

Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook

ATHENÆUM ARCANÆ

LETTERS



BY CARLA HARKER

IN+R⊕DUCTION

The items contained in this PDF are letters from various periods in a generic fantasy setting and are intended to spice up treasure hordes, spur player characters toward their next quest, or simply provide a measure of verisimilitude to the GM's world. Each entry includes a physical description, the entire letter, and any relevant background information and notes. Use these letters as is, or let them goad your imagination to create new ones.

LAY⊕UT

Each of the twelve entries follows the same format: appearance, date, type, letter, background, and special notes. An explanation of each of these sections is explained below.

Appearance: This section contains a physical description of the letter, including anything noteworthy about the handwriting.

Date: This section contains a recommended time period in which the letter was written.

Current: The letter is less than six months old. The PCs might still be able to affect the events and actions of the people mentioned in the letter.

Outdated: The letter was written more than six months ago but is less than ten years old. Some letters in this category can begin quests, but any information might be of limited use to the PCs. The letter could also be nothing more than a curiosity.

Antiquated: The letter is between ten years and two hundred years old. The information may propel the PCs onto a

quest, or it may provide additional information for an existing quest. Historians may be willing to pay small sums of money for these documents.

Archaic: The letter is over two hundred years old. Many of these documents are quite valuable to historians and sages.

Type: This section suggests one or more ways in which the letter is intended to be used in a GM's campaign.

Curiosity: The letter does not contain anything of value for the PCs, in terms of information, quests, or money; it is intended only to add realism to the GM's world. A word of caution: for some players, every handout takes on an importance far out of proportion to its intent. GMs may find PCs are moving in unintended directions if they add letters that have no real significance to the campaign.

Historical: The document contains information of value, usually to historians and sages.

Quest: The letter is designed to send the PCs on a quest.

Treasure: The document has some monetary worth, usually for its historical value.

Background: This section gives any relevant background information on the people, places and events mentioned in the letter.

Special Notes: This section may list suggested quests, monetary values, skill checks needed to understand the information as it is presented, and anything else not found in previous sections.

A+HENAÆUM ARCANÆ: LE+TERS

C⊕NFESSI⊕N

Appearance

The handwriting on this parchment is shaky, and many words have been crossed out and changed by a different hand.

Date: Antiquated

Type: Curiosity

Letter

I write this today to release my conscience from the burden of my sins. I, Rolorn of Eldaeth, confess to the crime of ~~killin~~ murdering the Tander family and eating their flesh. I performed this heinous act because I am a depraved ~~person~~ monster, and no amount of ~~mercy~~ justice will be enough to make up for my crimes. I beg the friends and relatives of the Tander family to forgive me and rest assured that the day of my ~~death~~ execution will be my first day of an eternity of damnation.

Signed this day in the sight of justice,
Rolorn of Eldaeth

Background

Almost two hundred years ago, the small town of Eldaeth was shocked by the slaughter of the entire Tander family. The cannibalistic killer was never found, so the people of the town were surprised when the shy, quiet scribe, Rolorn, confessed to the crime.

Rolorn was innocent of the charges to which he confessed, but an evil magistrate by the name of Alstiir wanted to be re-elected. He knew the easiest way to do so was to catch the killer. He chose to frame the scribe, because the man once insulted him in public. He convinced Rolorn that grievous harm would come to his family if he did not confess to the crime. The magistrate received his re-election and Rolorn was executed by hanging.

Special Notes

None.

D E C R E E

Appearance

This letter is written on a sheet of thick parchment and bears a royal seal in gold on the back. The handwriting is very formal.

Date: Archaic

Type: Historical, Treasure

Letter

To His Grace, Lord Tyndalim, Duke of Keldeg,

As has been witnessed this day by the honorable Chancellor Refgar d'Sureson, the following is true and untainted.

His Royal Majesty, Graced By The Light, Defender Of The Realm, Heir To All, King Oslorn IV, has taken into his council your words in regards to the widespread crime and alleged starvation of the peasant population.

His Majesty has decreed that all peasants are to return to their homes promptly at dusk each evening. The penalty for disobeying this order is the forfeiture of a hand for the first offense, death for the second offense.

