Bean Counter

Hey, if they can pop down to Palá Jakálla and do Red Flower a favour, we could do with the help!

Matt Johnston

Wull, y’see.... until the books arrive, I'd not even know where Palá Jakálla is...

Bean Counter

Just stand anywhere on the South Coast and turn your back to the strongest smells (Salarvyá and Mu’uglarvyá) and PJ is in front of you, at the foot of the big muddy rivers.

Alternatively, summon any demon of your choice and demand to be transported to the cellar of Tanmurúktu the Astronomer.

And, if you really want to pop into our clan house, the Eye of All Seeing Wonder would help (Duncan Taylor or Jack or Steve or Dave will remind me of the relevant issue) and the inestimable Mr. Brodt can sell you a reprint. Its worth a trip - we have exclusive rights to the best of the Green Malachite clan fish for a year and a superb recent white wine vintage from our farms a little to the North.

Felipe Morales

Excuse me, You of Fine Smells, You must be mistaken about what you are talking about, since my Clan of the Broken Reed has exclusive rights to the best of the Green Malachite Clan. Hmmm...

Bean Counter

Wha? I sense a shámtla demand! Green Malachite granted us a regional exclusivity for rescuing their barque from pirates. Do you mean to tell me that they cheated on the deal? To the hirilákte, major domo, immediately!

Oh, and send a basket of half bottle of last years wine to the nice man who tipped us off. You'll find his clan house near the sewage outfall, I think.

Calithena

Speaking for our clanhouse in Jakálla, I can find no record of either of these spurious claims to our best vintages. Tirrikamukoi Dyfur of N'lüss will be happy to meet representatives of either of your clans in the Hirilákte arena to settle this matter. He is anxious to test his blade again; it has been several months since he has been first over the side during the boarding of a Hlüss hiveship.

Kumar hiChuyon

Dritlán, Third Imperial Marines

Younger Brother of Green Malachite's Nurtsáhludali in Jakálla

Steve Foster

As Yalunequ's second\* I accept the challenge on behalf of the dignity of the Red Flower Clan. I propose spears and heavy armour, fight to first blood, and a redemption price of 1000K for my cousin and 10K for the N’lüss.

Well?..

Choqal hiZanirin

\*We'll discuss my formal appointment later, cousin.

Calithena

My esteem for the simpering, effete Vrayáni coin-counters of Red Flower is increased immeasurably by your courage in accepting this challenge, Choqal. Such a display of bravery will long be remembered among my cohorts in the Legion of Tlaneno the Steersman.

In broad outline, your terms are acceptable, but there are certain points that need to be clarified. First, though Tirrikamukoi Dyfur is admittedly a nakomé dog, he is also a subaltern in the Emperor's military, may his wisdom light the way for us all. Therefore three hundred káitars would be a more appropriate ransom price in the event that victory goes to your side. This outcome strikes us as so unlikely as to render the present point one of purely rhetorical significance, but forms must always be observed. Second, as I am sure you are aware, N’lüss warriors favor greatswords and rather modest armoring. Dyfur will be happy to accept either the spear or the heavy armor, as you will, but reserves for himself the right to choose that which you do not.

The other matter, which must be addressed before we proceed, is the precise contract under dispute in the duel. As I understand it is a matter of wine; the amount and quality of the vintages in question must be spelled out in detail before a duel is undertaken on behalf of my entire clan, naturally.

Kumar hiChuyon

Dritlán, Third Imperial Marines

Younger Brother of Green Malachite's Nurtsáhludali in Jakálla

Brad Johnson

Per your request for available arena times please see the accompanying scroll for dates and prices.

Please note that the Temple of Vimúhla has expressed interest for a block of time during the period that you requested for the testing of their warriors against a new set of Salarvyáni war prisoners. Temple requests have priority over individual disputes.

Do you desire Temple sponsorship? If so, please contact the duty officer for preparations of the arena shrines.

Medical attendants can be made available from the nearby Hospital of Keténgku. Priests from the temples of Belkhánu and Sárku are also close for those more unfortunate outcomes.

Arms can be rented for the bout or you may bring your own. Please advise the duty officer if ranged weapons or magic will be employed so that appropriate preparations can be employed.

Send all special requests by courier no later than two days before the match.

Glory to the Empire,

Kémuel hiTlélsu, Red Flower Clan

Mediator of Disputes, Temple of Karakán, Hirilákte Administration

Steve Foster

Lá, the N’lüss is nakomé! I had assumed he was a member of your clan but I am relieved to hear that not just any mendicant thug can waltz into Green Malachite clan despite the rumours in the market place!

On behalf of my cousin I accept the redemption value for your champion, who will not be the first N’lüss to fall to my cousin's blade. My cousin shall fight in heavy armour and leave the choice of weapon to you. I propose that medium shields be permitted if you select one-handed weapons.

Let the dispute be over the 12 jars of crimson wine ("Tumíssa Gold '59") recently delivered to the private cellars of my clan elders in Palá Jakálla. The jars shall be returned in the unlikely event that your man remains standing. Do you agree?

Now we must discuss the small matter of time and place. My cousin currently languishes in a hostelry in Palá Jakálla and leaves shortly to escort a sick cousin to a sanatorium in the Kúrt Hills. I believe it would be more convenient for your man to make his way here for the duel. My clan will be happy to accommodate him, despite the circumstances. He need only mention to the elders that he is an acquaintance of Yalunequ and Choqal and he will be astounded by the welcome he receives!

I await your response.

Choqal hiZanirin

Steve Foster

Apologies! I must read your missives more closely as your scribe has such spidery writing! You are, of course, of the Broken Reed clan which I hold in almost as high regard as I do Green Malachite!

