



Adult Years

Every morning I put on my *kataginu* and *hakama* and made the rounds of the powers that be.* I went to Commissioner Ōkubo Kōzukenosuke's home in Akasaka Kuichigaisoto and begged him to recommend me for a post. I even submitted a list of the misdeeds I had committed, adding a request that I be considered, now that I had repented. An agent came from his office one day. He said, "Be forewarned that Ōkubo-sama will be sending out investigators to gather information on you." I waited expectantly.

Ōkubo spoke to me one morning. "Your followers simply refuse to tell on you, and though you've confessed everything, we find upon investigating that the mischief you've done is far more serious than you say. Be that as it may, you've repented, and that's good enough for me. I will do my best to get you an appointment. Continue to report diligently."

*Bunsei 8 (1825).

I showed up at his residence with renewed fervor and practiced fencing in my spare time. Often enough my name was entered on the rolls of candidates, but not once was I given a post. And that I found very galling.

I badgered my father and brother into letting me set up a separate residence. I decided to build a house in Warigesui, on the property of Amano Sakyō. I rented the second floor of his house until it was ready.

Sakyō became seriously sick all of a sudden and died. I did what I could for the bereaved family. We moved into our new house. Sakyō's son and heir, Kinjirō, was then only two years old. When the time came to request formal succession to the family headship. Amano Iwazō, a member of the main branch of the family who bore an old grudge against Sakyō, started making things difficult. He tried to have the branch line ended, and with everybody squabbling, it looked as though the matter would never be settled. I was friendly with both branches of the family, so I stepped in and saw to it that Kinjirō was recognized as family head. His family, much pleased, asked me to continue to look after their affairs.

Sakyō's widow now began acting strangely, throwing herself at every man who came her way. It was one scandal after another, and though we'd just settled into our new house, I decided to sell and move out. I applied for permission to the commissioner of Kinjirō's unit. The agent in charge said, "If you leave, there's no telling what might happen to the Amano family. Stay on for a year or so."

I obliged but wasn't happy about it. Fixing other's troubles was all very well, but what about my own? Then one day an old man gave me a piece of advice. "People are wont to repay a good deed with ingratitude. Well, why don't you be different and try returning a good deed for every act of ill will?" I did as he said, and curiously enough, not only did my family situation improve, but even my mean old grandmother began acting more decently. I found, moreover, that people were constantly seeking my help. Whenever a sticky problem or negotiation came up, I dealt with it as though I myself were involved, so that in time even those who had been against me came over to my side, saying, "Yes, indeed. How right you are."

I realized that I owed all this to the old man's counsel. In my happiness I aided fellow swordsmen who'd gotten into trouble or hopelessly into debt, giving them cash or sending them someplace out of harm's way. How many I helped I'll never know, but it paid off nicely years later when I traveled in the provinces. No matter where I went, I was recognized and treated exceedingly well.

Two years had passed since Sakyō's death. His widow was still behaving scandalously. I received permission to move to a house on the property of Deguchi* Tetsugorō, who lived in the same section of town. His oldest son was a friend from way back, and ever since I'd helped him when he had a falling out with his family, his grateful grandmother had been urging me to come live on their land.

*Katsu means Yamaguchi.

I continued to report regularly to the commissioner's residence. I also had to make ends meet, so I tried my hand at dealing in swords and other military accoutrements. In the beginning I lost money—fifty or sixty *ryō* the first month and a half—but I got used to the business little by little, and by attending the second-hand goods market every night, I found I could really bring in profits.

I was anxious to find official employment. But I also had to dash about making money. Then my father died, and I lost heart completely.* His death was entirely unexpected—it seems he'd had a stroke. I was giving fencing lessons at Mazaki Inari Shrine when one of his young retainers came running with the news. I raced to my father's place, but it was too late. I stayed on, helping out, and left the following morning. The next few days were taken up with my father's affairs. My own son was then five. I went back to my business as soon as the mourning period of forty-nine days was completed.

