



To Empress Adelaide, honoured friend, the crusader-queen, knight of knights.

The world trembles and shakes. The centre cannot hold.
Madness boils beneath the waves, and all we can do is behold.

I greet you with all the honours of your station, and I can only hope my letter finds you upon the field of a great victory in Verlan. I steel my hand as I write, for standing aside from this situation frustrates me - it is not our way to refuse aid to an ally as true as you are proving yourself to be. Nonetheless, we understand that some battles must be fought alone to have been truly won. We hope you have done so.

Should you have fallen to dishonourable means levied by Verlan or another of our foes, we will declare blood debt upon those responsible. The crash of the waves upon the shores will be as nothing compared with our wrath, and the paws of a thousand beasts will drag the oathbreakers to an eternal fealty beneath the waves.

I am gladdened that Al Daric has responded positively. We know little of them, but their traders ply our shores with some regularity, and vice versa. I have sent adventurers and explorers to their lands, and hope to know more of them presently. I look forward to our summit, and I will make preparations to head there upon the next season.

As to our plans, my news is as simple as your own: they are in motion, almost exactly as we discussed.





Soon, the Shark and Naga fleets will sweep down upon the allies of the oathbreakers and plaguespreaders, the vermin and the carrion of the world. My own fleets will conduct your knights first, and I trust have already done so by the time this letter reaches you. These forces will have a new commander, one that I hope you find more amicable than Bri'Ayambe. His name is Varthak Tribeless, spoken of in deed and legend amongst the southern tribes, and he is a sufficiently horrible frog for the tasks we require of him. May he bring honour to the Ironscale Pact.

My captains burn with a fierce vengeance in this, for not only does the issue of the plague need redress, but another issue has long lain unresolved: in our previous conflicts with the Quotidien Quorum, Sootscale, voice of the Rahastan tribes, did beg us to stay our hand and pursue peace - in exchange for a gift of gold and volunteers from his tribes, so that we might learn of his peoples. Thus, Sootscale did shoulder the honour of the Quotidien Quorum. And thus did we honor his requests by pursuing peace - it has been four months now that we have staid our hand. And yet no such gift of gold or rahastans have reached our land, and we have now received confirmation that Sootscale does not intend to pay.

We name him oathbreaker.

This was not a matter he need have concerned himself with in the first place. I had assumed that, like yourself, he did not wish blood to be spilt unnecessarily. That is a noble thing. Yet it now seems he merely wished to beggar his own words, robbing himself of the virtues of truth in petty exchange for Quorum lives that we might have spared anyway if he had treated with us truthfully. We are personally





disappointed in him, and we relay this to you so that you might know his words are not to be trusted.

Beyond that, the Quorum claim in their letters that the plague that now wracks Bellor was originally designed as weapon against the noxious vermin of Grovel, and released accidentally by the actions of a nation whose name they refuse to disclose. Though I know we both have our own opinions of the true origin of this plague, with which I am still satisfied, it occurs to me that this plague may have been the work of two nations, not one. In that case, our current course of action is still appropriate. I shall simply enjoy it more.

As to the issues besetting your lands, I hope that the sales of cannons to my fleets will provide some income. Moreover, my traders will bring wealth to your shores this season, hopefully filling your war chest. I have received reports that our leaches are highly valued amongst your doctors, and we are sending our most prime specimens.

As to the rats, I have several pieces of information:

We believe Grovel is capable of using normal rats for espionage through certain spells, perhaps a variant of the beast binding my nation practices. Be wary of rats, and cull their numbers. Secondly, Grovel seems adept at spy craft, easily culling the QQ spies in their midst. Perhaps we will both benefit from a continued war between these two groups. In order to achieve this, I have advertised in our ports that any ratmen who wish to sail with our raiding fleets will be given double pay. Given the intended destination of our raids, I hope this will be sufficient - and might distract any raiders in your own lands with juicier targets





elsewhere.

Looking to the future, my fleets will be positioned to continue the blockade for several months. Whilst this action takes place, I wish to investigate Al Daric with my scouts, or perhaps send a party of adventurers towards the Ultra lands. Beyond that, I will be assembling my greatest hunters and beast binders. If you wish it in future months, I will send these to you to attempt to locate and aid you in binding the griffons of which you speak. My heart is gladdened at your skill and aptitude with Maelys, and we hope she might guard you from the threats that beset you. When my father helped me raise my first spine hound, he told me this: A man may be loyal for a day or a year. A hound is loyal forever.

I write to you in the spirit of the hounds.



From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Ayambe, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, Keeper of the Ironscale Pact, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