Choqal hiZanirin

Calithena

Worthy Sir,

I write not as a representative of the base and loyal clan of Broken Reed, but rather as a spokesperson for the Green Malachite clanhouse in Jakálla. I seek to correct a situation created by certain shiftless and indigent members of the otherwise honorable clans of Red Flower and Broken Reed, who have mounted baseless accusations concerning a debt of wine which Green Malachite does not in fact owe anyone.

Upon closer inspection of the matter, I find that the dispute actually concerns a certain portion of fish putatively owed by my clan to Red Flower and Broken Reed alike. Such gifts were in fact granted in exchange for services rendered, not long past; and I must humbly admit, on behalf of my brother, that the exact dispensation of the sea-fruit in question might well have caused certain points of legal wrangling between our three clans had the matter come to light previously.

However, the matter has been rendered nucupatory by subsequent happenings. The fish in question have been realotted, by order of his Divine Majesty the Emperor, to my own legion, that of Tlaneno the Steersman, as well as to the first Imperial Marines, to support our crews at sea. The edict is sound, and if there are any further questions about the matter I invite interested parties to consult with Tnikh hiTayarsha, the desk clerk for the Omnipotent Azure Legion here in Jakálla. (You may recall Tníkh from his earlier days as a special agent of the OAL; alas, he has been taken from the field for his ignominious role in the death of the supposed Imperial Heir Fasil. Still, he serves the Imperium well in this lesser role.)

However, having discussed the matter of the wine with Tirrikamukoi Dyfur, both of us maintain an interest in your twelve splendid jars of Tumíssa Gold. I personally take sufficient umbrage at being affiliated with the esteemed clan of Broken Reed to feel that some recompense is in order; perhaps this matter would be sufficient to let the duel go forward. If so, then let it be greatswords and heavy armor, at the Hirilákte Arena of your choice within a day's journey of fair Jakálla, the City Half as Old as the World.

Kumar hiChuyon

Dritlán, Third Imperial Marines

Younger Brother of the Green Malachite Nurtsáhludali in Jakálla

Felipe Morales

Ohe! O noble clans of the Red Flower and Green Malachite.

We too have reviewed our contract and have found the exclusive sea-fruit rights in question to have been mediated and signed by a certain Kúni, no lineage given, of the Red Flower Clan. A small symbol in the appearance of a red flame is oddly noted.

As is well-known in the Empire's southern expanses, that the Red Flower Clan are mostly devoted to Karakán, the Ultimate Warrior on the Final Day, and his cohort, Chegárra, Swordsman of Glory. Our Clan of the Broken Reed remains unaffiliated to one Lord, but I expect that this person of the Flame will be dealt with in an expeditious manner.

To the Clan of Green Malachite, we find no fault in this affair and look forward to future and profitable business with the great seaman of south.

To the Clan of the Red Flower, for redress, our esteemed, Shémek hiKhursa, Kási of the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm, is currently on leave, and is restless to test his recent acquisition of a sword of iron from Lilsu Isle. La, a simple misunderstanding as this can easily be compensated with an appropriate number of jars of 'Tumíssa Gold'.

Vírche hiDuné

Dispenser of Justice,

Master of Mediation for the Clan of the Broken Reed in the City Half as Old as the World.

Calithena

Friend Virche!

I am glad no further difficulties remain to be settled between the clan of Green Malachite and your humble yet estimable clan of Broken Reed.

Now let us unite in whipping these Vrayáni dogs from Red Flower back to their isle of wine and lanterns. Once we have received our wine in recompense for the many troubles their claims have caused us, we need bother with this matter no further. There is a Tirrikamu from N’lüss serving on one of the ships under my command, the size of a small serúdla, who can represent us in this matter in the hirilákte arena if need be. An uncouth bravo named Choqal from Red Flower has in principle agreed to this method of suicide; the Vrayáni apparently love wine more than life itself! Let us hope to enjoy the entertainment concomitant with his spectacular demise and our consumption of these elegant potables before the month is out.

Kumar hiChuyon

Dritlán, Third Imperial Marines

Clan of Green Malachite

Brother and Representative of our Nurtsáhludali in Jakálla

Steve Foster

Tlá once more! The esteemed sirs are ill informed on several counts. Clearly the scribes who read and transcribe your missives have the brains of hmélu for I can think of no other reason why you should have misunderstood so simple a situation.

The Red Flower Clan does, as you suggest, have many prestigious clanhouses on Vrá but the missives sent to you by myself clearly bear the mark of the Palá Jakálla house of the clan. I assume the esteemed sirs are familiar with the city only a few hours journey from Jakálla, but I would understand if they prefer to conserve their intellectual efforts for rumination on fine clothes and perfumes such a those a good clan girl would appreciate.

Secondly you will note that I am merely a second in the arrangements of the duel of honour you mention; my cousin Yalunequ, on whose behalf I have negotiated, will conduct the battle itself. Yalunequ, as you may recall from news of recent events, returned from a voyage south of Vrá a few weeks ago where he bested several pirates (including a steel-armoured ahoggyá) and a Hlüss lord, stormed a pirate citadel and released several hostages held there (including prominent members of the Joyous of Vrá clan). These were events that I witnessed (and indeed took some small part in) myself. But if you are so confident of your man then I suggest a side wager of say, 500K at odds of 3-1 in favour of the N’lüss?

I will understand if you decline the wager. I dislike taking money from those so clearly in need of paying for a decent scribe.

Choqal hiZanirin

Calithena

My esteemed slave-master of Red Flower,

I am fully cognizant of the location of your clanhouse in Palá Jakálla.

Further, the fact that you signify your lineage name with "hi" rather than the Vrayáni "vu" clearly indicates that you are a Tsolyáni miscegenator or sycophant rather than a proper descendant of the Vrá clan of Red Flower. So there was no confusion on this count either.