It was in the fall of the same year that I first heard of Yoshida Hyōgo, a Shintō priest of the Marishiten cult in Sarue in Honjo.²⁹ A number of my friends had taken up Shintō practices under his guidance and were eager to have me join them. I went to visit Hyōgo one day, and we were soon friendly. "Katsu-sama, I understand you have a wide following," he said. "I wonder if you would set up an association for my shrine—I am thinking of calling it the Day of the Boar Association."³⁰

*Bunsei 10 (1827).

After agreeing to try, I decided that the members would pay three *mon* plus three *gō* a month. Merchants were invited, as were peasants, not to mention my fellow swordsmen. In a month or so I had lined up about 150 or 160 members. I drew up a list of the membership and showed it to Hyōgo. He was very pleased.

A year and a half later the association had grown to five or six hundred subscribers—all thanks to me. Hyōgo then said to me, "As a propitiation and thanksgiving to the gods, I would like to hold a performance of sacred dances on the Day of the Boar in the tenth month." I called together thirty-eight members who would act as sponsors for the occasion and told them to spread word of the event. I also said that Hyōgo wanted them to come dressed in formal kimono for the edification of the pilgrims and that he himself would be in full ceremonial attire.

On the day of the festivities throngs of pilgrims poured into the shrine grounds. The street in front of the shrine was lined with booths that had been set up by merchants—it wasn't every day you could count on a crowd like this. Members of the association were regaled with food and drink as they arrived. That damned Hyōgo couldn't hold his liquor, though, and was acting up as if he owned a million *koku* of land somewhere off in Nishinokubo. He was also talking rot and nonsense and bossing around my friend Miyagawa Tetsujirō. I lost my temper and bawled him out, and when he answered back with some insulting remarks, I walked off, taking my friends with me.

The following day several members of the association came to apologize. "Listen," I told them, "if it

hadn't been for me, this association would've never been formed. And what do I get? Not a word of thanks. The way that idiot Hyōgo goes sounding off, you'd think he'd done it all by himself. You can tell him I'm resigning."

Ōgashira Ihei, Hashimoto Shōhei, and Mogami Iku-gorō tried to reason with me. "You have a point there, Katsu-san. But you did go to a lot of trouble to put this association together, and if you leave, everyone else will leave too. Why, Hyōgo is probably regretting it even now and intending to apologize. So forgive him this once, will you?"

"All right, but only on the condition that he write a note saying that he'll never again insult an honorable bannerman of the shogun."

"Oh, we'll make him do anything you say."

They left, and in a while I headed for Hyōgo's place with Miyagawa and Fukatsu Kinjirō. Ōgashira Ihei came part way to meet us. He said, "Hyōgo's put on his ceremonial robes for your visit. He's coming out to the gate to receive you, and then he's going to conduct you to the sitting room and formally apologize for his behavior yesterday. We've made sure of this—so please speak to him."

"Very well."

"And by the way, Katsu-san, the sponsors of the association are holding a banquet in your honor. We'd appreciate it if you didn't mention yesterday's incident."

"As you wish, but you'd better make sure that no one else talks about it either, because if someone does, it'll mean that the sponsors are nothing but a bunch

of liars. I'm warning you—I've come today with every intention of cutting down anybody who stands in my way." I said this with particular earnestness and sent Ihei on his way.

Hyōgo and the sponsors were waiting at the front gate. They led me to the sitting room, and after I had taken my place at the head of the room, I put my sword on the sword rack. Everyone sat down. Hyōgo prostrated himself on the floor. "Yesterday, not only did I get drunk but I behaved with extreme rudeness. Please forgive me. I promise to act henceforth with more circumspection."

I said, "You're nothing but a back alley Shintō priest and probably don't know any better. I rebuked you yesterday because you were unspeakably rude to me—an honorable bannerman of the shogun. No sooner does the association show signs of flourishing than you get puffed up with conceit. I advise you to be more careful in the future if you want the association to continue."

