

*Dear Bissi,*

*Notes are as follows. Monies for transfer to the accounts of the following gentlemen: of the amount 98f to the Overchurch; 67f to the Lergen Amanasi; 77f to Romina Agnoli (gentlelady in this case) for services rendered. Of them, such monies are to be passed to the Hock's Merchant House, although I have made payment to it via one of the Trading Groups that is a part of it: the Closed Trading Group, as tax reasons make a payment to a part more suitable than a payment direct to the parent company. Investment completed, and the Closed Trading Group should feed you and the other three investors a fairly nice dividend. I presume this will please the companies, plus Agnoli. I will have to see if she is happy with it next time I speak to her. I hope you reap the benefits,*

*Yours in the name of God,*

*Veredei Ferec*

Malkonmas, 1628

Dearest Bissi,

I have it on the authority of the Church that you have been requesting some strange things indeed. Old books on Arkati secrets, such as the Vizier Tome of Quietus Intellect, are not to be dabbled with lightly. And I hear that you have been trying to lay your hands on, of all things, the White Ash Grimoire. I warn thee Bissi that even a noble like yourself cannot have such secrets – by the name of Malkion, you aren't even in the correct Caste to know of these books, nevermind read the damn things. If you attempt such things again, I shall write to Foyalafine, & have him leverage against you, for if the Church cannot stop you then the Duke of the County bloody well can,

A.S.

Raceen's Feast, 1628

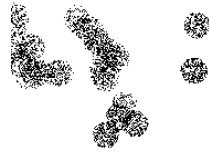
Dearest Bissi,

How you have managed to get the Bishop of the Rokari Church to aid you in your requests, I do not know. I am, however, happy to see that you have given up your search for the most damned tome you were looking for – but why are you still looking for the Select Four? I see also you have ignored Foyalafine's request. This is treason, although both you and I know that I would never take it that far. Have it your way Illido; you have called my bluff and I shall not bother to ask Foyalafine for your head. I shall pretend that all is fine, and that you are not, effectively, trying to break down the door of my library to raid my dark magics.

Fuck you

A.S.

Hail

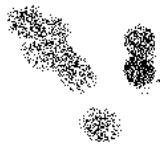


*This letter should find you in good comfort, although this body is uncomfortable for myself I hope yours is better. Next time I worm my way into some idiot's skull I do hope that it is some lithe female of the species. Or a dwarf. I have found such hosts more comfortable. This excuse for a meat puppet can barely walk and I swear it can barely contain my anger. I half think I should top the host, return to the Homeland and wait to be summoned again by the Master. Should I ever meet the Master again I shall be sure to put this to them.*

*Our Azilos plan is nearly complete. If we can isolate Gbaji from the League then it is likely the southern territories will fall to Tanisor. If we are lucky, they will take Gbaji with them. If not, it is better that he not find allies with the League. And, on this matter, you seem to have succeeded. A withdraw is coming soon, and you must come with it. In this matter, your body must come with it also, so try not to let it die. The Church members are now dispensable as we move into Kustria and infest the Shadow Court that way, but should their meat sacks survive as well then that is no bad thing. Tell our mutual friend inside the mayor that he, on the other hand, should ensure a death during whatever battle befalls Azilos when the Tanisorians invade. Master says he will return him from the underworld as soon as he can. If Gbaji falls we may be let off of the leash; I don't think Master cares much for our activities after he returns to Statham Well. At least, that is what I gather.*

*One final thing. I have tried sex again. It was most unpleasant. How that long thing is meant to go in the hole I do not know. I tried stuffing it in, but it's all squidgy and just sort of meshed against the hole. The prostitute with me started laughing and mocking me – some sort of failure on my behalf in this ritual I take it. I had to club her to death and break her open in order to get it in, but that was both a mess and a nightmare and I'm fairly certain that mating rituals of humans don't end up with one half of the pair dead at the end of it. If you would kindly send some advice I would be most pleased.*

*Yours,*



*I received your last note.*

*The lack of ability I have is because I did not devour the mind of my host, and instead have to sit inside this skull still in worm form. Master says this is for a special mission. I hope it goes well for I feel naked and defenceless in this form. You might not be able to die, but I can!*