You will, I hope, forgive an old soldier and bureaucrat his fantasies during a long day at work. A simple slip of the tongue, born from the unattainable! I am in any event happy to settle for the death of your cousin. In the likely event that your ill-used slaves someday overthrow you, your tales of his exploits seem to qualify you as a fabulist of the first rank. Perhaps the Hriháyal-worshipping whores of Emerald Circlet will have a place for you as an assistant flute-player at their orgies.

I am concerned, though, that you were able to read this statement at all, which was made in a private communiqué, carried to Broken Reed by the military couriers. Friend Tníkh of the Omnipotent Azure Legion will be contacted concerning this matter, naturally.

I accept your side wager unconditionally; this afternoon I shall leave work early to purchase jewelry for my third wife, leveraged against this income! Greatswords and heavy armor have been agreed for the duel; furthermore, if I may take your previous (and quite unclear!) missive as suggesting the hirilákte arena of Palá Jakálla as an appropriate venue, I accept this as well. I will not march a marine to the Kurt Hills for a trifle such as this, however.

Naturally no magic arms, items, or spells will be used by either side; all accouterments will be of simple chlén-hide, and muscle and bone alone will determine the victor. If these arrangements are acceptable, I will happily notify the priests of Durritlámish to ready the worms for your cousin's immanent demise.

The only matter that is still unclear is what you hope to gain in the event of a victory. You have offered some fine wine, but we have made no comparable counter-offer. As I noted the fish originally under dispute are no longer on the table, as they are now committed to the greater glory of our divine Emperor's military, may he live a thousand years! I could, however, stake some quaint jewelry of Hlüss-chitin, recovered by one of my ships, which the buck-toothed women of your clan might find decorative.

Kumar hiChuyon

Dritlán, Third Imperial Marines

Clan of Green Malachite

Brother and Representative of our Nurtsáhludali in Jakálla

Brad Johnson

To All Parties Concerned,

The Arena has been approached by the Temple of Vimúhla with an offer to subsidize any duel taking place in the early morning of Zaqé, next week. They prefer that their own fighting later in the day begin on already bloodied ground.

Your dispute has reached the ears of many in the city and I am willing to offer you the first right of refusal to being the opening fight. In addition to the lowered fee, the field shall be newly groomed so that any blood spilt will be easily noticed. The surrounding audience is especially appreciative of this.

The only condition they attached to this offer is that their temple archers be stationed around the pit to eliminate any cowardice on the part of the participants that would sully their later battles. I assured them that nothing of that sort would come from your clans.

I await your answer.

Glory to the Empire,

Kemuel hiTlelsu, Red Flower Clan

Mediator of Disputes, Temple of Karakán, Hirilákte Administration

Steven Foster

Esteemed sir,

Yes, I am happy to forgive an old soldier and bureaucrat his shortcomings.

Yet it seems that either your impending senility or over-fondness for zu’úr again afflicts your understanding. The duel, as clearly stated and agreed, is to first blood and not to the death. I realize that you have no concern for the life of your N’lüss, though I do find it strange that your clan believes it appropriate for such a nakomé foreigner to defend its honour rather than one of its own. Still, your clan's perception of it's own worth is a matter for debate in it's own clanhouses and not on the streets.

Indeed Palá Jakálla was the place I suggested for the duel. The arrangements are acceptable and I accept your counter offer of jewelry. Surely the purported beauties of your clan could look no worse for the loss of it!

Choqal hiZanirin

(Sir, forgive the insults. I mean no disrespect for your clan even though I write the words. Master Choqal is illiterate but he will beat me severely if I do not write exactly what he dictates and already this month another slave has "fallen down the steps to the wine cellar" for upsetting him!

Jayagu, slave and scribe)

Calithena

To the Esteemed and Worthy Kemuel hiTlelsu and Choqal hiZanirin, Red Flower Clanhouse, Palá Jakálla:

The terms appear to have been settled, and Tirrikamukoi Dyfur even now tests the edge of his greatsword in sweet anticipation of the upcoming bloodletting! Let the record show: our man ransoms for 300 Káitars, Yalunequ of Red Flower for 1000; the duel will be fought with greatswords and heavy armor of chlén-hide, with no magical equipment or assistance of any kind; the duel shall take place in the Hirilákte arena of Palá Jakálla upon its opening on the morning of Zaqé next, and the temple of Great and Fiery Vimúhla agrees to subsidize our fee in exchange for the right to exult in the newly groomed field covered with Vrayáni blood and to station their temple archers about the field to prevent cowardice.

As a technical matter the duel is to first blood rather than to death, but I think that the weak-kneed Yalunequ will discover that such distinctions are rather casuistic when applied to the slashing blade of mighty Dyfur of N’lüss.

Furthermore, it is clear that to honor our contract with the Temple of Vimúhla, the first blood in question must be sufficient to decorate the arena grounds.

For my part I would only like to impose the additional condition that two impartial referees, at least one with a definite nose for magic, shall be hired from the Temple of Chegárra. I will happily take this expense upon myself and the Clan of Green Malachite, as the expenses involved will be reimbursed many times over upon Tirrikamukoi Dyfur's victory in the match. Naturally neither of these judges will be clansmen of Red Flower or Green Malachite.

At stake on this match is the following: in the event of a victory for Dyfur, Red Flower delivers to Green Malachite twelve jars of Tumíssa Gold '59, in a fine, unspoilt vintage, and five hundred káitars; in the event that the victor is reversed, the sum paid to Red Flower will be fifteen hundred káitars, and in addition certain trinkets of Hlüss-chitin will be delivered to spare the eyes of honorable Red Flower clansmen as they attempt to mount their ox-thighed clan-girls. In either event both clans agree to drop all past claims for fish or wine against one another, and to start with a fresh slate.

As to the willingness of my clan to allow its interests to be defended by a nakomé N’lüss, I can only reply that it is the whoreson Yalunequ who was willing to step into the Hirilákte with such a man in the first place. I take his own estimate of his relative worth as accurate in this regard.

