

Dear Fathermother,

I was overjoyed to hear from Mel'yannah that you had returned to us again. I told you that she would survive and recover in time. I had also told the others that we should be expecting you soon, but there was always the fear that we might miss you this time. Plus you could not have emerged at a better time as I really could use your help.

Before anything else, I do need to give you the warning you asked me to give you the next time around.

Ylith Silthar does not care about you.

Apparently, in every one of your lives, you always find Ylith Silthar and you always believe you have a special bond, and you always create life. Yet that is ultimately the extent of Ylith Silthar's interest. Motherfather is good at sounding like it cares about mortals so that they will aid it in spawning more life, but the only things Motherfather truly cares about is creating lots of life, serving Yaw'nagrah and aiding Heralds of Yaw'nagrah. That does not include you – and it does not include me.

I really wanted to come and see you in person, but Papa Otec has sent me to the Barrens and I am unlikely to be free until my mission as his Herald has been completed. I'll come back to that though as you'll need me to start from the beginning.

You said last time that you are born with no memory of me, or the others, unless you have some kind of vision. So I suppose I should reintroduce myself.

My name is Kvaasi, Herald of the Prince of a Thousand Foes, and you are, or were, my father.

I do not exactly understand how it works, so the last time you asked me to keep a hold of a text that had been written by some Varushkan Wise One, which hopefully has reached you already. Ylith Silthar doesn't talk to me since I broke from Yaw'nagrah, so I had to ask Mel'yannah to ask Motherfather to deliver it. She is still his favourite. Anyway, the scroll should explain it all.

Now the scroll is old, so it falls to me to fill you in on what has happened since. Plus I have the best memory and writing skills of all your children.

Starting with Baxshula, as we suspected her fascination with naturally venomous creatures did not limit her solely to the domain of Yaw'nagrah. It ultimately led Baxshula into the lair of Arhallogen where she donned the Spiderbite and became a potent Herald of the Spider-King.

The last I heard from Baxshula is that she is trying to persuade Arhallogen to send her to the Hall of Worlds to petition the Conclave to lift the Declaration of Enmity against her master. Now whilst this may be true in itself, I believe it is also an excuse to come and see you whilst she still can. The Declaration makes this increasingly difficult and Baxshula's service to Arhallogen has taken its toll, but I will let her explain about that.

I have not seen Gilean in a long time. The last I heard, Llofir was sending Gilean to the Sacrophan Delves, but what her mission there is, I do not know. I have every reason to believe that she is well though. Gilean is older and more powerful than I am. Though that does remind me that I should mention the fungal blight in Miaren later as well.

So, eventually, we come to Mel'yannah. Obviously, you had been worried that she was grievously hurt by the destruction of the Heart of Spring regio she had merged with. I told you at the time she would recover. I will admit I was worried though and it did take about a hundred years, but her strength has returned and she is back to her quest to bring lineage to the un-diverse orc-kind. The Thule orcs have provided Mel'yannah with a Spring regio and she was confident of better results this time, and that was before the birth of Stormcrow Vora. I cannot begin to tell you how excited she was by that development. It is too early to tell, but a surviving, un-stunted, spawn from a male orc Archmage of Spring could be the key that Mel'yannah has been seeking for about four hundred years.

Obviously we are all very excited by the arrival of Ylitha-Rose and to learn what her potential may be. Unsurprisingly, Ylith Silthar will want her to remain with Yaw'nagrah or else lose interest, however I hope that she will be something special. Perhaps this could be the Eternal we spoke of last time around?

As for me, I am very busy in the Barrens, which I think brings me to the end of the family matters and onto the work part of this letter. Actually, I think I had better start a new letter.

Your loving son,

Kvaasi

Herald to the Prince of a Thousand Foes

Dear Fathermother,

This is the second letter that I have written to you and this is the work one rather than the family one. I would rather you read the family one first if you haven't already.

**Miaren.** Firstly, I'll get the Miaren business out of the way. If the Empire wants Llofir to help with the fungal spores in Miaren then Llofir wants the following:

1. Amity for Llofir and the Great Fungus' heralds
2. The interdiction of the ritual called "Quickening Cold Meat" for at least a year, or its removal from Imperial Lore
3. A Declaration of Concord asking Llofir nicely what the Conclave want Llofir to do which could be "make it better", "make it worse", "spread the fungus to another location".

The way I understand it, Llofir does not like Kaela hoiking corpses out the ground when they should be rotting away nicely.

**The Barrens.** I have been spending months and months in the Barrens helping the Black Wind Tribe do its best to overthrow the Druj that are oppressing them. The Black Wind are pretty favoured by Papa Otec, especially since they are currently trapped in a vice with the Druj on one side and the Empire on the other. Helping the Black Wind tribe to survive is looking like it is going to be nearly impossible.

So I am asking for your help.

First things first, it might help to give you the picture of what's going on.

**The Past.** Over a hundred years ago, the Druj invaded the Barrens. Before then, there were a whole bunch of orc tribes, but they were fragmented and fought one another. One of the tribes that held out the longest was the Gyak because Mel'yannah and Yaw'nagrah were helping them. However, the Empire then scorched the Gyak's Spring region, which was holy to them, and nearly killed Mel'yannah in the process. So there was nothing to stand in the way of the Druj who enslaved all the tribes.

