

**[Letter written in the Cornario family cipher]**

The Thirteenth Day of April,  
In the Year of Our Lord 1530  
The Isle of Crete

To Antonio Cornario  
City of Venice

My dear father –

I trust this missive finds you and mother well. I have arrived safely upon Crete and have delivered the items entrusted to me to their intended recipient. At the request of the recipient and per your instructions, I examined them for special properties. Only one of the items was of the unusual nature we discussed and I pointed that one out to their new owner.

I expect I will be staying in Crete for some time; ships to and from the Hapsburg controlled towns on the island arrive intermittently at best and those that are willing to carry passengers are even fewer.

In addition to the difficulties of leaving, I wish to make a closer exploration of the island; certain of my experiments in natural philosophy seem to work far better here than elsewhere, and I wish to determine why. I do regret to inform you that it seems unlikely that there will be much in the way of trading prospects with the island. Other than the Hapsburg troops occupying parts of it, it seems to be solely inhabited by Orcs, that subhuman race employed by the Turk as mercenaries and cannon-fodder in his armies.

Still, the presence of Orcs upon the island is not an unalloyed curse. The local Hapsburg garrison is paying 10 gp for each Orc head turned in. The local guard captain introduced Wulfgar and I to several men who are currently making a living by doing so. My new companions are Jean-Claude, a French Cavalier; Haldar, also a Frenchman I believe, though he has somewhat of a fey look about him; and

Demetrious, a Greek. Haldar, I should note, seems to be a priest of the pagan Greek god of the sun, Helios.

As of this missive, my companions and I have already made two forays in to the interior. The first was merely exploring a small section of the woods. Even there, we ran into a several groups of orcs. After slaying them and removing from them their ill-gotten loot and their no-longer needed heads, we returned to town. After a day or so of rest, Jean-Claude produced a map taken from some orcs that had the symbol of Helios marked upon it.

Both he and Haldar were eager to explore the area marked upon the map, and Wulfgar and I were amenable. We set out early in the morning and arrived at the spot marked by noon. The spot marked turned out to be a cave complex infested with Orcs. We cleaned out a third of the complex, killing over 2 score of the foul creatures, before decided to return to town and regroup.

We did acquire two dragon rifles from the Orcs we slew, further evidence of their provisioning by the Turk, as the crafting of such instruments is far beyond the capabilities of such an inferior race.

I have little more to say at this time. I will write again when time permits. I have entrusted this letter to a ship captain who will be eventually making a port of call in Italia, although it may not be for several months.

Please convey my regards to my mother and my siblings.

Your son,  
Magnus Cornario.