With this, the members began fawning on me, pressing me to eat and drink. I don't like sake, so I sat back and watched the others make drunken fools of themselves.

Among those present were Hyōgo's nephew, Ōtake Gentarō. Indignant that I had called his uncle a back alley priest, he had apparently wormed the details of yesterday's incident out of Miyagawa. He burst into the room. "That Kokichi keeps meddling in people's business and just because of his friend Miyagawa, humiliates my uncle in front of everybody. From now on he's going to have to deal with me. Come on,

Kokichi, let's settle it outside." Though still dressed in his formal kimono, Ōtake had bared one of his shoulders and tied a cotton band around his head. When I ignored him, he marched up to me and began making a scene.

"Oh ho," I said. "Ōtake must have taken leave of his senses. Just look at him, wearing a headband like some common roughneck itching for a fight. Samurai should act like samurai, I say, and as one myself, I disapprove of behavior fit for a servant or a sweeper."

"You brazen son of a—" Ōtake picked up a tray and hurled it at me.

I said, "Hyōgo's to blame for this nonsense in violation of our agreement. And seeing how his own nephew attacks me, I'll have to conclude that all this was planned beforehand. All right—I accept your challenge."

"Eat shit!" Ōtake snarled.

Determined to strike first, I reached for my sword. Everyone scurried out of the room, including Ōtake, who bolted for the kitchen. I ran after him but lost my bearings and found myself in a storage room. I was, moreover, unable to get out, for someone had slammed the door and gotten some men to lean against it.

A crowd gathered near the door and began talking at once. They begged me to forgive Ōtake, who, they said, had been scared out of his wits, thrown down both swords, and fled to his home in Iyodonobashi. I said that his behavior was inexcusable. Several others joined in trying to intercede, among them Ōtake's mother. In tears she implored me to forgive her son. I relented and told them to send for Ōtake.

Ōtake came back full of apologies. "I'm afraid I had too much to drink. And considering that we are under the same commissioner, I would be particularly grateful if you didn't report this." I decided to make peace.

Sake was served again. "Have a drink," Ōtake said.

"No thanks. I never touch the stuff."

"Hah, you're not drinking because we haven't really become friends."

Reluctantly I took a sip. Everybody crowded around me and said, "Let's see you drink from a soup bowl." That irked me, so I took a bowlful and emptied it in one gulp. "Just one more, just one more," they all cried. I drank thirteen bowls in a row. By this time the rest of the members were far gone in their cups and behaving like boors. But I remained sober and in perfect control of myself.

Hyōgo ordered a palanquin to take me home. I must have passed out, because I remember going only as far as Hashimoto Shōueimon's house in Hayashi-chō. For three days my throat was so swollen that I couldn't swallow a thing.

The next day some friends came by to report on the latest goings-on at Hyōgo's house. Hashimoto and Fukatsu stayed behind after the others had left. They each brought out a written pledge and said, "We have a request, Katsu-san. From now on please treat us as if we were your kinsmen." After this episode the Honjo area was more than ever under my control.

In my opinion Hyōgo was a thoroughly bad sort. I severed all connections with the association. The other members that I'd persuaded to join left, too, and I heard that the whole thing fell apart.

I went to see Hashimoto Shōuemon on my way home from Myōken Shrine one day. He had a visitor by the name of Tonomura Nanpei. As the three of us chatted about this and that, Tonomura suddenly turned to me and said, "Katsu-san, you must be a believer of the goddess Myōken.³¹ Tell me, am I right?"

"Yes—I've been devoted to her for a long time."

"Just as I thought. I could tell from the features on your face."

It turned out that Tonomura not only knew all kinds of strange and marvelous facts but was a practitioner of the Ryōbu Shingon arts.³² He struck me as an interesting man. Hashimoto asked him about a relative who was very sick. Tonomura said, "I'm sorry to say that your relative has been possessed by a dead person's spirit."³³

"Have you any idea who it is?"

