

Honorable Samurai,

I will not waste your time with eloquence, for the sacrifices you continue to make are vital to preserve the future Empire. An opportunity presents itself. Changes in the Imperial Court may provide fresh allies that would be of service in our endless conflict. I have commanded the Yasuki daimyō to meet with Chief Magistrate Bayushi Yojiro of Toshi Ranbo. Even now, he travels north to negotiate for a substantial provision of much-needed jade. After the success of his dealings these past months, I believe he can succeed in this endeavor. We may yet find friends among the Scorpion Clan after all.

The darkness that opposes us remains impenetrable. I have yet to receive any report from the watchtower at Ishigaki Province. I have dispatched Yasuki Oguri to uncover the fate that has befallen the garrison there. He is swift and cunning but will not undertake this task alone. Do not hinder or delay him. The machines of war shall crumble beneath the blows of our eternal enemy unless they operate in tandem. The Empire is not prepared for the worst.

You will go to Otsosan Uchi. A frog in a well cannot know the sea, so the Crown Prince remains ignorant of our duty. His family's Ancestral Sword, Kunshu, is in need of a steward. I do not expect His Excellency will grant such an honor to our clan, for he is surrounded by advisors among the Scorpion, Crane, and Phoenix who continue to advocate for their clans' interests. However, the Crown Prince's favor will be invaluable in securing future Imperial support. Do not concern yourself with the whispers of vainglory that swirl around him. Such whispers are no different from the lies others tell of our savagery. Fear not if Kunshu does not fall under our clan's care, so long as it remains out of the hands of the Crane. I have no doubt the capital will forget our duty entirely should the Crane secure the ear of the Crown Prince.

Depart as soon as you are able. I expect your report to be timely, and your return upon the resolution of this matter to be immediate. Our ancient foe grows stronger by the day.

*Lord Hida Kisada,
Defender of the Wall*

