

*The following letter has arrived by Winged Messenger.*

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*Ave, Rafael, Hero of Anvil, steward of Virtue, Grandmaster of the Sevenfold Path - may this letter find you Prosperous,*

*All across Felucca people have taken to their homes, their windows shuttered against the cold and their courtyards quiet to all but the impotent wind. Beneath the earth, in the smuggler's cove that is now our temple things are perhaps less warm, but the white granite rings with the echoes of our endeavour that rises and falls with each item of news delivered across the treacherous sea.*

*As the last season drew to a close the avenues and quarters of Nemoria became closed to us - ships of war painted in every kind of livery choke the span of the harbour - mercenary cadres of every sort having massed under the news of war. Priests of the Temple of Eyes have also been abroad in a profusion we have rarely ever seen: Pride and Courage demands honestly on this - we were afraid that our conspiracy would be undone by their gaze, or by the oppressive, tightening grasp of the powerful families currently dominating the Plenum.*

*Before we chose to cease our efforts in the capital you will be gladdened to hear that we had found more evidence of the disarray the actions of the Virtuous had sown in the halls of Asavean power: the meteoric decline of the House of Chains into near vassalage beneath the priesthood of the Red Goddess; winter storms crumbling slave-wrought edifices left without labourers by emancipations at Rachensgrab; of ancient families collapsing into insignificance when denied the robbed Prosperity that fuelled their power. The atmosphere was one of pregnant uncertainty - of teetering on a precipice of change. More and more the forae of Nemoria are savage battlegrounds as former allies turn upon one-another as they seek to weather the storm. Let them all drown!*

*We have weighed your suggestions in what our roles may be in the liberation of Asavea with utmost reverence: an opportunity for us to forge our Loyalty both to the Empire, the Way itself and yourself - whose tireless patronage has given our Ambition form - is not being taken lightly. With liao manifestations to gird us and your shared Prosperity to secure certain favours in authority, transport and alibis we have sent members of the temple to seek information and opportunity. Here is what we have learned:*

*In pursuing the Grendel and their blasphemous idol we were not swift or bold enough to act before it was taken abroad. However, riding upon a wind of good fortune, one of our number was able to take passage to Marracossa despite the strict restrictions on access imposed by the new Nemorian-backed Satrap. There we learned that a sizable estate in Nula once belonging to the Comasigne family had been given over to the orcs in the wake of the crushed uprising - rumours suggest that the members of the Comasigne family now serve the Grendel in chains. Before departing it was also discovered that the ship carrying the idol - and many other purple-livred ships in the Grendel style come and go from the estate - carrying slaves, plunder and dignitaries bound for Nemoria.*

*I add here a note about the 'First Priest' Portilium Traposdo - without easy access to Nemoria we cannot act against him without risk and cost - but by all accounts he is another casualty of shifting fortunes in the capital: before we withdrew it was common gossip how his lectures were shunned and his voice drowned out in the forum. Graffiti and damage inflicted by angry mobs mar the graven facade of his 'Temple' lingers unrepaired and whenever*

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*he travels abroad he is derided in the streets as an agent of the Empire and a traitor - no bodyguards will take his coin and so it seems to me that he is a problem that will eventually take care of itself.*

*As of the Tarquinius family - the promise of war has seen their fortunes rise: their long-standing criticisms of the Empire, the Way and its Nations have made them the keystone in a growing coalition in the Plenum. Their ancestral seat, like many old families, lies within the heart of Nemoria - but they have interests elsewhere. Working with members of our congregation who had the misfortune to once be enslaved by the Tarquinius to find and emancipate other servants of the household, we have learned of a family holding in the north - near Geberra. Here - far from the safety of the capital - many of the family often summer to escape the oppressive heat of the sun's zenith and exploit a locum of the realm of Summer that can be found there in their rituals. According to these new converts, Alonzo himself was a frequent attendant to this vacation in his youth and may still enjoy its solitude.*

*In both avenues of action we are carefully considering our options. In matters of magic, our congregation's talents are predominantly drawn from minor dabbling, or that skill required in ceremony demanded by our lives before the Way. Myself, as a sixth son to a family of merchants, I know a little of the lore of Autumn - we have those who once used Day ritual to guide ships, Spring ritual to enrich farms and so on - but we are not scholars or warriors, nor do we have access to the regalia, mysteries and temples of the idolaters to enact powerful entreatments to eternal. We have begun to turn our shared Prosperity towards changing this - already we have obtained some modest means to increase the potency of our ritual - but Felucca is an island of agrarian commerce and we must reach beyond its shores for such means. Your generosity as our patron will aid us in this.*

*So in response to your offer of assistance we currently are capable of gathering the crystalized mana and will to manifest a ritual of magnitude twenty at least once and perhaps again each season if we can find avenues for resources. We are not familiar with Imperial Lore - and our understanding of the denizens of the Realms is limited - it has always been in the Plenum's best interest to obfuscate and muddy the boundaries between this world and these otherworldly creatures. Thus, to both offers we must bind ourselves to your Wisdom: send to us those formulae which you believe will best help in our efforts - even minor enchantments to gird our agents away from this sanctuary; extend an introduction with those eternal with whom you believe we might find common cause in our endeavours; pass to us what artifice you see as vital to strengthening our ability - and in every case we shall put them to use for the betterment of all humanity and the furthering of the Way. In these things we accept our transitive role as the pupil.*

*We will continue to seek opportunities and pursue a way to capitalise on what we have already learned. Please extend our thanks to all whose struggle in the Empire we are joined with through common cause. Your example and those of your Empire inspire us to greatness.*

- *Amika Acciai, Felucca.*