

Legend
of the
Five Rings™



*The Journal of
Ashidaka Naritoki*

Month of the Tiger, Third Day

Simply dreadful day today. All I'm hoping for is a little peace and quiet out here, but the moment I'm through the door M. is on me like a fly in my ear buzzing about how I'm never around, how I take her for granted, how I act like I'm ashamed of her. What does she expect? She's my foreign mistress! I can't very well write her poems and sigh outside her window, can I?

To tell the truth, it's almost as bad as being at home. Worse, in some ways; at least Yoshino knows how to keep quiet.

All the little things seem to be conspiring against me. My stirrup broke as I was going to work. I've developed a cough that just won't go away. Finally, J. is being completely unreasonable about his taxes; if he had his way, I'd write him up as a mendicant beggar, while he flaunts his wealth this way and that. He demands a lot for his measly hundred koku, and if he's not careful I'll hang him out to dry just to shut him up.

Yet it could be worse, I suppose. I'm just grateful for this book. To be truthful (and where can one be truthful if not in one's pillow book?) I almost look forward to coming out here to write this journal *more* than I look forward to seeing M.

Month of the Tiger, Seventh Day

It's finally happened; "Memoirs of an Opium Eater" has arrived in Ryoko Owari. As I predicted, *everyone* is outraged and calling the whole thing a pack of lies. At the same time, everyone believes it completely and is desperate to figure out the identities of the people described in the book.

Now, I read the book for the first time two months ago when it came out in Otosan Uchi, so I've been prepared for this. Whenever someone mentions the book, I argue that it's most likely a fiction created by some devious Crane or Scorpion (I change the clan depending on my listener) to sow confusion and mistrust. In short, I keep telling people it's a basket hat. I can back this up by presenting a number of conflicts and contradictions in the text; although they don't really exist, no one is going to look them up while talking to me. Even if they can't find them later, the seed of doubt has been planted, which is what is required to settle this mess down.

Shiba Shonagon's diary is certainly a headache, but a minor one. What would happen if *my* journal got published, I wonder? Still, this may provide a way to gauge the cleverness of my fellow samurai. Only the most ignorant or inexperienced can fail to recognize themselves in the text. It's marginally more difficult to figure out that Shonagon wrote the damned thing (M. realized this right away, but this is hardly surprising, given her own dramatic role in the book). The more people the reader can puzzle out after that, the more cleverness I credit to them. I don't doubt that H. could read it through once, then read it again and fill in the names as she went.

Month of the Tiger, Fourteenth Day

Curse him, the bandit Fade has struck again — and this time on the river. Every time I think I've seen all his tricks, he comes up with something new.

He must have been raised noble; no peasant would have the tactical mind or the leadership to pull off such daring raids. It's maddening; first brilliant cavalry raids, and now he's moved to piracy.

Or... Is it possible that some river pirate simply used Fade's name to ensure compliance? That's a very real possibility; boating isn't Fade's usual style, and both criminals would gain a great deal by exchanging names. The real Fade could let himself be seen in public many miles from the incident, while the false Fade would have the reassurance that we magistrates would be looking for him with clues that lead to a different man altogether.

On one hand, it's a complicated trick. It could work, but would simple bandits even bother with such subterfuge? On the other hand... Fade is hardly a simple bandit. Besides, this deception is hardly less complicated than raiding rivers instead of roads. In either case, it won't do at all to underestimate my opponent.

Lately I've felt like this city is starting to work its way into my mind. Even things that should be simple appear complicated to me now, because I keep thinking "surely it can't be *that* simple; perhaps the simplicity is only a mask to conceal its true complexity!" It's like living in a maze lined with mirrors.

Damn.

Oh well, at least things are better with M. — for now. When I arrived, she must have seen in my face that something was bothering me, because she didn't start with her usual complaints. Instead, she gave me a nice *shiatsu*, in that strange foreign way she has. Then, when she was done rubbing my back, she covered my head with a towel and had someone else come in and walk on my back. Whoever it was, she had light, tiny feet — it was bliss. I wish I could sleep here, but T.W. will be waiting, not to mention my wife.

Now I know the burdens of an Emerald Magistrate.

Month of the Tiger, Twenty-Second Day

That blustering fool K. made quite a scene today, demanding that I catch Fade immediately. I assured him that I was doing my best, but he was not reassured. Of course he had nothing to add when I asked if he had any advice, information or assistance to offer. Naturally, the best he could do was insist that I work harder — as if I've been sniffing flowers and folding origami all the time I've been here.

Demands made, he then wanted to talk to me privately. He always does this; shouts and threatens me in front of my staff, then pulls me aside to discuss things as equals.

Once we were alone, he revealed his real fear. If Fade had taken one ship, what was to stop him from taking another — specifically, one of K.'s opium shipments to Necessary Village.

"Don't worry," I told him. "Most magistrates here would be spending time trying to track the sources of illegal opium. Since I already know them, I can spend that time searching for this bandit."

Really, I meant it as a joke, but he got upset and accused me of trying to threaten him. I found *that* to be quite a joke, and he left the office with my laughter in his ears.

Unbelievably, E. picked this juncture as the perfect time to get involved in power politics. He said he'd overheard K. talking about opium shipments (I'm not surprised; K. speaks loud, especially for a Scorpion) and wondered if it would necessarily be a bad thing if such a shipment was stopped.

Granted, I was surprised, but I suppose I should have kept my temper better. K.'s blustering had angered me more than I wanted to let on, and I'm afraid I took it out on poor E. — I struck him and told him in no uncertain terms that he should leave thinking about the opium trade to those with the proper perspective. Things looked very different at the top of a hill than the bottom of a dungheap, so I guess I shouldn't be surprised that E. doesn't understand how Ryoko Owari would be ruined if the cartels were harmed. I tried to explain it, but I doubt that I got through to him. He can be stubborn. Still, I made sure he understood that no one was going to interfere with the opium trade on my watch. He seemed a bit dejected, but I was in no mood to cheer up a gloomy Leatherworker. Perhaps tomorrow I'll give him a compliment. It really doesn't take much to keep their type happy.

Month of the Rabbit, First Day

Something ludicrous happened today; a minor noble implied that I was the man in "Memoirs of an Opium Eater" who seduced and then abandoned the narrator. I laughed out loud, which only led my imbecile accuser to smirk as if she'd figured out my secret. I then pointed out to her specific dates on which I was out of town reporting to the Emerald Champion, during which the narrator's mystery lover (who is almost certainly S.J. — a fact I chose not to tell this ignorant twit) was present and active. It was an amusing episode, but one not untainted by irritation.

I may have made a break on the 'ninja' case since last I wrote. All three I captured in the Month of the Ox broke when tortured, but unfortunately it took Pitiful over a day to get the first one to talk. I've worked with a lot of torturers, and Pitiful is the best of them for long haul jobs — I haven't seen anyone he couldn't crack eventually. He's not fast, though; while reliable, his methods take too much time. Maybe I should consider Osako's offer to lend me her man. But she says she doesn't need a new torturer, so I'd have to pay her back some other way. Not an attractive prospect.

In any event, we got names (or at least aliases) of other 'ninja', but it took so much *time* that they were long gone by the time we learned where they were. Now, however, I find out Shosuro Rei (a Daimyo's Magistrate for the Scorpion clan — she watches Beiden Pass and the areas by the Three Man Alliance) caught a fellow called Long Ears going towards Crab territory with forged travel papers. I think he may be one of our 'ninja'. I've filed a request to interrogate him before his execution. I hope it gets there in time — I included a letter from the Governor, that should ease any potential difficulties.

M. introduced me to a geisha called G. tonight. M. got her in from the country three years ago, and has just recently decided that she's completed her training. I'm impressed; not once did the girl slip up and reveal her common roots. She's also a real beauty, just now coming ripe. M. must have quite an eye if she spotted her three years ago — no doubt the girl was coarsened by the sun and had dirt under her fingernails, too.

Once G. had left us, M. confided to me that she was the girl who walked upon my back so expertly. M. has been saving her, hoping to establish her as the mistress of someone discerning and powerful. From what I've seen of her, her man will be lucky as well.

Month of the Rabbit, Sixth Day

Every lead on the case of Fade has led to a dead end. It's infuriating! The 'ninja' universally seem to recruit from the venal and self-interested, making it relatively easy to go from captured ninja to free ones. Fade, however, inspires loyalty through admiration instead of fear. This makes it much harder to extract information from his henchmen — and also means they're less likely to leave their injured behind to be captured.

Perhaps I'm comparing Crabs and Cranes here. Fade's gang is extremely mobile and violent. They focus on single, large robberies periodically through the year. Then they hide out, plotting the next heist. The Ryoko 'ninja' are immobile, cemented to the city, and they make a steady income through countless minor grafts and extortions. This makes it comparatively easy to drag off the lowest levels of the organization — but the leader knows this and is careful to insulate himself from his

underlings. Fade, on the other hand, is always right there with his vassals. This makes it hard to catch any of them... but when we do, we're much likelier to catch his whole rotten band.

I have succeeded in getting Long Ears' execution delayed and in having him sent to Ryoko Owari. Surprisingly, Shosuro Rei showed up as well. I'm not sure what to make of her; she seems to be a nosy one, but not in the usual Scorpion way. I'm not sure exactly how to describe it. Most Scorpions act like you've done something wrong, but that it's all right; like they'd do the same thing in your place. Almost like they regret having to blackmail you. Rei wasn't like that; instead, she acted like she knew I'd done something wrong and like it amused her. Not that different from fake sympathy, but there was also this little edge of threat. Not a blackmailer's threat; a magistrate's threat.

Maybe I'm just jumping at shadows. More likely the Scorpions in the south have a different style of blackmail. Not that I've done anything she could stick me for. Accusing me of taking bribes would cause her a terrible loss of face, given the difference in our stations. Hyobu would certainly stick up for me, even against a magistrate from her own family; that would swing a big stick.

Rei must know these things, unless she's a fool. She can't be planning to cross me, knowing she'd lose... it must be something else. Possibly just my own nerves.

M.'s whining for me to come to bed. Perhaps that will take my mind off things. If nothing else, it will shut her up.

Month of the Rabbit, Eleventh Day

Long Ears has been quite helpful, thanks to Pitiful. Two new 'ninja' have been identified in the Fisherman Quarter. I'm almost tempted to let those monsters from the Moment's Edge Firemen make an example of one of them just to slow things down for the 'ninja' or create a little war between the 'ninja' and the Firemen. Still, can't take a chance that the one I gave them would be the one who would eventually lead me to the new leader.

Who would have thought that someone smart enough to elude me for so many months would be *stupid* enough to ignore the advantages of allying with me? His (or her, can't rule that out) predecessor understood the situation. A little cooperation with

me — setting up some show arrests, agreeing to keep out of the Noble Quarter and to keep her activities quiet — was that so much to ask? Ayako was happy with it; she got to extort merchants to her heart's desire, as long as it didn't threaten the social order. It was *better* than catching criminals; I was preventing crimes from being done (or at least preventing them from having significant effects) instead of punishing people after the fact. Everything was *fine*, dammit, and then this new guy has to come in, kill Ayako and dump a bucket of fish guts all over a perfect situation.

It's probably her own damn fault. Ayako thought the magistrates were her only threat. Figured that as long as her organization was doing well, everyone would get fat scaring merchants with the ninja myth and would be too happy to covet her position. In all fairness, that's a reasonable assumption; but I could have told her that people are never too happy to covet. That's the first thing a Crane learns at court.

Reasonable people never see it coming. They assume everyone else is reasonable too. That's the first thing I learned from the Scorpions.

So somewhere out there is the heir to Ayako's 'ninja' extortion racket. Probably has guards and defenses and is constantly watching for betrayal from an underling.

Hm... is there an idea here? Perhaps I should contact this pair subtly. Put a little gentle pressure on them. Offer to make things easier for them — make sure that their rivals in the organization suffer while their own enterprises prosper. Get them grateful. Make them look good while they make me look good... and then when they've gotten high enough in the organization, they can betray the new leader to me, I'll kill him and put one of them in his place. Or just eradicate the whole organization.

It's a nice idea. I'll have to see if they're suitable. Even if they aren't, the approach might get noticed by the new chief, who will probably be paranoid enough to lash out on mere suspicion. And when he lashes out, of course, he'll be vulnerable.

Unreasonable people can never leave well enough alone. That's the second thing I learned from the Scorpions.

Month of the Rabbit, Twenty-Second Day

Just got back from my monthly meeting with the Emerald Champion. Luckily it was one of his months out of the capital, so I only had to ride two days and take an overnight barge to Kyuden Ikoma, then a day of meetings and the same journey back. All in all, five days out town — but worth it.

I always look forward to my meetings with Doji Satsume. Not just because he is my Daimyo and the Emerald Champion. In fact, I look forward to our meetings in spite of his high station — or perhaps because he does not allow his station to stand between us as men.

I made no excuses for being outwitted by Fade once again, but did stress the promising developments with the 'ninja'. That was a tight line to walk; I couldn't reveal to him how much I *truly* know about their inner workings, but I did subtly sound him out on my plan of subverting one of the underlings. I couldn't say anything outright, but when I presented it as an exchange of gifts, favor for favor, he seemed to understand.

There were five other magistrates reporting, so I didn't have as much individual time with the Champion as I might selfishly desire. He did make time to speak with me personally, however. He told me he understood what a thorn Ryoko Owari can be, and that he appreciates my efforts. He congratulated me on the general discharge of my duties — even though I haven't captured Fade or completely destroyed the 'ninja'.

With another man, I would have dismissed his words as mere flattery, but coming from him, they meant more. In my heart, I want to believe him, admire him, obey him — I feel more loyalty for him than I have felt for any man, place or ideal in my life. I catch myself hoping some part of my respect is reflected from him to me — that he really appreciates my work and understands my true loyalty to him, despite the actions I have had to take in pursuit of the larger good. I feel that he does; but I also know that I would think or feel anything if he wanted me to. It's perfectly possible that Doji Satsume is the greatest manipulator in Rokugan. I hope my feelings for him are valid; but I must accept that his sincerity and careful words could put anything he wanted in my heart. I have no way of knowing the truth.

On my way in here, G. bowed to me and greeted me in a familiar fashion. I asked her how she'd recognized me (as I had naturally taken great care to conceal my features and wear a plain robe). She said that when M. introduced me, she had been struck by my graceful walk, and that she had recognized it a second time today.

I asked her if her mother had been as beautiful as she, and she just giggled. Then I asked if her beautiful mother had snared the love of a samurai — for surely no peasant would have the refinement to notice a graceful walk, nor the poise to comport herself as she did. I could see that she was affected by my words.

I mustn't take her flattery too much to heart; she has too much to gain from me. Can it be that she's trying to supplant M. in my affections? Or am I only seeing my own imaginings reflected in her? In any event, it probably wouldn't be worth the effort. One mistress is trouble enough; I have no need to get two and watch them fight. Regardless of which won, I would lose.

Month of the Rabbit, Last Day

Today I made my move against Slender, one of the 'ninja' identified by Long Ears. Backed by A. and T.W., I cornered him and presented him with my offer — my patronage and protection in return for his assistance.

He said he'd do it, but I could tell right away that he intended to betray me. He was completely unsuitable; he might as well have held up a sign that said "I'm Going To Stab Your Back". People who don't have the sense to lie well should just tell the truth and stay out of trouble.

I let him think that he'd fooled me (and how *galling* it was to pretend that someone so transparent could dupe *me*) and then followed him when he departed. He went straight to the home of the second conspirator revealed by Long Ears — a low life called "Dusty". T.W. crept close enough to see inside, and then was able to listen to the pair with his magic.

As it turned out, Slender was not just planning to betray me to his master — he had ambitions to blackmail me as well. Clearly he wouldn't do. We moved in.

I was, perhaps, a bit sloppy. We didn't know there was a third man inside, and he had a bow. We tried to take Slender and Dusty alive, and the third man opened fire. T.W. got hit, and responded with a spell that killed the archer — and set the building on fire.

I had my weapon sheathed when the third man started shooting, so Slender must have thought he could grab his weapon and attack before I could draw. The look of surprise on his face when he died would have been more gratifying from someone familiar with the art of the *iai*, but I'll freely confess that I took great pleasure in killing him. Such is my weakness, but it stems from a joy in justice.

Slender died by my sword, and the archer by T.W.'s spell. The last 'ninja' tried to flee out the door, and was stopped by A., who grabbed him and flung him into a wall. Sadly, this Dusty was a frail man and died on the spot. That's how we wound up killing off all our leads in less time than it takes me to write it down.

I was frustrated, yes, but that's no excuse for what I did next. I lost my composure dreadfully and began bellowing at my deputies like a common fish seller. I'm afraid I said some ill considered things. I'd apologize, but given their station an apology would only make things worse, I'm sure. Perhaps gifts are in order.

Month of the Dragon, Third Day

T.W. has gotten over my reprimand, but A. still seems sulky and keeps making excuses — "I didn't throw him that hard, he must have had a weak skull," and so forth. I gave him a *tsuba*, as recommended by my wife, but it has had little effect on his mood. M. said she'd arrange for a geisha to cheer him up. If that doesn't work, I don't know what I'll do; I certainly don't need a horse-sized lump of mopey samurai around my office on top of my other problems.

The trail is definitely cold on Fade's latest heist, and the 'ninja' seem to have closeted themselves as well. While this gives me some welcome breathing room, I know it won't last. I haven't stopped them; they're just scared for a while, working in secret, saving their strength until they can reach out again. What form that reach will take I have no idea, but I'm sure I won't like it.

Month of the Dragon, Eighth Day

H. called me in for a meeting with the opium cartels today. This was the first time I've seen the three chiefs of opium trade in Rokugan together, discussing their business; it was informative and entertaining, if a bit tiresome.

S. spoke first, complaining about the weakness of her territory. K. replied that she had three major clans to supply, while he and H. had to make do with two apiece. S. responded with a litany of complaints I've heard before — the Dragon don't buy opium, the Unicorn magistrates are too honest to buy and too dangerous to kill, the Phoenix are so far away that it eats up all her profits just getting to them. H. just shrugged and said S. should find a way to make people want opium more. She suggested trying to get more Unicorn magistrates addicted — perhaps by sneaking it into their food surreptitiously. If such a magistrate declared openly that he was addicted to opium, but claimed to have been dosed in secret — well, who would believe such a story?

S. didn't look pleased that H. was telling her how to run her business, but then again, S. *never* looks pleased. K. spoke next, and renewed his request that the Mantis clan be put under his control. He restated his tired old arguments that the Mantis could more efficiently be served from Earthquake Fish Bay by his contacts, instead of having to come all the way up the river to get their goods from H.'s people.

H. made some comment about suspecting him of having an interest other than a desire to streamline distribution, but this time he had a ready answer. He claimed that his *only* interest in the opium business was to support the greater glory and power of the Scorpion clan. If controlling the Mantis through his Crab henchmen was the best thing for the clan, he should do it. If it was the best thing for him to *give up* power or profit to make the operation more efficient — he'd do that too. To prove it, he offered to let H. distribute opium in Scorpion lands, in exchange for the Mantis.

Certainly, this was a surprise. The Mantis are a big market for a small clan, and the Scorpion are a small market for a large clan — but the Scorpion fief still consumes easily twice the opium that the Mantis lands do.

K. argued that H. should distribute to the Scorpion because it was adjacent to her regular Lion clan territories, while he should distribute to the Mantis because they're next to his Crab regions. Again, he invoked "efficiency" and the good of the entire clan. H. countered by saying that if that was his only interest, he should just give her the Scorpion territory (which is convenient to her distribution network) and let her keep the Mantis (where she has experience and an established group of sellers). He was ready; his reply was that if H. had so much of the market, it would tax the fields she owns, while his would produce more opium than he needed. An exchange of lands would be difficult, expensive and look suspicious; and if opium wound up scarce in one area and plentiful in another, it raised the specter of alternative, independent merchants smuggling it across cartel boundaries.

I have to hand it to him; he argued well, without once admitting to his own self interest. I wasn't fooled, though, and you can bet H. wasn't either. If K. wants the Mantis, it's because he thinks he can make more money off it than he can off the Scorpion. My guess would be that he'd like to use the Mantis to smuggle opium into Otosan Uchi (H.'s territory, and the national capital of opium use) and into the Phoenix lands (S.'s territory — and an area opium could reach much easier by sea than by her current land route).

H. said she saw no reason to make such a drastic change when the system worked fine as it was, but that she'd consider his offer for next year. K. looked disgruntled, but what did he expect? I wouldn't be surprised if H. is sneaking cheap opium into Crab and Phoenix territories on the sly, and the Mantis would be the perfect way to move it.

They asked me if I had any input from an enforcement perspective. I told them that K.'s plan to diversify his distribution channels was a wise one. While he's got the riverbank inspectors taken care of for now, that could change in a moment. It will be good for him to have an overland route into Crab territory — well worth the risk and effort of establishing it now. I also said I saw no reason to change a system that was working fine. "As a magistrate, the things that catch my attention are when people do things out of the ordinary. The criminals I execute are often the

ones who couldn't leave well enough alone." That seemed to have an effect.

I received my usual payment from the three of them and reiterated my request that they just keep up appearances in Ryoko Owari. "The better I look, the longer I stay in office," I told them, and reminded them how much harder things were under my idealistic predecessor. K. expressed the opinion that while I was easier to get along with, Shigeko had been so easy to fool and misdirect that she had posed little threat — and she didn't have to be bribed!

We had a good laugh at that.

After the others had left, H. took me aside and asked how vulnerable I thought K.'s new overland distribution would be. I said I thought it would be fairly secure, barring any unforeseen problems. She nodded, narrowed her eyes, and asked me how "unforeseen problems" might come about.

So... it appears H. is nervous about K. cutting into her territory. I don't blame her a bit. I told her that I was unwilling to cross him for her unless she was planning to destroy him completely. She said she understood, and that my impartiality actually made the three-cartel opium situation more stable.

I smiled at that. After all, isn't stability the ultimate goal of an Emerald Magistrate?

Month of the Dragon, Sixteenth Day

It's been a while since I came out here to see M. My wife has been ill, and it concerns me. We have no illusions about our relationship, but it's hard to live with someone for years without either hating them or becoming their friend. Yoshino and I haven't had any children, but we're still close. She is a good listener, a good helper, and she keeps the house as I like it. I've trusted her with every legitimate problem I've faced as a magistrate, and her advice has always been sound... lately though, it seems as if the dirty side of my work, the side no one would understand, has come to dominate my duties. I can't tell Yoshino of such things; if I become disgraced, she must remain untouched as much as possible. I owe her that at least. But still, the pressure... I can't tell her, but I must tell someone. And so I find myself in the embrace of M. once more.

The pressure has become intense. So many merchants are coming to me, and they aren't asking help with their taxes — they're demanding it! As if I'm their vassal and it's their right to insist on compliance!

I'm tempted to just drop the entire charade. I could stop taking bribes from them all — and arrest them all for offering. What need do I have for more money? I already have wealth beyond avarice and no time to spend it all. The bribes from the samurai running the opium cartels is difficult enough to hide without worrying about all this low-level graft as well.

It's disgusting. The only reason I put up with it in the first place was to get the trust of the merchants so they'd lead me to the 'ninja'. I've followed their lead as far as it goes; what more do I need them for? I could hand over all the money I've taken and declare that the entire thing was a grand deception, a secret operation to root out and capture tax evaders. I'd be shut of their squabbling and I'd look great to my master..

But I could never do it. What would happen to the city if its most prosperous merchants were suddenly jailed or killed? It would be chaos — H. would never forgive me, not to mention the rest of the Scorpion clan. That's without even considering the talk that would follow me — the accusations that I'd taken the bribes when it suited me, and betrayed them when they were no longer useful. For once the obvious speculations of the public would be true — ugh. Could I stand myself if I did something so blatant?

No, I'll have to put up with them. Perhaps the time has come to take a more stern approach, however. I'll have to think it over after my upcoming journey to Otosan Uchi.

Month of the Dragon, Twenty-Ninth Day

This is the end. Fade struck again, in my absence, and this time he has gone too far. Taking gold was one thing — that's what bandits do. Assaulting nobles was a terrible crime, but such things happen locally and need not concern an Emerald Magistrate. Even the abuses heaped upon the shugenja of the Scorpion clan — even this blasphemy could be tolerated, if for no reason past the Scorpion desire to hide such a shaming loss.

Now, however, he has crossed the line. Stealing weapons and armor intended for a city garrison goes beyond banditry; Fade has entered the realm of armed insurrection.

It was a long and bloody battle — the sort of thing no mere bandit should have been able to engineer. The defenders sent carrier pigeons, but Fade must have hunted them. He harassed and assaulted the convoy for a full day before cornering them in an untenable position and capturing the shipment.

There are leads; a dozen of Fade's men were killed, and they must have friends, family — or failing that, enemies who've followed their movements. One of them will lead me to Fade. The most corpses he ever left behind was eight, and now we have over a dozen. One of them is sure to leave a clue.

But what if it doesn't? We had one of his men *alive* too — and still were unable to find him.

The 'ninja' are embarrassing enough, but at least that's fairly quiet. This is making me look like an idiot in front of the entire country — people are losing their faith in the Emerald Magistrates, which means they're losing their faith in the Emperor.

A letter to Doji Satsume is already on its way. I have humbly admitted to him that the situation is beyond my abilities — and that Fade has escalated his predation in a dangerous direction. He is well on his way to being a major threat to Rokugan, and to Ryoko Owari in particular.

I have requested an Emerald Legion be sent to me, dedicated solely to the capture of Fade.

Month of the Dragon, Last Day

Damn the backward, self-interested, ignorant and selfish Governor of this cursed, corrupt and shallow city! H. found out about my request for an Emerald Legion and recommended against it to the Emerald Champion and to Bayushi Shoji. Shoji spoke to the Emperor, and I'm to get nothing until additional need is shown.

That bitch! Doesn't she understand that we want the same thing — a safe, stable city? Ryoko Owari may be a stinking pile of ignorance and neglect, but it's still *my* city and I'm honor bound to protect it!

I only wanted the Legion to stop Fade, but H. is so paranoid that she was certain they'd uncover the opium trade. I told her again and again that they'd be isolated — when we weren't in the field looking for Fade I'd keep them billeted in the Towers of the Eyes. They'd never get a *chance* to find out about the cartels. She didn't believe me. S. and K. both opposed it too — idiots. Said that even Shigeko had gotten close to them on occasion, and she'd been only one honest magistrate. They were terrified by a legion of them. K. even went so far as to imply that maybe I intended to betray the cartels — that the Legion wasn't for Fade at all, but to protect me from the Thunder Guard.

He's fortunate I didn't challenge him right there, the smug bastard. Have I done *anything* to harm the cartels, ever? I've bent over *backwards* for their filthy opium trade — just to keep *my city* stable. I even stuck my neck out when Michikane died, making sure his father didn't do anything rash and stupid. This is the thanks I get — accusations and mistrust. I'm trying to protect their city from a dangerous lunatic, and all they can see is the need to protect themselves from *me*.

Yoshino told me. I should have listened. "Get in bed with Scorpions and you'll be stung," she said. I was such a fool.

Fine. They can all sink into Fu Leng's festering pit for all I care. If they don't want me to interfere with their cartels or their city, I'll sit back while Fade steals their weapons and kills them in their beds.

My career as a criminal's toady is over. Let's see how they like running the city without the Magistrate helping them.

