

Theory of the crows

Annike maintained a polite half-smile while la Ambasciatrice spoke. Inside she was seething at the woman's tone, and hid her growing impatience by sipping a little bitter dark tea from her porcelain cup. The Asavean had not touched her own beverage and Annike was idly wondering if it was some sort of power play or if she had simply forgotten it was there.

"... and that, mio caro corvo, is why the Plenum respectfully declines. You must understand that anyone choosing to sell their good to the Imperial bandits, to the assassins of Catazar, must accept that they do so in the face of the wrath of the oldest and most powerful nation of the Known World."

The tanned woman on the other side of the desk had finished, an entirely unmerited glint of triumph in her eye.

"Signora Ambasciatrice," Annike said carefully. "I hear what you are saying, but I am afraid it is you who does not understand."

The Bedelaar Huisbaas put her cup down gently, her amiable mask firmly back in place. She took a little spoon of fine spice from the ramekin on the tray and stirred it into her tea, clinking rhythmically. She did not take her eyes off the Asavean diplomat.

"Whether your nation is old and powerful, and whether the Plenum is furious at the Empire, is not in question." Her voice hardened to steel, the smile slipped from her face with such speed it was easy to imagine it had never really been there at all. "What is in question is who your Plenum think they are, to try and put reins on the river of trade that flows between nations. To try and grasp with their wine-stained fingers the throat of the Bedelaar Huisbaas. The temerity of trying to tell

us who we are, and are not, allowed to deal with."

La Amasciatrice's cheeks coloured, her lips pressed so tightly as to have become almost invisible. She opened her mouth to speak but Bedelaar Huisbaas Annike, secure in the heart of her power, raised a hand abruptly, allowing her no opportunity to interrupt.

"Please, signora. You have had plenty of time to have your say and now it is for me - for the Delves - to speak. The Bedelaar Huisbaas are in agreement. Your wars do not interest us, your fury does not touch us, and we will not tolerate further interference with our ships. We may be a nation of mud shovelers and coin counters -"

The Asavean ambassador winced, hearing her own private words thrown back at her.

"But we know that there is more power in coins and mud than there is in the whole of Asavea. Your nation is old, and bitter, and if I may speak frankly, your leaders are acting like angry children. I haven't asked you to meet with me because I wanted to hear more weasel words about bounties; that ship has sailed. You are here so I can formally inform the Asavean Republic of our intention to do whatever it takes to secure the sanctity of the trade routes on which all great nations rely. Whatever. It. Takes."

The woman across the table stood up suddenly.

"I will not stay here and be insulted," she said, her own voice cold enough to freeze the Umshalla river. "I will pass your words to the Plenum, and we will see what such rudeness merits!"

Annikie nodded, her pleasant smile back in place, as if they were discussing a garden party or the price of oranges.

"Oh, signora Aurora, before you go?"

The ambassador paused halfway to the door, looked back, storm raging on her face.

"Next time you are speaking to your patriarch, ask him how he thinks those delicate little candied flowers he enjoys so much get into the bowl on his bedside table. And what he thinks will happen to his supply if the Plenum continue to be obstinate in this matter."

The door slammed. Annike's chilly little smile spread across her face as she leant back and sipped her tea. Her heart was pounding.

"Well then," she said out loud to the empty room. "Now all we have to do is follow through on the threats and silence help us if we can't."

Overview

Each season the Civil Service prepares a summary of the Empire's relationship with the foreign nations, based on communications received from their ambassador, along with any useful intelligence gathered from other sources. While the Senate and the other houses of Imperial power may respond to these offers, it is important to note that it is the appropriate [ambassador](#) that the foreign power will expect to hear from. Their communication with the foreign power is the primary element that will determine the tenor of any response.

The merchant-princes of the [Sarcophan Delves](#) - the *bedelaar huisbaas* - strive for neutrality. They are enthusiastic about trade with the Empire, but their neutrality is precious to them. They hold it a mark of pride that they will deal with anyone who has goods, services, or money. While they have given up the practice of slavery without regret, they refuse to pick a side between the [Liberty Pact](#) and the Freedom Accord. Their primary goal is to ensure the ports of the world remain open to their ships, ideally with [free trade](#) agreements that allow their

merchants to operate without onerous [tariffs](#).

