, that all peoples' echoes are among us, for even our records did not well survive the intervening years. There may be those who are lost, forever.*

*It is good to know there are others who understand the meaning of the butterflies' early departure. Do your people prepare? I wish Under Secretary Annoria well, but agree that this is for the best.*

*Echoes. Mirrors. It is not our intent to baffle. Were we could understand you and be in turn understood. Curiosity we understand. Caution we understand. Battles, we do not. We wish only to understand first and be understood second.*

*We wish to enlighten you. Perhaps it is best to say that curiosity is what drives us. We know every inch of our lands. Some of our families fear the unknown. Of stepping foot outside of the range of milenia of study. I wish to remind those families of that which drives us to learn more and more. Once, we knew less. Everything was new and interesting, and we were happy. I want that happiness, again, for our families. Not through forgetting that which we know, but in finding things we do not. Your traders have provided us that which we value most: a curiosity. We hope that in our attempt at enlightening you we have lessened the terror that we have inadvertently caused.*

*We mourn that our families' knowledge is of no use to you. We want to share the happiness of knowledge. Trade was once the life blood of my families, yet it seems we have no skill at it in this new Age. We vow to improve. Should you seek information, especially from the Before Times, please consider us a source.*

*We are aligned in our lack of warrior nature. There is no greater tragedy than the thought of a people extinguished, their echoes lost. There is no greater boredom than everything trapped under the same banner. We wish the peoples of Bellor to continue to live and grow and change, that we might continue to learn. We wish them to resound in their uniqueness, not the muffled sameness that was our cage.*

*We fear the coming battles. You are not the first to speak to us of them as if an inevitability. We fear that a mirrored pool lies betwixt all of us, baffling our senses. We fear that a lack of knowledge will lead some nations to act rashly. Already one has spoken of skill in battle to us, and another has threatened violence over cultural misunderstandings. Knowledge is what can save us. Battle need not be inevitable.*

*May the coming butterflies bring blessing of full bellies, and may you be safe from battle*

*JR.*

(Attached is a single grey twig, with a dead leaf attached)