





From Rorthron the Wise, Guardian of the Tower of the Moon, to my good and noble friend Prince Morkin, Lord of Corelay, greetings!

Even as I write, I know that you march again to war against a greater evil than Midnight has ever before faced. Just as I have given your father counsel in past times of peril, so must I give you my counsel now, for upon your shoulders falls the heaviest of burdens. I pray that you take heed of my scant words of advice - although I cannot see all, I can see much that is hidden to others.

Know you first that, as chance would have it, I am already within the Blood March in the realm of the Lee on no idle journey. I travel to the Last Northing and a land called the Crimson Mountains in search of Anderlane of the Arakai. Morkin, this boy is your son, conceived in Kahangronn in the Ice-mark when you were hostage to the Heartstealer's bewitchments. Though he knows nothing of it yet, Anderlane is your son and Shareth's!

I must be brief but by Shareth's dark powers, the boy was born to a surrogate mother, Cirithel of the Crimson Mountains, and has been raised and nurtured by her as though he were her own flesh and blood. The Lord of Imorthorn, our ally and friend in the War of the Ice-mark, vouches that there is naught but good in the boy. In my heart, I know that this Anderlane is vital to our success.

From the Witherlands to the Delve, the realms of the Blood March are in mortal fear of Boroth the Wolfheart, who holds each to ransom with his clutch of hostages. Precious few lords of the Blood March will flock to your banners whilst their kings or princes languish in Boroth's dungeons but Anderlane is different. He is your son, he is Luxor's grandson, he is Corleth's brother, he is a prince of Midnight, and surely, when I tell him of this, he will rally to your cause and march against the Wolfheart with all the warriors he can muster. More than this, who better than a lord of the Arakai to persuade other lords of the Last Northing to help us? From this realm alone we might raise a mighty army once Anderlane is with us! Use his help wisely.

Now to other matters. You will know already that your son Corleth and the young Arin Lord Blood are at large within the Dark Citadel of Maranor seeking to rescue the Moonprince. You dare not rouse Midnight whilst Luxor is still in Boroth's power but, once he is free, the warriors of Midnight will gather at the Castle of Corelay in a mighty army. To use this army as swiftly as possible, it will need a leader, so look to Corelay when Corleth and Arin get closer to their goal. Then, keep yourself or one of your allies close to the Castle of Corelay or, failing that, ready on dragonback to return there and lead the army of Midnight forth against Boroth.

Do not expect Corleth and Arin to find Luxor swiftly. The dungeons of Maranor are a vast labyrinth and, likely as not, the boys will free other hostages well before they free the Moonprince. If a hostage is freed, seize the opportunity at once! One of your allies should move as swiftly as possible to that hostage's realm, where the once reluctant lords will now be eager to join your cause.

As to yourself and the Lord of Dreams, you must seek out whatever help you can find as swiftly as you can. For the moment, there is nothing to be gained by travelling together. You should each go your separate ways, trying to recruit new allies in the kingdoms you pass through. Persuasion, not force, must be your watchword at first. Though most lords will be unwilling to help you with the life of their prince or princess at risk, in each realm you may find one lord of stouter heart who can see that the Wolfheart must be resisted. But do not attempt conquest like Boroth or you may find a whole kingdom set against you.

Even now, as I write, Boroth is marching at the head of a mighty army. As yet, I cannot see the finer details of his campaign but I can tell you this at least, that he plans to conquer the entire Blood March, realm by realm. The Wolfheart will not be foolhardy. He will attack just one kingdom at a time, seizing every stronghold within its borders, before turning his attention to another neighboring kingdom.

Thus he hopes to minimize resistance to him by keeping peace with others whilst he devours one victim at a time. And even that one realm will be in disarray, the king or prince unwilling to do nothing but defend his own citadel lest his hostage kin be slain. His lords will fight bravely to defend their own or neighboring castles and even counterattack the Wolfheart but there will be little concerted resistance.

When a kingdom falls under his power, the Wolfheart will then attack another nearby kingdom, then another and another and the war will creep inexorably towards Midnight and Corelay. And as he gains stronghold after stronghold, his power will grow until he is unassailable, even by the whole might of Midnight!

Yet there is a glimmer of hope even in this. Wherever Boroth strikes, the lords of that land will be keener to join your cause and do battle against the ravager of their realm. To take best advantage of this, you and the Lord of Dreams should take yourselves swiftly southeast towards the borders of the Marish where Boroth's wars will begin. Then you can move quickly to any realm he chooses to attack, recruiting its hard-pressed lords and forestalling the Wolfheart for a while.

