

Greetings to the Bitter Chalice.

This is not a missive you will be expecting, so please grant us your patience as we explain who we are and why we are contacting you.

Knowledge has reached us, as so many affairs in the Iron Confederacy do. In this case, the knowledge is that members of your arcane fellowship, your Spire, offered magical tutelage and sanctuary to a Confederacy citizen during a gathering at the court of Baron Guiscard for a wedding. Specifically, we understand it to be one Mordred de Hauteville who was the recipient of your generous offer.

We approve of your actions.

We are the Hand of Dumon.

The priesthood of the Iron Confederacy claim Dumon was a fiend. This is a lie. Dumon was a great magician-king who placed true magic into the hands of his pupils, but his enemies conspired to bring him down and slander his name. He was no monster. He was a Paragon. He threatened the power of the priesthood, and so they had to tear him down for fear of the people seeing the power that magic grants and thus elevating themselves beyond the priests' control.

Yes, we know Dumon to be a Paragon. Yes, we understand the nature of the virtues that your Way follows - and more besides. It is the teaching of Dumon that all these driving forces must be drawn upon and balanced, focused and mastered. We understand the magical power of liao, better even than your own priesthood does.

We are the true spirit of the people bound in this Iron Confederacy, this iron cage. We have carried Dumon's legacy on through the centuries. We are magicians who do not submit to the priesthood's yoke, and who do not fear the power that they condemn.

And we fight, as we always have fought. We fight to protect magicians and to spread enlightenment, to give the people the power to see what lies within their grasp if they could only reach out for it - their inheritance, magic.

The priesthood have chained even our people's name, calling them the Suranni, but that is not who we truly are. We are the Dumoni.

For a long time, we have looked to your peoples' Empire as a possible source of hope and aid, but so few of you seem to understand that the true means of unchaining our people is through magic. When we have reached out to your leaders and influencers in recent years, we have found only those who flinch back from understanding

and instead hurry to the skirts of the robed priesthood and their faceless Templars, preferring to curry favour with the tyrants rather than learn what truths and secrets we have to offer.

This, then, is our hand being offered once again. We hope that on this occasion, we will find there is more to the Empire than the spineless and those who would prefer ignorance to knowledge.

To you, the Bitter Chalice, we propose thus.

We have knowledge you do not - of magic forged from Dumon's legacy over the centuries, of the curses and rituals we have gathered into our arsenal for our ongoing war with the priests of Surann, and more besides.#

We have resources that you and your Empire may desire - mithril taken from the rich veins that thread Dumon's land, and certain rare magical substances that the priesthood's own bans upon have left abundant and unexploited.

You have resources that we desire - mana crystals and, most of all, liao.

You also have influence and reach that we do not - the power to gain the ear of those who can set events into motion to aid us, and the grasp to punish those in Anvil who have blasphemously defiled our holy relics and sought to defeat us.

There seem to also be goals upon which we can find common ground, such as the spreading of magical knowledge amongst the people of the Confederacy.

Therefore, we propose that we consider the exchange of what each might desire from the other, so that we can further those common goals.

Let us now discuss what wrongs there are that should be righted, and that you are in a fine position to act upon.

A holy man, Morgan du Moreau, servant of Dumon and magician of great power, was slain by the perfidious priesthood after a life of virtuous deeds. His head was saved from incineration by the priests, and it was blessed with miraculous power, rendered a potent arcane focus and burgeoning with spiritual energy. The one who took the head fled to the Empire, unsure as to what to do with it. At the time, he did not know his uncle Morgan had been of the Hand of Dumon, or that the Hand existed at all, hence his desperation. Before we could reach out to him, Imperial defilers took the head and scoured it of its miraculous nature. The magicians of the Cenotaph in the Highguard nation of your people were responsible for this.

We know this is in contravention of your own Empire's laws, which condemned the destruction of spontaneous and miraculous auras, yet the Cenotaph acted without punishment and without hesitation. They betrayed the young man who came to them for help in favour of handing what remained of the defiled, scoured head to the priests of the Iron Confederacy, who then had it incinerated.

This was taken as official action by your Empire and by your Ambassador – the destruction of a miracle born of a virtuous man's death, in contravention of your Empire's own laws. We wish the Cenotaph to be cursed for their part in this. We wish the Ambassador to be cursed as well. We know the Ambassador now is not the same as the one then. If the Empire's policy is to defile and profane the miraculous remains of a man who was almost certainly an Exemplar, then we wish for the official figurehead of collaboration with the Iron Confederacy regime to bear our own, official response to these horrific acts. And we want the Cenotaph and the Ambassador to know from whom this message comes.

We cannot reach the Empire. We cannot reach Anvil. But you can, and you can right these wrongs.

The Ambassador to the Iron Confederacy at the time, Lukash Biessek von Temeschwar, should be in possession of a bag of ashes. These ashes were the remains of the head of Morgan du Moreau, burned by the priesthood and sent to Lukash as proof of the dead.

Those ashes are all that is now left of a most holy man.

We wish for those ashes to be returned to us, or at least placed in the hands of those who will do him the honour his virtue and the miraculous empowerment of his head indicate he should receive.

We cannot reach them. But you can.

Curse the criminals and gain the ashes, and we will richly reward you.

And we have so much to offer. Resources, power, and knowledge.

We are the Hand of Dumon. And now we extend this Hand to you, in friendship.

We hope that we have finally found righteous folk in the Empire. Our search thus far has been long and painful.

We will listen for the rustle of the Winged Messenger's approach. For now, you may commune with Adahl du Gevaudahn, trusted magician of the Hand. They will convey your words to all of us.