

At the request of the most honorable Champion Matsu, I have committed to paper a record of the most recent assault that the Daidoji soldiers have attempted against our unassailable defense. Let the historians of the future learn from their deceptive tactics and remember the efficacy of our unyielding discipline.

The attack began at twilight two days ago, while the echoes of Amaterasu's brilliance still hung over the treetops and the cold winds attempted to drive us from the battlements. The cunning and noble Daidoji Uji led his soldiers to the southern wall, where several of them took up their bows and unloaded three volleys into our defenders. Their aim was true, but only one ashigaru fell to the volley as we had witnessed their approach and taken ample cover behind the battlements. As expected, the archery was meant only to suppress our defenses as his heavily armored warriors moved to assault the gates. Thus the preparations of the Matsu Fourth Legion were made evident as the attackers found the gate's approach unassailable for the spears that had been entrenched and hidden before it. Rather than risk their lives attempting to navigate the sharpened stakes that we had placed, the Daidoji chose an immediate retreat.

The retreat was swift and organized, each samurai taking a position among their fellows such that no clear vulnerabilities could be found for our archers to exploit. Our archers, hidden behind the arrow slits of the palace's walls for this exact occasion, attempted to fell the retreating Daidoji but found no openings in their heavy armor and decisive discipline. Meanwhile, the Daidoji archers who had driven our battlement-guards into cover resumed their volleys, each firing six or seven more shafts into our defenders. They felled four more of our ashigaru, for in our haste to strike down the retreating samurai our archers placed themselves where the Daidoji veterans could strike them down.

It is clear upon retrospect that this assault upon the gate, the third such attempt yet, was not intended to be the main thrust of Daidoji Uji's recapture of the palace. His soldiers were too prepared for a retreat, and the timing of their arrows too precisely coordinated with the movements of the attacking samurai to be anything other than a feint in expectation of our defenses. This is more evident upon the infiltration attempt made by Uji's five scouts upon the northern windows, ultimately rebuffed by the Ikoma Auxiliaries and my own lieutenants. Had my soldiers not taken the initiative and made themselves battle-ready, it is likely that we would have lost far more than the ten ashigaru and four samurai who fell to the infiltrators' swords.

The Daidoji gained access to the palace through the northeastern second-story windows, which open from a room that once held some manner of artist's dōjō. (It is now a shrine to the spirit of the venerable Akodo Arasou.) The climb they undertook should not have been possible in such dim light, yet they had the help of tekagi and were intimately familiar with the wall face that they successfully scaled. No one was in the shrine when they shattered the lock and entered,



though many of our soldiers were resting and entertaining themselves in adjacent rooms. One of our ashigaru, a woman named Emiko, heard a disturbance as the scouts exited the shrine and commanded her comrades to arm themselves. They quickly found and confronted the infiltrators, courageously facing them alone to cut off the Crane soldiers before they disrupted the rest of the castle, but were each slain in the skirmish. Through their bravery, the infiltrators were delayed long enough for a runner to alert me to their presence that I could lead a counterattack to cut them down.

For my part, I found myself unable to finish the meal whose preparation I had enjoyed earlier that evening. Though our Champion was overseeing the rout of the attack upon the gates, and my services were not needed, I found myself drawn to the armor that I had removed upon completing my daily duties an hour earlier. In this lapse of focus, which I believe came as a warning to me from the honored spirit of Akodo Arasou, I determined to ensure that no deception was at work in Daidoji Uji's assault. With little more than my pauldrons and my swords, I ventured through the castle walls in search of trouble. This was what led me to the ashigaru runner, and subsequently the great skirmish in which seven of our samurai and twelve of our ashigaru finally trapped the Daidoji infiltrators and dispatched them.

This represents the sixth defeat of the Daidoji forces in the past month since their siege began. Our numbers are many and theirs are few, so soon they will be unable to capture the palace that Champion Matsu has so gloriously taken from them. As winter sets in, the open field will be too inhospitable for their war camp to remain, and the supplies from the Ikoma logisticians will be able to supply us through the cold months. Each battle in which we rebuff them only shows that the might of the Lion cannot be withstood even by those who believe that they have bested our champion. By year's end, the feud between Lady Matsu and the foolish Kakita shall finally be put to rest as Matsu Tsuko proves her strength to the Emerald Empire.

Recorded this twenty fourth day in the Month of Shinjo,
Akodo Zentarō, Commander of the Lion

