

Unto the Mouth (should the Mouth still - pray Darkness and Light - exist)

From a pared fingernail in Hanal

Location: The convent of The Weeping Woman: Help of the Destitute, near the City of Haminah

Hail honored Great One - I abase myself before you in the Green. I salute you in the grace of the Weeping Woman and of her father Paranswarm the Lord of Orderly Darkness. I perform the incline and the baring to you in your munificence.

This lowly one writes, using the ancient arrangement made over 40 years ago when my lady, the youngest daughter of the Kov of Ruatha was sent here, to this convent, as a lay member by command of her father, after youth swept her away and led her to commit something best thought of as an indiscretion. From that day to this, as her life indentured servant I have remained at her side constantly, as I swore I would to the wrist who purchased my services through the redemption of the rest of my family. This special method of communication was retained, as I was commanded, for the uttermost farthing, as it would only work, as I was made to understand, once. A high payment, I thought, for him to pay for a single communique at some time in the future.

That time is now.

After her eldest brother became Kov, mi-Lady's stay here (and my own) was somewhat lessened in stricture. After the bleeding stopped, it lessened further and the younger Kov even came to see her from time to time, and when he did, relenting, as he too had youthful... incidents... many years ago, he brought with him private letters, for, while the flames of youth were banked, the friendship that they engendered had endured.

Yesterday a trusted servant of the Kov came, bearing a sealed letter from her brother, and within it a letter from her friend, with a note that if she could reach a bishop or archbishop of the Church that she trusted she should pass it on.

Last night, word reached us (through refugees) of a horde, with many goat legged demons among them, approaching, they had routed the few troops that Haminah had left to guard two villages and paused to pillage and rape. By tomorrow they will reach us, for we are clearly their target. I can only believe that by some magic they are aware of what has transpired.

The sisters are preparing to defend the convent, but the handful of sisters militant and knights of the Weeping Woman who are present will offer no meaningful resistance from what I have heard from refugees that I have helped tend. Many of the lay sisters and guests are fleeing, but mi-lady, whose health is no longer the best, has chosen to remain and pray. She not only gave me leave to flee, but ordered me to do so, leaving her behind. She gave me the message from her friend and asked me to find a bishop or to reach the Kov of Bormark.

Both are impossible for me. Nor have I forgotten the vows that I took to you and through you to whatever foreign potentate sent the "wrist."

I have therefore enclosed the message my lady received and have put both in the special pouch I was given all those years ago. In a moment I will say the words that the "wrist insisted that I memorize, and if I am fortunate, then the pouch and documents will disappear, reappearing in whatever distant land you inhabit. If it does not I shall briefly feel very foolish before I am run down and slain.

May the Darkness Hide you from all Foes

Faithfully

To my beloved Fiona

My dear I dare not come to you myself and so I am sending a trusted servant to your brother, knowing that this missive will reach you then, undisturbed. Most here act as if they are bewitched, and though I am a general I know that I am being watched at all times, so I dare not try to seek an ecclesiastical authority, or to flee to Inquisition held territory or to Bormark.

The Court is afire. The Queen Empress has commanded a series of maneuvers word of which must reach those still loyal to our Lord of Orderly Darkness and his Daughter. I am sorry my-dear that after all these years and the many burdens that my birth status has caused you, I must one more time ask your help. This is the only time that I dare attempt to sneak the missive out at all, as the Queen Empress has commanded another night of blood sport...

I think the resistance and the Church fails to realize how powerful the remaining Iron Legions are. But more is afoot. The Queen Empress has commanded two military maneuvers, using a total of 20 of the Iron Legions - 4 field armies as it were. Both are unlikely to succeed, but the real goal is to completely distract all observers while a small band of a few hundred crack troops, a number of powerful magi and several beings that we are being told are devils, but which I believe to be powerful demons, make a quick strike for the Underdark entrance to the East, north of the City of Enclaves. They bear with them a number of "artifacts" - most of which I didn't know were in the royal treasury... or perhaps they were not when last I saw it.

These artifacts have a miasma about them, not of power, which I expect, but of a wrongness that exceeds anything I saw during my three years service with the Holy Inquisition. They must be intercepted.

The expectation is that two field armies will strike the Inquisition held east, in unison with a group of flying dragons, and two more will strike at Bormark - unexpectedly. Those are only intended to seize farmland, not to actually engage the Kov's forces. The rest of the Iron Army will stand firm, both attacks will be lightning fast, and as they are executed, the special "team" will set out from Camdragun and strike east along the mountains, with the appearance of being headed to Enclaves, but then will divert at the entrance to the Underdark northwest of the City.

Once in the Underdark all I know is that they expect to be met and reinforced. Their purpose, their sole purpose, is to get these odd artifacts into the hands of people somewhere in the South, and they feel that traveling in some force through the Underdark is the best way to get there.

My dear, I believe that we will not see each other again, and I am sorry. My love is always with you.

In Darkness and even in Light, but always in Truth.

Vondrov