"The dead person was a male," he said, and went on to describe the man's age, appearance, and manner of death as if he'd seen him with his own eyes. I asked Hashimoto, "What about it?" Hashimoto said the description fit exactly a man he knew. I was terribly impressed and asked Tonomura if he would take me on as a student. He said, "Very well, I shall instruct you as best I can." That same evening I took him home to spend the night.

Tonomura first introduced me to the teachings of the Ryōbu Shingon school and then showed me the correct way to worship Inari, the fox deity.³⁴ Over the next two months, he taught me how to recite mantras and incantations for the sick, how to communicate with the goddess Marishiten, how to master ascetic disci-

pline, and many other techniques and practices as well. In return I took care of his daily needs—he was somewhat seedy looking—and counting fees and other expenses, in a year and a half I spent close to forty or fifty *ryō* on him.

People came from all over Honjo to study with Tonomura, and he soon had so many students that he had to move to the residence of Ogura Chikara, who lived opposite the Mirokuji temple. He was besieged with requests for prayers and incantations—for the sick and afflicted, for appointment to office, and for every other purpose you could think of. But since I had been the one who had discovered him, he was always happy to oblige me.

Kondō Yanosuke's student, Kobayashi Hayata,* finally became my follower. He came to the house every day and made himself useful in various ways. He had no place of his own, however, so I got a house for him in Iriya in Asakusa, where there were a number for sale. I then told my fellow swordsmen to help him set up a practice hall. It became popular with men around Shitaya, and before long he was able to start a side business as a sword dealer. He was good at it and began lending money to his friends. Kobayashi was also cunning and often cheated his friends unscrupulously. On three occasions he borrowed to the hilt and ran away to Tōtōmi. I will say this for him—he always gave me notice before taking off. On the other hand each time

*A lapse of memory on Katsu's part; Kobayashi had already switched to the Otani school.

he came back to Edo, I had to write notes asking his friends to forgive him, and naturally, they were stuck with their losses.

Kobayashi is in Tōtōmi again, having made off with some seventy or eighty *ryō*. He has yet to show his face, but according to Mukōjima no Kane—someone I met in Chōshi—he's more or less shaped up. Kane told me that he met Kobayashi during a pilgrimage to the Hōraiji temple in Akiba. It seems they sat down and talked about me for several hours. He also said that Kobayashi was turned out rather smartly.

One day at Ogura Chikara's house I met a tailor from Kuromon-chō who was in charge of the lots for "shadow lotteries."³⁵ It happened that my friend Tokuyama Kazue was very keen on lotteries. On the day that lots were to be drawn for the official shrine lottery, he asked Tonomura Nanpei to recite some incantations to invoke the gods. Word got round, and a crowd quickly gathered at Ogura's house, where Tonomura still lived. He was just about to begin when I, unknowingly, dropped by. When it was explained to me that the incantation was to find out the winning numbers in the official lottery, I decided to stay and watch.

Tonomura called in a woman, intoned some prayers, and lit a sacred fire with cedar twigs. He then handed the woman a sacred staff decorated with paper streamers and bade her to commune with the gods. In a while she began to babble. "Today six is the lucky number. Lots sixteen, twenty-six, thirty-six—" All present were delighted. Tonomura started putting things away.

I said to him, "I've never seen anything like this.

I'm quite impressed, but I wonder if it's all that difficult—" The tailor from Kuromon-chō spoke up. "I realize that it's you, Katsu-sama, and not some ordinary person who is speaking, but reciting incantations is no simple matter. There are rules to this, you understand."

"I see what you mean," I answered. "But consider for a moment. Tonomura here—we've no idea which horse's rib he's made of or where he's from, and he manages fine. Now if I, by birth an exalted bannerman of the shogun, put my heart and soul into it, it stands to reason that the gods will swiftly heed my prayers. So when I ask Tonomura something, I'll thank you to keep quiet."