The Sarcophan ambassador to the Empire is *Bedelaar Huisbaas Annike*, of the Tower of Crows. She reports to the beggar-landlords of Sarcophan, and is known to be a wily and subtle diplomat. No stranger to the murkier waters of espionage and intelligence-gathering, she constantly seeks opportunities to expand the influence of the Sarcophan mercantile Empire across the Known World. She has no particular loyalty to any one faction; her main concern appears to be the prosperity of the nation as a whole.

The new Ambassador to the Sarcophan Delves is **Dino i Riqueza** of [the Brass Coast](#), a former [Kruidenkenner Trademaster](#) whose name is known to Bedelaar Huisbaas Annike. She tenders her congratulations to Ambassador Dino on their appointment.

[Sarcophan Delves](#)

- **Status:** Foreigner
- **Ports:** [Sarcophan](#) and [Betovering](#)
- **Ambassador:** Dino i Riqueza of [the Brass Coast](#)

International Tensions

- Fewer Sarcophan vessels are trading with Imperial ports

due to the bounty placed on trade with the Empire by the Asavean plenum

- **The bedelaar huisbaas are furious that their profits are being damaged by Asavean corsairs**
- **The Delves have a plan to address the situation**

The Sarcophan Delves are a nation of merchants. They are keen to keep their trade routes open and prosperous.

The **bounty** placed on all ships trading with the Empire by the **Asavean** Plenum interferes with their ambition to somehow have all the money in the Known World pass through the hands of Sarcophan merchants. The Delves' ship captains can handle themselves in a fight, regularly having to deal with ambitious pirates, but the new bounty has begun to take a toll on even these enthusiastic merchants.

The *bedelaar huisbaas* are quietly seething about this situation. They have made their unhappiness plain to the Asavean diplomats, but their attempts to get the situation resolved have been firmly rebuffed. The Delves are playing with a weak hand; they don't have the capacity to threaten the Sarcophan ships, and the Asaveans know it. The Sarcophan have spent decades building a reputation for neutrality, to ensure their vessels are welcome in every port - they may protest and threaten the Asaveans but the Plenum is betting they won't actually do anything about it.

As it turns out, they would be unwise to take that bet. The Delves are not prepared to take this affront lying down, and

when it becomes clear that the Asaveans can't be pressured into calling off their privateers, they refuse to simply leave the matter at that. Trade between nations is simply too precious to fall prey to the ham-fisted attempts of Asavea to control the seas. They quickly put a plan together, a proposal for a new pact.

A New Pact

- **The Sarcophan want to create a new international pact to deal with piracy the way the Liberty Pact has dealt with slavery**
- **They propose that signatories agree not to attack or encourage attacks on ships of any nation they are not at war with**
- **Their goal is for everyone to become a signatory to the Pact; they are asking the Empire to sign the Pact with them first**

The Sarcophan proposal is deceptively simple - they want to outlaw piracy on the High Seas, the same way the Liberty Pact has outlawed slavery. They argue that piracy is a scourge every bit as terrible as slavery - and they're clever enough to point the parts of the Way that agree with their argument - citing the tenets of Prosperity that urge the Virtuous to despise the thieving bandit. Their plan is for a Pact that all nations would sign that forbids piracy - they're calling it the Free Seas Pact.

To the Bedelaar Huisbaas, piracy is at least as great an ill for

the world as slavery, and the Asavean bounty is ultimately threatening every sea lane. Not only does this damage the Prosperity of those involved, it slows the spread of ideas and the ability for nations to find common ground. Something must be done. Imagine if the Principalities of Jarm decided that anyone trading with the Commonwealth should have their ships sunk? Or if the Commonwealth decreed that only vessels dedicated to their philosophy of the Common Good could ply the Sea of Steel?

