

## Chapter 9



### [1] The Matter of Ikezuki

At Naritada's Rokujō Nishi-no-tōin house, where Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa was staying, the lack of amenities made it impossible to conduct ceremonies on the First Day of the First Month in the third year of Juei. There were thus no Felicitations. And since there were no Felicitations at the Retired Emperor's residence, there were no Lesser Congratulations at the imperial palace.\*

The Heike, for their part, saw out the old year and welcomed the new on the beach at Yashima in Sanuki Province. The ceremonies of the first three days could not be performed in satisfactory fashion. Although the Emperor was present, there were no banquets, there were no Obeisances to the Four Directions. No trout were offered to the throne, nor did the Kuzu villagers from Yoshino present music. "Things were never this bad in the capital, in spite of all the disruptions," the Taira nobles told one another.

Verdant spring had come, with ever softer shore breezes and ever milder sunshine, yet the Heike, like the *kankuchō*, felt trapped in eternal ice. Most pathetically, they indulged in endless reminiscences about life in the capital, seeking to while away the long days with memories of how "the willows on the east and west banks do not put forth leaves at the same pace, nor do the plum blossoms on the south and north branches open and fall together,"† and of how they had enjoyed flower-viewing in the morning, moon-viewing at night, poetry, music, kickball, small-bow competitions, and contests matching fans, pictures, plants, and insects.

On the Eleventh of the First Month, Kiso no Yoshinaka visited the Retired

\* That is, at the young Emperor Go-Toba's current residence. The Felicitations (*hairai* or *hairai*) at the Retired Emperor's palace were supposed to precede the Congratulations (*chōhai*) or Lesser Congratulations (*kochōhai* or *kojōhai*) at the reigning Emperor's palace.

† A variation on a popular *rōei*.

Emperor to announce his imminent departure for the west to subdue the Heike.

On the Thirteenth, just as Yoshinaka was rumored to be ready to leave, word arrived that an army of fifty or sixty thousand riders had already reached Mino and Owari provinces, sent from the east by Yoritomo to put an end to his cousin's excesses.

In great surprise and alarm, Yoshinaka removed the Uji and Seta bridges and divided his forces for defensive action. His strength was negligible at the time. To the Seta Bridge, where the frontal assault would come, he sent Imai no Shirō Kanehira with eight hundred riders. To the Uji Bridge, he sent Nishina, Takanashi, and Yamada no Jirō with five hundred riders; to Imoarai, he sent his uncle Shida no Saburō Senjō Yoshinori with three hundred riders. It was reported that the Commanders-in-Chief of the frontal and rear assault forces from the east were Gama no Onzōshi Noriyori and Kurō Onzōshi Yoshitsune, that more than thirty great local landholders were marching with them, and that their combined armies numbered more than sixty thousand riders.

The Kamakura Lord Yoritomo owned two famous horses in those days, Ikezuki [Ill-Tempered Biter] and Surusumi [Ink-Stick]. Kajiware Genda Kagesue asked for Ikezuki more than once, but Yoritomo gave him Surusumi instead. "I am saving Ikezuki for the day when I might need to put on armor and ride," he told him. "Surusumi is an excellent horse, too." Then, for some reason, he bestowed Ikezuki on Sasaki Shirō Takatsuna when Takatsuna came to request leave to depart. "Take the horse in the knowledge that many others have desired him," he said.

Takatsuna made obeisance. "I will be the first man across the Uji River on this horse. If people tell you I died at the river, you will know someone outstripped me. If they tell you I am still alive, you may be sure I was first." He withdrew.

"That was an imprudent boast," the assembled great and small landholders whispered among themselves.

The easterners left Kamakura in independent parties and traveled toward the capital as they saw fit, some by way of Ashigara and others by way of Hakone. When Kajiware Genda Kagesue reached Ukishima-ga-hara in Suruga Province, he reined in for a time on a hilltop to watch the countless thousands of horses being led past by mouth and bridle ropes, each with a colored crupper and a saddle of its owner's choice. In all that mighty procession, there was no better mount than Surusumi, the one he had received from Yoritomo, he thought complacently. Just then, he spied a horse that looked like Ikezuki. Decked in a gold-edged saddle and a short-fringed crupper, it was champing white foam and prancing as a large contingent of grooms struggled to control it. He rode down.

"Whose horse is that?"

"He belongs to Lord Sasaki."

"This is intolerable! I had resolved to go to the capital and die wrestling one of Kiso no Yoshinaka's famous Four Heavenly Kings, Imai, Higuchi, Tate, and Neno, or else to head west and fall in battle against one of those ke samurai who are supposed to be worth a thousand men each. P



Yoritomo has his horse Ikezuki led in for Sasaki Shirō Takatsuna.

what good would it do if this is how His Lordship feels? I'll wrestle and sword-fight Sasaki right here: thanks to me, His Lordship will lose two valuable samurai." He waited, muttering.

The unsuspecting Takatsuna rode into view at a walk. Kagesue debated with himself. Should he ride alongside and wrestle with him, or should he hit him head-on and topple him to the ground? He decided to speak first. "Well, Lord Sasaki! I see His Lordship has made you a present of Ikezuki."

Taken aback, Takatsuna suddenly recalled rumors that Kagesue had cov-

eted the horse. "As a matter of fact, that was not quite what happened," he said. "When I was getting ready to start on this great campaign, I was sure the Uji and Seta bridges would be torn up, and I lacked a horse to carry me across the river. I wanted to ask for Ikezuki, but I knew it would be useless. I had heard that His Lordship would not even give him to you when you asked; what possible hope could I have had? So I decided to take the consequences. I was leaving just before dawn. Earlier that night, I came to an agreement with a groom, stole his precious Ikezuki, and brought him with me. What do you say to that?"

Kagesue's wrath evaporated. "Confound it! I wish I'd stolen him myself." He rode off with a laugh.

### [2] *The First Man Across the Uji River*

The horse Sasaki Shirō Takatsuna had received was a dark chestnut, very stout and brawny. He was called Ikezuki because he refused to let horses or men approach him. People said he stood eight inches higher than an ordinary mount. Surusumi, the horse Kajiwara Genda Kagesue had received, was also very stout and brawny. He was named Surusumi because he was pure black. Both were excellent animals, inferior to none.

At Owari, the easterners divided into frontal and rear assault forces for the attack on the capital.

The Commander-in-Chief of the frontal assault force, Gama no Onzōshi Noriyori, advanced to Noji and Shinohara in Ōmi Province with a total of more than thirty-five thousand riders, including these men:

Taketa no Tarō Nobuyoshi  
Kagami no Jirō Tōmitsu  
Ichijō no Jirō Tadayori  
Itagaki no Saburō Kanenobu  
Inage no Saburō Shigenari  
Hangae no Shirō Shigetomo  
Kumagae no Jirō Naozane  
Inomata no Koheiroku Noritsuna

The Commander-in-Chief of the rear assault force, Kurō Onzōshi Yoshitsune, descended on the Uji Bridge approach by way of Iga Province with a total of more than twenty-five thousand riders, including these men:

Yasuda no Saburō Yoshisada  
Ōuchi no Tarō Koreyoshi  
Hatakeyama no Shōji Jirō Shigetada  
Kajiwara Genda Kagesue  
Sasaki Shirō Takatsuna  
Kasuya no Tōda Arisue  
Shibuya no Uma-no-jō Shigesuke  
Hirayama no Mushadokoro Sueshige

The Uji and Seta bridges had both been pulled up, and there were branch barricades floating on the current, tied to ropes stretched between stakes driven at random in the riverbed. As was to have been expected of the season, which was past the Twentieth of the First Month, the last of the snows had melted from the Hira peaks, the Shiga Mountains, and Nagarayama; the ice had dissolved in all the valleys; and the river was in full flow. Angry white waves raced downstream; rapids roared like waterfalls; eddies had turned into whirlpools. Dawn was just breaking, but a dense river fog dimmed the colors of the horses' coats and the men's armor lacings.

The Commander-in-Chief, Yoshitsune, advanced to the river's edge and looked out across the water. Perhaps he wished to probe his men's minds, for he said, "What shall we do? Would it be best to go around to Yodo and Imoarai? Shall we wait for the river to subside?"

Hatakeyama no Shōji Jirō Shigetada, who was only twenty-one years old then, came forward to speak. "We used to hear many stories in Kamakura about this river. It is not some unknown body of water that has suddenly materialized: it is the outlet of Lake Biwa, and it will not go down no matter how long we wait. Nobody can bridge it for you, either. Was Ashikaga no Matatarō Tadatsuna superhuman when he rode across it during the battle in the Jishō era? I'll test it for you." Five hundred riders surged forward to align their bridles—members of the Tan League and others.

Just then, two warriors galloped into sight from the tip of Tachibana-no-kojima northeast of the Byōdōin. One was Kajiwara Genda Kagesue; the other was Sasaki Shirō Takatsuna. Although neither had let his intentions show, each had made a secret resolve to be the first man across the river.

Takatsuna hailed Kagesue, who was about thirty-five feet ahead of him. "This is the biggest river in the west. Your saddle girth looks loose; tighten it up!"

Kagesue must have feared that the girth did indeed require tightening. He stiffened his legs in the stirrups to hold them away from Surusumi's belly, tossed the reins over the horse's mane, undid the girth, and tightened it. Meanwhile, Takatsuna galloped past him into the river. Kagesue followed, perhaps feeling that he had been tricked.

"Look out, Sasaki," Kagesue cried. "Don't slip up just because you want to be a hero. There must be ropes on the bottom."

Takatsuna drew his sword, cut the ropes one after another as they touched his mount's legs, rode straight across the swift Uji River on Ikezuki, the best horse in the world, and ascended the opposite bank. Kagesue's mount, Surusumi, landed far downstream, forced into a slanting course at the half-way point.

Takatsuna stood in his stirrups and announced his name in a mighty voice. "Sasaki Shirō Takatsuna, the fourth son of Sasaki Saburō Hideyoshi and a ninth-generation descendant of Emperor Uda, is the first man across the Uji River! If any here consider themselves my equals, let them grapple with me!" He charged ahead, yelling.

Shigetada started across immediately with his five hundred men. From the opposite bank, Yamada no Jirō released an arrow that penetrated shaft-deep

into the forehead of Shigetada's horse. Shigetada dismounted from the stricken animal in midstream, using his bow as a staff, and made his way along the bottom to the other shore, heedless of the white water leaping from the rocks toward the edges of his helmet flaps. As he was about to climb up, he felt a sharp tug from the rear.

"Who is that?" he said.

"Shigechika."

"What, it's Ōkushi?"

"Yes."

Ōkushi Jirō Shigechika was Shigetada's godson. "The current was too swift; my horse got swept away," he said. "I had to catch hold of you."

"You boys are always expecting people like me to get you out of trouble." Shigetada seized Shigechika, dangled him in the air, and threw him onto the bank. Shigechika straightened up and announced his name. "Ōkushi no Jirō Shigechika, a resident of Musashi Province, is the first man across the Uji River on foot!" A roar of laughter went up from both sides.

