

## COMMON ENEMY

### by Laura Walsh

An excerpt from the fictional "History of the Seleucarian Empire, Part III" from the fantasy MUD/MMO Achaea: Dreams of Divine Lands. I wrote approximately half the material (including this piece) and edited the full document prior to release. The history can be found in full here: <https://www.achaea.com/history/fall-of-seleucar/>

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*[Editor's note: the selected letters comprise communications between Sir Mordon Derry, Knight-Captain of the Shallamese Guard, and Artinos Ravenmoor, Ambassador of Ashtan. The letters in Part I were written prior to the ten-day siege of Seleucar; Part II takes place after the fall of the Empire and the devastating earthquake that divided the continents.]*

### PART I

Derry,

What's happening down there? Our spies are worse than useless. All I know is half our army is gone, run away to follow Kephry in some madcap doomed scheme. I've tried sending our serpentlords to sneak in, but they couldn't get near him. This could ruin all of our plans.

R.

Artinos,

We have had a little more success, despite having lost many of our own men to desertion as well. You were right: Kephry's planning revolution. What's worse, he's got your mad dwarf and our Tsol captain. This might sound crazy, but... they might have a chance.

Sir Mordon Derry

Derry,

Damn that Kephry, and damn Cairo, too. I tried to tell him before he left that plans were afoot! Normal plans! Plans that didn't rely on foolish hopes and dreams! We're going to have to move, and move quickly. I've ordered Admiral Conlan to take the bulk of the fleet south to blockade the mouth of the Mnemosyne, and Pallan's already ridden south with our entire cavalry. I couldn't stop him. He's always hated acknowledging that anyone had authority over him.

R.

Artinos,

Your letter arrived on the heels of the Ashtani cavalry. King Pallan marched right past me and into the palace to meet with the Sultan. When they emerged, both of them had terrifying smiles

on their faces. I'm staying here, but I'm nearly the only one; Shallam's barracks are emptying. We planned for this, but I don't really think we're ready.

Sir Mordon Derry

Derry,

No, we're not ready. If I had my way we'd wait a few more years, allow the Empire to crumble even further under the weight of its own bloated incompetence, but Kephry and his blasted League forced our hand. Anyway, it's time our cities stood up for our rights, just like Kephry's standing up for his. Seleucar deserves to be taught a lesson, and we're going to do what we can to help that madman deliver it.

R.

## PART 2

Artinos,

May the Gods have mercy. The Vashnars are completely gone, cut off as though with a knife within a few hours' march south of Mount Nicator. Nothing on the horizon now at all.

Shala-Khulia and New Hope are intact, but we can't get out any further. The turbulence just swallows our ships. Land patrols are surveying the new coastline and we've started constructing a lighthouse of highest priority. Please send us what help you can.

Sir Mordon Derry

Derry,

Are you mad!? I haven't got any "help" to send! I haven't received anything from Admiral Conlan and his fleet, and worse, I lost contact with the King and his battlemages when the earthquakes struck. The city's in chaos; the peasants are revolting and the nobles are angling for position since Pallan doesn't have an heir. Have you tried pressing some of those merfolk for assistance in the search? Surely your priests managed to convert some of them by now. Please advise as to your findings.

R.

P.S. Fine. I'll send a construction crew. It should arrive by Lupar.

Artinos,

Clearly you've never tried to deal directly with merfolk. They have no interest in our "landwalker" problems, even if we'd seen any of them for days. They lack the ability to view things in the long run, if you ask me. Which you probably won't. In any case, you know that most of our resources were pulled away to follow the march south, including all of our priests. The Church should have a new mission up and running in a few years, but there's really nobody left who knows how to contact them right now.

Sir Mordon Derry

Derry,

If we can't recover the fleet our navies will be crippled for years! Don't you have any more ships left in your docks? What about Jaru?

R.

P.S. Don't know how much longer I'll be around. We've had three different nobles seize the palace in the past few days. Dangerous men.

Artinos,

I am well aware of the stakes. Now that the lighthouse is functional, we do have coast runners along the south, but they can't sail far into the chops from shore. If you recall, you insisted that every available deep-hulled ship join the combined fleet. Which is now missing. And doves won't fly over the water - they turn around after half a day, so don't bother suggesting that. Actually, do me a favour and stop "helping" with ideas. You should probably consider the likelihood that the entire southern half of the continent has simply sunk, taking our ships, our men, and your damn fool king with it.

Sir Mordon Derry

To the attention of Knight-Captain Derry of the Shallamese Guard:

With the removal of Seleucar from the political climate and the ascension of his grace King Beldan to the throne, Ashtan has declared herself a sovereign nation and will be attending to her own interests from this time forward. The Bastion's resources under your command have been recalled; we expect their departure to be swift and orderly. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Artinos Ravenmoor

Ambassador of Ashtan