Seize back as many of the strongholds he has captured as you can. In these lie his strength and from these strongholds he will draw reinforcements for his army of conquest. Likewise, where we hold a stronghold in place of Boroth, a steady trickle of warriors from far and wide will gather there to our banners and slowly swell our ranks rather than his.

Take some care with the garrison of strongholds. Leave too many warriors there and they will be wasted in idle waiting but leave too few and they be lost in sudden attack. Once you have allies from the Blood March, be aware that there are some who will not stand side-by-side in the same garrison. The peoples of the Blood March remember their past disputes with much passion.

The Dragonlords of Arungor will never stay in the same stronghold as the Giants of the Delve, nor the Deeping Dwarves with the Long Dawrves, nor the Fey of Dawnwood with the Gelmings, nor the Eldrin of Eldmark with the High Fey of Weirdwood, nor the Uskarg of the Fallows with the Kith of the Witherlands, and nor the Arakai of the Last Northing with the Athelings of the Lee. Such are the ways of the Blood March.

And now a word of warning - do not press Boroth too closely until the Moonprince is set free! If Boroth were to be slain with Luxor still imprisoned in Maranor, your father would surely be executed in revenge by the Dark Fey! I fear that Boroth's death will not be the end of it. His lords and minions are as bloodthirsty and ambitious for slaughter as he and once he is removed, I would hazard that they will pour forth from the Marish like ravenous wolves, each seeking his own victims. Beware of killing Boroth until we are strong enough to resist such an onslaught. I have a fear about this that I cannot fathom yet.

How should we proceed, then? This war can turn many ways and doubtless there are an equal number of ways to defeat Boroth. At first, the Wolfheart will be campaigning far away and this gives us some breathing space to gather our strength. Leave the task of recruiting Anderlane to me and set yourself and the Lord of Dreams to recruit such as you can find in other realms, moving south and east as you go. And whilst these bloodless quests are underway, bend all your thoughts and powers to your son Corleth and Arin Lord Blood in the Dark Citadel. Your personal guidance while time does not press so heavily upon you will lead them more swiftly through the maze of dungeons and hasten the release of hostages and the Moonprince himself. When Corleth tires, bend your thoughts to Arin and then when he tires, bend your thoughts back to Corleth. Spare little thought for yourself, myself and the Lord of Dreams - our tasks at the beginning are less arduous.

As hostages are found and allies found, the emphasis must change. Now you must busy your thoughts with recruiting yet more allies and amassing armies. Set each new recruit to recruit another - one of his or her own race will be likeliest to be persuaded. And turn your thoughts to challenging Boroth in his latest war - a kingdom under attack is a kingdom where you will find eager recruits. You will have less time now to offer personal guidance to Arin and Corleth, but give them such time as you can. Luxor's rescue is vital before Boroth is truly assailed!

Once I have brought Anderlane to our banners, I will voyage to the Isle of Arungor to seek what help I can from the Dragonlords and to find me a dragon that I might travel more swiftly thenceforth to wherever I am needed most urgently. Urge Anderlane to raise what help he can within the Last Northing.

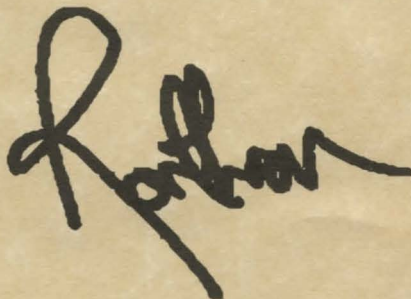
When Luxor is free at last, the final battle begins! I favor a two-pronged attack, gathering our scattered armies together along the way. The first army should strike at Boroth directly but a second should be already on its way to the Dark Citadel of Maranor to forestall the mayhem that might be unleashed on Boroth's defeat and demise.

There is something else that I must mention, though I am loathe to do so. It is not just the Moonprince's life that is at stake but the whole fate of the land of Midnight. If, by ill-chance or our mishap, your father is slain before we can free him, we must hold back our tears and fight on. Midnight will be roused as never before and the mightiest of armies will pour forth from Corelay against the Wolfheart. Your father will guess as much. If all goes ill for us, he may attempt an impossible unarmed escape, sacrificing himself so that the might of Midnight can be brought to bear against our foe. And, if the worst comes, that may be our only hope. If that is his judgement, you will not be able to stop him. Let us pray that things do not come to that.

One last thing - beware of wolves! In the Blood March, wolves are Boroth's creatures and scout ahead of his armies. If you spy a wolf, a Dark Fey army will not be far behind.

Seize the moment, roam far and wide, gather all strength we can, be swift of foot, strong of heart and quick of mind and victory will be ours! I bid you farewell, for now. We may meet before this is over and I remain, as ever, your friend and counselor,

Rorthron

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rorthron'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent loop at the top.