After that, Shigetada mounted another horse and left the river. A warrior in an olive-colored *hitatare* and a suit of armor laced with flame-red leather advanced to the enemy forefront, riding a white-dappled reddish horse with a gold-edged saddle.

"Who is that galloping toward me? Give me your name," Shigetada said.

"Nagase no Hangandai Shigetsuna, a kinsman of Lord Kiso."

"You will be today's offering to the god of battle." Shigetada rode up alongside him, seized him in a powerful grip, pulled him down, twisted off his head, and gave the head to Honda no Jirō to tie to Honda's saddle rope.

With that as a beginning, all the other easterners crossed and attacked. Yoshinaka's bridge defenders fled toward Kohatayama and Fushimi, routed after a brief resistance.

Thanks to a plan devised by Inage no Saburō Shigenari, the Seta force got across the river at Kugonose in the Tanakami area.

### [3] *The Battle at the Riverbed*

After the defeat of Yoshinaka's forces, Yoshitsune sent a courier to Kamakura with a written account of the battle. Yoritomo's first question was about Takatsuna. The courier answered, "He led the way across the Uji River." And when Yoritomo opened the report, he read, "The first man across the Uji River was Sasaki Shirō Takatsuna; the second was Kajiwara Genda Kagesue."

When Yoshinaka learned of the Uji and Seta defeats, he hurried toward the Retired Emperor's residence, the Rokujō Mansion, to say a last goodbye. The former sovereign, the senior nobles, and the courtiers at the palace were all wringing their hands and making every conceivable vow. "This is the end of everything. What are we going to do?" they said.

Yoshinaka had progressed as far as the gate when he heard someone say that the eastern armies had already reached the dry bed of the Kamo River. Without leaving any message of importance, he turned away and went to

a lengthy farewell visit at a house near the Rokujō-Takakura intersection, the abode of a lady with whom he had lately become intimate.

Among the men in his party was a new retainer named Echigo no Chūta Iemitsu. "Why is Your Lordship wasting all this time?" Iemitsu said. "The enemy invasion has already reached the riverbed. You are going to die like a dog." But Yoshinaka still lingered inside. "Very well," Iemitsu said. "I'll go ahead and wait for you at the Shide Mountains." He cut open his belly and died. Then Lord Kiso hurried out of the house. "He killed himself to arouse my fighting spirit," he said.

Lord Kiso's force numbered no more than a hundred riders, chief among them Nawa no Tarō Hirozumi, a resident of Kōzuke Province. When they rode out onto the Rokujō riverbed, they saw thirty horsemen who seemed to be easterners. Two of the thirty were riding in front, Shionoya no Gorō Korehiro and Teshigawara no Gosaburō Arinao.

"Should we wait for reinforcements?" Korehiro said to Arinao.

"Their rear ranks are bound to be in disarray now that the front ranks have suffered defeat. Charge!" Arinao galloped forward, shouting.

With Yoshinaka fighting for his life, every easterner pressed forward in the hope of being the one to take his head.

Meanwhile, Yoshitsune had delegated the fighting to subordinates and galloped toward the Rokujō Mansion, accompanied by five or six armored and helmeted men, with the intention of mounting guard over the Retired Emperor's palace to ensure its safety.

Naritada, the Master of the Palace Table Office, had climbed onto the eastern wall. As he looked around, quaking with fright, he saw a white banner suddenly raised over five or six warriors, who were galloping toward him in a cloud of black dust, their helmets loose from combat and their bow-arm sleeves aflutter.\* "Kiso has returned! Ah, this is terrible!" he said. To the panic-stricken sovereign and his courtiers, the end seemed at hand. Then Naritada said, "These warriors are wearing a different kind of helmet badge. I think they must be some of the easterners who are entering the city today."

As he spoke, Yoshitsune galloped to the entrance, dismounted, and pounded on the gate. "Kurō Yoshitsune, younger brother to the Former Assistant Commander of the Military Guards Yoritomo, has arrived from the eastern provinces! Open up!" he shouted.

Naritada was overjoyed. In his haste to leap from the wall, he fell and hurt his buttocks; but he hobbled inside with the news, too happy to feel any pain. The delighted Retired Emperor ordered the gate opened immediately.

That day, Yoshitsune was attired in a red brocade *hitatare*, a suit of armor with purple-shaded lacing, and a horned helmet. At his waist, he wore a sword with gilt bronze fittings; on his back, there rode a quiver containing arrows fletched with black-banded white eagle feathers. An inch-wide strip of paper was wound leftwise around the left-hand grip of his rattan-wrapped

\* During a battle, the weight of the plates gradually loosened a helmet's cords, forcing it toward the back of the wearer's head. The armor on the bow (left) arm was particularly susceptible to damage, not only because it was exposed during shooting, but because it was used as a shield.

bow—a sign, apparently, that he was the Commander-in-Chief for that day's battle. The Retired Emperor scrutinized him and the others from behind a slatted window at the middle gate. "They look like gallant lads. Have them all give their names," he said. The warriors identified themselves as, first, the Commander-in-Chief Kurō Yoshitsune, and, next, Yasuda no Saburō Yoshisada, Hatakeyama no Shōji Jirō Shigetada, Kajiwara Genda Kagesue, Sasaki Shirō Takatsuna, and Shibuya no Uma-no-jō Shigesuke. There were six of them, counting Yoshitsune, and although the colors of their armor-braid may have differed, not one was inferior to any of the others in bearing or character.

At the Retired Emperor's command, Naritada summoned Yoshitsune to the edge of the eave-chamber. His Majesty asked for a full account of the battle. Yoshitsune made obeisance and reported in a matter-of-fact voice. "Yoritomo was astonished by Yoshinaka's revolt. He dispatched sixty thousand riders, led by Noriyori and myself and including more than thirty leading warriors. Noriyori is coming by way of Seta; he has not arrived yet. I defeated Yoshinaka's force at Uji and hurried here to defend this palace. Yoshinaka has fled north along the riverbed, but I have sent men in pursuit; they will undoubtedly have killed him by now."

The Retired Emperor was greatly pleased. "Excellent! But I am afraid some stragglers from Yoshinaka's army may come here to cause trouble. Guard this palace well." Making respectful assent, Yoshitsune secured the four gates. Meanwhile, warriors galloped to his side, and his force soon numbered more than ten thousand riders.

Yoshinaka had stationed twenty shaven-headed laborers\* at the imperial residence with a view to carrying off the Retired Emperor westward and joining the Heike in case of an emergency. But now, upon hearing that Yoshitsune had already rushed to guard the palace, he resigned himself to the situation and galloped shouting into the enemy thousands. Time after time, he hovered on the brink of death; time after time, he managed to break through. "I would never have sent Imai to Seta if I had known things would turn out like this," he said, with tears streaming down his face. "Ever since the days when we played together with bamboo horses, we have sworn that if we met death it would be on the same spot. How bitter it would be to fall in different places! I must find out where he is." He galloped north along the beach. Again and again, he turned to meet enemy attacks between Rokujō and Sanjō; five or six times, he drove back the foe's cloudlike host with his small force. Then he crossed the Kamo River and made his way to Awataguchi and Matsuzaka. Last year, on his departure from Shinano, he had commanded fifty thousand horsemen; today, as he passed the Shi-no-miya riverbed, he and his companions numbered but seven riders. And how infinitely more piteous was the prospect of his solitary journey through the intermediate existence!

\* *Rikisha*, men used as palanquin bearers, porters, etc.

#### [4] The Death of Kiso

Kiso no Yoshinaka had brought with him from Shinano two female attendants, Tomoe and Yamabuki. Yamabuki had fallen ill and stayed in the capital. Of the two, Tomoe was especially beautiful, with white skin, long hair, and charming features. She was also a remarkably strong archer, and as a swordswoman she was a warrior worth a thousand, ready to confront a demon or god, mounted or on foot. She handled unbroken horses with superb skill; she rode unscathed down perilous descents. Whenever a battle was imminent, Yoshinaka sent her out as his first captain, equipped with strong armor, an oversized sword, and a mighty bow; and she performed more deeds of valor than any of his other warriors. Thus she was now one of the seven who remained after all the others had fled or perished.

There were rumors that Yoshinaka was making for the Tanba Road by way of Nagasaka, and also that he was heading north through the Ryūge Pass. In actuality, he was fleeing toward Seta in the hope of finding Imai no Shirō Kanehira. Kanehira himself had started back toward the capital with furled banner, worried about his master, after having lost all but fifty of his eight hundred defenders at Seta. The two arrived simultaneously at Uchide-nohama in the vicinity of Ōtsu, recognized one another from about three hundred and fifty feet away, and galloped together.

Lord Kiso took Kanehira by the hand. "I meant to die at the Rokujō riverbed, but I broke through a swarm of enemies and came away here because I wanted to find you."

"Your words do me great honor," Kanehira said. "I meant to die at Seta, but I have come this far because I was worried about you."

"I see that our karma tie is still intact. My warriors scattered into the mountains and woods after the enemy broke our formations; some of them must still be nearby. Have that furled banner of yours raised!"

More than three hundred riders responded to the unfurling of Imai's banner—men who had fled from the capital or Seta, or who had come from some other place. Yoshinaka was overjoyed. "Why can't we fight one last battle, now that we have a force of this size? Whose is the band I see massed over there?"

"They say the commander is Ichijō no Jirō Tadayori from Kai."

"What is his strength?"

"He is supposed to have six thousand riders."

"Then we are well matched! If we must meet death, let it be by galloping against a worthy foe and falling outnumbered." Yoshinaka rode forward in the lead.

That day, Lord Kiso was attired in a red brocade *hitatare*, a suit of armor laced with thick Chinese damask, and a horned helmet. At his side, he wore a magnificent oversized sword; high on his back, there rode a quiver containing the few arrows left from his earlier encounters, all fledged with eagle tail feathers. He grasped a rattan-wrapped bow and sat in a gold-edged saddle astride his famous horse Oniashige [Roan Demon], a very stout and brawny animal. Standing in his stirrups, he announced his name in a mighty

voice. "You must have heard of Kiso no Kanja in the past; now you see him! I am the Morning Sun Commander Minamoto no Yoshinaka, Director of the Imperial Stables of the Left and Governor of Iyo Province. They tell me you are Ichijō no Jirō from Kai. We are well matched! Cut off my head and show it to Yoritomo!" He galloped forward, shouting.

"The warrior who has just announced his name is their Commander-in-Chief," Ichijō no Jirō said. "Wipe out the whole force, men! Get them all, young retainers! Kill them!"

The easterners moved to surround Yoshinaka with their superior numbers, each hoping to be the one to take his head. Yoshinaka's three hundred riders galloped lengthwise, sidewise, zigzag, and crosswise in the midst of the six thousand foes and finally burst through to the rear, only fifty strong.

As the fifty went on their way after having broken free, they came to a defensive position manned by two thousand riders under the command of Toi no Jirō Sanehira. Again, they broke through and went on. Again, they galloped through enemy bands—here four or five hundred, there two or three hundred, or a hundred and forty or fifty, or a hundred—until only five of them were left. Even then, Tomoe remained alive.