Unlike the Liberty Pact, they've no interest in some grand meeting of nations to argue over terms for months on end. That, they say, is not the most efficient way to sail this vessel to safe waters. Instead, they propose to agree terms with the Empire - and then the two nations can sign the treaty together. Then the pact could be taken to other nations, first the Sumaah, then the Commonwealth, then the Jarmish... and finally the Asaveans. Their claim is that as each nation signs the treaty, so the leverage on the others will increase.

They've called their treaty the Free Seas Pact and proposed the following terms for discussion.

The signatories of the Free Seas Pact agree to outlaw the despicable practice of piracy. We swear to allow no pirates to dock in our ports, nor permit them to operate in our waters. We will place no bounties on any vessel that flies the flag of a nation that is a signatory of the pact, unless

we have issued that nation with a declaration of war.

To ensure this pact is enforced, we swear to prohibit all trade with any nation that refuses to sign this pact when approached or who signs the pact and then breaks the terms. We will not permit their ships to dock in our ports, either to trade or take on supplies. Nor will we permit our own vessels to sail to their ports. We renounce those who will not renounce piracy, that together we might finally free the seas of this scourge.

Proposed terms of the Free Seas Pact

The way this would work is simple according to Bedelaar Annike. The Asaveans and the Empire are free to attack each other's ships - because they are at war with each other. Nobody is suggesting that nations cannot be at war with each other, that would make no sense. This would not prevent nations being at war, or pursuing their own disputes. Closing their ports to enemy nations, sinking their ships if they strayed into national waters, all that would be entirely reasonable.

But, sending ships out into the waters between nations to attack neutral ships simply because they were trading with your enemy would no longer be acceptable. The terms of the pact would prohibit Asavea from attacking Sarcophan ships that were sailing to Imperial ports - and the Empire would agree not to put bounties on vessels from the Delves that were sailing for Asavean ports.

The key element of the pact is the enforcement conditions, which are imposed on any nation that refuses to sign the pact when approached. That term is essential, say the Sarcophan, to create the leverage needed to get the great powers to agree to sign. Without that term, Asavea can just ignore the Free Seas Pact and carry on with their piracy, doing everything they can to damage trade with the Empire.

The Sarcophan understand that the Empire likes to expend time documenting the small print of these pacts, and they are happy for that to happen. They're bringing this to the Empire because the Empire laid the way with the Liberty Pact. They can't make the Free Seas Pact happen without the Empire - but if they can get the Empire onboard, they think that working together, they have a chance to make this stick. So they're happy to amend this as needed, provided that the final terms remain strong enough to achieve what the Delves need.

The ultimate goal of the Delves is for all the great powers of the world to sign their Free Seas Pact. They believe the terms of the Pact are compatible with those of the Liberty Pact - they appreciate they need to make sure there is no conflict between the two treaties.

A Free Meeting

- **Johann Van Basten is coming to the Hub at Anvil at 21:15 on Friday to negotiate terms with the Ambassador to the Delves and their staff**

The Delves understand that creating this Pact and getting other nations to sign it will not be easy - they are frank that they can't do this without the Empire's help. That's why they are coming to the Empire *first*. Eska Crowspeaker and Ianthe, of the Suns of Couros, achieved something extraordinary when they created the Liberty Pact. Their agreement laid the groundwork for shattering the slave trade. Has the Empire tired of Virtue, or will it rise to this new challenge?

Bedelaar Huisbaas Annike is sending one of her best negotiators, *Johann Van Basten*, to Anvil to raise this matter with Dino i Riqueza. Johann Van Basten has [been to the Empire before](#) and was present when the Liberty Pact was negotiated. He is intimately familiar with Imperial diplomacy and has been given authority by Annike to negotiate and agree on terms with her counterpart. He is hoping to arrive in Anvil shortly after nine in the evening on Friday and will head to the Hub to try to find the Imperial ambassador to the Delves or their representative.

