Virtuous Things Proceed

By Jason Flowers

Inspired by *All’s Well That Ends Well* by William Shakespeare

Challenge

 For two years, the shugenja, Shiba Kosuke, has been the ward of Akodo Natsu, a powerful Lion Clan daimyo. Shiba Kosuke’s presence in the care of the Lion was meant to lessen tensions between the two clans, but Kosuke has had a difficult time gaining acceptance. His spiritual tendencies and lack of typical Lion martial prowess make him a target of ridicule in Akodo-sama’s court, despite his affinity with the kami. So far this has not truly bothered Kosuke, except in one case: that of Akodo Isamu, the niece of Akodo Natsu.

 Despite their differences, Kosuke has loved Akodo Isamu since his first day in Akodo Natsu’s castle. Sadly, the feeling is not mutual. Isamu barely knows that the Phoenix shugenja exists, and yet Kosuke pines for the lioness.

 Shortly before the Player Characters arrived at the castle, Lord Akodo became ill, and his healers have been unable to restore him to health. Shiba Kosuke approaches the PCs and asks them to help him. He believes that he has the power to alleviate the daimyo’s condition, but as a ward of the Clan, lacks the trust and influence in Akodo-sama’s court. He will even stake his own life, offering to commit seppuku if he fails. With the PCs assistance, and his vow, the daimyo and his court are convinced to allow the Phoenix to attempt to treat Akodo Natsu. Although the cause of the illness is unknown, Shiba Kosuke’s strength and connection to the kami is enough to revitalize the Lion lord, curing him of the deathly malady.

Focus

 With Akodo Natsu’s remarkable recovery many in the court rethink their opinions of the young Phoenix. Lord Akodo is eternally grateful to the shugenja. In thanks he promises to arrange a marriage between Kosuke and a suitable Lion samurai. At this promise, Kosuke makes his preference of Akodo Isamu known.

 While Lord Natsu quickly approves of this match, his niece is less than thrilled. She disapproves of the idea of wedding a Phoenix, especially one with no strong sword arm. Akodo Natsu and Shiba Kosuke will implore the PCs to speak with her and convince her that this could be an advantageous match. But before the PCs speak with her, or perhaps during the conversation, they learn that Akodo Isamu, a taisa in the Twelfth Legion, plans to return to her troops fighting on the frontlines against the Unicorn. She has vowed that her Duty is to the Lion and she would rather die in battle than marry an unworthy suitor not of the Lion Clan. She will wed a warrior, or she will wed no one.

Strike

 Shiba Kosuke, desperate to prove his worth, will beseech the PCs to accompany him to the frontlines. Arriving amid a massive battle, the group and Kosuke will need to locate Akodo Isamu in the clamor of combat. At a suitable lull in the conflict, the Lion Clan taisa will be found. Isamu is not pleased to see them in her Legion’s way, but as there is no other recourse assigns them to assist in defending against the coming Unicorn onslaught. The assault that follows is vicious. The intense Unicorn attack leaves high Lion casualties, but Shiba Kosuke stands in the midst of the fray, alongside the player characters, using his magic to heal injured Lion bushi. Kosuke’s esteem rises mightily, when he manages to call upon the kami to churn the earth, disrupting a Unicorn charge and saving the lives of an isolated group of Lion soldiers.

 During the tumult Akodo Isamu witnesses the actions of Shiba Kosuke and realizes that she has misjudged the Phoenix shugenja immensely. Kosuku has fought alongside the Lion with Honor and Courage, and while he may not be the finest swordsman, he is indeed OF the Lion Clan.

 In the happiest ending to this story, Akodo Isamu declares her devotion to Shiba Kosuke. The two are married immediately upon their safe return to Akodo Natsu’s castle, thus bringing the Lion and Phoenix Clans closer together. But in Rokugan, happy endings are not guaranteed.

 Perhaps Isamu is mortally wounded in the fighting and says her wedding vows with her final breath as Kosuke kneels over her fallen form. Isamu could witness Kosuke’s feats and swear to marry him when the battle is over only to see him struck down in front of her as she races to defend him.

 Or, in true Shakespearean form, the two could come together on the field and, recognizing their pending doom, swear their vows before sacrificing themselves to allow the bulk of the Lion army to survive. The player characters should have a hand in how this plays out, but remember, the End is the Renown.