I regret the death of Jayagu, and have included five káitars as shámtla on his behalf.

Kumar hiChuyon

Dritlán, Third Imperial Marines

Clan of Green Malachite

Brother and Representative of our Nurtsáhludali in Jakálla

Steven Foster

Excellent. My cousin should soon receive these communications for the first time and I am sure he will be pleased with the terms of the contest I have arranged for him. For my own part, I have to visit an aged parent who lives 100 tsán to the north and I will be beyond reach for 3 days.

Choqal hiZanirin

Brad Johnson

Greetings to the Esteemed Brothers in Trade,

The announcement that this dispute shall be honourably decided on the field has created opportunities for us all. The Temple of Belkhánu will not receive many requests for funeral rites from the arena that day since the Flame Worshippers will be casting their dead into the Maw of Vimúhla.

My Temple is willing to contribute a chorus for the opening ceremonies (albeit a relatively inexperienced one that needs the practice) and put up the price of a Fine Embalming should the unthinkable happen to one of the contestants. In return, certain patrons of the Temple request exclusive rights to in-arena wagering on this bout.

I believe this to be a most rewarding proposal. Respond soonest.

Mnéktu vuKe’él

Clan of The Joyous of Vrá

Otlú of the Temple of Belkhánu

Calithena

To the great and honorable Mnéktu vuKe'él, of the glorious and ancient

Clan of the Joyous of Vrá, from his humble servant Kumar:

Your offers are in every way acceptable to me, and I leave the settlement of all particulars to your staff, whose competence and energy no doubt leave nothing to be desired. Since the illustrious Choqal hiZanirin of Red Flower, who has negotiated so ably as Yalunequ's second, evidently appears to have taken a visit to an elderly relative, we must await the approval of Yalunequ himself for a final decision on these matters. Nonetheless I am sure he will prove accommodating to a request from so worthy and majestic a petitioner.

The glorious Mnéktu and stalwart Yalunequ should be aware that I have now engaged the two referees, both from the Temple of Chegárra. Purely to satisfy my own mania for exactitude, which has, alas, been compared unfavorably with that of the hated Mu'ugalavyáni, I have made sure that both men are quite sensitive to the slightest of magical emanations.

Kumar hiChuyon

Dritlán, Third Imperial Marines

Clan of Green Malachite

Brother and Representative of our Nurtsáhludali in Jakálla

Brad Johnson

To The Dlántukoi of The Red Flower and Green Malachite Clans,

Your interclan dispute has received much attention amongst the populace. In keeping with this growing bloodlust, the Temple guards of Vimúhla and Chiténg are offering the use of several of their steel greatswords for your use in this bout. Please send your representatives to the Flame Lord’s Garrison for training and practice with these fine weapons.

Dritlán Antú hiAgnásh

Red Star Clan

Temple Guards, Temple of Chiténg

Brad Johnson

My esteemed Clan Cousin Chóqual,

Enclosed is a letter authorizing the clan 100 seats at the arena for the match. The interest in this contest is very high and these seats are very valuable. The Dlántukoi will have special seats near the Imperial box where the view is excellent.

Beware that this opportunity for honor is also fraught with danger. Many forces are starting to focus on this event. I will speak further of this when my duty schedule allows me to return to the clan house in two days.

Glory to the Empire and the Clan,

Kémuel hiTlélsu, Red Flower Clan

Mediator of Disputes, Temple of Karakán, Hirilákte Administration

Calithena@juno.com

Subject: A Humble Petition

To his Radiant Excellency, General of the Third Imperial Marines, Arsekmekoi Kerdukoi Tlaneno hiVorodlaya, Golden Sunburst Clan, Jakálla:

My Esteemed Lord Commander, Light of all the Deeps,

Your insignificant servant in all things feels compelled to report to you concerning certain circumstances which, while normally beneath the notice of one who treads your lofty heights, have caused rather more public uproar than this poor and simple soldier, unsuited to diplomatic wranglings, originally anticipated.

I speak not of military matters, with respect to which you have placed so much trust in me despite my modest origins, but rather of a certain duel, of which news may indeed have reached you by now. I had no desire to become involved in this matter, please be sure; but my brother, the Nurtsáhludali of Green Malachite here in Jakálla, pleaded with me to handle this matter for our clan, indeed came so close to groveling that my own natural concern for his honor as a member of my clan and lineage compelled me to intercede. Spurious claims of a right to various wines and fishes produced by our clan were being put forward by certain adventurous hotheads of Red Flower and even lowly Broken Reed - La! I shall not bore you with details.

Suffice it to say that, while I have already succeeded in defending my clan's interests in every way, regardless of the duel's outcome, still I have some concerns about the duel itself.

You will recall the gigantic N’lüss to whom we awarded the "Glory of Gold" for his single-handed stand alone on the deck of the great Hlüss hiveship, chitinous warriors assaulting him from all sides for more than twenty minutes, while we moved our second qél into place for a fresh wave of boarders. It was this act of valor more than any other that allowed us to capture the hiveship, which revealed those strange artifacts from Bednálljan days, over which I understand you still ponder. For some reason the champion of Red Flower was willing to duel with such a man, despite his nakomé origins and dubious lineage. Moreover the choice of weapons and armor they have allowed are in every way favorable to the N’lüss.

Nonetheless, senior members of both Red Flower and Joyous of Vrá have been in repeated contact with me, concerning arrangements for the duel, and consequently I must frankly admit to suspecting treachery.

