

To Lord Fujiwara no Takanobu  
Chief Chamberlain of the Imperial Bureau of Rites  
NARA

7<sup>th</sup> day of the 4<sup>th</sup> month, 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the Ten'en Era  
In the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of En'yū's Emperorship

Takanobu-sama,

The scent of plum blossoms clings to this letter, though their branches blacken in the courtyard. Perhaps the ink will hold their memory longer than the earth does.

At the fourth hour of morning, I looked toward the eastern ridge and saw an arc across the heavens—pale, unbroken, arcing like a bow without tension. Not a rainbow. Not a spirit bridge. It shimmered without color. It held itself like a poem with no subject.

No birds sang.

You remember when the emperor's second son died—how we lit incense and read the *Manyōshū* until even the tears smelled of cedar. Now there are five dead children in the southern wing, and no one writes poems.

Even the sun seems unwilling to enter the city. Amaterasu's light grows thin—she appears late, departs early, as though ashamed to look upon us.

The monks say it is a karmic storm. The doctors blame mold. But I say this: the arc is a scar. A wound where the sky once held thought. And now it forgets.

The princess wrote a tanka yesterday that ended with: "Even the moon forgets to reflect." She does not speak now.

You are receiving this letter because you once told me that rituals are the language of grace. That when words fail, incense may still speak. But what if the gods no longer smell our offerings?

What if the court continues its dances, and the gods no longer watch?

Let it be known:

*In the second year of Emperor En'yū, when a bowed light crossed the eastern sky, Fujiwara no Sadanobu, courtier of Heian, inked the silence of Amaterasu into trembling lines of kanbun.*

Bury this scroll in the poetry archive beneath the mirror chamber. Let it lie beside the verses of men who believed beauty could order time.

Let it say: *we painted our sorrows in brushstrokes, but the sky sent only silence. The goddess who once hid in a cave has hidden again—but this time, we cannot draw her out.*

With folded sleeves and fading light,  
**Fujiwara no Sadanobu**  
Poet of the Second Lantern Hall  
HEIAN-KYŌ