"Quickly, now," Lord Kiso said to Tomoe. "You are a woman, so be off with you; go wherever you please. I intend to die in battle, or to kill myself if I am wounded. It would be unseemly to let people say, 'Lord Kiso kept a woman with him during his last battle.'"

Reluctant to flee, Tomoe rode with the others until she could resist no longer. Then she pulled up. "Ah! If only I could find a worthy foe! I would fight a last battle for His Lordship to watch," she thought.

As she sat there, thirty riders came into view, led by Onda no Hachirō Moroshige, a man renowned in Musashi Province for his great strength. Tomoe galloped into their midst, rode up alongside Moroshige, seized him in a powerful grip, pulled him down against the pommel of her saddle, held him motionless, twisted off his head, and threw it away. Afterward, she discarded armor and helmet and fled toward the eastern provinces.

Tezuka no Tarō Mitsumori died in battle; Tezuka no Bettō fled. Only two horsemen remained, Imai no Shirō Kanehira and Lord Kiso.

"I have never noticed it before, but my armor seems heavy today," Lord Kiso said.

"You are not tired yet, and your horse is still strong. Why should you find a suit of armor heavy? You are discouraged because there is nobody left to fight on our side. But you should think of me as a man worth a thousand ordinary warriors. I will hold off the enemy awhile with my last seven or eight arrows. That place over there is the Awazu Pine Woods: kill yourself among the trees."

As the two rode, whipping their horses, a new band of fifty warriors appeared. "Get into the pine woods. I will hold these enemies at bay," Kanehira said.

"I ought to have perished in the capital. My only reason for fleeing here was that I wanted to die with you. Let's not be killed in different places; let's

go down together." Lord Kiso brought his mount alongside Kanehira's, ready to gallop forward.

Kanehira leaped down and took his master's horse by the mouth. "No matter how glorious a warrior's earlier reputation may have been, an ignoble death means eternal disgrace. You are tired; there are no forces following you. If you are isolated by the enemy and dragged down to your death by some fellow's insignificant retainer, people will say, 'So-and-So's retainer killed the famous Lord Kiso, the man known throughout Japan.' I would hate to see that happen. Please, please, go into the pine woods."

"Well, then . . ." Lord Kiso galloped toward the Awazu Pine Woods.

Kanehira dashed into the fifty riders alone, stood in his stirrups, and announced his name in a mighty voice. "You must have heard of me long ago; see me now with your own eyes! I am Imai no Shirō Kanehira, aged thirty-three, foster brother to Lord Kiso. The Kamakura Lord Yoritomo himself must know that such a person exists. Kill me and show him my head!" He fired off his remaining eight arrows in a fast and furious barrage that felled eight men on the spot. (It is impossible to say whether or not they were killed.) Then he drew his sword and galloped slashing from place to place, without meeting a man willing to face him. Many were the trophies he amassed! The easterners surrounded him and let fly a hail of arrows, hoping to shoot him down, but none of their shafts found a chink in his armor or penetrated its stout plates, and he remained uninjured.

Lord Kiso galloped toward the Awazu Pine Woods, a lone rider. The shadows were gathering on the Twenty-First of the First Month, and a thin film of ice had formed. Unaware that a deep paddy field lay in front of him, he sent his horse plunging into the mire. The animal sank below its head and stayed there, motionless, despite furious flogging with stirrups and whip. Lord Kiso glanced backward, worried about Kanehira, and Ishida no Jirō Tamehisa, who was hard on his heels, drew his bow to the full and sent an arrow thudding into his face. Mortally wounded, he sagged forward with the bowl of his helmet against the horse's neck.

Two of Tamehisa's retainers went up and took Lord Kiso's head. Tamehisa impaled it on the tip of his sword, raised it aloft, and announced in a mighty voice, "Miura no Ishida no Jirō Tamehisa has killed Lord Kiso, the man known throughout Japan!"

Kanehira heard the shout as he battled. "I don't need to fight to protect anyone now. Take a look, easterners! This is how the bravest man in Japan commits suicide!" He put the tip of his sword in his mouth, jumped headlong from his horse, and perished, run through. Thus, it turned out that there was no combat worthy of the name at Awazu.

### [5] *The Execution of Higuchi*

Imai no Shirō Kanehira's older brother, Higuchi no Jirō Kanemitsu, had marched against the Nagano stronghold in Kawachi to attack Jūrō no Kurando Yukiie, only to find his quarry missing—gone, it was said, to

Nagusa in Kii Province. After crossing the provincial border in pursuit, he learned that fighting had broken out in the capital. He galloped toward the city, and at the Yodo Ōwatari Bridge encountered one of Kanehira's subordinates. "Alas!" the man said. "Where do you intend to go? Lord Kiso is slain; Lord Imai has committed suicide."

Tears streamed down Kanemitsu's face. "Listen to me, men! If you are loyal to our lord, flee wherever you will, take religious vows, and become ascetics to pray for him in the next life. I am going to the capital to die in battle, so that I may wait on him in the nether regions and see Imai no Shirō again."

As Kanemitsu rode, one after another of his five hundred men pulled up and fled. There were only twenty left when he reached the south gate of the Toba Mansion.

When it became known that Kanemitsu was entering the capital that day, members of warrior leagues and of powerful military families galloped toward Shichijō, Suzaku, and Yotsuzuka to confront him. One of his men, Chino no Tarō Mitsuhiro, dashed into a throng of onrushing enemies at Yotsuzuka. "Is anyone here a retainer of Ichijō no Jirō from Kai?" he shouted.

"Do you insist on fighting one of Ichijō no Jirō's men? You had better take whoever comes along." The enemy warriors guffawed.

In response to their laughter, Chino no Tarō announced his name. "I am Chino no Tarō Mitsuhiro, a resident of Suwa-no-kaminomiya in Shinano Province and the son of Chino no Tayū Mitsuie. I do not insist on seeking out one of Ichijō no Jirō's men. It is simply that my younger brother, Chino no Shichirō, is a member of Lord Ichijō's force. I want Shichirō to see me fall in battle so he can carry word back to my two sons in Shinano: they will be worried about whether their father died well or ill. I am not choosy about my opponents!" He galloped at one foe after another and shot down three men. Then he rode alongside a fourth, seized him, crashed with him to the ground, and died in a dagger fight.

The members of the Kodama League, who were old friends of Kanemitsu, met to discuss the situation. "Every warrior seeks a wide circle of acquaintances in the hope of gaining a breathing spell and prolonging his life when he is hard pressed. That is probably why Higuchi made friends with us. We should request his life as a reward for our services in this campaign," they decided. They sent a messenger to Kanemitsu. "You and Imai always used to be renowned as Lord Kiso's finest men, but now Lord Kiso has been killed. There is nothing to hold you back: surrender to us. We will save your life by trading our rewards for it. Take Buddhist vows and pray for Lord Kiso in the life to come."

It may be that Kanemitsu's luck had run out, for he surrendered to the Kodama League, famed warrior though he was. The league made its request to Yoshitsune, who in turn addressed Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa and secured a revocation of Kanemitsu's death sentence. But there were protests from all the senior nobles, courtiers, and high-ranking ladies in attendance on the former sovereign. "We heard the names of Imai and Higuchi everywhere when Kiso came to the Hōjūji Mansion, shouted his battle cries, ha-

ressed His Majesty, and sent countless people to a fiery death. It would be a mistake to show such a man clemency," they said. And so the sentence was reimposed.

The new Regent, Moroie, was relieved of his post on the Twenty-Second, and his predecessor, Motomichi, was reinstated. For Moroie, replaced after a mere sixty days, the experience was like an unfinished dream. But the Awata Regent had held office for only seven days after his formal expression of gratitude; and although sixty days was not very long, Moroie could at least remember that he had presided over a New Year banquet and a distribution of offices.

On the Twenty-Fourth, the heads of Lord Kiso and five of his men were paraded through the avenues. Higuchi no Jirō Kanemitsu had begged to be allowed to accompany them, prisoner though he was; and he joined the procession in a high cap and an indigo-patterned overshirt.

On the Twenty-Fifth, Kanemitsu was finally beheaded. Although Noriyori and Yoshitsune had made every possible plea on his behalf, he was killed because the Retired Emperor had issued a special order: "He was one of Kiso's Four Heavenly Kings, Imai, Higuchi, Tate, and Neno. Pardoning a man like that would be 'borrowing trouble by keeping a tiger.'"

In China, we are told, Liu Bang entered the Xianyang Palace ahead of everyone when the decline of Qin made the lords rise like a swarm of bees—yet out of fear that Xiang Yu would pursue him, he neither seized men's beautiful wives nor appropriated their gold, silver, and gems, but merely guarded the Han Valley Barrier, gradually crushed his adversaries, and achieved dominion over the land. Kiso no Yoshinaka would have shown himself as wise as Bang had he obeyed Yoritomo's orders, even if he did happen to be the first to enter the capital.

At some time around the winter of the past year, the Heike had crossed from Yashima to the Naniwa coast in Settsu, taken up residence at the old Fukuhara capital, established a stronghold at Ichi-no-tani on the west, and selected Ikuta-no-mori as the entrance to their forward position on the east. The forces stationed in the vicinity at Fukuhara, Hyōgo, Itayado, and Suma consisted of men recruited from the eight provinces of the Mountain Sun Road and the six provinces of the Southern Sea Road subjugated by the Heike—more than a hundred thousand riders from fourteen provinces, according to report.

Flanked by mountains to the north and by the sea to the south, the Ichi-no-tani position was narrow at the entrance and wide in the interior. High cliffs rose above it like folding screens. From the base of the mountains on the north to the shallow waters on the south, the defenders had erected a high wall of huge boulders and installed branch barricades made by felling great trees. Where the sea deepened, a line of large vessels formed a rampart. A cloudlike host of armored bowmen from Shikoku and Chinzei stood in ranks on archery platforms at the front of the stronghold, each of them reputed to be worth a thousand men. Ten or twenty rows of saddled horses waited below the platforms, and there was a constant din of beating drums and shouted battle cries. The full-drawn bows were like half-moons at the

warriors' breasts; the glittering three-foot swords resembled streaks of autumn frost crossing their hips. The countless red banners unfurled on the heights danced like leaping flames in the spring breeze.

### [6] Six Battles

There was disaffection among the warriors from Shikoku after the Heike moved to Fukuhara, and some of them—provincial officials from Awa and Sanuki—decided to desert the Heike for the Genji. "We cannot expect the Genji to trust us if we suddenly try to join them now, after having been adherents of the Heike until the last day or two. We must prove our allegiance by shooting an arrow at the Heike," those men said. They set out in a dozen or so fighting boats to attack the Kadowaki Middle Counselor Norimori and two of his sons, the Echizen Governor Michimori and the Noto Governor Noritsune, who were said to be staying at Shimotsui in Bizen.

"The contemptible louts!" Noritsune said. "Yesterday they cut fodder for our horses; today they suddenly shift their loyalties to someone else. Very well, kill them all!" He attacked with a fleet of small craft. "Don't let any escape! Don't miss any!"

