

General,

I regret to inform you that one of our officers has disappeared. We believe they have been kidnapped – worse, that the thing that kidnapped them is nothing less than a creature of the Realm of Night.

During the season, as you will of course be aware, we encamped in Redoubt in its northern regions. While the troops saw little threat from the Grendel due to the Freeborn's efforts further south, some took it upon themselves to find quarrel with the Varushkans of the Northern Eagle who have spent the months working on repairing the damage to roads and bridges caused by Grendel magic. Most of the scuffles and disputes were, I am sorry to say, caused by the soldiery clashing over the matter of Yael; the ongoing turbulence in the Synod has left its mark and, unfortunately, with so much of the Empire having schismmed from our priests on the matter, a great number of our troops feel uncertain and short-tempered on the matter. It makes them prickly and prone to lashing out.

Regardless, these disputes have taken a certain amount of the time and energy of our officers to deal with, but there was a positive change in the last month – if you'll excuse the wordplay, bridge-building of a more direct sort. A very well-liked Highborn captain from the chapter of Sarah's Hammer fell into romantic relations with a Varushkan, Captain Olegev, despite their differences. In fact, truth be told, the spark of this romance quickly became a favoured story around both our and their campfires – Captain Hammer's rescue from an avalanche by Captain Olegev, Hammer's nursing of the injured Olegev back to health, and the ongoing devotion of the two to one another appears to have struck something of a chord with the troops of both armies. It is true that as many of the stories told about them are, shall we say, of an earthy and ribald manner as there are more high-browed and poetic retellings, but the two captains' love did something to overcome the anger in each. We saw a noted reduction in the number of brawls between Highborn and Varushkan soldiers.

However, there has been a creature menacing Redoubt this past season, presumably conjured by the foul magic of the regio that erupted off the coast and soaked the place in Night effluent. The thing is persistent and troublesome. It marauds hapless travellers on the woodland routes, lurching out to demand they answer its riddles, and if they fail then it – and this is no lie, General, and no embellishment – it literally tears their romantic memories from them and leaves them adrift. This foul love-thief has been nicknamed the Eater of Love, and wherever our troops have encountered it they have, of course, sought to kill it. The problem is that the Eater seems to be an extrusion, always linked back to one of the innumerable, infernal regio that have sprung up across Redoubt like mushrooms. In short, driving weapons into the thing is merely cutting off a tendril or limb – and there are always more.

The Eater's predations have just stepped up a notch; it kidnapped the two captains during a romantic stroll they were engaged in to find some rare Urizen flower, presumably seeing them as a considerable feast for its monstrous appetite. Our scouts have scoured the area to see where it took them; as best we can ascertain, it is likely at the forested base of Mount Siluri in the Siluri region of Redoubt. Through co-operation with local Urizen rangers, we hope to verify this soon. Seers at the Court of the White Fountain tell us there may be an opportunity to move in on the area through the Sentinel Gate and try to deal with the horror properly, so I am sending this missive to you to alert you to that likelihood. I assume my counterpart with the Varushkans will be doing the same with their general – it may be worthwhile co-operating on this matter.

The Magisters tell me that attempting to kill the Eater will, again, likely fail. It may be that it can be bargained with to free the captains, or that successfully answering its riddles will drive it off. However, there is one other possibility that has been suggested to us – that it could potentially be harmed, or even killed, via giving it poisoned 'food' - that is to say, General, giving a volunteer a dose of the lethal poison known as the Hunger of the Wolf. The volunteer would have to take the poison, then purposefully let the Eater feed from their romantic memories; the Magisters suggest that this would also transfer across the supernatural venom of the Hunger of the Wolf into the fiend. Obviously this would be incredibly risky, and the volunteer would need to be dosed with the antidote within fifteen minutes before they become uncontrollably frenzied.

It is also necessary to note that possession of a dose of the Hunger of the Wolf is, of course, illegal.

In Loyalty and Vigilance,

Captain Abadiah of Luke's Bulwark, Granite Pillar

Additional note: These ushabti the Urizen have are very useful for recording dictations, but I find their strange mimicry of human movement to be unnerving.