His Majesty has also decreed that the King's Forest is not to be opened to hunters. His Majesty has investigated the situation and has not found any evidence of rampant hunger among the commoners. Furthermore, His Majesty feels that allowing the commoners to keep one-third of their crops is more than generous. Anyone found poaching in the King's Forest is to be executed immediately.

Signed This Day,
His Royal Majesty, Graced By The Light,
Defender Of The Realm, Heir To All,
King Oslorn IV

A+HENAÆUM ARCANE: LE++ERS

Background

King Osborn IV was a corrupt, tyrannical ruler who was overthrown during a revolution when he did nothing to relieve the suffering of his subjects after a famine caused mass starvation. This decree is considered to be the catalyst for the revolution, but scholars have been unable to prove it existed.

Special Notes

A DC 30 Knowledge (history) or Bardic Knowledge check gives the PCs the background information for this letter, and a DC 25 Appraise check recognizes the document is worth 500 gp. If this letter is also found with the letter in **Rebellion**, scholars are willing to pay 1,000 gp for both.

DELIVERY

Appearance

Written on a cheap piece of parchment that has been scrubbed and reused several times, the handwriting is poor and ink spots blot some of the words.

Date: Current

Type: Quest

Letter

To Jhulvian Yhamel,

I have run into a problem with delivering your latest shipment. The Green Jasmine guild has decided to take control of the road between our two towns. I don't know if you remember how the Green Jasmies almost destroyed commerce between Sarlyn and Ilag's Hill with their extortion and highway robbery, but this is a serious problem, and the guards are either unwilling or unable to do anything about it.

I simply cannot attempt to deliver your shipment until these bandits are taken care of. I hope this letter reaches you.

Sincerely,

Shurus Alemakers

Background

The Green Jasmine guild has set up camp a few hundred feet away from a main road between two cities. They extort a toll from any who want to use the road, and more than a few people have died when they refused to pay or attempted to outrun the bandits.

Special Notes

As a quest, Jhulvian Yhamel might ask the PCs to get rid of the Green Jasmine bandits and escort his shipment of ale to him. The PCs could also come across the body of the messenger near the bandit camp and find the letter still on him.

FAMILY LOVE

Appearance

A fine scroll of high-quality cotton paper, this letter has gold edging and a border painted in an intricate design.

Date: Current

Type: Curiosity, Quest

Letter

Father,

Aezumon, Relbar, and I have a matter of utmost importance to discuss with you. As you no doubt are aware, there is significant costs connected with living in the city and properly associating with peers of our social standing. Sir Tuarl, the agent in charge of our trust funds, claims our monthly income is limited to four hundred gold each. We three have discussed this and find

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the sum to be appallingly low. We would like you to authorize Sir Tuarl to double our income immediately.

Do you remember, about five years ago, a certain young countess by the name of Lolaerie? She was the wife of the Earl of Bendinway, was she not? Beautiful woman, if I recall, and rather fond of you. Did you know she has a son? I believe the young heir is about four years of age now. I'm sure the old earl is quite proud, considering the priests told him decades ago that he would be unable to sire children after his war injuries.

But enough reminiscing about old times. I do hope you'll reconsider our current financial arrangement. We *are* your only children after all.

Your dotting son,
Ghallid

Background

Volurin Dzoulish is a very wealthy man who deals in rare imported furniture. He was a distant father, and his three sons, Aezumon, Relbar, and Ghallid grew up to be spoiled and selfish. Now the three are attempting to blackmail their father to increase their allowances by threatening to expose his affair with the Countess of Bendinway.

Special Notes

One possible quest has Volurin asking the PCs to convince his sons to give up their blackmail scheme. Another might have the brothers employing the PCs to deliver the message to their father.

GIRLFRIENDS

Appearance

Written on fine linen paper in a girlish hand, this letter is dotted with tiny drawings of flowers, hearts, and other assorted doodles.

Date: Current

Type: Curiosity, Quest

Letter

Dear Maithyn,

I have so much to tell you. We returned from the Taldyn's ball very late last night. I believe it was a quarter past two. Oh, the fun we had! I wish you could have been there. Mother let me wear the red gown, you know the one that shows a positively scandalous amount of cleavage.