The Shikoku warriors had planned to retire after firing an arrow or two in token of their change of heart. Dismayed, perhaps, by Noritsune's fierce attack, they did not risk a close-quarters engagement, but fled toward the capital until they reached Fukura Port in Awaji Province. There were two Genji in Awaji, Kamo no Kanja Yoshitsugi and Awaji no Kanja Yoshihisa, the youngest sons of the late Rokujō Police Lieutenant Tameyoshi. The Shikoku warriors put themselves under their command, built a stronghold, and waited. Noritsune followed in swift pursuit and staged a daylong attack, during which Yoshitsugi was killed. Yoshihisa took his own life after suffering a grievous wound. Noritsune cut off the heads of more than a hundred and thirty enemy archers and sent a list of the attackers' names to Fukuhara.

Middle Counselor Norimori went to Fukuhara. His sons crossed to Shikoku, with the intention of attacking Kawano no Shirō Michinobu\* of Iyo Province for his failure to obey the summons from the Heike. Michimori went to the Hanazono stronghold in Awa Province, and word spread that Noritsune had arrived at Yashima in Sanuki Province. Upon hearing the rumor about Noritsune, Kawano no Shirō Michinobu went to Aki Province to join forces with his uncle, Nuta no Jirō, who lived there. Noritsune started after Michinobu from Yashima as soon as he learned of his departure. He advanced swiftly to Minoshima in Bingo Province, and on the following day assaulted the Nuta stronghold. Nuta no Jirō and Michinobu resisted him together. The defenders fought for a day and a night after the start of the attack, but then Nuta no Jirō doffed his helmet in surrender, perhaps because he felt that victory was impossible.

Still unwilling to submit, Michinobu left the stronghold with fifty riders, the only ones remaining from his original band of five hundred. As the fifty

\* Called Kōno no Shirō Michinobu earlier (6.6).

went on their way, they were surrounded by two hundred riders under the command of Heihachibyōe Tamekazu, one of Noritsune's samurai. Tamekazu reduced the party to seven men, including Michinobu. The fugitives were fleeing shoreward along a narrow path, intent on boarding a rescue vessel, when Tamekazu's son Sanuki no Shichirō Yoshinori, a superb archer, overtook them and brought down five of the seven on the spot. There remained only Michinobu and one retainer, a man Michinobu valued as he did his life. Yoshinori rode alongside the retainer, wrestled him to the ground, pinned him, and started to decapitate him. Michinobu turned back, lopped off Yoshinori's head as he straddled his victim, threw the head into a paddy field, and shouted, "This is the battle style of Kawano no Shirō Ochi no Michinobu, aged twenty-one! If any here consider themselves my equals, let them stop me!" He slung the retainer over his shoulder, fled the scene, and crossed to Iyo in a small boat.

Although Michinobu had escaped, Noritsune went to Fukuhara with Nuta no Jirō as prisoner.

Again, a resident of Awaji Province, Ama no Rokurō Tadakage, turned against the Heike, communicated in secret with the Genji, and set out toward the capital in two large vessels loaded with arms and commissariat rice. Learning in Fukuhara of Tadakage's activities, Noritsune launched ten small craft in pursuit. Tadakage turned back off the Nishi-no-miya coast, confronted Noritsune, and attempted to resist him. But perhaps he despaired of success against Noritsune's fierce assault, for he retreated to Fukei Port in Izumi Province.

A resident of Kii Province, Sonobe no Hyōe Tadayasu, also decided to forsake the Heike for the Genji. Upon hearing that Ama no Rokurō Tadakage had gone to Fukei after Noritsune's attack, Tadayasu galloped to join him with a hundred riders. Noritsune promptly followed and attacked. After a day and a night of fighting, Tadakage and Tadayasu may have concluded that they could not prevail, for they fled toward the capital, leaving their kinsmen and retainers to ward off the foe with arrows. Noritsune decapitated more than two hundred of the defenders, hung up their heads, and returned to Fukuhara.

Again, three men, Kawano no Shirō Michinobu of Iyo, Usuki no Jirō Koretaka of Bungo, and Okata no Saburō Koreyoshi of Bungo, joined forces, crossed into Bizen with a total of two thousand men, and entrenched themselves at the Imagi stronghold. Upon learning of their activities, Noritsune galloped to attack Imagi with three thousand riders. Presently, it was reported that Noritsune had said, "Those fellows are stubborn opponents; I need more men," and that a huge force of fifty or sixty thousand riders was about to be sent from Fukuhara.

"The Heike are many and we are few: there is no hope of victory. We had better leave here and catch our breath awhile," said the warriors in the stronghold, who had already fought to their utmost, taken ample numbers of trophies, and performed every conceivable exploit. Koretaka and Koreyoshi went by boat to Chinzei, and Michinobu crossed into Iyo Province. De-



claring that there was nobody left worth fighting, Noritsune returned to Fukuhara, where Munemori and all the other Heike senior nobles and courtiers assembled and praised his repeated successes.

[7] *The Array of Forces at Mikusa*

On the Twenty-Ninth of the First Month, Noriyori and Yoshitsune visited Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa's palace to report their intention of marching westward to subdue the Heike. "Our court possesses three treasures handed down since the age of the gods: the Mirror, the Bead Strand, and the Sword," the former sovereign said. "Be very careful to return them unharmed to the capital." The two made respectful assent and withdrew.

The Taira arranged for the customary Buddhist rituals on the Fourth of the Second Month, the anniversary of Kiyomori's death. The old year had given way to the new without their noticing the passing of time, so completely had they been absorbed day and night in going forth to battle; and the anniversary of that sad spring had arrived. What plans they would have made for a stupa, what gifts they would have presented to Buddhas and monks, if only things had been the same as before! The bereaved sons and daughters could do no more than gather and weep. The occasion was nevertheless marked by promotions in which everyone shared, lay and clerical alike. When Munemori announced that the Kadowaki Middle Counselor Norimori was to become a Major Counselor of Senior Second Rank, Norimori declined with this reply in verse:

kyō made mo  
areba aru ka no  
wa ga mi ka wa  
yume no uchi ni mo  
yume o miru ka na

Is it possible  
that I have survived somehow  
until today?  
What you say seems but a dream  
dreamed within a dreamer's dream.

The Suō Vice-Governor Morozumi, a son of Major Secretary Nakahara no Moronao, became a Major Secretary. Junior Assistant Minister of War Masaakira became a Fifth-Rank Chamberlain and was known thenceforth as the Chamberlain-Junior Assistant Minister.

In the past, Masakado had subjugated the eight eastern provinces, established a capital at Sōma District in Shimōsa Province, styled himself the Taira Prince of the Blood, and created a bureaucracy (which, however, did not include a Calendar Doctor).<sup>\*</sup> But the present appointments were unlike his. To be sure, the Emperor had fled the old capital, but he had taken with him the Three Sacred Treasures and retained his high estate. There was no reason why ranks and offices should not have been conferred.

It was being said that the Heike were assured of reentering the Heian capital now that they had fought their way as far as Fukuhara; and those who had been left in the city felt cheered and optimistic. The Nii Bishop Senshin

<sup>\*</sup> The point seems to be that Masakado had implicitly recognized the Heian court's authority by not commissioning a rival calendar.

had found ways of communicating with his former temple companion, the Kajii Princely Abbot Jōnin, and the Abbot had also sent Senshin many letters. "It is terribly sad to imagine what you must be enduring on your travels," Jōnin wrote. "Things are still unsettled in the capital, too." He added a poem:

hito shirezu  
sonata o shinobu  
kokoro o ba  
katabuku tsuki ni  
taguete zo yaru

I send it westward  
in company with the moon—  
this heart containing  
nostalgic recollections  
of which others know nothing.

Senshin pressed the paper to his face, unable to restrain tears of misery.

With the passing of time, the Komatsu Middle Captain Koremori had become obsessed by melancholy thoughts of the wife and children he had left behind in the capital. When merchant-borne letters described how his wife was living, he thought in dismay that it would be better to bring her west to share his fate. But the lot of a fugitive seemed too cruel a trial to impose on her, acceptable though it must be for him, and he demonstrated the depth of his love by forcing himself to bear the situation.

The Genji had originally planned to attack the Heike on the Fourth. Upon learning that that was the date of Kiyomori's death anniversary, they decided to allow the enemy time to perform religious rites. Then the west proved to be a forbidden direction on the Fifth, and travel was interdicted on the Sixth. They thus resolved to postpone the arrow exchanges at the Ichi-notani eastern and western entrances until the Hour of the Hare on the Seventh. But since the Fourth was an auspicious day, the Commanders-in-Chief of the frontal and rear assault forces divided the army into two groups and set out from the capital.

The Commander-in-Chief of the frontal assault force:

Gama no Onzōshi Noriyori

The men in his party:

Taketa no Tarō Nobuyoshi

Kagami no Jirō Tōmitsu

Kagami no Kojirō Nagakiyo

Yamana no Jirō Noriyoshi

Yamana no Saburō Yoshiyuki

His Samurai Commanders:

Kajiwara Heizō Kagetoki

His heir, Genda Kagesue

His second son, Heiji Kagetaka

Kajiwara Saburō Kageie

Inage no Saburō Shigenari

Hangae no Shirō Shigetomo

Hangae no Gorō Yukishige

Oyama no Koshirō Tomomasa

Oyama no Nakanuma no Gorō Munemasa  
 Yūki no Shichirō Tomomitsu  
 Sanuki no Shirōdaifu Hirotsuna  
 Onodera no Zenji Tarō Michitsuna  
 Soga no Tarō Sukenobu  
 Nakamura Tarō Tokitsune  
 Edo no Shirō Shigeharu  
 Tamanoi no Shirō Sukekage  
 Ōkawazu no Tarō Hiroyuki  
 Shō no Saburō Tadaie  
 Shō no Shirō Takaie  
 Shōdai no Hachirō Yukihira  
 Kuge no Jirō Shigemitsu  
 Kawara Tarō Takanao  
 Kawara Jirō Morinao  
 Fujita no Saburōdaifu Yukiyasu

Those and others, more than fifty thousand riders in all, left the capital during the first quarter of the Hour of the Dragon on the Fourth and camped at Koyano in Settsu Province during the Hours of the Monkey and the Cock on the same day.

