

HEAR YOU, O VULKERATH SOOTSCALE, THE WORDS OF THE SPEAKER OF RAHASTAS, AND MAY THE MIRE SWALLOW ME IF I SPEAK AGAINST RAHASTAS' WILL.

THE HARVEST HAS BEEN EXCESSIVELY BOUNTIFUL THIS MONTH, RAHASTAS' FISH AND FRUIT PLENTIFUL BEYOND BELIEF. RAHASTAS PRODUCED FOR OUR HUNTS AN UNDYING CALF, AND OUR HUNTERS SALLIED FORTH AND SLEW IT SEVEN TIMES, WITHOUT A SINGLE CASUALTY OF THEIR OWN. EACH TIME THEY BROUGHT BACK MORE OF THE CALF'S MEAT AND SCALES: IT SHALL MAKE FOR FINE FEASTING AND FINER TOOLS.

I HAVE, AS YOU REQUESTED, ESTABLISHED THE BLOODROSE COVEN FROM THE RANKS OF THE SHAMAN-INITIATES, PAYING CLOSE MIND TO THOSE WITH A LOVE OF EXPLORATION AND A SPECIALTY IN CURSES OR BLESSINGS. FOR A LEADER, I HAVE CHOSEN VRISA THREE-TONGUE, YOUR OWN DAUGHTER, AS HER WANDERLUST IS STRONGER THAN ANY I HAVE SEEN IN AGES. SHE WILL SERVE WELL, I'M SURE YOU AGREE.

THE ROVE AND THE SPEAKERS OF IT HAVE PASSED BEYOND OUR CONCERN. AS THE HERALDS HAVE SAID, A STORM HAS COME, AND IT HAS WIPED THEM FROM THE WORLD'S STAGE, IN A TRAGEDY MADE OF TIME. THE SHELLFOLK ARE TRULY A TRAGIC PEOPLE: CURSED TO GROW INTO BEASTS NOT UNLIKE THE ONES THAT HAUNT OUR SWAMPS AS THEY AGE, AND RAHASTAS TELLS ME THAT THIS WAS WHAT UNDED THEM. THE STORM WAS NOT ONE OF MUTATION, BUT OF AGING, A SICK TWIST ON THEIR DESIRE TO MOVE EVER FORWARD BY MOVING THEM EVER FORWARD THROUGH THE MISTS OF TIME.

WE MOURN FOR THEIR LOSS. SOME OF THEIR SURVIVORS HAVE BEGUN TO ENTER OUR TERRITORIES, RAHASTAS BIDS THEY BE WELCOMED WITH OPEN ARMS.

ON AN EVENING WANDER THROUGH RAHASTAS' ROOTS, I FOUND MYSELF IN A SERPENT'S NEST. I CHOSE THERE TO SPEND THE NIGHT, THAT THEIR SHIFTING AND HISSING WOULD MASSAGE MY DREAMS TOWARDS RAHASTAS' WILL. THREE BIT ME, BUT WITH GENTLENESS, THAT I MIGHT SEE BEYOND MY FEEBLE MIND AND KNOW THE BEAUTY OF RAHASTAS' DREAMS.

I DREAMT OF WALKING THROUGH HER MAJESTY, LOST AS IF IN A MAZE, FAMILIAR SIGHTS UNFAMILIAR. CORRIDORS OF TREES AND BUSH STRETCHED OUT BEFORE ME, INTERCUT WITH WALLS OF WATER AND VINES. I WOKE ONLY WHEN I GLIMPSED THE SHORELINE, GLIMPSED A GREAT AND TERRIBLE GOLDEN SUN RISING ACROSS THE HORIZON TO THE EAST. FROM THIS, I BELIEVE RAHASTAS MEANS TO SAY THAT NO "PATHWAYS" MAY BE BUILT UPON HER BULK, THOUGH SHE CARES NOT WHAT WE DO UPON THE REST OF OUR LANDS.

I WOKE TO FIND THAT THE SERPENTS WITH WHOM I HAD SLEPT HAD TANGLED THEMSELVES INTO A KNOT, AND HAD BEGUN TO DEVOUR THEMSELVES. THIS IS THE NATURE OF THE QUORUM: A BED OF SNAKES TANGLED INTO ITSELF, ISOLATED FROM ALL ELSE AND DEVOURING ITS OWN TAIL IN A LOCKED CYCLE.

I THEN LOOKED ABOUT ME FOR SIGNS OF WHAT RAHASTAS SAYS OF **FRIEND**.

RAHASTAS HAVE MERCY BUT I FOUND THE CLEAREST SIGN I EVER HAVE, FOR WRITTEN IN BLUE SAP ON THE TREE UNDER WHICH I HAD SLEPT, WERE THE FOLLOWING WORDS:

RESPECT FRIEND. FEAR FRIEND. DO NOT TRUST FRIEND. DO NOT INSULT FRIEND. FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND FRIEND IS FRIEND IS FRIEND.

THUS HAS RAHASTAS SPOKEN.