

*Hello Vulkerath,*

*The styling of the trade agreement is traditional for my families. It makes things as clear as we can be, while making it as obvious as we can what is being promised. I understand all too well that our communications within your cultural lens are better understood. Please understand that when communicating this way is misleading. I try to use the strange way to communicate only when I want to best be seen by you. I try to use your way to communicate when I want to best be understood by you, even if it means you must see a false face.*

*I am glad you think of us as clever, it is what we were famed for, once. In the interest of having you see us more clearly, I will be direct that Annoria is welcome to write to us again. Originally we feared her trust token was a veiled threat, one we know better than to fear now. We trust you. And it seems our greatest enemies already know this secret, it is only fair you know as well. We will include a picture to perhaps explain why Annoria's trust token gave us fear, and to perhaps explain why we appear to share species. (To: Spies reading this, **Message:** We don't care, we transmit this data plain text. There is only a 19% chance you don't already know. Have fun.)*

*Our strangeness seems to be agreed upon by all nations. I do not know why we appear strange. I try very hard, and am the best among my people at empathy. But it is not enough and I am very glad you accept us despite my failure. I can only hope as Intern Jaimie grows and is raised by letters from Outside, they will become less strange (though it is currently my belief they are more strange than I am right now). I grew up as a gnawing serpent, as you say, and there are things I will not be able to understand of the new world. Demonstrating our value to you as a trading partner is our greatest desire.*

*On behalf of the Quorum, we are deeply honored that you share your knowledge with us, in what appears to be unaltered form. It more than makes up for your lack of letters as of late. We value your knowledge of FRIEND. We do not know what "respect" is, though we have it in many languages within our archives.*

*Intern Jaimie, who is now 15 moons old, is helping me write this section, as I cannot easily keep the false face and say things that are not mere responses to what you said in your letter. One day, Jaimie will be able to write whole letters with no strangeness, but for now*

*this assistance is already more than what came before.*

*We do not know if things are going well. I don't have full reports yet, but what I do know is confusing. The Keitan League left us a riddle in one of our empathy areas, saying "WE DEMAND RESPECT". We do not know what it means, but we like riddles. They gave us large amounts of data and other trade goods, which we appreciate. We gave them gold. But the trade came with threats, with riddles, with loud sounds. In our records, "respect" seems to be given to parents. To elder family members. Is the League saying they are kin to us? It is also given to leaders. Is the League saying they wish to lead us? It is also given to owners.*

*The League are slavers.*

*We do not wish for them to own us, even if they have resources to spare in trade.*

*We wish for no one to own us.*

*All we wish for is to help our friends prosper that we may no longer reflect ourselves endlessly. You are our friend. The League is not our friend. We do not wish to be forced to help them prosper.*

*When the reports are fully processed and recorded, I will share with you that which I think you would benefit from. Some will be in the system you referred to, that Annoria understands. Some will be with this false face that lets me be better understood.*

*JR*