

*To his Majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Lord of the Nine Islands, The Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Binder of Men, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed. I Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, First Of Mine Name, send this letter as means of negotiation.*

*I send this letter in haste, so long as such things occur immediately, I accept thine terms. I deign only to "bully" you into haste, for as I said before, wasted time is wasted lives. I have just sent my Grand Admiral, Giacomo-Henri d'Harcourt, the Dragonslayer, towards your northern forces, with them a retinue of two thousand knights. They shall learn from thine commanders your forces, capabilities and status of the Northern Freeholds, then lead a joint effort between us. Not as means of insulting your Keitian leadership, but Giacomo-Henri tis unparalleled, and adaptive in both tactics and strategy. I firmly suggest you send word to thine leadership that they will be leading the joint leadership efforts, so that bruised ego mayhaps not cost us lives.*

*You and yours will be in route towards Graulden-Hall isle, which is the large landmass at the center of the Tomb Bay. Your ships acting as both transport, and defence, for the sea spawn grow bolder each day. Lest we find ourselves with dynamic situations, ours will continue up the Cestin Coast. Each day we clear more towns and our supply lines swell, as our roads pave way toward safe perimeters.*

*After such things have been completed, and given that I am still within the world of the living. I shall hear your 47 stanzas. There is no greater Unity than one forged on blood and sacrifice for Sainly means. Whilst I mayhaps've lead you to*

believe us to be zealots. Through reason, I see a path towards an enduring respect betweenst us.

Once more, your tales of war and conquest leave me with a great feeling of reassurance. The world of other nations oft seem cruel, pathetic manipulation, your directness is a refreshment in this regard. If you may, I request you allow me to publish writings of your conquests. These victories fascinate me, as do your descriptions of your beasts of war. Ours, the Horse, is a quadrupedal beast that hast been one of few keys elevating us above Chaos Spawn. For one, a Horse, nay a Sancerren Destrier, tis the fastest animal on land. Beyond that, it carries an incredible strength, with ease we may drape it in our steel, and have it hoist our lancemen. Whilst tis not a nimble creature, tis remarkable at moving in a singular direction.

To elaborate on such things, I wish to provide an example. As have been described in past, I mention that "No Sancerren may sully a sword in war", such a thing is put simply, to deter Sancerrens from using such weaponry. You see, Saint. Aistulf, first King of Sancerre, the first Knight of Sancerre, the Purehearted, wielded a sword named Lightsguard, into battle. In the following ages, near all Knight, wishing to become one with St. Aistulf, wielded swords into battle against the Chaos tides.

Tis of great tragedies that none realized the awfulness of such a weapon. A sword tis best for piercing, for dueling, that of slaying Chaos monsters? Nonsensical. A sword would slice into such a creature a thousand times without the weight to hack off a single limb. This for similar reason as to why Spear are oft seldom

found within Sancerre, nor Daggers, nor Archers. Our weapons are toward the end of slaughtering monsters, and to do so you have two paths. Hack it until it can no longer move. That of the Hatchet, the Axe, Halberds, that which can carry weight enough to hack limbs clean off. Then there is the second path, Obliteration, which would be Warhammers, Cannons and most importantly the Lance.

Whilst tis true the Lance is a piercing weapon, and far too unwieldy for any Knight to wield afoot. The weight behind a Lancemens charge atop horseback, tis that which can be compared to cannonfire, only intensified to a single point. The targets of such a thing will die from the shock first, then later the missing, well, everything. That above all else is the horses greatest strength. Tis why even when harried with Ballistae fire, it took a single Knight and rider, at just the perfect angle to skewer through the Saesenterment's infernal heart.

I hast sent word to Le'Conquerant to send you one of our finest Equestrians, with them a Sancerren Destrier, Llockwindberg Courser, and an Eggebracht Rouncey. Destrier's tis the largest breed, and of charging stock, most above six feet in height, with a muscular build. Courser's tis for skirmishers, lighter, and more easy for strafing runs against one's foe. Then there is the Rouncey, a general worksmens horse, made to last, and to carry supply to and fro the many Kingships.

With such things said, your own fauna intrigues me, that of the Gheist seems a beast of particular value. I ask for you to write back on the nature of your many creatures, so that I may hear of their purpose in war.

In addition, you ask us of both our histories, and of the Republic of Vaerlan. Such

things I have kept fierce secret from mine other neighbors, tis of particular shame, and vulnerability. Yet, I sense within your peoples an unyielding honor, and as means of further transparencies I shalt share with you Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Lord of the Nine Islands, The Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Binder of Men, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed, but only you. Know that this story tis as long, as it may very well be of disinterest, though all the same I ask of you to not share with your people's what I am to share to you now.

Whilst in truth such things should start at the birth of Tavar, no less beginning with full detail the Innumerable Wars of Tavarin Succession. Know only that the Tavarins hold a heretical streak of rebellion against their kingship, of which Sancerrens have given an ocean's worth of blood in protecting.

Tis important however for thou to understand several of the conflicts within Sancerre to have grasp of the state of the Vaerlan. First twas the Battle of Haut-Alpes, which was the fight that Knighted the now Secessionist King Patrice-Joseph.