The Commander-in-Chief of the rear assault force:

Kurō Onzōshi Yoshitsune

The men in his party:

Yasuda no Saburō Yoshisada

Ōuchi no Tarō Koreyoshi

Murakami no Hangandai Yasukuni

Tashiro no Kanja Nobutsuna

His Samurai Commanders:

Toi no Jirō Sanehira

His son Yatarō Tōhira

Miura no Suke Yoshizumi

His son Heiroke Yoshimura

Hatakeyama no Shōji Jirō Shigetada

Hatakeyama no Nagano no Saburō Shigekiyo

Miura no Sawara no Jūrō Yoshitsura

Wada no Kotarō Yoshimori

Wada no Jirō Yoshimochi

Wada no Saburō Munezane

Sasaki Shirō Takatsuna

Sasaki Gorō Yoshikiyo

Kumagae no Jirō Naozane

His son Kojirō Naoie

Hirayama no Mushadokoro Sueshige  
 Amano no Jirō Naotsune  
 Ogawa no Jirō Sukeyoshi  
 Hara no Saburō Kiyomasu  
 Kaneko no Jūrō Ietada  
 Kaneko no Yoichi Chikanori  
 Watariyanagi no Yagorō Kiyotada  
 Beppu no Kotarō Kiyoshige  
 Tatara no Gorō Yoshiharu  
 His son Tarō Mitsuyoshi  
 Kataoka no Gorō Tsuneharu  
 Genpachi Hirotsuna  
 Ise no Saburō Yoshimori  
 Ōshū no Satō Saburō Tsuginobu  
 Ōshū no Satō Shirō Tadanobu  
 Eda no Genzō  
 Kumai Tarō  
 Musashibō Benkei

Those and others, more than ten thousand riders in all, left the capital during the same hour on the same day, swung onto the Tanba Road, made a two-day march in one, and arrived at Onobara, the eastern approach to Mikusa-no-yama on the border between Harima and Tanba provinces.

### [8] *The Battle at Mikusa*

At the western approach to Mikusa-no-yama, three leagues from Onobara, there was a Heike position manned by three thousand riders, with Middle Captain Sukemori, Lesser Captain Arimori, the Tango Gentleman-in-Waiting Tadafusa, and the Bitchū Governor Moromori as Commanders-in-Chief, and with Heinaibyōe Kiyōie and Emi no Jirō Morikata as Samurai Commanders.

Yoshitsune summoned Toi no Jirō Sanehira that night at around the Hour of the Dog. "The Heike are camped in force at the western approach to Mikusa-no-yama, three leagues from here. Would it be better to attack tonight under cover of darkness, or should we fight them tomorrow?"

Tashiro no Kanja Nobutsuna came forward. "The Heike strength will probably increase if you wait until tomorrow. Right now, they have three thousand riders and we have ten thousand, so the odds are all in our favor. I think the night attack would be best."

"Well spoken, Tashiro," said Sanehira. "Attack at once, Your Excellency."

The army mounted and set out.

"Everything is pitch black. What are we supposed to do?" the warriors said.

"How about lighting big torches in the usual way?" Yoshitsune said.

"That had slipped my mind." Sanehira set fire to some commoners' houses at Onobara. His men did the same to fields, hills, grass, and trees, and they crossed the three leagues of mountainous terrain in light as bright as day.

Tashiro no Kanja Nobutsuna, the man who had spoken up, was a son of the Former Izu Governor-Middle Counselor Tametsuna, born to a daughter of Kano no Suke Mochimitsu and entrusted for rearing to the boy's maternal grandfather, who had made a warrior of him. He was a fifth-generation descendant of Prince Sukehito, Emperor Go-Sanjō's third son. His lineage was good and he was a good warrior.

The Heike never dreamed that the Genji might attack that night. "There is sure to be a battle tomorrow," they said. "It is disastrous for a sleepy man to try to fight: let's get a good night's rest." Some of those in the front lines stayed alert, but the ones in the rear stretched out and went to sleep, their heads pillowed on helmets, armor-sleeves, and quivers.

Around midnight, the ten thousand Genji riders swooped down with a great battle cry. Some of the Heike seized bows and left arrows in the confusion; some seized arrows and left bows; some opened gaps for the Genji in their attempts to avoid horses' hoofs. The Genji attackers chased the fleeing enemy here, cornered them there, and killed more than five hundred on the spot. Many others suffered wounds. Three of the Commanders-in-Chief, Sukemori, Arimori, and Tadafusa, crossed by boat from Takasago in Settsu to Yashima in Sanuki. (Perhaps they went there because they felt humiliated.) Moromori went to Ichi-no-tani, accompanied by Kiyoe and Morikata.

### [9] *The Old Horse*

Munemori sent Yoshiyuki, the Aki Assistant Director of the Stables of the Right, as a messenger to the Taira lords. "They tell me Kurō Yoshitsune has already routed the force at Mikusa and penetrated our lines. The mountain sector is crucial: please go there, all of you." But every one of them asked to be excused. Then he dispatched a message to the Noto Governor Noritsune. "I know we have called on you time and again, but won't you please go?"

Noritsune's answer was reassuring. "If a man wants to succeed in battle, he must think of nothing else. He will never win a victory if he is like a hunter or a fisherman, always looking out for comfortable situations and avoiding inconvenience. I am perfectly willing to be sent into danger any number of times. You may rest assured that the foe in one area, at least, will be annihilated." The delighted Munemori sent him ten thousand riders, led by Etchū no Zenji Moritoshi.

Taking with him his older brother, the Echizen Governor Michimori, Noritsune established defensive positions in the hilly area (that is to say, the terrain below the Hiyodorigoe track). Michimori had someone bring his wife to Noritsune's camp quarters so that he might bid her a final farewell.

"I was sent to this front because it was considered dangerous, and danger indeed confronts us. There will be no time to take up arms if the Genji drop down from those heights now. Even if a man holds a bow, he will get no-

where unless he fits an arrow to it; even if he fits the arrow, he will do no good unless he pulls the weapon. And if he is as feckless as you are, he will be of no use at all," Noritsune said in a fury. Michimori may have felt that the rebuke was deserved, for he hastily donned his armor and sent his wife away.

At dusk on the Fifth, the Genji began a slow advance toward Ikuta-no-mori from Koyano. Looking out in the direction of Suzume-no-matsubara, Mikage-no-matsu, and Koyano, the Heike could see where enemy bands had set up camp and lit beacons. As the night deepened, the fires resembled stars in a cloudless sky. The Heike, not to be outdone, went through the motions of lighting their own beacons at Ikuta-no-mori. With the approach of dawn, the distant blazes were like the moon rising over the hills. For the first time, the Heike understood the full import of the old lines about marsh fireflies.\*

The Genji went about their business with deliberation, here pitching camp and resting horses, there pitching camp and feeding horses. The nervous Heike expected an attack at any moment.

At dawn on the Sixth, Yoshitsune divided his ten thousand riders into two forces. He sent Toi no Jirō Sanehira with seven thousand riders toward the western approach to Ichi-no-tani, and he himself circled around from the Tanba Road at the head of three thousand riders, with the intention of descending behind the stronghold from the Hiyodorigoe track.

"The Hiyodorigoe area is notorious for its perils," the warriors all said. "We are ready to be killed in battle, but we have no wish to fall to our deaths. Surely there must be someone who knows these mountains."

Hirayama no Mushadokoro Sueshige of Musashi came forward. "I know them."

"You were reared in the east," said Yoshitsune. "You cannot know western mountains you have never laid eyes on before today."

"I don't think you mean that," Sueshige answered. "Poets understand the blossoms at Yoshino and Hatsuse; men of valor understand what is behind an enemy stronghold." It was an arrogant-sounding speech.

Beppu no Kotarō Kiyoshige of Musashi came forward next, a young man of eighteen. "My father, the monk Yoshishige, told me, 'When you lose your way in the mountains, whether because of an enemy assault or during a hunt, you must toss the reins over an old horse's neck and drive him ahead of you. Then you will always come out onto a path.'"

"Excellent advice," Yoshitsune said. "The classic tells us, 'Even when snow covers the plains, an old horse knows the way.'" He put a gold-mounted saddle and a polished bit on an old whitish roan, tied the reins, tossed them over the animal's neck, and drove it before him into the unknown mountain fastnesses.

\* A reference to an anonymous poem preserved in both *Ise monogatari* (Section 87) and *Shinkokinshū* (1589): haruru yo no / hoshi ka kawabe no / hotaru ka mo / wa ga sumu kata no / ama no taku hi ka. ("Might they be stars in the clear night or fireflies by the riverbank? Or are they fires kindled by the fisherfolk where I dwell?") The *Heike* author apparently knew the



Yoshitsune questions an old hunter before the battle of Ichi-no-tani. Yoshitsune is the seated figure in the center. Benkei (with an ax on his back) kneels at the left.

As was to have been expected at the start of the Second Month, there were places where lingering patches of snow dappled the peaks like blossoms, and others where the warriors heard warblers in the valleys and made their way through thick haze. When they climbed, they found themselves among

slightly different version recorded in a variant *Shinkokinshū* text, which has "by the marsh" (*sawabe no*) instead of "by the riverbank" (*kawabe no*).

cloud-capped peaks, dazzling white; when they descended, they encountered rugged, tree-clad slopes and towering precipices. The snow had not so much as melted from the pines; the narrow, mossy path was all but invisible. Snowflakes scattered like plum blossoms in the blustering wind. Darkness enveloped the mountain track as they whipped their steeds this way and that, and they all dismounted to make camp.

Musashibō Benkei brought an old man to the Commander-in-Chief, Kurō Onzōshi Yoshitsune.

"Who is this?" Yoshitsune asked.

"A man who hunts in these mountains."

"Then you must know the area well. Tell us the truth."

"Yes, of course I know it."

"I want to descend from here to the Heike stronghold at Ichi-no-tani. Is that possible?"

"Not by any manner of means. There is no way for a man to get down the three-hundred-foot gorge and the hundred-and-fifty-foot rock face. It would be inconceivable on horseback."

"Do deer go through?"

"Yes. When the weather turns warm, the Harima deer cross into Tanba to lie in the deep grass, and when it turns cold, the Tanba deer go to Inamino in Harima to feed where the snow is shallow."

"Why, it sounds like a regular racetrack! A horse can certainly go where a deer goes. Very well, you shall be our guide."

The hunter protested that he was too old.

"You must have a son?"

"I have." He presented an eighteen-year-old youth called Kumaō. They promptly put up the boy's hair, named him Washinoo no Saburō Yoshihisa (his father's name being Washinoo no Shōji Takehisa), and assigned him to the vanguard as a guide. When Yoshitsune died in Oshū, estranged from Yoritomo after the conquest of the Heike, it was that same Yoshihisa who perished at his side.

### [10] First and Second Attackers

Kumagae no Jirō Naozane and Hirayama no Mushadokoro Sueshige stayed with the rear assault force until around midnight on the Sixth. Then Naozane called over his son, Kojirō Naoie. "Nobody will be able to take the lead when this force makes its descent. Let's head for Toi's route, the Harima Road, and be the first to attack Ichi-no-tani," he said.

"A fine idea," Naoie said. "I have been wanting to suggest that very thing. Please start at once."

"Come to think of it, Hirayama is marching with this force. He's a man who has no taste for fighting in a crowd." To a subordinate, Naozane said, "See what Hirayama is doing and report back to me."

Just as Naozane had suspected, Sueshige was already preparing to leave. "Others can do as they please," he was muttering. "I am not going to fall one step behind. I am not going to fall behind." A subordinate, feeding his

master's horse, gave the animal a blow. "How much longer are you going to keep eating, you big slob?" "Don't treat him like that," Sueshige said. "You're seeing him for the last time tonight." He rode off.

Naozane's man ran back and blurted out his news. "Very well!" Naozane also left at once.