The hope of the Delves is that the Empire will be able to quickly agree terms for this new Pact with them and then have their Senate sign the treaty. The Delves will do likewise, and then the two nations can discuss who to approach next and how to persuade them to join the new Pact.

Hold the Line

- At present the Sarcophan are protect their shipping preventing harm to Imperial trade ministries but they warn they cannot do this forever
- The temporary boost to fleets trading with the Sarcophan Delves has faded due to their defence of their ships

At the moment, the major routes to the empire - those maintained by the *Kruidenkenner* or the *Vandersaar* for example - are holding but only due to a concerted effort by the Sarcophan to try and protect their ships from Asavean pirates. They warn that they cannot afford these additional costs forever and would eventually be forced to scale back their operations if they're not able to find another solution.

While trade holds, the amount of [white granite](#) delivered to the [Concordium Docks](#) remains higher. The offer of the *Debruin* family to support the [support the Pallas Docks](#) in [Cargo](#) is still open. The [House of the Hyena](#) remain [interested in opportunities](#) on the [Brass Coast](#), provided the Empire can show some progress in dealing with the [Children of Wrecks](#).

The temporary boost to Imperial ships that were [sailing to ports in the Delves](#) has faded for the time being.

The Kruidenkenner

Kruidenkenner Purchase	
7 Crowns	10 imperial roseweald, 6 cerulean mazzarine
17 Crowns	22 imperial roseweald, 11 cerulean mazzarine
35 Crowns	32 imperial roseweald, 18 cerulean mazzarine

- **The Kruidenkenner have made new arrangements for a more predictable supply of herbs to the High Herbalist of Sybella**
- **The opportunity to expanding the Kruidenkenner magazijn in Meade will end after this summit**

Following the communique from the Imperial Ambassador, the The Kruidenkenner guilds have assessed their trade with Imperial herbalists and adjusted the herbs offered to the [High Herbalist of Sybella](#). The High Herbalist, Asher of Cantiarch's Hold, can now be confident of exactly what herbs will be delivered when they place orders with the Kruidenkenner.

The Kruidenkenner do express surprise that the hospitals the Asher deals with prefer [Imperial roseweald](#) and [cerulean mazzarine](#) to [true vervain](#) and [marrowort](#), but they are nothing if not adaptable. At the end of the day, the customer is always right!

The opportunity to [expanding the Kruidenkenner magazijn](#), and similar offers are still available, but not for much longer. By the start of the Spring Equinox, the opportunity to discuss the Kruidenkenner interest in the Empire will have faded as the guilds focus their interests elsewhere.

Alvietti Estates

- **The ambassador politely declines to suggest the Alivetti Estates modify their trading practices**

By all accounts the Sarcophan freehold at what were previously [the Alivetti Estates](#) continues to prosper, which has led to a number of [violations of Imperial law](#). Ambassador Dino i Riqueza has raised the matter of concerns about the sale of substances within the estates which are currently illegal in the Empire. Bedelaar Annike's staff pass on polite thanks for the confirmation that the Empire will continue to respect the legal independence of the enclave which they regard as subject only to Sarcophan law.

The ambassador assures the Empire that their merchants on the Estates understand that once their customers pass back onto Imperial soil, their condition is a matter for Imperial magistrates. Nobody wants their customers getting arrested, but it is their own lookout if they choose to break Imperial law. While the Sarcophan would much rather the Empire adopt a more enlightened approach to free trade, they also respect the right of the Empire to set their own laws.

If the intention was to politely suggest that the ambassador should discourage some of the rampant criminality that is happening on the estates, it would appear that the ambassador is politely declining to do so.

