

My dear Anabela,

I regret that I must decline your invitation. Whilst I cannot help but admire your conviction and ambition, I will do so from a safe distance. I do not wish to be in arm's reach when you bring together bitter enemies who share enough bad blood to fill the Vassa. I feel certain that I would be mistakenly stabbed by one side or the other.

The sad truth, my would-be Merchant Prince, is that the Cartas of the Regario and Mestra will be forever divided. Just as the Vassa is impossible to bridge, so too is the gulf between the two peoples' impossible to close, and widens daily.

I said it to you when last we met, and I shall say it again:

Be content with what you have.

You have done well for yourself with your little shack on that misbegotten speck of land that squats amidst the river. It was enterprising to position yourself as a middleman between traders from Regario and Mestra, and we've both profited from your initiative.

However, it is a long long long way from having the goodwill of some Regario and Mestra traders, to having the cartas of each accept you as a Merchant Prince. They like you, but they hate each other.

If you think you can change that with a few clever words, then you will die on Tassato island, and we will both be poorer for it.

If you do make it out of this damn fool meeting with your skin, come and find me. I promise not to say that I told you so more than forty-nine times.

Fortune favour you,

Fernando