The tailor was not about to back down. "But Katsu-sama, I still think it's beyond your powers. In all things pertaining to the gods, certain rules must be observed." I strode to the middle of the room and said to the tailor, "This is no matter for argument. You—get over here and bow down. And you'd better not raise your head until I give the word."*

Everyone could see that I meant what I said. They begged me to forgive the tailor, but when I said I would, he said, "If you're so sure you can do it, why don't you try some incantations right now?"

I purified myself with cold water, ordered the woman to come back, and mumbled some prayers. Sure enough, the woman began to babble just as she'd done before. I finished up, made a boast or two, and left. From that

*A literal translation of Katsu's words gives the flavor of the original: "If you raise your head before I give you permission, I'll become your cook right away." Since Katsu had no intention of becoming the tailor's cook, the words express a threat.

day on everyone came to me for incantations—I charged less.

Some time later Tokuyama asked Tonomura if he would recite some incantations using his own younger sister as a medium. He was told, “Your sister is possessed by a living person’s spirit. It will take at least two or three days to exorcise it, and that will cost five *ryō*.” Tokuyama decided to ask me instead. I worked at it for three nights running and finally drove the spirit away.

Tonomura resented my success and broke off our friendship. I joined forces with Tokuyama and on “shadow lotteries” alone made ninety *ryō*. Apart from this we easily made ten or twenty *ryō* any number of times.

I took up religious austerities and penances. I began by going to the Fuji Inari Shrine in Ochiai for a hundred nights. I went next to the Inari Shrine in Ōji for a hundred nights and after that to the Inari Shrine in Handa for another hundred nights. I also carried out the cold water penance. Squatting half-naked in front of the shrine altar, I poured bucket after bucket on myself for five or six hours at a stretch. That lasted 150 days, and much of it during the winter, too. While performing these austerities, I had many interesting experiences, but I won’t go into them. Fasting was something else I tried three or four times. I was convinced there was nothing I couldn’t do.

The family of my landlord, Yamaguchi Tetsugorō, had served as district administrators, and the space once



A Swordsmith and His Assistants. Kuwagata Keisai (1764–1824).

used for their office stood empty. I invited Suishinshi Shūsei, a swordsmith married to a granddaughter of Suishinshi Tenshū, to come and use the space to forge swords. I also invited Kichi, a disciple of Hon’ami Yasaburō, to live in my house and work at his profession of polishing blades. I took a few lessons from him.

It then seemed like a good idea to form a sword association in which members would pay dues and take turns buying a sword. I invited my fellow swordsmen and friends to join, along with Hosokawa Chikara Masayoshi, Minobe Taiki Naotane, Kanda no Michiyoshi, Umeyama Yasohachi, Kobayashi Shinpei, and all the other sword appraisers in business.

One day I went to the shogunate prison in Senju

and tested my sword on the corpses of criminals who had been executed.³⁶ After that I became a student of Asauemon and learned how to lop off the heads of corpses with a single stroke.

At home, matters were improving, for my son, Rintarō, now seven, was in service at Edo Castle.³⁷

My landlord, Yamaguchi Tetsugorō, received only a small stipend and was always short of money. He complained to me that he was being hounded by creditors, so I settled his debts for him. He then complained that none of the nine families living on his property ever paid the house or land rent on time. I threw out the tenants and brought in my friends and acquaintances. The rents now came in regularly, and my landlord went around all smiles saying, "Thank goodness, thank goodness."

He told me one day that he was thinking of petitioning the government for an appointment as district administrator. When I advised him against it, he became very angry and sent me a notice of eviction after consulting Hayama Magosaburō, one of his men. I went to him and explained at length what the position of district administrator involved.

"And look," I said, "you're already past fifty. You would be better off giving up the idea."

"What makes you say that?"