Everything Must Go

- **Aaven Beekhof are interested in hearing from anyone who might wish to purchase the legal drugs they sell**
- **Missives pertinent to the business of the Gold Leaf Gardeners in the Empire can be sent to *Aaven Beekhof, The Bladgoud Tuiniers Handelsschool, Sarvos* during the Winter Solstice. After that, the address will be defunct..**

During the Autumn Equinox, the Sarvosan Chamber of Commerce discussed and [an offer](#) made by the *Bladgoud Tuiniers*. Ultimately, the Chamber chose not to take their offer, and so their *handelsschool* is failing to attract Imperial students. Keen to salvage something from their investment, *Aaven Beekhof*, a major stakeholder in the Bladgoud Tuiniers, has extended their visit to Sarvos until the new year. They have let it be known that the Gold Lead Gardeners are keen to hear from anyone who might have a genuine interest in acquiring a steady supply of the [drugs they have to offer](#) - none of which are illegal in the Empire as Beekhof is quick to point out.

Anyone who is interested can send a [Winged Messenger](#) to Aaven during the Winter Solstice with any offers or proposals.

After that, they will be on the move again, and the address will no longer be usable. It's likely that if no convincing offer is on the table by the start of the Spring Equinox, the Gold Leaf Gardeners will cut their losses in Sarvos.

The Bladgoud Tuiniers have invested a considerable amount in the Alivetti Estates which would cause considerable losses if they were forced to move, but there is a reasonable Sarcophan presence at [Ivarsgard](#) in [Karsk](#), and at [Crown's Quay](#) in [Necropolis](#), which reduce costs to set up shop there if that served the local market better.

House of Silence

- **The House of Silence have increased their offer to buy Imperial white granite to 4 thrones 1 crown**
- **They intend to employ a renowned Imperial artist to decorate the structure**
- **Missives pertinent to the building of the Silent Manse on the Alivetti Estates can be directed to Poortwachter Farber, The Jolly Buidelrat Inn, Sarvos.**

Poortwachter Farber , and the *Community of Silence* remain committed to their plan to [establish a Sarcophan temple](#) in the Alvetti estates, but the sect is struggling to source the [white granite](#) they need. The offer to purchase up to 40 wains to build their temple is still open for one more season, but they have increased their offer to 4 thrones and 1 crown a wain. The *Community* are keen to receive [Winged Messengers](#) from

anyone prepared to make an offer to provide them some or all of the white granite they need.

If there are no such offers made during the Winter Solstice, they will have to accept that there is no appetite for supplying them and source the materials elsewhere. There's no doubt they will be successful, but this will delay the completion of their temple until shortly before the Autumn Equinox 386YE.

(OOC Note: Anyone sending a Winged Messenger stating how many wains they are prepared to provide could expedite the trade by ensuring they have the white granite in their inventory and emailing plot@profounddecisions.co.uk).

On one matter, however, the Poortwatchter is pleased to have made progress. They have apparently been offered the services of a renowned Dawnish artist from Astolat, whose services they intend to retain until the construction is complete. By all accounts, the *Community of Silence* is enthusiastic about some of the samples of their work they have seen and looking forward to getting started on the decoration of the new structure once it is complete.

Frost Flowers

- The farmers of Wintermark are growing vlinderbloem for the Sarcophan in exchange for viezesmaak

- **The brothers have asked the Ambassador to speak to the farmers and business people of Wintermark to find out if there is an appetite for more trade of this kind**
- **They invite Wintermark merchants to contact them directly via winged messenger to the office of the Sarcophan Ambassador to the Empire**

The entrepreneurial brothers *Florian* and *Gelder Kraft*- brewers of substances designed with recreation rather than practicality in mind – are pleased that the farmers of Wintermark have [accepted their proposal](#) to cultivate *vlinderbloem*. The delicate plant with its sublime dual-petaled pink flower only blooms in alpine climes, but the first crop is now ready to harvest. The first Imperially produced viezesmaak is shared with the farmers of Hahnmark, with the bulk being exported for sale in Faraden and markets further afield.

With the trade established, the brothers Kraft are keen to see if there are other investment opportunities in Wintermark. As such, Florian has asked if the Ambassador would help them out by speaking to the people of Wintermark – the farmers and business folk rather than senators and generals – to find out if there is any appetite for more such deals of this kind. The brothers claim to have contacts all over Sarcophan, so they suggest that anything is possible if the price is right. If there are Sarcophan goods Wintermark merchants are interested in buying, or unusual goods they are interested in selling, the brothers want to know. They claim they can turn their hand to anything; what they need to know is what kinds of

opportunities for wealth and mutual prosperity the Mark might find appealing.

