

Celime

This word of war brings consternation to my thoughts. I have spoken with Lord Dall, and he too is surprised by Constans actions, and admittedly a little worried, as am I. Stepan's brother plots and politics like someone who once brought great pain to Bentara. I pray to Nynistra that she protects Pellern from anything of its ilk.

You speak of running away and avoidance of those concerns of importance, yet I feel you do some injustice to yourself. For one you have not fled Pellern, and another in spite of actions taken against you in the past, you never ran from Bentara. I believe courage comes from experience, and we both are young, even if I feel aged.

Your words of a coalition of Ventene with Alkartek may have weight, if what Lord Dall says is reported to be coming from the mouths of travelers from Nier. Andaras is assuredly building forces. History speaks of his desire to conquer Haestra, which is why he fought with the Titan Kio Viax on the plains of Uj, and were it not for the other Titans who rescued Kio Viax, that Titan would surely be dead. Then again, history shows that after that encounter, the Titans lost control of Emer and disappeared altogether, along with Andaras conquest. After these sudden actions I can only urge you to compel Stepan to trade agreement with the Eog. Already I

am in discussion with the Nomari, or as we upon the surface know them, the Dwarves over possible forging. Negotiations with the Nomari are always fraught with difficulties.

Your words of a great secret, and your self as the key disturb me. As such I offer to your service this man, and good friend, Daemander. I grew up with him and he along with others was among those that helped me in times of past difficulty. He will answer to you first and foremost. Nothing will pass between he and I save that which travels between you and I. This was supposed to be a letter of introduction for Daemander, but I feel I must continue to touch on what you spoke of recently.

By all measure, I beg of you to not let Stepan capitulate to Constans. You speak of dark times and the power of Andaras combined in Alkartek, and I cannot but agree, and henceforth believe Stepan should fight at all costs, with escape only as a last measure. And if you must flee, if this man, Luse Invarath desires asylum from the ravages that I hope will not come to his land, then on your behalf it is granted.

Finally, you ask of what makes me smile. Your letters bring some joy, Celime. You must understand, my life is Bentara. I suppose I have little else. I understand your points on life, yet I feel there is little time for self-fulfillment. So much must be done for our city. My times in Orian are another source of pleasure, even

if they are on discussions of threat. That which takes my mind from the city, brings me joy, it is not a common event unfortunately.

Nynistra protect and guide you, I pray to her that you do not die within the month. That would take away what smiles grace these lips.

Count Bryce Kovel