I danced with Sir Pelnol, then Jonnor Saendon, Mekarris the Bold, and Lord Izenil. Lady Urmae was so jealous! You should have seen her; I've never seen anyone so green. I don't know why, though. She danced with Sir Ethrael Barlon. Oh, he was so devilishly handsome. Mother wouldn't allow me to dance with him. She claims he's something of a rake, but I would have so liked to meet him.

We must get together for tea soon. I shall call on you tomorrow afternoon, and we will ride to Melyn's Tea Room together.

Your sister in spirit,

Ilderia

Background

On the surface this appears to be a frivolous letter from one adolescent girl to another. In reality it is a carefully-coded message. Sir Ethrael Barlon is the head of a powerful crime organization and the authorities have recently uncovered his

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identity. This message explains when and where they plan to arrest him. The real message reads:

“At a quarter past two tomorrow, Lady Urmae will lure Sir Barlon to Melyn’s Tea Room, where Sir Pelnol, Jonnor Saendon, Mekarris the Bold, and Lord Izenil will be waiting to arrest him. All precautions should be taken, as he is very dangerous.”

Special Notes

If the PCs come upon this note with no prior knowledge of the situation, a DC 30 Sense Motive can deduce the proper meaning. PCs who have ranks in Knowledge (nobility and royalty) can add a +2 bonus to the check.

INFIDELITIES

Appearance

The handwriting on this sheet of plain parchment seems rushed in places, as if the author was in a hurry to finish it. Water spots blur many of the words.

Date: Outdated

Type: Curiosity, Quest

Letter

Jasil,

You rat! Did you think I wouldn’t find out? Did you think Shurla could keep a secret like that? Well, I hope you’re happy, you stinking pile of goblin waste.

Shurla told me everything, the pox-ridden harlot. I knew I shouldn’t have trusted my sister, but I thought I could at least trust you to keep your hands where they belonged.

I’m taking the children, and I’m going to make sure you never see them again.

Good riddance.

Your ever-hating wife,
Lilliana

Background

When Lilliana Mydeelae learned of her husband’s infidelities with her sister, Shurla, she left her husband and took the children. As an act of revenge, she also burned their house to the ground. Unknown to her, however, a servant lay sleeping inside. The man perished in the blaze, and Lilliana and her children haven’t been seen since.

Special Notes

The PCs could be approached by Jasil Mydeelae to help locate his long-lost children, or perhaps by the town’s leaders, who want Lilliana brought in for the death of the servant.

PROPOSAL

Appearance

Faded and worn in places, this scrap of parchment looks to have been read many times.

Date: Archaic

Type: Curiosity, Treasure

Letter

My loveliest lady, Bethra,

The nights grow so lonely [illegible] on the plains. We march late into the evening every night to stop Duke Moris’s troops before [illegible] can reach the pass. I hope this letter reaches you safely. I sent it with [illegible], the royal courier. He owed me for a gambling debt.

We’ve fought three battles so far. Do not fear for me, my love. I have escaped with but some light cuts on my forearms. The healers do not think I need the attentions of the priests. [illegible] Moris, the cad, hired a bugbear clan to harry us two days past, but we easily took care of them. Lieutenant

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Airilee said we should be home before harvest, and I so look forward to seeing your sweet face again.

I beg you to consider now the question that gives me both fear and hope these long nights. Will you consent to be my wife upon my return home?

Yours in eternal love,
Isordail Krench

Background

This letter is just what it appears to be, a love letter from a homesick soldier. The battle he participated in three days later was a turning point in the Blackguard's Battle, a relatively minor skirmish between rival kingdoms. Isordail Krench returned home to wed Bethra, and the two lived long enough to see their great-grandchildren born.

Special Notes

Scholars of the Blackguard's Battle are willing to pay 100 gp for this letter, because it puts a timeline to the fight. Descendants of Isordail and Bethra can pay 10 gp for it.

REBELLION

Appearance

This letter is written on the back of a piece of crumbling parchment on which is listed types of grains and their prices. Some of the words are illegible or faded.

Date: Archaic

Type: Historical, Treasure

Letter

Dear Ebanens,

I have informed the troops of your plans, and [illegible] are quite eager to get started. By the time King Oslorn knows what is going on, we will already be in the castle. Victory is so close [illegible] almost feel it.

