

*Greetings, my loyal vassals. I offer prayers to the ancestors that this letter finds you well.*

*Here, as I write this missive, I recall the majestic fury of the kami that awakened beneath a mountain near Castle Soshi, called Hadakayama. As the spirit under the mountain raged, gray ash fell like snow upon a small abandoned village in the valley below. I later discovered that a group of bandits had seized the opportunity to loot whatever meagre possessions the villagers had left behind in their haste. But, this brazen thievery was their undoing; they were trapped by the falling ash and buried with the village in a featureless, ashen tomb.*

*Recalling this incident, we can consider its wisdom in approaching the situation facing our clan today. We will soon face another crisis, one that will shake the Empire as vigorously as the enraged mountain spirit. Just as those bandits who, in their greed and arrogance, saw only the opportunity offered by the volcano's eruption, those of us who see only the opportunities in the coming upheaval in the Empire will likewise face calamity.*

*I can hear some of you insist that our position is unassailable. Our political might stands almost unchallenged in the Empire's courts, our place close at the side of he who sits upon the Throne assured. The esteemed Bayushi Yojiro-san soon departs his service in Ryoko Owari to assume the duties of Chief Magistrate of Toshi Ranbo, assisting the new Imperial governor to rebuild and administer the city and end the bloodshed between the battered armies of the Crane and the Lion. Meanwhile, even as the Dragon languish in their mountains, embroiled in their own affairs, the Crab eagerly seek our aid in fulfilling their sacred duty upon the Carpenter Wall—and on and on the list of turbulent matters affecting the Great Clans goes. Only our clan remains relatively untroubled and in a position of unprecedented sway in Imperial matters.*

*Need we concern ourselves, then, with what appear to be new opportunities to accrue more influence and more power? Do not forget the opportunistic bandits who ignored the crisis and sought to defy, not just the elements, but Hadakayama-sama in their efforts to enrich themselves. Better they had been discovered by the magistrates before entering the doomed village, for that may have offered them a chance, at least, of being saved from oblivion. Instead, they were victim to a horrific fate, buried under the immense weight of dispassionate circumstance.*



*Rest assured that I will not allow any of you, my honored vassals, to succumb to such a dire outcome. I, and those chosen by me, will be watching over all of you closely, to ensure this remains true.*

*Ever vigilant in his wisdom, may Bayushi-no-Kami guide your thoughts, deeds, and words in service to your clan and Empire.*

*Lord Bayushi Shoji,*

*The Most Dutiful, Master of Secrets, among other titles known and unknown,*

*Daimyō of the Bayushi, and Champion of the Scorpion Clan*

