

Love Letter



*Legend of the
Five Rings*

A few months ago, the Empress of Rokugan's third child, Iweko Miaka, came of age. This instantly made her the most eligible maiden in the Empire, and prominent samurai from every clan and faction have set out to court her. Of course, in Rokugan marriage is a matter of duty and politics far more often than love, but the personal affection of a potential spouse can be a very effective tool in marriage negotiations. And when that potential spouse is an Imperial princess, her affection can be more influential than any number of political favors.

Of course, winning a princess' heart is hardly an easy task in the tightly-monitored world of the Imperial Palace. The preferred tool of courtly romance in Rokugan is the letter, and every palace's corridors are filled with the soft steps of servants carrying letters back and forth. But such letters can be intercepted by rivals or turned away by hostile guards. For a samurai to succeed in his suit, he will have to find ways of getting his own letters into Miaka's hands – while blocking the similar efforts of rival suitors.

Object

In the wake of many recent tragic events, Empress Iweko I has sought to bring a note of joy back to the Imperial City, Toshi Ranbo, by announcing the gempukku (coming-of-age) of her youngest child and only daughter, Iweko Miaka.

Prominent samurai throughout the Imperial City have immediately started to court the Imperial princess, whose hand in marriage would be a prize beyond price in Rokugan.

You are one of these suitors, trying to get your love letter delivered to Miaka's hand. Unfortunately, she spends most of her time in her

private quarters within the Imperial Palace, and when she does appear in public she is surrounded by guards, handmaidens, and spiritual advisors. A personal meeting is impossible, so instead you must use your political influence to arrange an intermediary to carry your message.

During the game, you hold one secret card in your hand. This is who currently carries your love letter for Iweko Miaka.

Make sure that the person closest to Miaka holds your love letter at the end of the day, so it reaches her first!

Components

Your game of LOVE LETTER should include the following. If it does not, contact customerservice@alderac.com for assistance.

- 16 game cards
- 4 reference cards
- 13 Tokens of affection

Game Cards

The game has 16 cards. Each different card name represents someone at the Imperial residence.

Each card has a value in the upper left corner—the higher the number,

the closer that person is to the princess. Below is a Clan symbol that shows how many of that card are in the deck. At the bottom of each card, a text box describes the effect when the card is discarded.

Reference Cards

These list the various cards in the game, as well as their effects and how many copies are in the deck. They are not used in the game, but are provided as a memory aid.

Tokens of Affection

Red tokens are also included. These are used to track Iweko Miaka's ever-growing affection for those suitors whose letters reach her.

Setup

Shuffle the 16 cards to form a face-down draw deck. Remove the top card of the deck from the game without looking at it.

If you are playing a two-player game, take three more cards from the top of the deck and place them to the side, face up. They will not be used during this round.

Each player draws one card from the deck. This is the player's hand, and is kept secret from the others.

Whoever was most recently on a date goes first (if tied, the younger player wins the tie).

How to Play

LOVE LETTER is played in a series of rounds. Each round represents one day. At the end of each round, one player's letter reaches Iweko Miaka, and she reads it.

When she reads enough letters from one suitor, she becomes enamored and grants that suitor permission to court her. That player wins Iweko Miaka's heart and the game.

Taking a Turn

On your turn, draw the top card from the deck and add it to your hand. Then choose one of the two cards in your hand and discard it

face up in front of you. Apply any effect on the card you discarded. You must apply its effect, even if it is bad for you.

See page 15 for the effects of each individual card. Likewise, if you have any questions about special cases regarding the card, you'll find the answer there.

All discarded cards remain in front of the player who discarded them. Overlap the cards so that it's clear in which order they were discarded. This helps players to figure out which cards other players might be holding onto.

Once you finish applying the card's effect, the turn passes to the player on your left.

Out of the Round

If a player is knocked out of the round, that player discards the card in his or her hand face up (do not apply the card's effect) and takes no more turns until next round.

Honesty

A player could cheat when chosen with the Guard, or fail to discard the Sensei when that player has the Manipulator or the Hatamoto in hand. We suggest that you don't play with people who cheat at fun, light games.

End of a Round

A round ends if the deck is empty at the end of a turn. The Imperial residence closes for the evening, the person closest to Iweko Miaka delivers the love letter, and Iweko Miaka retires to her chambers to read it.

All players still in the round reveal their hands. The player with the highest ranked person wins the round. In case of a tie, the player who discarded the highest total value of cards wins.

A round also ends if all players but one are out of the round, in which case the remaining player wins.

The winner receives one token of affection. Shuffle all 16 cards together, and play a new round following all of the setup rules.

The winner of the previous round goes first, because the princess speaks kindly of him or her at breakfast.

Winning

A player wins the game after winning a number of tokens of affection based on the number of players:

- 2 Players 7 tokens
- 3 Players 5 tokens
- 4 Players 4 tokens

The People

Here are brief profiles of the people in the game.

8: Iweko Miaka, Princess



The Empress' youngest child is a teenager who has just completed her gempukku (coming-of-age ceremony). An innocent girl who has lived a very sheltered life up until now, Miaka has a rather naïve and romantic view of samurai life shaped more by reading pillow-books

and listening to the gossip of her handmaidens than by any real-life experience. She spends most of her time within her quarters in the Imperial Palace, making only occasional appearances in the court. In public she is usually too shy and uncertain of herself to actually speak, instead huddling silently within the overwhelming splendor of her court garb. (In private, she sometimes complains to her handmaidens that her hairpins alone are heavy enough to break her neck.)

If you discard the Princess—no matter how or why, even to the Hatamoto—she has tossed your letter into the fire. You are knocked out of the round.