Food supplies are scarce. Vaerin lost his daughter last week. The child simply coul[illegible] hold on any longer. Oslorn must pay for what he has done to [illegible] people! I hope to be the first inside, so I can see the look on his face before you chop off his head.

Freedom and Justice!
Fethrual the Axegrinder

Background

Six hundred years ago, a corrupt King Oslorn IV came into power. As he levied more and more taxes against his people, they starved. When the worst drought in thirty years hit the kingdom, he still refused to help his people, instead building more elaborate homes with the kingdom's treasury.

Finally, a miller by the name of Ebanens started gathering people to his cause, and what later became known as Ebanens's Rebellion was formed. They overthrew King Oslorn and declared Ebanens the new king. The Ebanens Dynasty lasted sixty years and died when King Ebanens's daughter, Ektann, died without heirs.

Special Notes

A DC 30 Knowledge (history) or Bardic Knowledge check gives the PCs the background information for this letter, and a DC 25 Appraise check recognizes the document is worth 300 gp. If this letter is also found with the letter in **Decree**, scholars are willing to pay 1,000 gp for both.

SORROWFUL NEWS

Appearance

This letter is written on a white sheet of heavy linen paper. Embossed in gold in the top right corner is the word, "Rubauldo."

Date: Current

Type: Curiosity, Quest

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Letter

My dear Mr. and Mrs. Fynstora,

It is with a sorrowful and heavy heart that I must relay this terrible news. The love of my life, my one ray of hope in this dismal world, my dearest Deria, is dead. I can only imagine the agony my words cause you, and I desperately wish I did not have to say them to you.

When she first became ill, we did not worry overly much. We thought it likely the result of the stress of our new life. But the fevers grew worse, and then came the shaking fits. By the gods, those were a terrible sight to behold. Healers were called in, then priests, but no spells could cure my love of this affliction.

Her last words were an expression of love for you, and I regret that I cannot be there in your time of grief.

In loving memory of a beautiful wife and daughter, I sign this,

Eanthlee Rubauldo

Background

Eanthlee Rubauldo is a false identity of a con man named Hannos the Red. He slowly poisoned his new bride, Deria, in order to gain her considerable fortune. For more information, see the Background entry for the **The Wedding**.

Special Notes

This can be used in conjunction with **The Wedding**. The PCs might be asked by Deria's mother, Cymra Fynstora, to learn the truth behind her daughter's death. Deria can be resurrected, though Eanthlee/Hannos tries to convince everyone the priests already tried and failed to do so.

T⊕ THE ADVENTURERS

Appearance

This letter bears no identifying marks, but it is addressed to the adventurers. The handwriting is rather non-descript.

Date: Current

Type: Quest

Letter

Your work has garnered much recognition in this part of the country, so I approach you with the hope that you will accept my proposal.

Nearby is a dungeon that holds a magic item of great value I would like to possess. I am willing to pay a significant sum of money for acquiring it. I don't think I need to point out the many dangers you are likely to face in obtaining this object.

If you agree to this proposal, my assistant will meet you at the Dawning Blade tavern tomorrow at dusk. He will have the details and be able to answer any questions you may have. Please understand that I prefer to remain anonymous for the time, as I have many enemies who would rather I not succeed at this venture.

Until then.

Background

None.

Special Notes

This letter can be used to propel adventurers to their next quest. Perhaps the magic item in question is actually a minor artifact an evil wizard wants for a nefarious purpose, or a good patron wants his father's sword returned.

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TREASURE

Appearance

This crumpled and creased document is stained and faded with age and contains a short series of correspondences between two people of limited education.

Date: Outdated

Type: History, Quest

Letter

Beljin,

Don't worry none about it. Everthing will be fine once we get the guards off are backs. For now its berried in someones back yard. You no how long it takes to berry that much gold? They almost cot me but it should be safe for now.

Garl

Garl,

You better not have took even a copper. And I want the stachew of that naked elf girl to. I didn't think they cud do stuff liek that with gold. Were'd you burry it? I want to see what it looks like. Jes look that's all.

Beljin

Beljin,

Gods teeth, will you shut up about that stooped stachew? Its ugly any way. I'm not telling you were its at. I don't trust you.