I am aware that none of these clans, not even the esteemed Joyous of Vrá, merit the attention of one such as you, may your glory last a thousand years. I am concerned rather for the respect which the Squadrons of Tlaneno the Steersman currently everywhere command, and which might be damaged by a loss in this duel, even if that loss was brought about by duplicitous means. I had originally scheduled the battle to be over and done with in short order some morning at the Hirilákte arena in Palá Jakálla, but it has now become a major event, and it is possible that even worthies in your august circles are now planning to attend. Naturally all the tickets I have received are at your immediate and unalterable disposal, should you conceive some spur of the moment interest in such a trifling matter.

There is no question but that our N’lüss will slaughter Red Flower's champion, who is a man of no consequence, should the duel be conducted fairly. Should it be within the domain of your interests to secure such a victory and preserve the reputation of our Legion's greatest battle-champion, a word or two to the various arena officials of Palá Jakálla would be more than sufficient to ensure this. Needless to say I will bow to your superior wisdom in every respect in this matter, should you perceive it differently.

Sincerely,

Kumar hiChuyon

your Dritlán and Humble Servant

Duncan.Taylor

As an aside I do hope that the "esteemed" members of Green Malachite [and any other nakomé foreigners they may wish to invite] realize that my clan's right to the quota of fish relates to the year 2359 AS

and not some later year or alternative multiverse.

Regardless of any temporal displacement, I am disturbed by Green Malachite's lack of honour in this matter [as alluded to by my clan-cousin Choqal]. What self-respecting Tsolyáni clan would entrust the honour of their clan to a nakomé foreigner? Surely no medium status clan would stoop so low - but yes, a reneging fishing clan obviously low on talent through inbreeding from sub-standard stock.

I am also upset my by former Legion's mercenary involvement by lending a supposed champion who has no connection with the clan in mention to fight on their behalf. I have therefore no alternative but to issue a challenge to this N’lüss champion to engage me in the trial reserved for intra-Legion of Tlaneno the Steersman duels.

I challenge him to swim the tributary of the Missúma river between Palá Jakálla and the City of the Dead, or any other stretch of water not less than 1/4 tsán in distance, in light chlén hide armour - the honourable contest of stamina and skill [remember anyone can swing a sword and get lucky, even Red Devastation].

If we exist in the same time, I look forward to receiving your acceptance to my challenge. If we do not, I look forward to whooping your ass in the future.

Trasune hiIssasa, Red Flower Clan

Former Tirrikemu, Notable Legion of Tlaneno the Steersman

Brad Johnson

From the Desk of Kuruthúni Giriktéshmu hiKoyúga, Red Sun Clan, Legion of Giriktéshmu, 23rd Imperial Archers

Dlántukoi,

The attempt by the Flame Lord’s minions to skew the fight has been noted by my Legion. In response, send a runner to pick up two steel helms for temporary use by your clan.

Calithena

Before I get back "in character" -

I'm curious about a point of etiquette here. As far as I could gainsay from Swords and Glory book II, on the Hirilákte Arena, it's Red Flower who has committed the blunder here by agreeing to duel with the nakomé, rather than Green Malachite who has committed it by allowing him to represent the clan. (Incidentally, it's not clear that he's representing the clan any more, because no one from Red Flower has stepped forward to protest the OAL's impounding of the fish supposedly due to them.) I don't have S&G handy at work, but the text I'm thinking of has nobles laughing off challenges from lesser folk, and a statement to the effect that normally duelers are of equal status. Who is in the right here?

Brumazik,

Sean

Brad Johnson

Having consulted “The Manifesto of Noble Deliverance” it is my ruling that the contest is to be considered a simple interclan match versus a personal shámtla match. This relieves the loser of having to forfeit all accoutrements and pay ransom. The duel will be considered to be the final settlement of all minor disputes and wagers will be allowed on the outcome.

As to the question of the appropriateness of a N’lüss representing one of the parties, I shall leave that up to the individual clans to agree upon. This is not an issue with the arena if the N’lüss is designated a hired champion of the clan.

Charukéldálkoi Ashnán hiGáni

Golden Sphere Clan

Chief Referee, Arena Administration

Brad Johnson

From The Deck of the Command Ship of the Kuruthúni of the Third Imperial Marines, Tlaneno hiVorodlaya, Golden Sunburst Clan, Jakálla

My Loyal Dritlán,

I understand your concern in this matter. Be advised that I cannot show any outward support for either side at this time. However, rest assured that all precautions are being taken to ensure a fair fight. I would expect no less from the Arena staff.

Also appreciate that a recipient of the “Glory of Gold” represents a certain amount of honor for the legion.

Perhaps, I will mention this matter to my Golden Sunburst clan cousins.

Brad Johnson

From the Palace of Changadésha Sérqu hiChaishyáni, Golden

Sunburst Clan, Legion of Sérqu, Sword of the Empire, 14th Imperial Heavy Infantry

Dlántukoi,

Neither the Temple of Vimúhla nor the Legion Brethren of the 23rd Imperial Archers shall shame us for showing a lack of support for the pursuit of honor.

Send a courier, immediately, for two sets of steel breastplates and to accompany the armourers back to your clanhouses in order to fit them to the combatants.

Use them skillfully for the glory of your clans.

Felip Morales

Long Private Missive for Clan of GM

ngángmuru!

To the Esteemed Clan Elder of the Men of the Earth & Purveyors of Sea-Fruit otherwise nobly known as Clan of Green Malachite

Kumar hiChuyon

Brother and Representative of Nurtsáhludali in Jakálla

I beg forgiveness in detaining my reply to your previous entreaty to unite our claims for Shámtla from the Clan of Red Flowers. Negotiations with this hotheaded, foreign dealing clan fell off the Sakbé and into the Hirilákte too quickly for a response. The Broken Reed Clan was considering to offer ourselves as your seconds in this matter, if not for a chrí fly in the soup.

My ears to the wind have heard that unorthodox dealings have been entered into agreement which are strictly prohibited by "The Manifesto of Noble Deliverance", the code of our ancestors, since before the time of the Éngsvan hla Gánga. The willful break of the "Manifesto is an Imperial offence and will be tried in an Imperial court.

