

Dearest Father:

The vanity of authors manifests in no greater measure than in our reluctance to observe the mundane. Yes, contrariety is the foundation of intrigue, and adventure the heart of the tale. Yet as we sail ever into storms, we can neglect the most common truths. The sheets and stays of ordinary life become tangled and forgotten.

We all observe what is commonplace, and we can imagine no other ways, no time before us or after when those basic notions might change. We learn from our parents and we teach our children, as links in an eternal chain. But over time that chain shifts, it stretches, it breaks. And sometimes, a once common truth expires like a hamlet in the fog.

Consider the ancient game of Linos, the game of twelve bars. Countless sets lay scattered across the forum, in ancient ruins deep in the fog, buried for a thousand years. Yet no one today knows how to play this game, for want of but a single reference to explain its rules. Despite this game's prevalence, or perhaps because of it, it has now been lost forever.

In my forty years aloft I have learned a thousand games in a thousand places. Like games of old, these modern games are also undocumented, passing from one generation to the next through repetition and play.

From what I have observed among these games, I have gathered what I believe might be a set of rules for Linos. Many of today's games seem to be its descendants. But my rules are at best a fabrication, a fiction. I have no proof that my guesses are correct.

For my own amusement, perhaps, and for generations that may follow me, I have within this history described a selection of modern games, as well as giving my best devise of their grandfather. May this collection serve to enlighten those future players, for whom the chain has broken.

Stargazers proclaim that I am wasting my time, that the world will end in darkness and render our greatest works into dust. But I believe that this history is a worthy endeavor, however the tides may run, even if its only audience is myself. We are flesh here and now, not the ghosts of tomorrow or the echoes of yesterday.

I did not always feel this way.

At the age of seventeen I ran from the safety of our home. I became a volunteer in Hightower's Navy, taking my first step on a journey around the world. I abandoned my place and my family, leaving you to worry after me as I searched for the truth under every dark sky.

In these pages I have documented some of the exceptional and unique events of my journey, sailing into storms as a historian should. But I have striven also to capture some record of the normal life of our people, and of those other peoples who float in the same sky.

My truth was always here at home, as I'm sure you would say to me now. But like anyone born into this world, I could not be told this. I had to learn it for myself.

May we walk together again.

Galiard Gaspar Ewen

In the house of my beloved father, Lantry Ewen

Heyan 16, Midsummer's Day, SL 1611