Naozane was attired in a dark blue *hitatare*, a suit of armor with red leather lacing, and a red cape; he rode his famous steed Gondakurige [Chestnut Gonda]. Naoie was attired in a *hitatare* with a light water-plantain design and a suit of armor laced with blue-and-white rope-patterned leather; he rode a whitish horse named Seirō [West Tower]. The standard bearer was attired in an olive-gray *hitatare* and a suit of armor laced with redyed cherry-patterned leather; he rode a blond chestnut horse. The three proceeded at a walk toward the right, observing on their left the gorge the others were to descend, and came out onto the Ichi-no-tani beach by way of an old path called Tai-no-hata, unused for many years.

Because it was still the middle of the night, Toi no Jirō Sanehira had halted with his seven thousand riders at Shioya, near Ichi-no-tani. Naozane slipped past him in the dark, following the beach, and rode to the western gate of the Ichi-no-tani stronghold. Not a sound was audible in the peaceful enemy camp at that hour, nor was a single Genji warrior following Kumagae's party.

Naozane called Naoie over. "There must be many who hope to lead the attack; we should not leap to the conclusion that we are the only ones. Others are probably already here, waiting somewhere in the vicinity for daybreak. Let's announce our names." He walked his horse to the shield barricade and announced their names in a mighty voice. "The first men to attack Ichi-no-tani are Kumagae no Jirō Naozane of Musashi and his son Kotarō Naoie!"

The Heike made no response. "Just keep quiet," they told one another. "Let them wear out their horses. Let them use up their arrows."

Meanwhile, a warrior came up behind Naozane. "Who goes there?" Naozane asked.

"Sueshige," the other answered. "Who wants to know?"

"Naozane."

"Kumagae, is it? How long have you been here?"

"I arrived during the night."

"I ought to have been on your heels; I am late because Narida Gorō tricked me. Narida said he wanted to die wherever I did, so I took him along, but then he tried to delay me after we started. 'Don't be in a hurry to attack first, Hirayama,' he said. 'Nobody will know how you acquitted yourself unless you have friends watching in the rear. What would be the use of dashing to your death alone in the middle of an enemy host?' I thought he was right, so I went ahead of him to the top of a little rise, turned my horse's head downhill, and waited for some of our men to appear. When Narida came along behind me, I expected him to bring his horse up beside mine for some talk about the battle, but he galloped past with a hostile look in my direction. 'Aha!' I thought. 'That fellow has used a trick to take the lead.' He

was about two hundred feet ahead of me. I saw that his horse seemed weaker than mine, so I whipped after him. I overtook him, shouted, 'How dare you trick a man like me?' and came on alone to attack the enemy. He must have fallen far behind; I'm sure he was not able to keep me in sight."

Naozane, Sueshige, and the others waited, a party of five. When the first light of dawn appeared at last, Naozane walked his horse to the shield barricade again and called out in a mighty voice. (He had already announced his name, but he may have wanted Sueshige to hear.) "Kumagae no Jirō Naozane of Musashi and his son Kojirō Naoie, the men who announced their names earlier, are the first to attack Ichi-no-tani. If any Heike samurai consider themselves my equals, let them confront me! Let them confront me!"

"Come on! Let's go pull those two off their horses. They've been yelling their names all night long." Who were the Heike samurai who came forward with those words? They were Etchū no Jirōbyōe Moritsugi, Kazusa no Gorōbyōe Tadimitsu, Akushichibyōe Kagekiyo, Gotōnai Sadatsune, and other leading warriors. More than twenty riders in all, they opened the gate and galloped out.

Sueshige was attired in a white-spotted tie-dyed *hitatare*, a suit of armor with flame-red lacing, and a cape with a two-bar design; he rode his famous steed Mekasuge [Gray-Ringed Eyes]. His standard bearer was attired in a suit of armor with black leather lacing and a helmet with the neck-guard well down; he rode a rust-brown horse.

Sueshige announced his name. "I am Hirayama no Mushadokoro Sueshige, the Musashi resident who led the attacks in Hōgen and Heiji!" Then he galloped forward, shouting, side by side with the standard bearer.

Where Naozane galloped, Sueshige followed; where Sueshige galloped, Naozane followed. Neither willing to be outdone, they dashed in by turns, whipping their horses and attacking until the sparks flew. The hard-pressed Heike samurai may have considered themselves overmatched, for they hurried back into the stronghold to fight from its protection.

Naozane's horse reared, shot in the belly, and Naozane swung his leg over its back and dismounted. Kojirō Naoie leaped down and stood beside him, wounded in the bow arm, after he had announced his age as sixteen and had fought until his horse's nose touched the shield barricade.

"Are you wounded, Kojirō?"

"Yes."

"Keep pushing your armor up. Don't let an arrow through. See that your neck-guard is low. Don't get shot in the face."

Naozane pulled out the arrows that were lodged in his own armor, tossed them aside, faced the stronghold with a scowl, and shouted in a mighty voice, "I am Naozane, the man who left Kamakura last winter determined to give his life for Lord Yoritomo and bleach his bones at Ichi-no-tani. Where is Etchū no Jirōbyōe, who boasts of his exploits at Muroyama and Mizushima? Where are Kazusa no Gorōbyōe and Akushichibyōe? Isn't Lord Noritsune there? Fame depends on the adversary. It does not come from meeting just any fellow who happens along. Confront me! Confront me!"

Etchū no Jirōbyōe Moritsugi was attired in his favorite garb, a blue-and-

white *hitatare* and a suit of armor laced with red leather. He advanced slowly astride a whitish roan, his eyes fixed on Naozane. Naozane and his son did not retreat a step. Instead, they raised their swords to their foreheads and advanced at a steady walk, staying side by side to avoid being separated. Perhaps Moritsugi considered himself overmatched, for he turned back.

"Isn't that Etchū no Jirōbyōe?" said Naozane. "What's wrong with me as an adversary? Come on! Grapple with me!"

"No, thank you!" Moritsugi withdrew.

"You coward!" said Kagekiyo. He started to gallop out, intent on grappling with Naozane, but Moritsugi seized the sleeve of his armor to stop him. "This battle is not the only one Lord Noritsune has to think about. Don't throw your life away here."

Later, Naozane obtained a remount and galloped forward with a shout, followed by Sueshige, who had been resting his horse while Naozane and Naoie engaged the foe. Not many of the Heike warriors were mounted. The men on the archery platforms aligned their arrows and released showers of missiles, but because the Genji numbers were fewer by far, Naozane and the others escaped harm, lost in the melee. "Ride alongside and grapple with them! Grapple!" came the orders from the platforms. But the Heike horses were exhausted from having been overridden, underfed, and forced to stand in boats for long periods of time. One collision with Naozane's or Sueshige's big, well-nourished beast would have been enough to knock any of them flat, and thus there was not a single attempt to grapple with either warrior.

An arrow pierced Sueshige's standard bearer, a man he valued as he did his life. Sueshige burst through the enemy ranks, took the slayer's head swiftly, and came out again. Naozane also amassed many trophies.

Naozane, the first to arrive on the scene, had been kept outside because the gate was closed; Sueshige, the second, had been able to gallop inside because the gate was open. So each of the two claimed to have led the attack.

### [11] *The Double Charge*

Meanwhile, Narida Gorō arrived.

Toi no Jirō Sanehira galloped forward at the head of his seven thousand riders, and the whole force attacked and fought, shouting and yelling, with their colored standards raised aloft.

The fifty thousand Genji riders under Noriyori had taken up positions on the main front, at Ikuta-no-mori. Among them, there were two residents of Musashi Province named Kawara Tarō Takanao and Kawara Jirō Morinao. Takanao called over his brother, Morinao. "A great landholder wins glory through his vassals' exploits, even though he may do nothing himself, but people like us have to earn their own reputations," he said. "It irks me to wait around like this, not releasing a single arrow, when we have an enemy in front of us. I am going to steal inside the stronghold to shoot an arrow. Since there is not a chance in a thousand of my returning, you must stay here so you can testify later."

Morinao burst into tears. "It hurts to hear you talk that way. What kind of prosperity would reward the younger of two brothers if he stayed behind?"

let the older one be killed? Let's not fall in different places; let's face the end together."

The two instructed their subordinates to carry word of their last moments to their wives and children. Then they went forward on foot, shod in straw sandals. Using their bows as staffs, they clambered over the Ikuta-no-mori branch barricade and entered the stronghold. Not even the color of their armor lacing was distinguishable in the dim starlight. Takanao announced their names in a mighty voice. "Kawara Tarō Kisaichi no Takanao and Kawara Jirō Morinao, residents of Musashi Province, are the first men of the Genji frontal assault force to attack at Ikuta-no-mori!"

None of the Heike felt inclined to fight. "Nothing is as fearsome as an eastern warrior," they said. "There are only two of them in the middle of our huge force; they can do no real harm. Let's humor them awhile."

The brothers, who were crack archers, proceeded to let fly a fast and furious barrage of arrows.

"We can't tolerate this! Kill them!" someone shouted.

There were two brothers famous as bowmen in the western provinces, Manabe no Shirō and Manabe no Gorō, residents of Bitchū Province. Shirō was at Ichi-no-tani, Gorō at Ikuta-no-mori. At once, Gorō drew his bow to the full and sent an arrow whizzing on its way. The shaft drove straight through the breastplate of Takanao's armor to his back, and he stood paralyzed, clinging to his bow for support. Morinao rushed up, slung Takanao over his shoulder, and started to climb the barricade. Gorō's second arrow penetrated a gap in the skirt of Morinao's armor, and the brothers fell together. One of Gorō's subordinates went over and decapitated them.

When the New Middle Counselor Tomomori saw the heads, he said, "Ah, they were valiant fellows. Each of them deserved to be called a warrior worth a thousand. I wish they could have been spared."

At that juncture, the Kawara subordinates shouted, "The Kawara brothers have now become the first men to dash into the stronghold and meet death!"

"It was through the Shi League's negligence that those two were killed," said Kajiwara Heizō Kagetoki. "The time has come. Attack!" He and his men raised a great battle cry, which was taken up at once by the rest of the fifty thousand riders. Foot soldiers were ordered to clear away the branch barricade, and Kagetoki and his five hundred riders galloped forward, shouting.

Upon observing that his second son, Heiji Kagetaka, seemed inclined to dash too far ahead, Kagetoki sent him a messenger. "The Commander-in-Chief has said there will be no reward for any man who gallops ahead with nobody behind him."

Kagetaka pulled up for a moment. "Tell my father this":

mononofu no  
toritsutaetaru  
azusayumi  
hiite wa hito no  
kaeru mono ka wa

I can no more turn back  
than can an arrow in flight  
shot when a warrior  
extends the bow of birchwood  
handed down from his forebears.

Then he galloped on with a shout.

"Don't let Heiji be struck down! Follow, men! Don't let Kagetaka be struck down! Follow, men!" Kagetaka's father, Kagetoki, and brothers, Genda Kagesue and Saburō Kageie, rode after him.

The five hundred Kajiwara riders galloped into the great force, pressed the foe mercilessly, and made a swift retreat, their number reduced to a mere fifty. Kagesue had somehow dropped out of sight.