"Well, to serve as district administrator, you'll need at least one thousand *ryō* to start with. Your rental properties in Edo are bound to fall into disrepair, and that will take over two hundred *ryō* to fix. Getting your

men properly outfitted will take another one hundred *ryō*, and moving expenses—that's assuming you move to your jurisdiction—will come to over one hundred *ryō*. That's almost two thousand *ryō* already, and let's say that your bailiff is incompetent and you incur liabilities. No matter how frugal you are, it will take at least thirty years to pay off your debts. Your descendants may well suffer, too, because if they don't come up with the money, they'll be banished to some far-off place or may even have their family line abolished. No, it really isn't the kind of job that someone without ability should seek."

The landlord and his family were incensed and demanded that I clear out at once. So I went around to collect the rents that were due and pocketed the money. My next concern was to find a place to live. Unfortunately, my chronic beriberi was making it almost impossible to walk. I had a friend look for me and decided on a house on the property of Okano Magochirō, a samurai in my unit who lived in Irie-chō.

I went to Yamaguchi to give formal notice of my move. I said, "If by any chance you become district administrator, and I doubt you'll last five years even if you do, I advise you to be very careful. Of course, my predictions could turn out to be wrong, but in that case you may count on not seeing me alive."

"And what do you mean by that?"

I told him what I knew about his retainer Hayama Magosaburō and left.

Several years later Yamaguchi was appointed district administrator in Kōshū Province. A riot broke out in

his fourth year of office, and just as I'd expected, he failed miserably at the job. He was recalled to Edo and transferred to the Escort Guards.³⁸ He was, furthermore, three thousand *ryō* in debt and in danger of having his family line abolished. His man Hayama was sentenced to jail for three years.

Feeling sorry for my former landlord, I went to visit him. "And all this because I didn't listen to you," he said with tears in his eyes. "But if possible, I would like to save my family from being disgraced." I pitied him, so after hearing what Hayama had done, I drew up a draft of a letter to be sent to the district office in Kōshū. "Try sending something like this," I told him. "You never know—some generous benefactor might come forward. With at least five hundred *ryō*, I should think."

Yamaguchi looked nonplussed. He nevertheless sent off a letter immediately, and shortly afterward, six hundred *ryō* were delivered from Kōshū. His family was saved from ruin, but his stipend was reduced to forty-three and a half bales, thirteen and a half being handed over directly to a rice agent to whom he owed fifteen hundred *ryō*. Because of all this, his children still visit me every month.

In the end Yamaguchi was demoted to the *kobushin-gumi* and put under house arrest for one hundred days. But Inoue Gorōzaemon, another official involved in the same affair, was stripped of stipend, house, and samurai status. As for Hayama, after serving his sentence, he was banished from Edo.*

*A form of punishment forbidding a person to live within twelve miles of Nihonbashi.

My beriberi was much better since moving to Okano's land in Irie-chō. It must have been a month or so after we had settled in that Rintarō, now nine, returned from service at Edo Castle.* I decided to send him for reading and writing lessons to a retainer in the employ of Tarao Shichirōsaburō, who lived on the other side of Mitsume Bridge.

One morning on his way to lessons Rintarō was bitten in the testicles by a mad dog. Hachigorō, a laborer from Hanamachi, carried him home. Although I was still recuperating at the time, I flew to Hachigorō's house as soon as I received word.

Rintarō was propped up against a pile of quilts. I pulled up his kimono front and saw that his testicles were intact. Fortunately, a doctor called Narita had already been summoned. When I asked him, "Will my son live?" he sounded rather doubtful. I turned to Rintarō and yelled at him. He seemed to get hold of himself, so I called for a palanquin and took him home.

My landlord had sent for a doctor named Shinoda. The doctor began stitching Rintarō's wound, but I noticed that his hands were trembling. I bared my sword, plunged the blade into the tatami near Rintarō's pillow, and drawing myself up, glared down at my son and the doctor. Rintarō didn't even whimper, and the doctor managed to finish stitching the wound.

