

To **High Magus Vahman Ardeshir**
Flame-Watcher of the Imperial Fire Temple
ESTAKHR

13th of Mehr
In the 18th year of Khosrow II's Kingship

Vahman,

The fire flickers in strange rhythm tonight.

I send this letter beneath the ash of the sacred brazier. You, who have guarded the flame longer than I have breathed, will know what I mean when I say: the heat does not hold.

At the feast of the new king, as the nobility drank and the court bards praised Ahura Mazda's justice, I stepped outside the Temple of Adur Burzen-Mihr and looked to the sky—as we are taught to do.

And Jupiter, the King's Star, was gone.

No cloud. No haze. The other planets shone in their paths. But Jupiter was missing. As if someone had plucked it from the vault. I have never seen such silence in the sky.

I questioned the elders. Some said it was the omen of Yazdegerd's fall—though he has only just risen. Others whispered of Angra Mainyu stirring beneath the sands. But I saw no rage in the heavens. I saw abandonment.

Since then, the fire has burned strangely. The flame folds inward. It curls as if drawn by something we cannot name.

You taught me the fire is Mazda's whisper. But what if the whisper has stopped? What if the silence is not absence, but collapse?

Heraclius mocks us from the west. Our nobles betray each other in the dark. The people chant prayers, but they no longer rise from the tongue like heat. And now the sky itself refuses to align.

Let it be known:

In the reign of Khosrow II, when Jupiter was plucked from the heavens over Ctesiphon, Rostam Ardeshir, brother of the sacred fire, committed the sky's breach to parchment lest Asha be swallowed by the Druj.

You are receiving this because you still believe in balance. If you find this, bury it beneath the threshold of the temple where the three fires converge.

Let it say: *we tended the fire as the stars vanished. We sang the gathas as the world forgot its rhythm. We watched, not the end of fire, but the unraveling of the flame's purpose.*

And no one spoke from the sky.

In fading heat,
Rostam Ardeshir
Magus of the Southern Flame
CTESIPHON