

*My Dear Cousin,*

*The wind that bites across the plains has within it the first teeth of winter, and so my thoughts turn to the future. As I have charged you with the stewardship of Hisu Mori Toride, lately recaptured by my son Shono, you play an integral role in that future. I fear that you have not seen the last of our war with the Lion, and you are not positioned to best apply the strengths of our armies. We are invincible on the Golden Plains where our horses are given leave to run, but the terrain along our shared border—villages, farms, rivers, castles— favors the Lion. I have given Utaku Kamoko leave to join her Battle Maidens to our regulars and lead the joint force south across the river. Her offensive shall keep the Lion too occupied to threaten our lands, and her force will prove too mobile for the Lion armies to destroy.*

*It is lamentable that we were unable to secure a claim to Toshi Ranbo, as it would have given us an excellent position to threaten the Lion from multiple directions, as well as the ability to easily coordinate with our allies the Crane. However, with Shinjo Shono and Utaku Kamoko otherwise engaged, the cost to secure the city would have been too high.*

*I have sent Shono west along the Sand Road, in the company of his trusted companions and advisors. The wind that blows from the west brings the bright scent of wealth, but there is danger there. Caliph Harun al-Hakim has long cast an envious eye on our holdings outside of Rokugan, and when word of our renewed war with the Lion reaches him, he may decide the time has come to raise against us. We cannot allow trade along the Sand Road to be disrupted now. Resolving this matter and keeping the peace will require a general's hawk-vision and a diplomat's lark-song. Pray to the Five Winds that Shono has both.*

*Though the son of the Shinjo has been taken far from us, the departure of Shahai pains us even more. To sacrifice the presumptive heir to the Iuchi daimyō to a life in a cage should be enough penance for any clan, and yet the Phoenix have revoked our right of pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Ki-Rin. It seems they have encountered djinn for the first time, and rather than accept the aid of those accustomed to dealing with such creatures, they have chosen to blame us for their own failures. So be it—the Unicorn can ill-afford open conflict with yet another Great Clan at this time, but the insult will be remembered.*



*If only the Great Clans were the extent of our troubles. Iuchi Rimei has brought us word of creatures stirring in the Shinomen Forest—intelligent beings with the appearance of serpents. Only the Unicorn Clan has the wherewithal to broker peace with such a strange people, and doing so is of the utmost importance. It is our duty to protect Rokugan from all such threats. To that end, I have tasked Ide Nominari and the Shinomen Wayfinders with keeping the peace with our new serpentine neighbors.*

*We face many challenges, but it is ever so. We count among our number the greatest warriors—and the greatest peacemakers—in the Emerald Empire. Like Shinjo before us, we ride ever into the unknown that is the future. And like our ancestors, we will always be the equal to its challenges. To gaze fearlessly into the unknown, to know that we will always be ready for what comes, that is to be a Unicorn. It is our strength, and one which the Empire will dearly need, no matter how little they respect it.*

*Courage, cousin. Winter lies ahead, but spring comes after.*

*Shinjo Altansarnai,  
Seeker of the Setting Sun, Khan of Khans, Mistress of the Five Winds,  
Daimyō of the Shinjo, and Champion of the Unicorn Clan*