The leader of the excursion twas mine father Emperor François de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, our aim twas to slay the "Montagnelezar", a Chaos titan that lurked within the territories of Ponce. Pouring off of it's innumerable bubous twas an army of malformed beasts twisted from the blackness that formed the Chaos Tides themselves. To give reference, the creature twas the size of a mountain, likely five hundred feet in length, with the body of a slug, and skin of rock. It's roar shook

*the ground itself, and it took the combined effort of ninety thousand infantry, and five thousand knights, to bring an end to the monstrosity.*

*Whilst you may believe such a thing to be greater than any threat I have described before, know that it was compared to a Mountain for great reason, such weight rendered it near immobile, only defended by the endless Chaos that it bled into this world.*

*My retinue composed of nine thousand men, many of them were my close allies, having been those of whom I had forged my career as infantrymen with. It took three hours of constant battle before we began to lose ground. Then four hours after that, for us to lose half of our forces. I scarcely remember a time where I was surrounded by more blood. Yet, all the same, I remember our Commandant gave us a speech between every engagement. Simple words that ignited something within my men. Gave us purpose, reminded us of our calling, of Saint Sours and those that came before us.*

*It took fourteen hours for the Cavalrymen to arrive, after that, it took but forty minutes for our section of the mountain to be cleared. See, our aim was to defend a row of thirty Catapults. That we did, and when time came, Catapults on all sides of the Haut-Alpes bore through the cliff faces that flanked the beast. Followed by a deafening crash as the mountain was brought down, finally killing the Montagnelezar under an ocean of rubble. Whilst such a thing was a success, only a hundred of the men in my l'escouade, out of nine thousand, survived. All but I was knighted, and among the Cavalrymen that rescued us, was Giacomo-Henri then Sours-Lieutenant, and the soon to be knighted Patrice-Joseph.*

*I need only mention this, for it twas a particular spark in the current wars of succession. If I were not born a woman, that day I would hast been knighted. See, due to specific tenets of chivalry, concerning innocence, and verbage surrounding certain Aistulfin tenets, women are barred from Knighthood. Just as important to this, whilst it is never explicitly stated in formal text, tis a tradition above even blood, that all ranks higher than Duke be held by Knights, which includes the title of Emperor.*

*After this, there was the "War of Purple Blood", wherein the Mad King of Tavar Jacques de Roche Gilbert de Boncompagni attempted a Succession from greater Dun Sancerre with the Kingdom of Maecht forming the "Feux de Liberté". Their annihilation twas humiliating, and brutal, for they hadn't the manpower to defeat our Knights. The "Siege of Saint-Bonnet-en-Champsaur" in particular twas a bloodbath that ended in the death of King Jacques de Roche Gilbert, executed by mine hands. With every fiber of mine body I hated that heretical king and their worthless barbaric rebellion. Such things said, in my younger years I had allowed such hatred to consume me in reckless ways.*

*There twas a decision that was made jointly by Giacomo-Henri d'Harcourt and I, to incinerate the castle. Whilst I do not regret giving the order, twood seem in mine later attempts at Peace, this was used as evidence of mine barbarism. Mine reasoning was that it would spare the lives of Sancerren troops. Yet, it chiefly destroyed several priceless artifacts of Tavarin culture within the castle. See, then I did not hold an official title of anything other than Princess. So, to refer to this non-Knight that executed the king and burned their home to ashes, they began to*

refer to me as "Maîtresse de Hache". Then, I preferred it, near relished in that my actions finally began to speak louder than my birthright.

Though looking back, a reputation as a merciless barbarian twas likely a problem I should have nixed earlier. For not too far after the "War of Purple Blood", there twas the "Siege of Château Guillaume-le-Conquérant" which killed mine father, and near plunged the Kingdoms into anarchy. All suitable heirs had been killed, and that of the newly kinged Patrice-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert de Boncompagni, had maneuvered his way into being an ideal choice for the next Emperor.

Then was "La Quête du Ciel", I'm not sure how much I thought of politics then. Only with the words of Giacomo-Henri did I care to pay attention to the lesser whispers that surrounded the campaign. There was only the speeches I gave, and the troops I rallied under the Gryphon Banner. Twas seventy thousand infantrymen, and four thousand knights, all of which fought against a single creature. If you wish mine elaboration on this conflict, I may do so in the future, but such a thing twood be a novel in it's own right.

Know that sixty thousand men died among those four days, and out of those remaining, nine thousand were promoted to Knighthood. Out of those, Giacomo-Henri d'Harcourt, along with new title of Dragonslayer, twas promoted to the highest rank possible for a military officer Grand Admiral. His first command, twas to lay his sword atop my shoulders. Knighting me.

History would not be as it is if it were not for that heretical break in the Chivalric

Code. With it, Patrice-Joseph found support in calling us radical false-knights, using this as a catalyst to swell his own ranks, as he joined with the Kingships of Maecht and Eggebracht to succeed. During "La Quête du Ciel", the Tavarins did not offer a single troop. Heretics. They waited in the shadows as vipers for whence our army twas at it's weakest for them to once again break from the Empire.

In truth, our armies then were at the weakest they had ever been, handed to me twas a fractured empire, on the edges of collapse.

Those were desperate days, I did all I knew how, fighting one the frontlines with mine men. I lead my empire exclusively through speeches made on the frontlines. Whether such a decision furthered their view of me as bloodthirsty brute, or self sacrificing Knight, I could not know. But I fought in those war for four long years, until the Heralds fell the cages that surrounded our borders. Then, only then, could I even think to accept their surrender. A six month non aggression pact twas formed, and now we are at our current situation.

I must apologize for the lengthiness of such histories, but you shall be the only one that I will tell in full of this conflict. It shall be two months until this pact of non aggression ceases, and I do not intend to let those bewitching politicians know of it.

I do not expect, nor do I now request of any aid in this manner. This is internal, personal, to me and mine peoples. Simply, it twas a show of good faith and transparency, oft which we find little of in our neighbors, and much of with yours. I hope that our people's futures are that of unity against this bleak future.



*May his Lionheart beat within us All.*

*-Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières*