The world shifted to the left alarmingly yet again, and a wet calligraphy brush took the opportunity to roll across the small writing desk. Asahina Niwayo reached for it with a rush of panic, but she grasped only air. The brush left a trail of irregularly shaped ink splotches across the white paper before it clattered onto the deck.

"Be a dear and get that for me?" She smiled up at the tall yojimbo that lounged in the doorway to her tiny cabin.

Dōji Asa bent down to pick up the errant calligraphy brush, swaying as the ship beneath them righted itself again. She set it on the writing table. Niwayo picked it up and tucked it, still inky, negligently behind her ear. She picked up the scroll she was reviewing and went back to her reading.

Asa watched the shugenja patiently as the boat continued to sway. Every now and then, Niwayo would write a few crisp kanji, and continue with her reading. Through the tiny porthole, Asa could hear a single seagull's cry, but it was gone quickly, leaving only the waves beating their rhythm against the hull of Mioko's Song.

Finally, boredom and curiosity tempted her tongue. "What are you working on anyway, Asahina-sama? We haven't gotten to shore yet, and you can't see anything from the deck but mists. And all this endless rain. All my feathers are sodden."

The moon-faced Asahina looked up at Asa and smiled. Her eyes sparkled. "Oh, I've waited months for someone to ask me that! Are you sure you want to hear?"

Asa put a palm to her forehead as she shifted her balance. Fool! Never ask a shugenja what they're working on! You know better! The slender woman forced out an interested expression and braced herself in the doorway to get more comfortable, lowering her hand. "Of course, Asahina-sama," she lied. "At least until the end of my shift."

The shugenja shuffled her papers quickly, pulling out one from the bottom of her stack. "Of course! I will be brief then!" she offered, waving the paper so quickly that Asa couldn't hope to read it.

"Clearly, as you can see here," Niwayo waved the paper again, "Our destination is a land prepared by the Lady Dōji. Somewhere between one hundred and one hundred twenty of the Isawan Calendar, during the reign of Emperor Genji…preserved by the mystery of the Water Dragon for a thousand years. Now, we have a legacy of the Kami's works, a carefully preserved relic of the past. As the Scholar Otomo Kenji wrote in the 400's, 'There is no part she would not save'. Now, that is contradicted by Bayushi Monoru in 549, but he was playing into the conflict with Akodo Senbai in the Imperial court at the launch of the Goshin war…"

The small muscles in her jaw clenched as Asa stifled a yawn. "And that means?" she politely recovered by asking.

"That means, Asa-san, that despite what it said in The Cost of Grace, everything Lady Dōji wanted to preserve…all that she wanted to save from the ravages of time and the loss of memory…every scrap, every observation of what came before, what she found when she arrived in Ningen-do, even her memories of Tengoku itself…they all could be there! Not changed to please this Emperor or that Champion. Not slightly modified for political expediency, nor due to a copyist's error. Whatever she intended to save, in its rawest form. Don't you see? We could find out the truth."

Asa shifted to a standing position at the mention of the book banned by Imperial edict. "The truth about what?"

Niwayo looked up. "About everything."