7: Togashi Gozato, Sensei

Iweko Miaka's personal sensei and advisor is from the Dragon Clan, a fitting choice given her mother's origins within that clan. Like all tattooed men, Gozato is enigmatic and mysterious, prone to speaking in riddles and answering questions with questions of his own – habits which frustrate young Miaka to no end.

When he is not instructing his young student, Gozato spends much of his time in the Imperial Palace gardens, where he may be



found meditating at odd hours of the day or night. He takes a dim view of courtly romance, which he sees as a distraction from the pursuit of Enlightenment.

Unlike other cards, which take effect when discarded, the text on the Sensei applies while he is in your hand. In fact, he has no effect when you discard him.

If you ever have the Sensei and either the Manipulator or the Hatamoto in your hand, you must discard the Sensei. You do not have to reveal the other card in your hand. Of course, you can also discard the Sensei even if you do not have either the Manipulator or the Hatamoto in your hand. He likes to play mind games....

6: Doji Takato, Manipulator

One of the more prominent diplomats in the Iweko court, Takato is an elegant and stylish man whose smooth face often wears a somewhat supercilious expression. He is never without his splendid fan, which he claims was once used by the famous Chancellor Kakita Yoshi. Takato sees himself as an heir to Yoshi's mastery of the courts, and to that end he seeks to control the flow of information and favors through the Imperial Palace. The Iweko princess' ultimate choice of husband matters far less to Takato than whether or not he can improve his own power and reputation by manipulating the courtship process.

When you discard the Manipulator, trade the card in your hand with the card held by another player of your choice. You cannot trade with a player who is out of the round, nor with someone protected by the Shugenja. If all other players still in the round are protected by the Shugenja, this card does nothing.



5: Matsu Misato, Hatamoto

Miaka's quarters in the Imperial Palace are watched by a dedicated Lion bushi, hand-picked for the duty by her father Iweko (formerly Akodo) Setai. She is always on guard at the doors, carefully inspecting and reviewing every visitor, and anyone seeking access to the princess must contend with her interference. Due to her role as the protector of an Imperial heir, she is permitted to wear swords and full armor within the palace, and the sight of this formidable warrior is a constant reminder of the Right Hand's loyal service to the Iweko Dynasty.

When you discard Matsu Misato, choose one player still in the round (including yourself). That player discards his or her hand (do not apply its effect unless it is the Princess) and draws a new card. If the deck is empty, that player draws the card that was removed at the start of the round.

If all other players are protected by the Shugenja, you must choose yourself.



4: Isawa Tenkawa, Shugenja

No heir to the Imperial line can be left without spiritual advisors, and no clan is better suited to such duty than the Phoenix. Of course, the Phoenix chose one of their most powerful shugenja for such an important role, but power and courtly talent do not always mesh well. Tenkawa, a shugenja of Fire, is a tall, lean man with a narrow face and an unfortunate tendency to look down on all those who are not gifted with the power of the kami. Still, one thing does level this priest: the determination that Miaka should marry a husband of suitable spiritual purity. Anyone else must be driven away, either with political influence or through the subtle disruptions of magic.

When you discard the Shugenja, you are immune to the effects of other players' cards until the start of your next turn. If all players other than the player whose turn it is are protected by the Shugenja, that player must choose him- or herself if possible when applying the effect of his or her card.



3: Kaiu Akemi, Diplomat

Among the lesser but still influential figures in the Imperial court is Kaiu Akemi, a talented sumai wrestler.

Like most masters of sumai, she is a large-bodied samurai who dresses plainly and wears her hair tied back in a formal topknot – and also like most masters of sumai, she is a blunt and harsh woman who often speaks her mind, even in court. Although her political influence is limited by her confrontational nature, no sumai wrestler is wholly without allies and favors, and she intends to use these to make sure Miaka has a Crab husband.

When discarded, choose one other player still in the round. You and that player secretly compare your hands. The player with the lower rank is knocked out of the round. In case of a tie, nothing happens. If all other players still in the round are protected by the Shugenja, this card does nothing.



2: Shosuro Yamazaki, Courtier

Yamazaki is subtle and self-effacing even for a Scorpion courtier, preferring to lurk in the background and avoid



notice, forcing others to seek him out when they need his support. His ominous mask, resembling an angry demon, serves to unsettle and distract anyone who approaches him. Yamazaki, like all Scorpion, prefers to take advantage of others' weakness and exploit their needs while keeping his own resources concealed. Yamazaki could care less who manages to romance Iweko Miaka – what matters to him is how much political debt and blackmail he can gather during the process.

When you discard the Courtier, you can look at one other player's hand. Do not reveal the hand to all players. If all other players still in the round are protected by the Shugenja, this card does nothing.

1: Seppun Tasuke, Guard

No Imperial heir leaves the palace without being closely guarded. Seppun Tasuke is but one of many Imperial samurai, a member of the elite order of bodyguards known as miharu, who ensures the princess is always safe when she travels outside her quarters.

When you discard a Guard, choose a player and name a card (other than a Guard). If that player has that card, that player is knocked out of the round. If all other players still in the round are protected by the Shugenja, this card does nothing.



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Game Reference:

Setup

1. Shuffle and remove the top card from deck from the game (facedown).
2. Deal each player 1 card.

Play

1. Draw 1 card.
2. Play one card for its effect.

End

1. Players remaining when last card is drawn and played reveal their hands. Highest value wins.
2. Winner takes 1 Token of Affection, then reshuffles entire deck and starts again. First player to 4 Tokens of Affection wins.