

Unto the Imperial Spymaster of her Most Eminent Grace - the Archduchess Ashberry of Canberry

From Bishop Pomeroy Sackville, Lord Inquisitor of Escilias, Enclaves, the Broken Lands and the surrounding

This 15<sup>th</sup> day of Vaen -

Tormentum Hereticus; Sanctus Spiritu

I trust that this missive finds you and your mistress in the best of health, and finds her lands free of the taint of Chaos and of Evil.

I do not disturb your repose and your duties lightly. Nor is it only because of the demands of the Ecumenical Council and its dictates that I do so, rather, the Archduchy of Canberry has long behaved in a manner that exemplifies honor and civility. Though the faith of the Light and the faith of the Darkness meld only due to the actions of the Council, we have long regarded Canberry as either a foe to be treated with utmost respect, or a friend to be treated with caution. It is because of your reputations and the actions that have long exemplified your code, that we are proud to cautiously consider you friends, and due to that cautious friendship that I pen these words.

Two months ago, Inquisitors in my service uncovered and destroyed a most foul cult, dedicated to the Lords of Chaos. That cult, housed within the Archbarony of Escilias was composed of those who, though not born to the races of Chaos and Shadow, have sought dark blessings and so received a special kind of Lycanthropy – were-cats of a different breed than we are used to, if you would. A demonhost was with them.

The battle was fierce – for the normal bane of Lycanthropy, silver – had no effect on these chaos spawned were-creatures, nor did cold iron, nor salt, wolfsbane, or even the small quantities of mithril that were available to us. Adamantine – which we have small quantities of from the dwarves of the Barrier Mountains did turn the trick however, hacking through them cleaning, as weapons should – even if only a dusting of the substance had been applied to the edge of the blade or the tines of the morning star.

Had there been only the Lycanthropes, we would have no further word to share. It was the demonhost that ultimately, we captured. Torment does strange things to creatures, and ultimately, torment broke through the sneering countenance of the “rider” to the host within. It was then, when the light died from his body and his eyes and the man, trapped within, willingly once, and then increasingly unwillingly, came forth; that we found the truth of things.

The cult was not simply a cult of chaos worshippers in Escilias, in fact, seemingly, it did not truly worship the Lords of Chaos – here was a thing that the Inquisitors of my dominion had never seen – a cult, a cult that tore off the tongues, and ears of its elven and partly elven victims, a cult that burned out their eyes, and finally as they grouped in silence and darkness slew them with burning wires through the heart – and yet, a cult that worshiped neither Chaos nor demons – but rather some ancient god – long gone

and sought to bring back its bloated form to our world.

Upon the holy scriptures of Darkness, upon the honor of my house and of the Ordo Valorous – I say to you that this cult extends beyond this land – to yours, to the Eastern Trade Federation, and to Enclaves city.

Here, they are cleansed – *exterminus* – in Enclaves, we have power here and there and my deepest agents pursue them through the hidden ways – in the Eastern Trade Federation however, and in Canberry – we have none – and we should have none – you must act! I cannot stress this unto you and your Imperial mistress thoroughly enough. This group is a danger. They are somehow linked to others, and they will soon make a play for power.

My scholars and scribes have examined the various documents and continue to strain to break the codes – but they have not yet done so in fullness. There are several things that I can tell you – some shared by the demonhost, before at last the host, feeling the thing's control slowly returning, asked us to put him beyond misery – *te absolvo* – may he rest in darkness and in peace – his duties done, and his soul redeemed – the others drawn from those few documents that we have translated.

1. This plot stretches back several years, at the least – apparently as much as several decades, and includes layers upon layers of activity, all superficially separate – and some actually separate as “dupe” activity to mislead the Inquisitors, whom they knew would eventually come.

2. Cult centers include Escilias City, Bright Span City, the Enclave of Rabber in the City of Enclaves (we hold considerable power there – and are beginning our investigations within its confines), and the city of Morodrius in the Eastern Trade Federation. Several attempts have been made to implant a cult center in the Spicelands, but your Archbishop there has a strong grip, and the faith of the Light is so revered - to your credit as a faith - that those attempts failed – which appears to have resulted in some sort of attempt to end run that situation – the words used by the demonhost was “using the delusions of believers.”

3. Layers that I have uncovered that are unrelated to the main plot, but may easily distract – and for all I know may even provide cover in some other way –

\$ the Order of the Ram – a demonic order; nasty, violent, fecund – but only a pawn for greater purpose. It can be cleaned up later – ask the honored Bishop through whom I send this missive to explain what that statement costs me, he has known me for many years.

\$ a commodity run is being planned – the plan is somewhat open ended – wheat, corn, or at the last extremity, preserving salt. The intent of this cover is, I think (I am of noble birth, though a younger son), to destabilize the relationship of the Archduchess with her subjects.

\$ Something to do with the heir. It is not clear at all what – but whispers have emerged in the cult - and at one point the demonhost saw him in the northlands –

or rather saw what appeared to be him. Close questioning leads me to doubt that. This is intended to sew distrust when the elder lady finally dies, I think.

\$ The replacement of some important figures, or those close to them. I have no idea how this is accomplished, but the demonhost was fervently sure that it was possible, and being done - though only for a few - the resource being limited.

\$ Other cult infiltration - at least the factors of two or three merchants in Canberry, a half dozen in the Eastern Trade Federation and two in Enclaves. Infiltration at "a very high level" of the Ecclesia of the Archdiocese of Moridius, and so forth.

The cult will move when the lady shows weakness, or when she passes and the heir takes over, I believe. There is nothing more that I have been able to gain that might be able to help you - but I can guarantee a good reception for any servants of yours who come openly to Escilias, and a blind eye from the authorities and the Church In Rabber.

I would welcome collaboration on this issue, please respond if you wish to continue this discussion. I have sent this scroll tube, along with my usual ramblings to my dear friend, Bishop Williams - and asked him to put it into the hands of the privy secretary, which worthy - being a noblewoman - will pass it to a functionary who will know what clerk to give it to so that it reaches you.

I wish you well - Salute.