The dealings of which I speak of are the arrangement of recompense in the form of 12 jars of Tumíssa Gold and the irregular negotiation of ransom before the results of the duel have come to pass. As the Shámtla negotiations for the Tumíssa Gold turned into a duel of honor, they can no longer be considered. The duel itself is the end of the matter. The only material effects that may be claimed by the winner are the loser's weapons, armour, and immediate personal effects. And,... (to which I praise your negotiation skills worthy of the noblest clans of Jakálla)... more importantly, the winner acquires the person of his vanquished opponent. Well done! I say, when your N'lüss warrior is victorious. La! You know all of this, as well as I do. Perhaps, the ire of the Red Flower indignants have clouded your memory.

Although, since my Clan was involved in earlier in this affair, I beseech you, on behalf of the noble actions of our ancestors, do not be sullied by submitting to terms set forth by the Vrayáni clansmen. I do not wish to see my Clan or yours dragged into an Imperial court for bussan. I am quite shocked that Kemuel hiTlelsu of the Red Flower Clan who holds a post with Hirilákte Administration would allow such a breech of tradition. Perhaps, his time as a merchant abroad has soiled his Tsolyáni upbringing. Or since Charukéldálkoi Ashnán hiGáni Golden Sphere Clan, Chief Referee in Arena Administration has not rejected this duel, could it be that these dealings are in secret? That would be even worse bussan.

Be content of victory in the duel itself and servitude of one named Yalunequ.

I believe my ancestors will rest in peace, now that I have written this letter to you. Glory to the Emperor and the Empire of the Petal Throne.

másun kula!árin guál!

(It is done!)

brumazík!

Vírche hiDuné

on behalf of the Clan Master of the Broken Reed in the City Half as Old as the World.

Dispenser of Justice, Master of Mediation

Written by the humble hand of Hekésh hiChúma

Elder Scribe

Steve Foster

Gentlemen!

Your interest in the outcome of this duel is comforting, but I remind you that agreement has already been reached on arms and armour which must be of chlén hide. I thank you for your fine offers but it is not fitting for any party to change the terms of the duel once they have been agreed.

Choqal hiZanirin

(using new scribe small enough to sit comfortably on one's lap)

Calithena

Curious about the legal points Virche raised in his letter - is this right? It seems to me that he has a point about the previous wager not holding as such when the change in the status of the duel occurs, but then since the duel has changed in status we appear to have continued to accept the original wager in the new context. Any thoughts from legalists out there? I'm sure Dritlán Kumar and Tirrikamu Dyfur will continue to believe that the wine, money, and jewelry specified in the most recent letter to Red Flower remain connected to the match as a side bet if nothing else until Red Flower protests to the contrary.

Also, when will the cowardly Yalunequ step forward to defend his own interests?

Calithena

Long Private Missive for Clan of GM

To the Esteemed and Worthy Kemuel hiTlelsu and Choqal hiZanirin, Red Flower Clanhouse, Palá Jakálla;

and to the Cunning and Honorable Vírche hiDuné, Dispenser of Justice, Master of Mediation, Broken Reed Clanhouse, Jakálla:

Honorable Gentlemen,

In a recent missive from Virche hiDune, an excellent point was made about the upcoming duel between the Yalunequ the Silent (I hope that he has not fled to Tsolei to avoid this contest of honor!) and Tirrikamukoi Dyfur of the Squadrons of Tlaneno the Steersman. In changing this duel from the settlement of a clan squabble - alas, one which had no basis in fact! - to a personal contest between two warriors of puissant excellence (for it is good to be charitable to one's foes), we have inadvertently run afoul of the “Manifesto of Noble Deliverance”. I regret this oversight greatly, and heretofore leave off all conditions laid upon the duel, to be fought at the Flame-Lord's earliest convenience in the arena of Palá Jakálla.

Therefore I hereby disavow all bets, wagers, conditions, and other stipulations past or present relating to this match, save for those as pertain to weapons, armaments, time, place, and style of the duel, as that glorious Manifesto that governs the Hirilákte lays out for us.

Since the dispute between our clans has been effectively resolved, let this simply be a battle of men, governed by all the everlasting laws of our Imperium!

To my friend Choqal, Master of Slaves and Champion of the Downtrodden, I have this additional comment. A certain officer under my command, Hereksakoi Aikallu hiAuvesu of the honorable clan of Golden Sapphire, has conceived a betting interest in this match entirely independent from any matters pertaining to the clans or individuals involved, or to our negotiations. Should you be aware of someone similar within your own sphere of peers, perhaps the wager previously offered, twelve jars of Tumíssa Gold '59, in a fine, unspoilt vintage, and five hundred káitars against the Hlüss-chitin jewelry and fifteen hundred káitars, could be transacted between these two men. If not, La! - we will have to make do with Yalunequ's blood as an offering for great and fiery Vimúhla and the unimpeached honor of the stout marines of the Squadrons of Tlaneno the Steersman as sufficient compensation for the contest. Of course friend Virche has also noted that, since the match is to the first ground-staining spilling of blood, it is conceivable that your man Yalunequ will find himself soon enough a slave rower on Molkarkoi Chagash's (you perhaps know him as "The Reaper of Men") Zirunel instead, if the medics of wise and glorious Keténgku are quick enough to his aid. All this shall be as great and mighty Karakán, Who Brings the Lightning, wills it.

Sincerely,

Kumar hiChuyon

Dritlán, Third Imperial Marines

Clan of Green Malachite

Brother and Representative of our Nurtsahludali in Jakálla

Calithena

Re: Long Private Missive for Clan of GM

Friend Vírche!