It's more than a little much to be asking Dino to devote their precious time to dealing with Wintermark merchants about this, especially as there is an unspoken expectation that the ambassador might help facilitate the trade. There is a suggestion that if the ambassador is able to help them out, there might be a little recompense for their troubles. The more help the ambassador can be, the bigger their cut. The brothers are clearly a right pair of chancers, but they have at least been as good as their word, thus far at least.

If that's too much to ask of the Ambassador, then they're happy to receive winged messages from anyone in Wintermark. However, given the brothers are usually on the move, it'll be tricky to contact them directly but anything included in the Ambassador's missive to Bedelaar Huisbaas Annike at the Tower of the Raven should get to them eventually.

The civil service is uncertain at the Kraft brothers' bold assertion that the Bedelaar Huisbaas Annike of the [Crow](#) will be enthusiastic about serving as the secretary for these two rogues but admit that the internal politics of Sarcophan are opaque at best.

Prosperity & Portraits

- A beloved Sarcophan thespian has asked to meet with Darian Numbers, Cardinal of Prosperity, Dino i Riqueza, Ambassador to the Sarcophan Delves and Konstantin Rabovich Bolotnikov, Mistress of Monuments
- Elian Vlas and his personal priest have requested their presence at Wise Guise in Dawn at 19:00 on the Friday evening of the Winter Solstice
- He has asked the Cardinal to find an artist to render this historic meeting and offers 16 crowns for their service

The Civil Service have received correspondence from the Sarcophan Delves that "national treasure" *Elian Vlas* is en route to the Empire and planning to attend the summit at Anvil. Elian is a much-beloved actor, critic, wit, and patron of the arts. While not one of the *Bedelaar Huisbaas* themselves, he is a regular guest at the Beggar's Banquet, purchasing the *Seat of the Bloedzuiger* when the mood takes him. He is a wealthy individual with fingers in any number of pies in the city itself.

Elian Vlas wishes to meet with the [Cardinal of Prosperity](#), the [Ambassador to the Sarcophan Delves](#) and the [Mistress of Monuments](#) - but stresses that although he wishes to discuss business, there is no reason for the meeting to be without opportunity to sample the finer pleasure the Empire has to offer. As such, he has suggested gathering at **Wise Guise** in [Dawn](#) - an establishment of enough renown that he is familiar with its name, even from such great distance. He is,

however, open to moving elsewhere at the other attendees' discretion. He only requests that the meeting take place in a bar, coffee house, café, or similar. He has no interest in conducting his business in dull private rooms and wishes to take advantage of Anvil's famous hospitality during his visit. He'd be especially interested to visit any theatres in the League, especially if there is the opportunity to take in a performance.

In addition, Elian Vlas has requested that the Cardinal of Prosperity select an artist to commemorate the meeting in order to document the historic moment as it unfolds, ideally in the form of a painting. He expects the Cardinal to know far more about Imperial artists than he does and offers a commission fee of 16 crowns to the selected individual for a completed work.

Despite these detailed plans, there is little information on what the wealthy Elian Vlas actually wishes to discuss, not why his personal priest will be in attendance. He has mentioned in brief an 'exciting opportunity for those who understand the power of Prosperity, and their congregations' but no further details have yet been revealed.

Kleistgast

- **Bedelaar Huisbaas Annike declines an invitation to visit the League**

- **A representative of the Lijkkever families plans to attend Anvil at 21:00 Friday to speak to the Holberg Chamber of Commerce and possibly the Ambassador.**

Both Ambassador and Bernhard Kleist von Ennerlund extended an invitation to Bedelaar Huisbaas Annike to attend a celebration at [Anvil](#) marking the 250th anniversary of the [Greatest City in the Empire](#) joining [the League](#). While the Sarcophan are largely disinterested in matters of history, they are not blind to the benefits of mingling with representatives of an influential chamber of commerce are clear. Thus far, the Delves have minimal direct contact with Holberg – the city can be challenging to reach – but with the [Druj](#) in retreat and [the Barrens](#) no longer hostile territory, there is some interest in exploring potential trade partnerships.

