

Courteous Retainer of the Honorable Crane,

The breeze of the descending autumn carries with it a sharp sting. Its whispers speak of the Crown Prince, observing his behavior and drawing self-serving conclusions. I do not look forward to the coming winter, when the days shall be short and our glorious city closed to the cold winds. After your unparalleled service at the palace of my family, the Imperial Capital would be blessed by your presence.

The Ancestral Sword of the Hantei shall soon be entrusted to one of the Great Clans, though there is little reason for His Excellency to consider the Lion, Unicorn, or Crab. Their duties require a great deal of travel as they safekeep our glorious Empire from threats within and without, and to involve them in the intricacies of the court would only draw them away from such magnanimous tasks. As the Emperor continues to consider our humble proposal of wedding the beautiful and eloquent Doji Chiyoe to the Crown Prince, the caretaking of Kunshu may be bestowed upon the Crane. No other clan would be so equipped to keep perfect such an ancient and exalted talisman. While the artisans of the Kakita maintain its every ornament, the shugenja of the Asahina shall keep its spirit dedicated to peace. Yet words shared in secret weigh more heavily upon the mind. With the Imperial Advisor at His Excellency's ear, and the close friendship of their sons, I fear the sword's destiny may be marred by red hands.

Let this be an invitation for you to join us in Otosan Uchi, your duties having been exceptionally fulfilled. Your sharpened wit would be invaluable to cut through the sea of lies and half-truths of the Emperor's court.

While you are here, you may be honored by the company of the esteemed Doji Kuwanan, recently returned from the fighting on the Osari Plains. With the duties his sister must undertake to keep the Empire safe from Matsu passion, she has been unable to fully attend to the needs of the late Emerald Champion's legacy. Kuwanan-sama remains in the Forbidden City for as long as is needed for him to fulfill that service to his honorable father.

In regards to the city of Toshi Ranbo, held so long by the Crane, the current Emerald Champion's wisdom has been invaluable. The Honest Scorpion will rule the city fairly, and the roar of the offended Lion will fall upon unlistening ears. Daidoji Uji has withdrawn his forces from the city to transfer governance to the Emerald Magistrates, and will soon reunite with his Champion on the field. Further, the new governance of the city has helped us arrange for Kakita Asami's departure from the court of Matsu Seishin. She travels now with Doji Kuzunobu to the court of the Fox to discuss the challenges each of our clans face, and how we can best work together toward freedom and security amid the turbulent waves of our time.

Kakita Yoshi,

*The Voice of Honor, Esteemed Imperial Chancellor,
and Noble Daimyō of the Kakita*

*Ice cuts the still air
Where silent empty words echo
Petals fall away*