

Greetings to the Bitter Chalice.

Your missive has reached the Hand of Dumon.

We are appreciative of what you have written within it. We intend, if you believe it is worthwhile and safe, to dispatch an agent to Anvil for the summer gathering of your government. They will come to you to discuss the possible exchange of resources, and they will bring what reward is due if you have levied the consequences of our anger upon those who we wish to see cursed.

They will bring mithril and vials of the blood of Winter, and perhaps other things, and will look to trade these for your liao, your crystal mana, and other services — which we shall write more upon below — and, perhaps, to discuss the establishment of a courier to help us continue to act for such mutual benefit in future.

We still seek those who have wronged us to be cursed.

We still seek the ashes of Morgan du Moreau from Lukash Biessek von Temeschwar.

But there are other things that your Empire can also offer that are of interest to us.

We are at war. It is a slow, cold, creeping war, one that has dragged out across the years. We are at war with the tyrants of the priesthood who would deceive our own people.

To fight this war, we have been sly, and cunning. We have fought from the shadows, using Dumon's inheritance — magic — as our blade. But in this war, we have few strongholds, few fastnesses — few places where we can gather and truly know safety.

The blades of the Templars are always poised above us, a threat against which we must be eternally vigilant.

And so.

And so it is, that where your Empire raises up great houses of learning — here, in the sham that calls itself the Confederacy, we true heirs of Dumon must guard every scrap of magical lore that we can gather. Where your Empire makes this knowledge free to all — as it should be! — we must hide in the shadows and conceal every hidden lore-house, every shrine to the Paragon where our scrolls and texts can be protected.

We have knowledge that is not known to your Empire, yes. Powerful curses, indeed. In time, perhaps, we can share those with you — but for now, it would be a great leap of trust for us to do so, and to send something as precious to us as a ritual text to the Empire. Lacking your Empire's resources, every text is utterly invaluable to us, and very hard to replace.

Consider thus.

As magicians of the Empire, you have access to your own places of learning.

We have many curses and rituals born of our struggle but, lacking such places to codify them in, many we have never been able to formalise; we must, again and again, project and prepare them at expense and difficulty.

We therefore propose the following to you.

When our agent comes, if they bring with them arcane projections of rituals that we make use of in our struggles — but that we have not been able to codify — and provide those to you, then we would be willing to reward you greatly — to pay more than adequately — for you to take those to the arcane scholars of your places of magical learning, and have them codified there, and then provide to us the resulting ritual texts.

For this, we would offer mithril, or Winter blood, or other services besides, of a quantity that would be suitable to be a just and prosperous payment for this help.

We would also not seek any privilege or limitation on your own learning of these rituals — as long as we received the text to aid us in our struggle.

Thus will you learn of the weapons we have honed in our colder war, and in turn gain access to them, even as you return them to us strengthened for the battles yet to come.

And on those battles, we are thankful for your warning of the intention of your magnates seeking to aid our people fleeing the Confederacy.

We must speak thus, however.

We do not support the flight of magicians from this, our homeland, and we will tell those magicians who are part of the Hand to avoid your du Gauvain's outreach.

We praise you for your intent to teach magic to one of our people — but ultimately, we wish for those trained in magic to return again to this land, to aid us in our fight.

We would shame Dumon's name were we to flee.

This is a war that we will not retreat from.

But we are heartened nonetheless. We are heartened because, where before, our efforts in the Empire met only with disappointment and desecration, this action on the part of the Empire indicates that there may be others like yourselves who can be considered as allies to us.

This effort by du Gauvain is misguided. But we hope now that, perhaps, the Empire might turn its efforts to more fruitful methods of fighting the tyranny and false gods of the Confederacy.

We know that there were rumblings of a slave rebellion in Kalino.

Let these words reach you as untarnished and truthful: You must forget about the slaves. They are already dead.

Who would conquer the many legions of the Suranni with a rabble of slaves, even armed? That was a doomed endeavour from the start.

The stirring of unrest amongst the slaves is not, and will never be, the path to victory here.

If the Empire wishes to loosen the grip of the priesthood, it should not look to the slaves.

It should look to the Hand of Dumon.

Stirring up the slaves will lead to their slaughter, to chaos and anarchy and the crushing grip of the Templars drawn even tighter.

Aiding the Hand of Dumon will, eventually, lead to what we seek — a mirror of your own virtuous Urizen, a place where Dumon's gift — magical learning — is held in the highest esteem.

We would ask you to aid us in achieving this.

Yet we are hesitant still. After our previous interactions with your diplomats and priest-mages, we feel concern of reaching out to the Ambassador again. We feel concern at reaching out to your Conclave.

We ask of you — are there those you feel you can trust in your Synod? Those who could be stirred to pushing not for the well-intentioned but blundering attempts to stir up slave rebellions or steal away our magician warriors, but to guide the Synod instead towards supporting the Dumoni resurgence? Do you have influence amongst your Senators enough to know who are fools and who are wise, and with whom such things might be discussed? Those of power with whom an understanding might be reached, that ultimately the Confederacy be cast down from within and without and then, and then, thoughts might be turned to even greater ambitions — of our bearing Dumon's legacy onwards in true fellowship with your Empire?

Can you reach as far as your very Throne?

We will listen again for your reply, and we will plan to send our agent to you when summer dawns, unless we hear warning from you to withhold from such. Reach out again to Adahl du Gevaudahn, and thence to the eyes of all the Hand.