One guest at least has expressed an interest in attending; a representative of the [Lijkkever](#), Schuyler Koopman, has accepted the invitation on behalf of their family and their house and plans to come to Anvil. In the absence of a specific time for the celebrations, they plan to arrive at around nine in the evening on the Friday of the Solstice. They are keen to meet citizens of the Greatest City in the Empire and to see what proposals for shared prosperity they might have. The Lijkkever are not the wealthiest house of the Delves, but they have unmeasured levels of influence over stevedores and dockworkers wherever Sarcophan ships unload.

Mx Koopman is also interested in chatting with the Ambassador, should **Dino i Riqueza** be available, on matters of "quayside diplomacy" that will likely prove quite tedious and technical and so perhaps would be best addressed after the meeting with the Holbergers in a more private environment.

Regarding the Barrens

- **The Ambassador has reassured the Sarcophan Delves that recent events in the Barrens will not affect their nearby holdings**
- **Bedelaar Huisbaas Annike seems nonplussed as to why the Ambassador might think they would**

Ambassador Dino's letter included a condemnation of the [actions of General Archavion](#) in [the Barrens](#) and reassurance that the Sarcophan holdings would not be affected.

The letter caused some alarm for the Sarcophan, as they had no idea what the Ambassador was talking about. They have no idea what General Archavion's orders were or why that would affect them in any way. Nobody was certain where the Barrens was, so they had to get a map of the Empire out to find it, but when they did that, they were a bit bemused to think how anything in this far flung part of the Empire could possibly affect them?

Unless there is something happening in this part of the Empire that the ambassador is unaware of, which seems a stretch, there are currently no Sarcophan interests in the Barrens. The closest hub of trade with the Empire is at [Ivarsgard](#) – and trade with the [Ivarsgard Docks](#) does not stop at any Barrens ports because there don't appear to be any marked on the map she has? Obviously that's not to say that there couldn't *be* some trade with the Barrens – a port established on the Barren Sea for example would most definitely be of interest to Sarcophan if the Barrens was rich in resources... but until that happens they can't understand how this is any of their concern.

Annikе thanks the Ambassador for keeping her apprised – anything that might impact trade with the Empire is of interest to the Bedelaar Huisbaas after all - but this does not appear to be any of their business.

And Finally...

- **Bedelaar Huisbaas Annike has made enquiries with the Elakar**
- **She urges Ambassador Dino, and former Ambassador Thanmir, to be cautious**

Bedelaar Huisbaas Annike is a little nonplussed on one other matter, that of the Elakar. Last season she [passed on an offer](#) from the Jasmijn Dijkgraaf, a small family allied with the House of the Vulture offering to convey a letter of introduction to the Elakar Tetrarchs. The Ambassador declined. This is not

what concerns Annike (she mentions that she felt the Jasmijn Dijkgraaf were clearly overplaying their hand). What interests her is the response to a carefully worded approach from her office to the Elakar Tetrarchs.

She enquired how they found dealing with the Empire and whether they would like to discuss potential approaches, and they denied all knowledge of the matter. Bedelaar Huisbaas Annike is at a loss on how to proceed. The Elakar are not given to deception; the Sarcophan maintain excellent relations with them. For the representative of the Tetrarchs to flat-out lie to Annike is unprecedented, and frankly, the Sarcophan diplomat just finds it unlikely they would do so. As such, she again advises caution on the matter. Either they are dealing with a faction of the Elakar that does *not* have the backing of the Tetrarchs, or someone is lying.

She wishes the new ambassador good fortune in getting to the bottom of this matter. She also thanks them for their disclosure, but the Sarcophan are content that appear to be no implications for their trade monopolies with the Elakar.