*It is to the attention of the council of Vicci that your concerns should be drawn to. I have discussed your plans with them, and they have found themselves to be in agreement with you. If, at the start of next year, it were to be the case that Foyalafine was not part of the League then, unless he finds other allies from elsewhere, it is likely that the Tanisorians would swarm upon the county. There are many alliances that Foyalafine might rely upon: he has been courting both Brithini and Troll allies in addition to those from Wolffblood. The Arolanit Brithini have been present in and around his personal castle for quite some time; disquieting those around them and upsetting the townsfolk nearby so I hear. Exactly what they are after is unclear, but they have been present for over a year. They even took in good humour Foyalafine's declaration that he was/is Arkat. At least twice they have been heard referring to him as such. There are, I am sure, Zzaburi wizards amongst their numbers, and it is those wizards who apparently Foyalafine needs most, whilst it is their Lord who, because of this, has Foyalafine's ear. I know not what sorcerous magic they have been enacting, if indeed that be what is going on rather than some merely political alliance, but they have certainly been a lot more active in the last year. Whereas the Troll allies have been more subdued. It has been difficult to discern exactly what is going on in that avenue. Sometimes they meet in Azilos, but often it is out near the Forest. Foyalafine travels in a regal caravan flanked by guards and meets with Uz from Guhan. On three occasions they have been joined by a troll from Halikiv, although my sources could not name her. What we do know is that Foyalafine is particularly interested in the new leading faction of Guhan, and fears some great enemy lies in their midst. Information, then, is what is to be taken from those meetings. But in both cases I fail to see a sign of strong military alliances. One with Arolanit would prove problematic enough, but the trolls from Guhan would prove far worse if their forces could attack Tanisorian forces. But, no, the alliances he is engaged in appear to be with individuals, not entire political factions, and are ones of business and discussion, not blood oaths and weapon promises. So should war break out, I feel that we have nothing to fear from that avenue. Upon war breaking out, I would expect the Azilos army to crumble quickly if the League has failed to keep them at bay. If, as you say, you are really hoping for Foyalafine to fall to Tanisorians, then you will need to effect a situation such that the Daran League cannot hold them at bay for too long. I dare say that a prolonged battle between the League and the troops of the Fat King of Tanisor will leave Azilos in a strong position for a decade or more, safe from attack if the military is drained enough and Azilos's is built up enough. Given what I have seen down at the boatyards, and of the smitheries in Twelve Mine County hard at work shifting out pike after pike after pike (apparently Foyalafine is to try a new war method, displacing sword and axe for polearm), our new 'Arkat' is eager to pour resources into a strong military. If he carries on at this rate then a resounding drumming before the Tanisorians manage to take the League counties will be no end of problems for them taking Azilos. Even a staunch defence by Daran would leave the Tanisorian army somewhat beleaguered, and unlikely to threaten Foyalafine. He is a canny man to stay out of the battle thus far, although one would think that with his military capacity he must be eying up some great political leverage from Wolffblood in return for his joining the fray. So if he is to be kept from battle, then one must have an insight into exactly what it is that Foyalafine wants, and exactly who can offer him it: Tanisor, or Daran? Like everyone it may merely be dominance of the lake; a first step towards building the Dark Empire (or whatever toy facsimile he wants). Mayhaps he is megalomaniac enough to believe his own lies, and think he really is the successor of the Empire. In that case, he might be biding his time for an attack on the whole of the Felster Lake. If that is the case, of course, then we can easily imagine failure – no man could build an army in a single county that would be powerful enough to take it all. Except, perhaps, Sentanos, but as they have fallen to Kustria recently I doubt we'll hear a peep out of them. If it is political power, and treaties concerning the lake, then Daran will be the key holder for that. Or, at least, the League counties together. But if it is really dominance of the whole Felster, and a rebuilding of the entire Dark Empire, that he wants then it is Tanisor, with their army, that he will need (but how is he to keep them away from what he conquers with them? Foyalafine does not strike me as one to share power). There is, of course, a third option: none of the above. We may find that Foyalafine has a totally different aim in mind. I am led to believe that there is good likelihood of that. His claiming to be Arkat is not without some truth – certainly he has been up to something concerning Arkat from what I hear, and has certainly worked some powerful magic to award him some aura of power that he now carries with him. And those Brithini, as I say, are up to something. Maybe, then, it is some third option, some plan grander or altogether different from those listed here. In which case, Illido, I have no idea what he will do or how he will act. With these words, be settled: Gereodo of the Vicci Council.*