

*Noble Samurai of the Glorious Phoenix Clan,*

*As I was returning from Otosan Uchi after the beautiful wedding of Akodo Kaede, I came upon a dry riverbed flowing down from the foothills. On our journey south, my companions and I had stopped at that river and left a small offering, allowing the kami of the river to cleanse the weariness from our bodies. To see it so empty was disheartening, and yet more concerning were the fish whose bodies lay clustered at a rocky bend, abandoned by the receding current. Where the kami that dwelt in that river has gone—and what could have caused so sudden an emptiness—has lingered in my thoughts ever since.*

*The Council of Masters, in their wisdom, have dispatched the Isawa to inquire after the kami who dwell in such places. Yet the Council is incomplete, for our Elemental Master of Earth has traveled south to the lands of the Kuni on a personal quest of his own. As our undivided wisdom is required to safeguard the Empire's spirit, I have sent a clever advisor, wise beyond her years, to find Isawa Tadaka. I have no doubt that Asako Tsuki will be up to the task, but I have additionally instructed her to seek out Hida Kisada on the Carpenter Wall should the trail run cold.*

*Yet Tsuki's departure from the Imperial Capital leaves us in need of a diplomat whose insight can manage our requests of the Emperor's court. With our friendship with the Unicorn strained and with the Dragon unwilling to root out the heresy that has been burgeoning in their lands, we are now in particular need of Imperial support.*

*This is why I must humbly ask that you take up Asako Tsuki's duties at Otosan Uchi. The Emperor's Ancestral Sword will soon be placed in the care of one of the Great Clans, and if such a blessing brings with it the confidence of the Crown Prince, then I believe we would benefit to receive it. The Emperor's Advisor and Chancellor each have his ear, but our cause is sacred and just. Neither the Left nor Underhand of the Emperor can claim to match our sincerity.*

*In the meantime, I must travel from Shiro Gisu to meet with my trusted advisor, Asako Maezawa. The Kaito remain spread across the shrines of our lands and the Isawa busy with the Council's tasks, yet questions still linger in my mind. I intend to task my advisor with his own investigation, one for which his unique talents are invaluable. Yet whether he is most needed in our lands or in Otosan Uchi remains unclear to me. When you arrive at the Imperial Capital, report to me on the atmosphere of the court there. Your advice on this matter may help sway my mind as to where Maezawa-sama's investigation must begin.*

*I will await your advice by the grace of the kami. Once your retainers are at hand to travel, depart straight for Otosan Uchi. Your most loyal service is always noted and appreciated.*

*Shiba Tsukune,*

*The Soul of Shiba, Protector of the Council, Keeper of the Tao,*

*Daimyō of the Shiba, and Champion of the Phoenix Clan*