Again must I thank you for your timely assistance in these difficult negotiations. The life of a soldier-bureaucrat is busy indeed, and I have many more pressing matters to attend to than the endless intrigues surrounding this duel. I am indeed surprised that these details of law, which I am sure were known to every one of us, were overlooked by all. Your timely advice has saved us considerable embarrassment, and perhaps subsequent legal expense as well.

The two lovely bearers of this letter are slave-girls in the special employ of the high officers of my legion. They have brought you baskets of fresh fish and flowers, dná-bread and wine, which you may enjoy along with their tender caresses. I must warn you to take care regarding the short, slender one; she was an advanced priestess of Hrela among the Redhats before her time of servitude came, and she will tempt you into sensual excess even as she fulfills your every desire.

The silver service included with the foodstuffs you may keep as a token of my gratitude. The women should eventually return to our command offices, but there is no hurry; if their ministrations take several days to complete, so be it.

If any cousins of yours are in service with the Third Imperial Marines, please do not hesitate to mentioning their names to me. Great sagacity and puissance runs in families, and I am always on the lookout for those whose five selves are apportioned in the unique quantities necessary to make a good officer.

Sincerely,

Kumar hiChuyon

Dritlán, Third Imperial Marines

Clan of Green Malachite

Brother and Representative of our Nurtsahludali in Jakálla

Brad Johnson

Your refusal of the loan of our weapons is disappointing. We are aware of your interpretation of the agreement. I shall ensure that my bloodlust filled archers are as precise in the interpretation of their orders during the match.

Dritlán Antú hiAgnásh

Red Star Clan

Temple Guards, Temple of Chiténg

Brad Johnson

From the Contracting Staff of Giriktéshmu hiKoyúga, Red Sun Clan, Legion of Giriktéshmu, 23rd Imperial Archers

To the Dlántukoi of the Red Flower and Green Malachite

My Commander informs me that your clans are to be used as examples for all future dealings for contract deliveries to our legion. I look forward to this glorious burden the next time that we have requirements for your products.

Dritlán Honú hiTolú, Red Sun Clan

Quartermaster, 23rd Imperial Archers

Bean Counter

Scene: the wet washed cobbles approaching the door to a small but recently rather beautifully redecorated clan house in Palá Jakálla.

Yalunequ hiChaquvar: enters, singing the Hymnal to the Lord of Light and happily swinging his cloak over his shoulder and nonchalantly carrying a shiny new steel spear

Slave: races from the door and throws himself at Y's feet.

Pause

Yalunequ: finally looks down and clicks fingers. - "Am I to tread on you, or do you wish to say something?"

S: stutters - "I have a message from Choqal, honoured sir. He left word that you were to go direct to the Hirilákte arena on your return from visiting your cousin Mashmirek in the Sanitorium"

Y: laughs! - "Choqal? Is he in trouble again? Surely not another slave has fallen down the cellar steps? I guess he wants me for his second again."

S: panic stricken - "no, sir, its not like that at all. Here are the letters. Hurry, come with me now to the arena, please"

Y: dismissive - "I shall do no such thing! Fetch chumetl, my favourite slave girl and a good flute player while I sit in the garden and read this bundle of ragged parchment."

Appearing at the gatehouse is Rifushiya vuChaquvar, senior elder in Palá Jakálla. An imposing figure.

R: Commandingly - "Yalunequ! Go with this slave and settle the matter in a noble fashion! You have been greatly wronged by Green Malachite,

a clan for whom you performed a great and noble deed. Now they weasel out of their contract with you on the slightest pretext. Pfagh! As if some contract with a mere quartermaster could overthrow the need to repay you! Choqal has done as you would, and challenged them as one clan to another, and I fully agree with him. Go. Settle it this very afternoon."

Y: looks at papers, then Rifushiya then over his shoulder at the towering arena walls. - "So the huge queues at the arena gates are ..."

R: "waiting for you, yes!"

Y: "and the large party of archers I saw ..."

R: "yes"

Y: "and the enormous N’lüss I saw being carried in on the shoulders of many men ..."

R: "yes ... but you will be saddened to hear that Choqal negotiated them down to just one N’lüss, although many of the elders here felt you could easily deal with two."

S: quietly - "we are already late, sirs"

A crowd has begun to gather inside the gatehouse.

R: "Quickly, Yalunequ, your armour has been sent. Your favourite, you know, the one with the reflective discs of Lord Hnálla and the Dnellu motifs! I'll wager you want to run on ahead and finish the brute off before I can get a decent side wager in, heh?"

Y: stunned - " ... " opens letters and scans them quickly.

The crowd sets off, flowing around Yalunequ and the prostrate slave. Rifushiya goes with them. His clan cousins all banter and pat him on the shoulder for luck. Some girls pin charms on his tabard and kilt. most are already part drunk or intoxicated and all are clearly wildly excited.

Y: reading, slowly turning bright red with anger - "they called me WHAT" ... "our clan is WHAT" ... "they dare to" ... "they called Choqal a WHAT"

Y: turn on his heel, and strides towards the arena side gate, shouting over his shoulder - "Slave - fetch me the biggest fish you can find! NOW! Once I knock him down, I am going to beat what is left of their half-wits brains out with it and to the Pale Lady with the shámtla on him!"

Exeunt Y to Arena and S to a mainly deserted market ...

From The Deck of the Command Ship “Crusher of Hulls”

Mígor hiVorodlaya

Aide to Commander Tlaneno hiVorodlaya, Golden Sunburst Clan

Third Imperial Marines, Jakálla

To Kumar hiChuyon

Dritlán, Third Imperial Marines

Clan of Green Malachite

Return with this messenger immediately to explain the refusal of the offer from Commander Sérqu hiChaishyáni, Legion of Sérqu, Sword of the Empire, 14th Imperial Heavy Infantry

Calithena

Kumar hiChuyon, Dritlán of the Legion of Tlaneno the Steersman, left his offices in Jakálla that very morning to respond to the summons of his esteemed general, compatriot of the Imperial Prince Eselne.