Garl

Background

Garl and Beljin were two petty criminals who managed to make off with the contents of a baron's treasury. Garl buried the money

in the backyard of someone's home, but before the two could recover their ill-gotten gains, they killed each other in a jealous fight over the money. No one is quite sure how much money they stole, or even if it is still there.

Special Notes

This letter is often accompanied by a city map, but no one is certain in which town the money is buried.

WEDDING

Appearance

This letter is written in an elegant script on a crisp white sheet of heavy linen paper. Embossed in gold in the top right corner is the word, "Rubauldo."

Date: Current

Type: Curiosity, Quest

Letter

Dearest Mother,

I have so much wonderful news to give you, I just don't know where to start. But first I must ask, how is Father fairing? Has he recovered from his coughing fit? And the little ones, how are they? They must be so big now. Did Lethia receive the doll I sent her? The dollmaker assured me it was his best work.

I simply cannot wait a moment longer to give you my good news. I'm getting married! His name is Eanthlee, and he's so sweet and kind. The wedding is in two months. I know it's rather short notice, but Eanthlee is just so eager, like Colthan during festival time. I'm sure Henira won't mind teleporting the family when the time comes.

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I know you worry that any man I meet is after my money, but I can assure you Eanthlee isn't like that. He has plenty of his own and has insisted on paying for the entire wedding. On our first night out, he paid a wizard for a fly spell, just so we could go soaring through the clouds. Don't tell Colthan, though. He'll be so jealous since Henira won't do that any more after he broke his leg that time.

Well, I really must be off. Eanthlee wants to go out dinner, and I offered to buy this time. The darling man didn't want me to, but insisted. Give my love to everyone!

Your loving daughter,
Deria

Background

Deria Fynstora comes from a very wealthy family. Her fiancée, Eanthlee Rubauldo, is a con artist whose real name is Hannos the Red. His plan is to marry Deria and kill her, inheriting her considerable fortune. He has gone into considerable debt with a local crime syndicate to maintain the appearance of wealth and gain Deria's trust.

Special Notes

If used in conjunction with **Sorrowful News**, The PCs might be given the two letters by Deria's mother, Cymra, to learn the truth behind her daughter's death. If used alone, Cymra Fynstora might ask the PCs to investigate Eanthlee Rubauldo, on behalf of her daughter, to make sure he is as he appears.

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I write this today to release my conscience from the burden of my sins. I, Rolorn of Eldaeth, confess to the crime of ~~killing~~ murdering the Tander family and eating their flesh. I performed this heinous act because I am a depraved ~~person~~ monster, and no amount of ~~mercy~~ justice will be enough to make up for my crimes. I beg the friends and relatives of the Tander family to forgive me and rest assured that the day of my ~~death~~ execution will be my first day of an eternity of damnation.

Signed this day in the sight of justice,
Rolorn of Eldaeth

To His Grace, Lord Tyndalim, Duke of Keldeg,

As has been witnessed this day by the honorable Chancellor Refgar d'Sureson, the following is true and untainted.

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Sincerely,
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Father,

Aezumon, Resbar, and I have a matter of utmost importance to discuss with you. As you no doubt are aware, there is significant costs connected with living in the city and properly associating with peers of our social standing. Sir Tuarl, the agent in charge of our trust funds, claims our monthly income is limited to four hundred gold each. We three have discussed this and find the sum to be appallingly low. We would like you to authorize Sir Tuarl to double our income immediately.

Do you remember, about five years ago, a certain young countess by the name of Losaerie? She was the wife of the Earl of Bendinway, was she not? Beautiful woman, if I recall, and rather fond of you. Did you know she has a son? I believe the young heir is about four years of age now. I'm sure the old earl is quite proud, considering the priests told him decades ago that he would be unable to sire children after his war injuries.

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Ilderia

Jasil,

You rat! Did you think I wouldn't find out? Did you think Shurla could keep a secret like that? Well, I hope you're happy, you stinking pile of goblin waste.

Shurla told me everything, the fox-ridden harlot. I knew I shouldn't have trusted my sister, but I thought I could at least trust you to keep your hands where they belonged.

I'm taking the children, and I'm going to make sure you never see them again. Good riddance.