"What has become of Genda?" Kagetoki asked the retainers.

"He must have penetrated too deep; it looks as though he might have been killed."

"It is only for my sons that I value life. Why should I survive if Genda has been cut down? I am going back!" He turned around and announced his name in a mighty voice. "I am Kajiwara Heizō Kagetoki, a warrior worth a thousand men! I claim descent from Kamakura no Gongorō Kagemasa, the sixteen-year-old who led Hachiman Tarō Yoshiie's assault on the Senbuku Kanazawa stronghold in Dewa during the Latter Three Years' Campaign, the same who earned everlasting renown when he felled an adversary with a return shot, though an arrow had pierced his left eye and penetrated to the top layer of his neck-guard! If anyone here considers himself my equal, let him kill me and display my head to his chief!" He galloped forward, shouting.

"Kajiwara is a warrior famous throughout the eastern provinces," Tomomori said. "Don't let him escape! Don't miss him! Kill him!" The Heike surrounded Kagetoki with their great numbers and attacked.

Heedless of his own fate, Kagetoki galloped through and around the myriads of the foe in search of Kagesue, using the sidewise, lengthwise, zigzag, and crosswise maneuvers. Meanwhile, Kagesue had fought until his helmet sagged. Then, having lost his horse to an arrow, he had dismounted and backed against a twenty-foot cliff, where he and two retainers, one on either side, were defending themselves desperately, with their eyes straight ahead, hemmed in by five enemies.

Kagetoki caught sight of him. "You have not been killed!" He leaped from his horse. "Here I am! Don't show the enemy your back, Genda, even if it costs you your life." The father and son together slew three of the five enemies and wounded two.

"There is a time for a warrior to advance and a time for him to withdraw. Come, Genda." Kagetoki took Kagesue on his horse and retreated.

That is what people mean when they talk about "Kajiwara's double charge."

### [12] *The Assault from the Cliff*

After those encounters, other eastern warriors moved forward—the Chichibu, the Ashikaga, the Miura, the Kamakura, and, among the leagues, the Inomata, the Kodama, the Noiyo, the Yokoyama, the Nishitō, the Tsuzukitō, and the Shinotō. The massed Genji and Heike armies met in mingled combat, the riders charging by turns and vying to announce their names. Their shouts and yells awoke echoes in the mountains; the hoofbeats of their gal-

loping horses reverberated like thunder; the arrows they exchanged resembled falling rain. Some men retired to the rear, carrying the wounded on their shoulders; some sustained light injuries and fought on; some suffered mortal blows and perished. There were those who rode alongside enemies, grappled with them, fell, and died in dagger fights; there were those who seized others, held them down, and cut off their heads; there were those who had their heads cut off. Neither side revealed a weakness for the other to exploit, and the main Genji force seemed unlikely to prevail without help, despite its valor.

Now Kurō Onzōshi Yoshitsune, who had circled around to the rear, had climbed to the Hiyodorigoe track behind Ichi-no-tani toward dawn on the Seventh. As he was preparing for the descent, two stags and a doe ran down to the Heike fortifications, frightened perhaps by his forces. The warriors in the stronghold were much agitated when they saw them. "Even the nearby deer ought to be fleeing deep into the mountains to get away from us," they said. "It is strange, indeed, that these animals should have come down into the middle of so great an army. The Genji must be going to descend from the mountains above."

Takechi no Mushadokoro Kiyonori, a resident of Iyo Province, stepped forward. "Be that as it may, we cannot spare anything that comes from a hostile direction." He shot the two stags and let the doe pass.

Etchū no Zenji Moritoshi cautioned Kiyonori. "Shooting the deer was an imprudent act. You could have held off ten enemies with one of those arrows. You wasted precious arrows in order to commit a sin."\*

Yoshitsune surveyed the distant stronghold. "Let's try chasing some horses down." They chased some saddled horses down. Some of the animals broke their legs and fell; others descended in safety. Three of them reached the roof of Moritoshi's quarters and stood there trembling.

"The horses will not get hurt if the riders are careful," Yoshitsune said. "All right, take them down! Do as I do!" He galloped forward at the head of thirty horsemen, and all the others followed, descending a slope so steep that the rear riders' stirrup edges touched the front riders' armor and helmets. After slipping and sliding swiftly for seven hundred feet through sand mixed with pebbles, they pulled up on a ledge, below which they could see a huge mossy crag, a vertical drop of a hundred and forty or fifty feet. They sat aghast. "This is the end!"

Sawara no Jūrō Yoshitsura came forward. "In Miura, we gallop over such places morning and night, even if we're only chasing birds. This is a Miura racetrack!" He dashed ahead, and all the warriors followed.

The tense riders went down with their eyes closed, encouraging the horses in muffled voices. "Ei! Ei!" The feat they were accomplishing seemed beyond mortal capacity, a fit undertaking for demons.

Even before all the men had reached the bottom, they raised a great battle cry. They were only three thousand strong, but the echoes made them seem a host of a hundred thousand.

Murakami no Hangandai Yasukuni's men put all the Heike sleeping quar-

\* According to Buddhist doctrine, it is a sin to take a life.

ters and camps to the torch. As luck would have it, a violent wind chanced to be blowing. Clouds of black smoke billowed forth, and great numbers of panic-stricken Heike warriors galloped into the sea to save themselves.

Many vessels had been left in readiness at the water's edge, but what good could come of it when four or five hundred armored men, and even a thousand, tried to crowd into a single craft? Three great ships sank before the beholders' eyes, after having progressed a mere three hundred and sixty yards from the shore. Thereafter, it was decreed that although men of quality might board, those of inferior status were to be kept off: instructions were issued to slash at them with swords and spears. Well aware of what to expect, the lesser orders seized and clung to the vessels from which they were barred. Some lost whole arms and others forearms, and they ended as rows of corpses, reddening the water's edge at Ichi-no-tani.

Although the Noto Governor Noritsune was a man who had fought time and again without suffering defeat, he fled westward on his charger Usuguro [Dusky Black]. (It is hard to say what was in his mind.) He boarded a ship at Akashi Shore in Harima and crossed to Yashima in Sanuki.

### [13] *The Death of Etchū no Zenji*

In reckless disregard of their lives, the warriors from Musashi and Sagami took the offensive on both the main front and the seaward side. The Kodama League sent a messenger from the mountain flank to the New Middle Counselor Tomomori, who was fighting with his face toward the east. "The men of the Kodama League tell you this because you were once Governor of Musashi: look behind you!" On doing so, Tomomori and the others saw a cloud of black smoke advancing toward them. "Ah! The western front has fallen!" They all fled in desperate haste.

Etchū no Zenji Moritoshi, the Samurai Commander on the cliffward side, halted his mount and sat motionless, perhaps because he believed it was too late to try to escape. Inomata no Koheiroku Noritsuna marked him as a worthy adversary, galloped forward with flailing whip and flapping stirrups, rode up alongside him, gripped him with all his strength, and crashed with him to the ground. Noritsuna was a man renowned in the Eight Provinces for his great strength, a warrior who was said to have once torn apart a deer's double-branched antlers with ease. Moritoshi allowed others to consider him merely as strong as twenty or thirty ordinary men, but in actuality he could haul up or send down a vessel that required sixty or seventy men for the working. Thus, Moritoshi succeeded in gripping Noritsuna and holding him still. Noritsuna, lying underneath, tried to draw his dagger but could not grasp the hilt with his splayed fingers, tried to speak but was pinned too tight to utter a word. But although his head was about to be cut off, and despite his physical inferiority, his valor did not flag. He collected his breath calmly for a few instants and then spoke in an offhand manner.

"Did you hear me announce my name? A man who kills an enemy does not perform a great exploit unless he takes the head after identifying himself and requiring the other to do the same. What will you gain by taking an anonymous head?"

Moritoshi may have thought that he was right. "I am Etchū no Zenji Moritoshi, born a Taira but now become a samurai because of my inadequacies. Who are you? Announce your name: I would like to hear it."

"I am Inomata no Koheiroku Noritsuna, a resident of Musashi Province." Noritsuna continued, "If we look at the present state of affairs, it seems that the Genji are the stronger, and that you on the Heike side face defeat. Unless your masters prosper, you will reap no rewards by taking heads to show them. Stretch a point and spare me. I will use my exploits to save the lives of any number of Heike men—dozens, if you like."

Moritoshi was outraged. "In spite of all my shortcomings, I belong to the house of Taira. I have no intention of turning to the Genji for help, and no intention whatsoever of helping one of them. Your proposal is ignoble." He prepared to cut off Noritsuna's head.

"You are disgracing yourself! How can you decapitate a man who has already surrendered?" Noritsuna said.

"Very well, I will spare you." Moritoshi raised Noritsuna to his feet, and the two sat down to rest on a footpath, with a hard, sun-baked field in front and a deep, muddy rice paddy to their rear.

Presently, a warrior attired in a suit of armor with black leather lacing came galloping toward them on a whitish horse. Moritoshi eyed him suspiciously. "Don't worry," Noritsuna said. "That is Hitomi no Shirō, a friend of mine. He must have seen me." But to himself Noritsuna thought, "If I begin wrestling with Etchū no Zenji after Shirō gets close, Shirō will be sure to attack him, too." He bided his time.

The rider meanwhile advanced until he was a mere thirty-five feet away. At first, Moritoshi tried to keep one eye on each of the two men, but the galloping foe engaged his full attention as he gradually approached, and he lost track of Noritsuna. Noritsuna seized the opportunity. He sprang to his feet with a yell, dealt a powerful blow to Moritoshi's breastplate with the combined force of his two hands, and toppled him backwards into the rice paddy behind. As Moritoshi struggled to rise, Noritsuna clamped him between his legs, snatched the dagger from Moritoshi's waist, lifted his adversary's armor skirt, plunged the weapon into his flesh three times, hilt, fist, and all, and took his head.

Hitomi no Shirō had come up in the meantime. "It is cases like this that give rise to disputes," Noritsuna thought. He impaled the head on the tip of his sword, held it high, and announced his name in a mighty voice. "Inomata no Koheiroku Noritsuna has slain Etchū no Zenji Moritoshi, the Heike samurai known in these days as a demon god!" His name led that day's list of exploits.

### [14] *The Death of Tadanori*

The Satsuma Governor Tadanori was Commander-in-Chief in the Ichi-notani western sector. Attired in a blue brocade *hitatare* and a suit of armor with black silk lacing, and seated on a gold-flecked lacquered saddle astride a stout and brawny black horse, he withdrew at his leisure in the middle of a group of a hundred of his men, pausing on occasion to d tle. A member



of the Inomata League, Okabe no Rokuyata Tadazumi, marked him as a Commander-in-Chief and pursued him with flailing whip and flapping stirrups. "Who are you? Announce your name."

"We are friends." Tadanori turned and raised his head as he spoke, revealing a face with blackened teeth.

"Aha!" Tadazumi thought. "Our men don't dye their teeth. He must be one of the Heike nobles." He rode up alongside him and gripped him with all his strength. Tadanori's hundred riders, hastily recruited warriors from different provinces, all fled in desperate haste at the sight.

