

*Most loyal retainer, keep this letter and its contents secret with your life.*

*Onnotangu looks down upon Ootosan Uchi this night. Our most glorious Emperor, the Son of Heaven, has joined his ancestors in Tengoku. He is at peace now, having grown old despite his years. He may have prepared for his appointed time, but to our sorrow, it arrived quite unforeseen to the rest of us. Yet our duty demands that we now step forward to serve the Crown Prince amid his grief. The responsibility he bears will be a heavy weight upon his young shoulders, so it settles upon his advisors and loyal vassals to provide the counsel and support that he requires.*

*It is known to many that the Emperor was soon to choose which of the Great Clans would be the caretakers of his Ancestral Sword, Kunshu, until Hantei Sotorii's coronation. Such will still occur, and it is now of the greatest importance that the stewardship falls upon the Scorpion Clan. Sotorii has always had a fondness for kenjutsu. Yet he is still young and fierce, blessed with strength rather than restraint. Should another clan become its steward, they may give him unfettered access to his family's sword without further training and meditation. A wiser course would be to continue the prince's instruction while Kunshu is kept by the Yogo, whose wardmasters can safeguard such a venerable artifact of Heaven.*

*There will be confusion as news of the Hantei's ascendance to Tengoku makes its way around the Forbidden City. Kakita Yoshi may try to lead the Empire as Chancellor until Hantei Sotorii ascends the throne, perhaps even giving the stewardship of the Ancestral Sword to the Crane on Sotorii's behalf in order to secure his own authority. With Daidoji Uji's armies returning from their former garrison at Toshi Ranbo and the spies that Yoshi-sama has spread throughout this blessed city, the machinations of the Crane cannot be ignored. We must clip their ornamented wings. Watch for them, undermine their every effort, and be ready for an act of desperation once they realize they cannot take what we have worked so hard to obtain.*

*As I attend to our late Emperor, your service is required. Observe our foes among the Crane and Phoenix, who are most likely to oppose us when the caretaking of the Hantei lineage is decided. Report on their movements and actions. If they send messages, intercept and destroy them. The days to come will be trying for all of us. Keep close those you trust the most and allow only them into your confidence. If you have any doubt, even your personal servants or bodyguards must be left ignorant to the truth. The Scorpion Clan will only succeed if our loyalty stays strong.*

*Bayushi Kachiko,*

*Imperial Advisor and Lady of Whispers*

