

Greetings, Keen and Gracious Samurai of the Crane Clan,

I read the report of your latest foray with great amusement. Our opponents always remember too late that the crane that walks about in the muddy pond can spread its wings and fly into the heavens. I will see that the information you sent will be put to good use. In turn, I am sending you this missive so that, being well-informed, you will continue to bring honor to yourself and your family.

The arrogant cats of the west continue to make noise around Toshi Ranbo, to no avail. Our glorious Emperor has—like a wise parent dealing with an unruly child—taken the matter out of their reach. The city is to be administered by an Imperial delegation which will be led by the Emerald Magistrate Bayushi Yojiro. Crane diplomacy and the rectitude of our ancient claims will soon persuade the Honest Scorpion to allow our influence to again be felt in the city, and our own Magistrate Daidoji Chitose will offer him any assistance we can render. With Toshi Ranbo secured, I have called upon our generals to gather our armies on the Osari Plains to meet the next challenge. Our forces grow in strength daily, as warriors flock to our banners like songbirds to a freshly threshed field.

Those who think that this war will exhaust the Crane's treasuries will be disappointed. The true wealth of the Crane lies in the skill and creativity of our people, and that is inexhaustible. You know this to be true: the warrior who today boasts of how he will triumph over our samurai then goes home and shows off his newest wall scroll—painted by a Kakita artisan—to his admiring friends. Thus, even our enemies add to our wealth.

Now, I must speak to you of those seafaring peasants who style themselves as the Mantis Clan. For some time, our shipping has been plagued with losses from pirates linked to the Mantis. Now, some of the Asahina have sensed an elemental imbalance connected with the storms that have also been plaguing our ships. They bring tidings of terrible abuses against the kami by the Mantis, who blaspheme not only common courtesy, but the spirits of nature themselves.

I am out of patience with these upstarts. We are preparing a response to their outrageous behavior, and I am recalling Doji Kuzunobu from Shizuka Toshi. My husband will then be sent to represent the Crane among his former kin. The honorable Fox Clan will be delighted to host such a high-ranking courtier from a Great Clan, and you shall go with him to seek out solutions to appease the offended kami off our coasts.



Sharpen your swords and polish your mind, my friend. Much has been done, but much remains. Our descendants to come will speak in awe of the things we accomplish as we drive the Lion out of the Osari Plains for good.

*Lady Doji Hotaru,
Trusted Left Hand of the Emperor, Beautiful Mistress of the Arts,
Skillfull Daimyō of the Doji, Indomitable Champion of the Crane Clan*