Anyway, with the war with the Empire, a chance arose for the enslaved tribes to rise up against the Druj, which they took. They have now coalesced into about five rough groupings who only really have one thing in common: they hate the Druj and the Empire.

Anyway, I'll try and summarise the five groups.

**The Black Wind Tribe.** The Black Wind are where I am based and they control Farweald, the Bitter Strand, the Fangs and about a third of the rebel fighting force. They are not really one tribe in the family sense but have gathered together various refugees, outcasts and escaped slaves under a group of chieftains and shaman. This was achieved by the inspirational leadership of two of their number, but these rebel leaders were captured by the Druj and were being held at an encampment that the Empire raided.

Unfortunately for everyone, the Empire proceeded to slaughter everyone in the camp, including the rebel leaders who were chained up there. This confirmed to them that the Empire were no better than the Druj, so when Senator Steelhail sent a letter to Chieftain Rahvin offering to talk a deal, I tried to get the Black Wind chieftains to listen, but it went straight in the fire along with cursing and swearing. Saying that, the Black Wind do speak highly of a group called the Tangled Thorns who, so I am told, destroyed the Druj fortifications in the East, so it is not all hostile.

Anyway, it's the Black Wind that I am supposed to keep alive. In my head, they have the most in common with your Imperial Orcs being a collection of escaped slaves that have been brought together. In many ways it's a crying shame that Archmage Kallendar is dead as he would have been a great ambassador.

**The Montanians.** The Montanians are unusual for the Barrens in that they are not orcs, and are pretty much all briars. They are what is left of the Kingdom of Montane, which I think the Empire called the Freedom Heresy. They refused to return to the Empire and bow to its laws. Instead they have holed up at Hope's Rest and will not give an inch. They managed to fend off the Druj but only because their worthless scrap of land wasn't worth the effort taking it, but it is their land. They are pretty close allies with the Black Wind, and they like me well enough, but they don't like the Empire or the Druj, as they see both as a force for tyranny. However, they do not directly contribute to the rebel army as their numbers are so small.

**The Chosen of Ashrak.** The Chosen of Ashrak control the Untrod Groves and The Bleaks, and contribute about a third of the rebel fighting force. Like the Black Wind, they are a collection of tribes that have united under a single banner, which belongs to a group of clerics calling themselves the Chosen of Ashrak. Now the orc clerics believe that Ashrak is a god. The Black Wind say that Ashrak is a demented ancestor. Either way, the Chosen believe that Ashrak has lifted them up to the point of being able to throw off their oppressors and its working. The Chosen are fierce as fire and prepared to die in droves. They also credit the fall of the Druj fortifications to the will of Ashrak rather than the efforts of the Tangled Thorns. Being in the far east of the Barrens, I don't think the Chosen have much a view on the Empire, but I suspect their beliefs may not reconcile.

**The Venderri.** The Venderri control Saltmarsh and are, as far as I can tell, the only pureblood tribe in the Barrens outside of the Druj. They achieved this by surrendering almost immediately when the Druj invaded and making themselves useful. The Druj let them be and moved on. When the rebellion started, the Venderri saw which way the wind was blowing and stabbed their unsuspecting overseers in the back. I have to say that I am slightly impressed, but the other tribes hate the Venderri. I have no idea how they feel about the Druj or the Empire, but they are so small they don't actually contribute directly to the rebel army.

**The Great Forest Tribe.** The Great Forest Tribe control Murderdale and the Eaves of Peytaht. They control the final third of the rebel fighting force and include what's left of the Gyak who have merged with other refugees, escaped slaves and remnants of older tribes. Living close to the Great Forest of Peytaht, they are very attached to it, and practically worship it. They are huge on Spring and, as you might imagine, Yaw'nagrah, and they also venerate Mel'yannah who was their champion until the Empire tried to kill her a hundred years ago. So, as you would expect, they hate the Empire and the Druj.

So, how does this relate to me asking you for help? Well, I have been trying to keep the factions talking to one another and uniting against the Druj, but it has not been easy. The Great Forest Tribe believes it has a claim to the Carmine Fields, Hope's Rest and the

Bleaks. The Black Wind are claiming they should control the Carmine Fields and the Untrod Groves and so on and so on. No one wants the Druj or Empire to have them.

Anyway, I was talking to the Great Forest Tribe and it just happened to come up that I knew the mother of Mel'yannah. They went crazy and became desperate to meet you and were really very excited. It was the furthest I had ever got with them.

I am really sorry, Fathermother, but I may have laid it on a bit thick about how you are the Mother of Heralds and have returned from the grave to bring salvation to all those who are touched by the Realm of Spring. In my defence, I really needed the Great Forest Tribe to start listening to me.

Anyway, I was hoping you might see if the Sentinel Gate would open to the Eaves of Peytaht and possibly go and have a chat with the Great Forest tribe and maybe try and win them over? Obviously, it would be really really great if you could perhaps elicit their adoration and maybe perform a miracle or two. That would be so useful.

As I am in Farweald in the Barrens, you can send me a Winged Messenger, but I am so stretched to the limit that it may be weeks before I am able to try and send you a replay.

I'll leave it that for now. I just want to finish by saying that I am so very excited to have you back in the world. I also hope that, this time, you might break the pattern and actually live beyond the age of forty, and die of natural causes.

Your loving son,

Kvaasi

Herald to the Prince of a Thousand Foes