"You scoundrel! You would have done well to accept my word." Tadanori, reared in Kumano, was a man of great strength and agility. He snatched out his dagger and stabbed at Tadazumi three times—twice while he was on horseback and once more on the ground where he fell. Two of the blows were deflected by armor; the third struck Tadazumi in the face, but inflicted only a slight wound, not enough to kill him. Tadanori seized Tadazumi, held him down, and made ready to cut off his head.

Just then, Tadazumi's page galloped up from the rear, drew his sword, and lopped off Tadanori's right arm at the elbow. Tadanori may have felt that his time had come, for he said, "Give me room for a while. I want to recite ten Buddha-invocations." He gripped Tadazumi and hurled him a bowlength away. Then he began to recite ten invocations in a loud voice, facing westward: "His light illumines all the worlds in the Ten Directions; he saves sentient beings who recite his name, he does not cast them away." Tadazumi came up behind and cut off his head before he had finished.

Although Tadazumi felt certain that he had slain an important Commander-in-Chief, he did not know who he was. Observing that the other had tied a strip of paper to his quiver, he opened it and saw a poem, "On Blossoms at a Travel Lodging," with the signature "Tadanori":

yukikurete	If, journeying on,
ko no shitakage o	I seek shelter at nightfall
yado to seba	beneath a tree,
hana ya koyoi no	might cherry blossoms become
aruji naramashi	my host for this evening?

Thus it was that he discovered his adversary's identity. He impaled the head on the tip of his sword, held it high, and announced his name in a mighty voice. "Okabe no Rokuyata Tadazumi has slain the famous Heike Lord Tadanori, the Governor of Satsuma!" Of all who heard, friend or foe, not one but wept until his sleeves were drenched. "Ah, how pitiful!" people said. "He was a Commander-in-Chief who could ill be spared, a man equally proficient in martial pursuits and the art of poetry."

### [15] The Capture of Shigehira

Middle Captain Shigehira, the Deputy Commander at Ikuta-no-mori, had been deserted by all but one of his men. That day, he was attired in a dark blue *hitatare* embroidered with a flock of bright yellow plovers, and a suit of armor with purple-shaded lacing; he rode a famous horse named Dōji Kage

[Child Deerskin]. His foster brother, Gotōbyōe Morinaga, was attired in a white-spotted tie-dyed *hitatare* and a suit of armor with flame-red lacing; he rode Shigehira's prized horse Yomenashi Tsukige [Night-Eyeless White].\*

Kajiwara Genda Kagesue and Shō no Shirō Takaie marked Shigehira as a Commander-in-Chief and pursued him with flailing whips and flapping stirrups. Too hard pressed from behind to escape to one of the many rescue vessels at the water's edge, Shigehira crossed the Minato and Karumo rivers, galloped with Hasu Pond on his right and Koma Woods on his left, passed Itayado and Suma, and fled toward the west. His splendid mount drew farther and farther ahead; there seemed little chance that the battle-weary Genji horses could overtake him. But then Kagesue stood in his stirrups, drew his bow to the full, and sent an arrow into the distance, hoping for a lucky hit. The arrow sank shaft-deep in Dōji Kage's rump, and the horse faltered. Perhaps Morinaga feared that Shigehira would take his horse, for he promptly fled with raised whip.

"What are you doing, Morinaga? This is not the way you always swore to act. Where do you intend to go after forsaking me?" Shigehira said. Morinaga pretended not to hear: he discarded his red armor-badge and rode off as fast as he could.

With the enemy approaching and his horse weakening, Shigehira rode into the sea, but it was a shoaling strand, too shallow to drown in. He dismounted, slashed his belt, unfastened his shoulder cord, took off his armor and helmet, and prepared to cut open his belly.

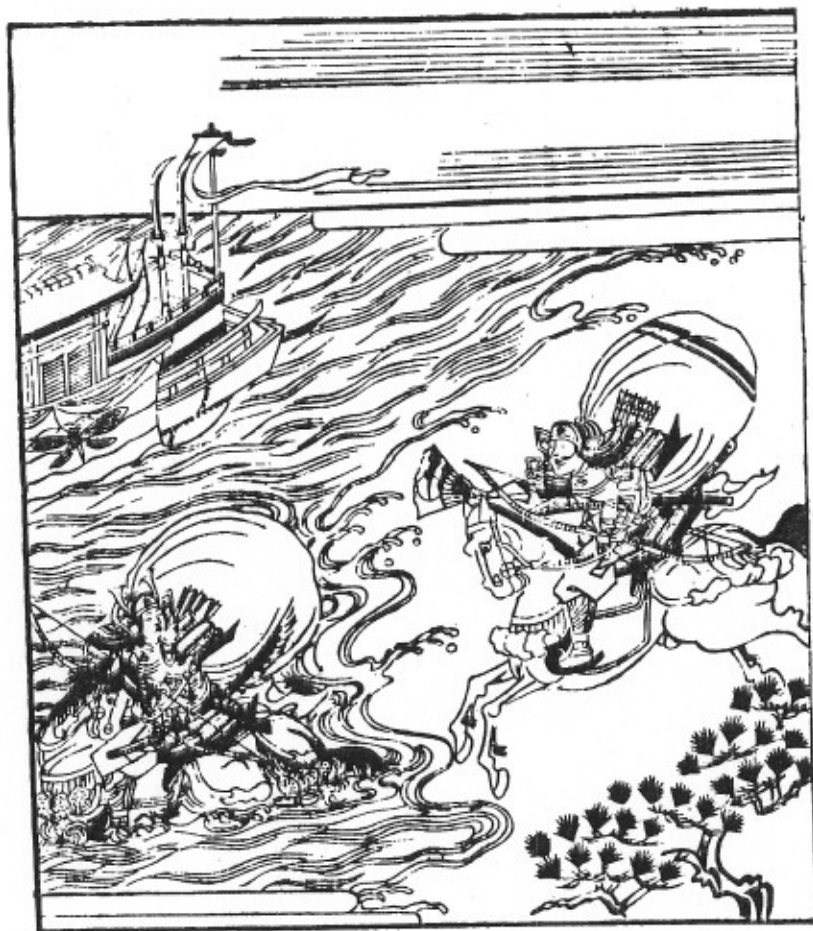
Shō no Shirō Takaie came up ahead of Kagesue, galloping with flailing whip and flapping stirrups. He leaped down. "It would be a mistake to kill yourself. I will be your attendant wherever you go." He put Shigehira onto his own horse, tied him to the pommel, and escorted him back, riding a remount.

Thanks to his splendid, long-winded steed, Morinaga escaped without incident. He later found refuge with a Kumano monk, the Onaka Dharma Bridge. After the monk's death, he went to the capital with the widow, a nun who was prosecuting a lawsuit, and there he was widely recognized by high and low as Shigehira's foster brother. "Morinaga is a shameless fellow," people said. "Shigehira thought the world of him, but he refused to face death at his master's side. Instead, the wretched creature turns up with a nun, of all things!" We are told that the criticism seems to have embarrassed even so dishonorable a man, and that Morinaga used a fan to hide his face.

### [16] The Death of Atsumori

Kumagae no Jirō Naozane walked his horse toward the beach after the defeat of the Heike. "The Taira nobles will be fleeing to the water's edge in the hope of boarding rescue vessels," he thought. "Ah, how I would like to grapple with a high-ranking Commander-in-Chief!" Just then, he saw a lone rider splash into the sea, headed toward a vessel in the offing. The other was

\* A horse with a white node (*yome*, "night-eye") behind its front knee was said to be able to run well at night, the reason being (according to one theory) that the node served as an extra eye. Shigehira's horse, which was white all over, could presumably do even better.



*Kumagae beckons to Atsumori.*

attired in a crane-embroidered *nerinuki* silk *hitatare*, a suit of armor with shaded green lacing, and a horned helmet. At his waist, he wore a sword with gilt bronze fittings; on his back, there rode a quiver containing arrows fledged with black-banded white eagle feathers. He grasped a rattan-wrapped bow and bestrode a white-dappled reddish horse with a gold-edged saddle. When his mount had swum out about a hundred and fifty or two hundred feet, Naozane beckoned him with his fan.

"I see that you are a Commander-in-Chief. It is dishonorable to show your back to an enemy. Return!"

The warrior came back. As he was leaving the water, Naozane rode up alongside him, gripped him with all his strength, crashed with him to the ground, held him motionless, and pushed aside his helmet to cut of

head. He was sixteen or seventeen years old, with a lightly powdered face and blackened teeth—a boy just the age of Naozane's own son Kojirō Naoie, and so handsome that Naozane could not find a place to strike.

"Who are you? Announce your name. I will spare you," Naozane said.

"Who are you?" the youth asked.

"Nobody of any importance: Kumagae no Jirō Naozane, a resident of Musashi Province."

"Then it is unnecessary to give you my name. I am a desirable opponent for you. Ask about me after you take my head. Someone will recognize me, even if I don't tell you."

"Indeed, he must be a Commander-in-Chief," Naozane thought. "Killing this one person will not change defeat into victory, nor will sparing him change victory into defeat. When I think of how I grieved when Kojirō suffered a minor wound, it is easy to imagine the sorrow of this young lord's father if he were to hear that the boy had been slain. Ah, I would like to spare him!" Casting a swift glance to the rear, he discovered Sanehira and Kagetoki coming along behind him with fifty riders.

"I would like to spare you," he said, restraining his tears, "but there are Genji warriors everywhere. You cannot possibly escape. It will be better if I kill you than if someone else does it, because I will offer prayers on your behalf."

"Just take my head and be quick about it."

Overwhelmed by compassion, Naozane could not find a place to strike. His senses reeled, his wits forsook him, and he was scarcely conscious of his surroundings. But matters could not go on like that forever: in tears, he took the head.

"Alas! No lot is as hard as a warrior's. I would never have suffered such a dreadful experience if I had not been born into a military house. How cruel I was to kill him!" He pressed his sleeve to his face and shed floods of tears.

Presently, since matters could not go on like that forever, he started to remove the youth's armor *hitatare* so that he might wrap it around the head. A brocade bag containing a flute was tucked in at the waist. "Ah, how pitiful! He must have been one of the people I heard making music inside the stronghold just before dawn. There are tens of thousands of riders in our eastern armies, but I am sure none of them has brought a flute to the battlefield. Those court nobles are refined men!"

When Naozane's trophies were presented for Yoshitsune's inspection, they drew tears from the eyes of all the beholders. It was learned later that the slain youth was Tayū Atsumori, aged seventeen, a son of Tsunemori, the Master of the Palace Repairs Office.

After that, Naozane thought increasingly of becoming a monk.

The flute in question is said to have been given by Retired Emperor Toba to Atsumori's grandfather Tadamori, who was a skilled musician. I believe I have heard that Tsunemori, who inherited it, turned it over to Atsumori because of his son's proficiency as a flautist. Saeda [Little Branch] was its name. It is deeply moving that music, a profane entertainment, should have led a warrior to the religious life.