Watching over the prow as the winds blew behind him, he contemplated how best to address his Kerdu and sovereign master Tlaneno in relation to the brusque missive that had arrived only hours before.

What was the armor to him? He was only acting in accordance with the "Manifesto of Noble Deliverance!" Still other terms had fluctuated like the light of sunset against the radiant plumage of a kheshchal; perhaps he should have negotiated more strongly on behalf of his fellow legion's interests. And all of this just to protect his stupid, simpering, incompetent elder brother, who could never do what was needful for Green Malachite when external pressure became too strong.

He shook his head, speaking to himself. "Cha, Kumar. You are not one of Tlaneno's cousins from Golden Sunburst, a nobleman born to politics. You are a simple man from an honorable middle-class clan who has risen so high solely through his grasp of strategy. See what it costs you to dabble!" Dritlán Kumar swore to himself that if he could somehow escape from this mess with his honor intact, he would forever afterward leave these political maneuverings behind. He was careful not to swear it to great and mighty Karakán himself, however, for he knew it to be a lie. Still, to quiet himself for a while, perform his duties...

The massive Crusher of Hulls, Molkar Mígor hiVorodlaya's great mrishuren, loomed before him now, filling up his field of vision and dwarfing the tiny, wet-sailed sescha he had taken from Jakálla's southern harbor only two hours before. Migor was an excellent commander, and cousin to Tlaneno himself; when he tired of the active life at sea, a shoreside command post as Dritlán was his for the asking. And because of his own clan Kumar's was ever the most vulnerable; the moment he became expendable, or lost his unblemished record of strategic planning against the Salarvyáni and pirates, he would be back on the open sea, and Migor would be enjoying his wines and slave girls at headquarters. He cursed again. "Stupid man! If Tirrikamu Dyfur fails, this could be your undoing." But how could the N’lüss fail? He was invulnerable, all the men attested to that!

Dritlankoi Kumar and his four aides climbed the gangplank sent down to them from the lower deck of the mrishuren. Mighty Tuléng was accursedly hot now, and all but the slaves were shielded from its wrath. Climbing the ladders to the higher decks one by one, Kumar soon enough spied the master of his fate: Arsekmekoi Kerdukoi Tlaneno hiVorodlaya, sipping Chumetl and poring over sea-charts on a high dais while his pretty third wife - a priestess of Hnálla with considerable sorcerous skill, though she was only half through her third decade, it was said - kneeled behind him and massaged his shoulders. Next to him, two cushions lower, sat Molkarkoi Migor, whose hawk-jawed good looks and sun-blackened skin ever presented the image of the conquering hero. Three of their assistants, promising young Hereksayal all, sat again two cushions down from Migor, mostly silent onlookers to the strategic discussions of their superiors.

Migor looked up from the charts and spied Kumar first, waving to him. Kumar grimaced inward at this informality from one he technically outranked, but outward he only gave Migor a small smile. Save Kerdukoi Tlaneno himself there was no man in the legion he could less afford to offend.

Kumar stood below his general and bowed low. Without raising his eyes from the ground, he spoke his rehearsed piece.

"Mighty Kerdukoi, he whose name makes the waves tremble, your servant in all things has arrived. I am deeply sorry for any annoyance my conduct has caused to our fellow legions, whether of Serqu or Girikteshmu. When I received the arrogant Choqal's missive, I felt that my hands were bound by the Manifesto of Noble Deliverance, and accepted his terms. I see now that I should have negotiated much harder on behalf of our fellow legions.

"There is perhaps still some hope for saving face in this matter, however. A rumor that the mysterious Yalunequ has a preference for metal armor, indeed a special suit that he wears to battle, has apparently gone unheeded by his second. Assuming the armor in question contains no sorcery, perhaps we may save face in this matter by allowing Yalunequ his favored protection and accepting some of the metal armor in question on Tirrikamukoi Dyfur's behalf, at least."

Not daring yet to look up, Dritlán Kumar awaited his master's response.

Steve Foster

Overheard in the Red Flower clanhouse (quoted with permission of the author but source "unattributed" hence no claim for shámtla possible!):

>> This guy you have to fight is nakomé? What sort of a dishonourable Ahoggyá turd would choose a nakomé N’lüss as his champion?! Your foe is announcing to the whole world that

1. He’s a rank sniveling coward
2. He not only doesn't want to lose - he doesn't even want to play fair
3. , And just in case his champion loses after all, he doesn't want the expense of buying him back.

>> Outrageous!

>> Did I hear it was the Green Malachite Clan? I guess they don't have a single warrior in the entire clan capable of taking you on. And so they've hired this nakomé, is that it? What a pathetic bunch of losers, they don't deserve to call themselves Tsolyáni. If I see any Green Malachite people in the crowd, I'll ask 'em why they don't buy a serudla to field as their clan champion. Then they could mince around all over town, insulting their betters and then saying, "Oooo, but I don't have to fight you because we bought ourselves a big bad serudla to do it for us." Sad bastards.

>> Hmm. Just realized that the N’lüss might have a legitimate reason to get involved. He's probably the unacknowledged half-brother of the guy who challenged you. Or perhaps his dad, given the way these Green Malachite guys behave. Or maybe he's actually one of the Green Malachite elders, but he prefers to go incognito as a nakomé soldier rather than admit to belonging to Green Malachite. Can't blame him there.

>> If you defeat him, there is no earthly reason why you should sell him back. If Green Malachite whine about it (like they whine about most things), tell 'em: "If you feel this guy has some special relationship to your clan, how come you left him as nakomé?" Your own redemption value ought to be around 500 Káitars. (Normally higher, but this duel is so uneven that I don't think you should make any concessions.