Your ever-hating wife,
Lilliana

My loveliest lady, Bethra,

The nights grow so lonely ~~through~~ on the plains. We march late into the evening every night to stop Duke Moris's troops before ~~anyone~~ can reach the pass. I hope this letter reaches you safely. I sent it with ~~himself~~ the royal courier. He owed me for a gambling debt.

We've fought three battles so far. Do not fear for me, my love. I have escaped with but some light cuts on my forearms. The healers do not think I need the attentions of the priests. ~~He~~ Duke Moris, the Cad, hired a bugbear Clan to harry us two days past, but we easily took care of them. Lieutenant Airilee said we should be home before harvest, and I so look forward to seeing your sweet face again.

I beg you to consider now the question that gives me both fear and hope these long nights. Will you consent to be my wife upon my return home?

Yours in eternal love,
Isordail Krench

Dear Ebanens,

I have informed the troops of your plans, and ~~we~~ are quite eager to get started. By the time King Oslorn knows what is going on, we will already be in the castle. Victory is so close ~~we~~ almost feel it.

Food supplies are scarce. Vaerin lost his daughter last week. The child simply couldn't hold on any longer. Oslorn must pay for what he has done to ~~the~~ people! I hope to be the first inside, so I can see the look on his face before you chop off his head.

Freedom and Justice!

Fethrual the Axegrinder

Rubauldo

My dear Mr. and Mrs. Fynstora,

It is with a sorrowful and heavy heart that I must relay this terrible news. The love of my life, my one ray of hope in this dismal world, my dearest Deria, is dead. I can only imagine the agony my words cause you, and I desperately wish I did not have to say them to you.

When she first became ill, we did not worry overly much. We thought it likely the result of the stress of our new life. But the fevers grew worse, and then came the shaking fits. By the gods, those were a terrible sight to behold. Healers were called in, then priests, but no spells could cure my love of this affliction.

Her last words were an expression of love for you, and I regret that I cannot be there in your time of grief.

In loving memory of a beautiful wife and daughter, I sign this,
Eanthlee Rubauldo

Your work has garnered much recognition in this part of the country, so I approach you with the hope that you will accept my proposal.

Nearby is a dungeon that holds a magic item of great value I would like to possess. I am willing to pay a significant sum of money for acquiring it. I don't think I need to point out the many dangers you are likely to face in obtaining this object. If you agree to this proposal, my assistant will meet you at the Dawning Blade tavern tomorrow at dusk. He will have the details and be able to answer any questions you may have. Please understand that I prefer to remain anonymous for the time, as I have many enemies who would rather I not succeed at this venture.

Until then.

Beljin,

Don't worry none about it. Everthing will be fine once we get the guards off are backs. For now its berried in someones back yard. You no how long it takes to berry that much gold? They almost cot me but it should be safe for now.

Garl

Garl,

You better not have took even a copper. And I want the stachew of that naked elf girl to. I didn't think they cud do stuff liek that with gold. Were'd you burry it? I want to see what it looks like. Jes look that's all.

Beljin

Beljin,

Gods teeth, will you shut up about that stooped stachew? Its ugly any way. I'm not telling you were its at. I don't trust you.

Garl

Rubauldo

Dearest Mother,

I have so much wonderful news to give you, I just don't know where to start. But first I must ask, how is Father fairing? Has he recovered from his coughing fit? And the little ones, how are they? They must be so big now. Did Lethia receive the doll I sent her? The dollmaker assured me it was his best work.

I simply cannot wait a moment longer to give you my good news. I'm getting married! His name is Lanthlee, and he's so sweet and kind. The wedding is in two months. I know it's rather short notice, but Lanthlee is just so eager, like Colthan during festival time. I'm sure Henira won't mind teleporting the family when the time comes.

I know you worry that any man I meet is after my money, but I can assure you Lanthlee isn't like that. He has plenty of his own and has insisted on paying for the entire wedding. On our first night out, he paid a wizard for a fly spell, just so we could go soaring through the clouds. Don't tell Colthan, though. He'll be so jealous since Henira won't do that any more after he broke his leg that time.

Well, I really must be off. Lanthlee wants to go out dinner, and I offered to buy this time. The darling man didn't want me to, but insisted. Give my love to everyone!

Your loving daughter,
Deria