

Greetings to you, honoured Ambassador, from the Marquis Flavien du Libbelue, trade envoy to the Prosperous Empire.

I hope that this letter reaches you in good weather and fair spirits. I wished to thank you for our meeting at the last summit held by your empire, and for the opportunity for frank discourse on a number of matters. I am writing now both to continue that discussion, and to address further and future opportunities for mutual prosperity between our countries.

I hope that Grendel depredations on your coastline this season have not been harsh. We of the Confederacy have, as you have, long suffered the burden of their raiding and looting upon our shores. While I understand that your council of warleaders has, for now at least, set aside the notion of working with Confederacy forces to secure your south-western regions, it would be remiss of me not to pass on the knowledge that there are a number of janissary company captains possibly interested in seeking employ on the fronts that your empire battles on.

I understand that the last time such an employment was made, there was some resulting difficulty - the janissary captains involved had strict requirements about where they and their soldiers might be deployed so as to avoid your empire's rather loose and expansive laws on slavery, requiring that they be deployed into a territory not controlled by your people so as to allow them to engage alongside your own armies without violating your laws. However, the ambassador at the time paid for their aid in your city of Sarvos, overcoming their reservations about the legality of such by assuring them that he would deal with any legal matters involved - assurances that were not borne out when the janissaries deployed into the city to help your own. I know that there are also misunderstandings amongst your people as to the nature of janissaries, and that they might seek some sort of virtue in 'freeing' trained, well-paid soldiers from the purpose to which they have dedicated their lives and loyalty. However, despite these complications, as I say, some janissary captains would be interested in employment supporting imperial armies under the appropriate conditions to avoid breaking imperial law. If you are interested in such contracts, I will pass that on to the captains and facilitate negotiations.

I am pleased to say that, after spending several long weeks discussing the further opening of trade between the Confederacy and the Empire with key Ducal nobles and priests, I have been able to arrange the following offer. The Iron Confederacy is willing to open the city-port of Robec to the Empire in return for a one-time payment of fifty wains of white granite. In return for this payment, the port will remain open to the Empire on an ongoing basis for as long as our great peoples remain in prosperous peace with one another. Furthermore, this arrangement would be considered a significant step in laying the foundations for future trade deals and a great assurance that the Empire intends to deal fairly and peacefully with the people of the Confederacy.

As we discussed at our last meeting, I know that the Empire is interested in the significant reserves of mithril that our rich mines produce - and, as I indicated at the time, you of course now know that it would *currently* be illegal for any of the Ducal Houses to trade mithril with outside powers due to the concern of the priesthood over how it might be turned against the Confederacy. As I am sure you understand, as an ambassador and trade envoy who represents all the people of the Confederacy and a law-abiding noble who respects and adheres to the laws issued by the most holy priesthood of Surann, I cannot condone or endorse the fact that, were the trade port opened and the Ducal Houses directly given the reassurance of such a trade pact with the Empire, there may be individual Houses who might look to the prosperity and wealth of the Empire and choose to engage in covert trade of mithril due to the clear benefits of

doing so that they might see. However, I can suggest that, with a payment of white granite and the opening of the port so clearly indicating the Empire's intent to be a peaceful neighbour interested more in trade than in conquest, the concerns of the priesthood might be ameliorated and the road laid, so to speak, towards possible official arrangements around the sale of mithril, a lifting of the ban on trading the material, and generally a more open approach to mercantile endeavours between our powers.

The people of the Iron Confederacy want a reason to trust the Empire and to see that it has mutual prosperity as a goal. Currently, that is hard for them to envision given recent Imperial history. The Confederacy made early concessions to your Empire, freeing all slaves who may have held Imperial citizenship, protecting Imperial-Faraden trade across the Lasambrian Hills in the wake of the orc bandit-clans' dispersal, and seeking discourse with the ambassadorial staff of the Empire about a possible agreement around exchange of criminals who had committed crimes in each other's lands to subject them to the appropriate law for their actions - an effort that was rejected by the Empire. These concessions and efforts having been largely ignored or thus rejected, it has taken a significant amount of time and effort on my part to convince the Ducal Houses that it is worthwhile seeking further fellowship in the face of such snubbing. As I pointed out at our meeting, the selection of a Dawnish to the ambassadorial position was also concerning - the Dukes respect Dawnish military might, but feared that the Empire's selection of one to hold the position was essentially signalling that the Empire had military intent towards the Confederacy. While I have since done my utmost to further reassure the Houses that this was not the intent, worries and fears remain.

I believe, for my part, that we can build a rich and thriving mercantile net covering the lands around the Bay of Catazar and beyond, and it is my ideal, my dream, to make that a reality. I know that with trade comes peace and prosperity; unlike many of my countryfolk, I have spent long years visiting foreign ports while working as an envoy, and I have seen how great powers can work together for the benefit of all. But for that to happen, we need the Empire to take active steps to secure this relationship, because at this time the nobility of the Confederacy have found their efforts ignored or snubbed repeatedly and worry for what it portends in the future.

On a final note, I wish to alert you that there are a number of lesser Houses currently squabbling over the division of land rights and ennoblement in Kalino, the southern region of the Lasambrian Hills that we wrested control from the orc bandit-clans and which borders with your own territories. While I do not expect these squabbles to threaten Imperial land, citizens or goods at all, it is possible that one or other petty Baronial House will attempt to rope in Imperial citizens to help them in this bickering. Please let me know if they cause any problems for your citizens or seek to embroil any Imperial folk in unwise or problematic schemes so that I can take steps to limit such foolery on the part of the Barons.

With hope for the future,

Marquis Flavien du Libellue

House Libellue

Envoy to the Empire