***Blood Faith XVII***

To Pereles, Invested Justiciar of the Ward,

I must admit that I was astonished to hear from you. It was over a year before I learned of your demise and it has been several months since. I can only hope that you have not given up waiting to hear from me. Sibyl is no longer with me, but more on that later. Let me first recount the events that have transpired since I appealed your help.

We arrived in the *tʰōŋ hǎj hǐn* and searched there hoping to find the *sˁḥ* of Mégas Alexándros. When we weren’t scouring the plains we subsisted on trepangs and did a little exploring of the nearby abandoned *candi*. Ultimately our search was earnest but fruitless. However, I do not believe that I was in error in going there. One of the *heroons* we examined bore two evidences that it had once been the receptacle of Amaymon’s desiccated flesh. First, unlike any other pot it wore a European symbol, the *vesica piscis*. Second, it was freshly smashed open, suggesting a recent removal of its contents. Inside was a single tatter which, upon analysis, I believe will prove to be impregnated with the mummia of *Km.t*. Once we had determined this we dared await your arrival no longer (just as well we didn’t, since you never would’ve come!) and began retracing our steps to the West. At the time I believed the Reclamation would take place in a city of the *Rus’* called *Chornobyl’* (again, more on that later), so we turned inland.

In Cathay we hired a palanquin which, though less rigorous on our own overtired legs, proved to be quite slow-going. We soon grew weary of the pace and abandoned our palanquins at Lake Manasarovar and proceeded to traverse the land of the Hindoos afoot. We were not long in this country when we came upon a most peculiar community. There was a whole village of men and women shut off from the rest of the *Homo mortalis*. They often described themselves using such morbidly poetic phrases as “the Dead who never died but no longer live.” They claim that their flesh is diseased and falls from their bones, but I suspect that they have some infectious, but incomplete form of the Shedding. It is as though their progress to immortality has halted even one step earlier than what would be required to become a *malparido*. I wonder if these benighted people are the source of the legends that often reach our ears from these realms of terrible creatures called *akhkharu*, *edimmu*, and *preta*.

A few weeks later we reached Samarqand and there I discovered an ancient, hidden library. I was surprised to find it intact given the systematic destruction of ancient libraries at the behest of the Council. (So far I have obtained evidence of their involvement in the destructions of the School of Edessa, the *Bayt al-Hikma*, the five great Mahaviharas, the Library of Pergamum, Ēpáng Palace, the Imperial Library of Byzantión, the Library of Celsus, the Library of Ctesiphon, the Carthage Library, the Serapeum, and the druid college of Bibracte.) In this library I found a copy of the *Zīj*, just as you did (though at the time I didn’t know it). After slogging through reams of longueurs, I determined that I was deceived in my idea that the Council would soon be gathering to *Chornobyl’*. I had supposed that the many allusions I’d found to wormwood, *Wermut*, *ajenjo*, ἀψίνθιον, לַעֲנָה, etc., referred to that city, whose name means as much. But the *Zīj* gave me to understand that Wormwood was a title for Amaymon himself. So I immediately made plans to proceed to *Rōma* rather than *Chornobyl’*.

However, during this time of study in Samarqand Sibyl began to despair that we could successfully prevent the return of Mégas Alexándros *Gojastak*. She sought to legitimize our association through a marriage ceremony of the *Homo mortalis*. The best I could I could offer a *déclassée*, such as she, was a morganatic wedding. But she deemed this proposal unsatisfactory. All together this produced in her a vulnerability that eventually drove her to seek solace in Nestorian Christianity. In fact, she was so persuaded by it that she became a proselyte. And then something unexpected occurred—she lost her immortality! I examined her and saw no evidence that she was once of the Blood. It was as though she’d never Shed! She had returned to her previous condition as a *Homo mortalis*.

I hesitantly propose that when we undergo the Shedding we sever the Maternal Line, thus obliterating our connection to the Original Sin, which was committed by a woman—Ḥavvah. When Sibyl submitted to Christian baptism, she restored that ancient link to Ḥavvah and thus lost all indicators (and benefits) of the Shedding. In any case this decision compelled her to stay in Samarqand, so I summarily abandoned her there—for good, this time—and left her to be a hierodule to her faith.

I received your letter in the land of the Saracens, while crossing the Bosporus, and so made a stop in *Sozópolis*. While there I had the misfortune to encounter two of the Council, Lucretius and Shenouda, who I presume were on their way to *Rōma* via *Byzántion*. Since learning of your death at the hand of Gaius Messōrius Vēnātor (who has since himself been eliminated), I have taken to carrying two iron stakes which I stole from an *yshtës*. Lucretius and Shenouda were not expecting me and were unarmed, but they had the advantage of descrying me first. They ambushed me and pressed their attack with such ferocity that I was driven into a nearby Orthodox cathedral. I had hoped the sanctity of the place would deter them from following me in, but, alas, it did not. We did battle under the heavy stares of an iconostasis of the Jesse Tree and Lucretius and Shenouda weakened more quickly than I did. I eventually prevailed and drove my iron bars through their hearts. I buried the two shroud-eaters behind the altar so they might never be discovered. I left the stakes embedded in their breasts so that each may pay an *óbolós* to Charon.

Well, though there is much more I would tell you (such as the references to something called the *Cintāmaṇi* that I found at the *Nemrut Dağı*), I will conclude so as not to overburden the courier—a delightful young Hébertist upon whom I may someday have to dine since I have yet to sample the flavor of fanaticism. Despite my loss of faith in our order, I find I cannot separate myself from the fruits of the Shedding. Though my unregeneracy condemn me to the darkest pit, I must feed!

Per your indication, I now await you in a rundling on the *Chersónēsos tou Haímou*.

*S-ciào vostro*,

Porfirio, Devoted Servant of Truth

For future revisions: [*yartsa gunbu*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yartsa_Gunbu) (reference the retconned *Allium* passage).