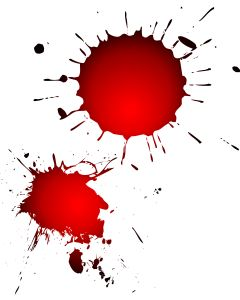
***Blood Faith X***

Sibyl,

I must admit that I haven’t come to you straightaway for the contents of your last letter infected my brain and sent me on a feverish quest to find this *Book of Abramelin*. I vaguely remember hearing about the *en archē vrykolakas*, but I never saw a copy—it must’ve been popular when I was trying to prepare for my Ordeals. Nonetheless, I developed an insatiable desire to learn of the Demarche.

So I took a journey to Rome while on my way to you in al-Qāhira. To my dismay, I learned that Caesar Augustus was promptly cremated following his death and his ashes stored in a mausoleum, not a tomb. And what was worse, when the Goths sacked Rome in 410 a.d. they ransacked the mausoleum and scattered his ashes to the wind! In vain I searched for the tome; I tried as many different interpretations of “the tombs of Caesar Augustus” as I could think of—the temple of the *Sidus Iulium*, the tombs of his family tree, the tombs of his fallen soldiers, even the tombs of his slaughtered enemies. But none of them yielded anything.

But the one thing that nagged at me about the passage was that it said ‘tombs’ rather than ‘tomb’. I’d been assuming that you’d just translated it wrong. But eventually I realized that it wasn’t ‘tombs’ that was translated wrong, it was ‘Caesar Augustus’. What it should’ve said was ‘Caesaraugusta’! So, though I knew it would pain you that I did not come to you first, I turned back to the West and traveled to Zaragoza, in Aragón. And I immediately began to suspect that it was no coincidence that the troubles that Hæmming so recently advised me of took place in the Pyrenees!

Once in Zaragoza, I began searching the tombs of the city by night. I had to make several weeks of it, given the great many dead to be found in that city. Now that my focus was on a municipality rather than a single individual, I was forced to explore a great many more resting grounds.

Finally, a month ago, I entered a Churrigueresque chapel near the Ebro River, called the *Catedral-Basílica de Nuestra Señora del Pilar*. The faith in that place was strong and I’d been avoiding it. But I was running out of options, so I forced myself to go in. The iconography and the *puti* were intricately ornate and completely repellant to me—I could feel my skin crawling like it wanted to peel off of my flesh. Beneath some of the floorboards I found a hidden tomb of some Crusader or Knight Templar. Clutched in his decaying embrace was the tome I sought!

What I found made me wish I had your skills in translation. My own efforts must’ve taken me considerably longer than you would’ve needed. Not only did the author write it in Ogham, but he also used a Caesar cipher (not so clever, given the book’s location). It was on a folded scrap of paper wedged into the chapter ‘On How to Recover Treasures’.

This is the secret of the Demarche. When Amaymon fled the Mountains of the Moon and fled to Makedonía, the Hunters tracked him and gathered their greatest: Rhydderch, Lucretius, Iltiŕbaś, Thrax, Tarquin, Ishpaki, Sembecconi, Thielvar, Skomantas, Palakus, Shenouda, Oeagrus, and Aristotélēs. These Thirteen discovered his hiding place and entered his bedchamber one evening, intending to finish their mission, their purpose. They also discovered that he’d taken mortal form. This, in and of itself, was no problem since killing him as a mortal would be easier than killing him as the Son of Dawn.

But in assuming mortality, he was only preparing for an act much more heinous. When the Thirteen confronted him, they learned that he’d also undergone the Shedding! The Son of Dawn had anticipated their arrival and lay in wait for them. Since two of the Converted had never before done battle together, they were woefully unprepared.

Amaymon slew three and captured several others; the rest fled. Those who were captured, he converted to his Philosophy. With their help, he began his conquest of Makedonía. Soon thereafter the world would come to fear him as Mégas Aléxandros. Amaymon and his newly-captured Hunters assisted his lover, Hephaestion, and his horse, Bukephalus (an act which has never since been accomplished), in the Shedding and Conversion. Armed with immortality, Amaymon began conquering the world.

Aristotélēs worked with the remaining Hunters (those still loyal to Eternity) to oppose Amaymon, seeking some way to stop his advance across Persia. As each new city fell before the onslaught of Amaymon and his armies, the anxiety of the Hunters increased. How could they slay an immortal who was already dead? Twice their plotting was discovered and they were forced to vanish.

Finally, they devised a blood-borne illness and infected Ishpaki with it. He journeyed to Haŋgmatana and entered the tent of Amaymon, intending to feed on him and transmit the contagion. He found Amaymon and Hephaestion in each other’s arms and mistakenly infected Hephaestion, instead. Ishpaki never recovered and Hephaestion died soon thereafter. Their next attempt coincided with the Battle of the Vitastā River and cost both Palakus and Bukephalus their lives.

Seeing the high mortality rate of their endeavors, the remainder of the Thirteen Hunters abandoned their intentions to terminate the traitors who’d joined with Amaymon and concentrated their efforts on killing Amaymon himself. Every one of them, except Aristotélēs, traveled to Āryāvarta. There they enlisted the help of the wise men of Dhana, ruler of the Nanda Empire in India, to quell the spirits of Amaymon’s army. Eventually they rebelled against him in on the banks of the Vipasa River and not even the Traitors could convince them to stay and fight.

So they began their return to Makedonía. Angry at his forces for their cowardice, Amaymon forced them to march across the Gedrosía Desert. This provided the Hunters with a great opportunity. They infiltrated the army in the desert and spread the seeds of death among them. Three-quarters of Amaymon’s army died—but so did the Hunters in their midst. In a final stroke, Amaymon himself was infected with the deadly pathogen. To accomplish this, Aristotélēs sent his unConverted nephew, Antipatros. Because he hadn’t undergone the Shedding, Amaymon didn’t suspect him and took him as a lover. Amaymon was strong and he resisted the infection long enough to escape the desert. But it slowly grew within him until he finally succumbed in the palace of Nabû-kudurri-uṣur II in Bāb-ilû.

Amaymon was dead, but it had come at a great cost: Aristotélēs was the only true Hunter left of the Thirteen. Though Amaymon had been destroyed, his traitorous Hunters survived. They attacked and murdered Aristotélēs, leaving the Hunters leaderless—a void which the Traitors were quick to fill. It did not take them long to purge their ranks of those still loyal to Eternity.

It seems your greatest fears have been confirmed. I can only assume that Amaymon refers to the Son of Dawn. And I needn’t tell you how disturbing it was to see the names of so many Council members on the list of the Thirteen—especially since all the others died opposing Mégas Aléxandros! We find ourselves swimming in deep water.

I suspect that it was Sembecconi, who is an Aquitanian by birth, who hid this passage here in Zaragoza. It makes me wonder, though, why someone in the highest circles would take the risk of creating this document…

But more important than that, the current resting place of the sarcophagus of Mégas Aléxandros is al-Iskandariyya! You could go investigate! Furthermore, many of the world’s greatest leaders have visited that sarcophagus, including…Caesar Augustus. Ponder on that.

Yours,

Porfirio

P. S. Please forgive the splatter; I spilled my sealing wax while trying to heat it up and I’ve run out of parchment so I had to use this one even though I’d just spoiled it.