"How does it look?" I asked.

The doctor said, "I can't guarantee he'll live through the night."

On hearing this, everyone in the house began wail-

*Tenpō 2 (1831).

ing. I yelled at them to pull themselves together and slapped them soundly.

From that night on I visited the local Konpira shrine. Stripped to my loin cloth, I dashed buckets of cold water on my body and prayed for my son. I had Rintarō sleep in my arms and forbade anyone to touch him. I raged and stormed and carried on so that the neighbors were soon shaking their heads saying, "That sword-master who just moved into Okano's place—he's gone out of his mind ever since his son was bitten by a dog."

Rintarō's wound finally healed, and on the seventieth day he was able to get out of bed. To this day it hasn't bothered him in the least. So mark my words—it's care and attention that heals the patient.

Makino Nagato-no-kami, a relative who had been magistrate of Yamada, was newly appointed magistrate of Nagasaki.³⁹ That same month the swordsmith Suishinshi Shūsei asked me whether I could do anything for Owariya Kamekichi, a man from the Aki domain who lived in Toranomonsoto in Sakurada-chō. Owariya made his living supervising porters for traveling dai-myō and was apparently most anxious to act as agent for Makino. I told Shūsei I would try.

Owariya came to see me presently. He took out fifty *ryō* and said, "This is to buy a gift for Makino-sama—something to his liking." I purchased several items and sent them over to Makino's son, but someone had beaten us to it and been appointed only the day before. I told Owariya about it and offered to return the rest of the money. He wouldn't accept. "No, no, that was a fee—it's yours to keep." There was almost thirty *ryō* left over.

Several years later Kuze was appointed magistrate of Nagasaki. Hoping to do Owariya a good turn, I sent a messenger. He was told Owariya had been dead for some time. So that was that.

My new landlord, Okano Magoichirō, was a rake and a spendthrift. He owed seventeen *ryō* to a teahouse in the Yoshiwara, and unable to pay, was being threatened with a law suit. No one was willing to help him out, though, since this sort of thing happened all the time. He came to see me. I had just moved in and in my ignorance got together some cash for him.

Okano got into debt again, having obtained seventy *ryō* at 5 percent interest a month to buy a prostitute out of her contract.* The trouble was, as security he had handed over the ledger recording the payment of rice taxes by his fiefs. The retainers at home and on his fiefs came to me for advice. I got back the document by putting up as security swords and other goods that had been consigned to me. My landlord, however, made no move to help me get my goods back. I eventually retrieved them one by one, but from then on I was always hard-pressed for cash, and with all my social obligations it was an awful nuisance.

For a while I managed to survive by selling what I had left, but I soon ran out of goods and was forced to sell my own possessions. I hated parting with them—I'd collected them painstakingly over the years—but what else was I to do? I sold off every single item—and at half of the original cost. In the end I was hard put to fork out four pennies. And this entirely because of my landlord.

*The officially permitted rate was 1¼ percent a month.

Okano's wife came to see me secretly one evening. She said, "Magoichirō's loose behavior is causing difficulties for everyone in the family. Katsu-san, could you talk to his commissioner and get him to order Magoichirō into retirement?" I went to talk to the commissioner's agent. "We will first need a written statement about Okano's conduct from his wife," he said. I got one from her and presented it to Nagasaka San'uemon, who then discussed the matter with Nagai Gouemon, the commissioner of Okano's unit. Soon after, Okano received orders to retire. There was nothing he could do about it, really.

Okano's heir, also called Magoichirō, was fourteen at the time. I did everything for him, even taking him to Edo Castle for his formal installation as head of the family. His father by then had taken the name Gōsetsu and become a lay priest.*

The Okano family affairs were still in a mess, however. I took charge, telling the retainers how to go about settling accounts, and succeeded in putting the family finances into shape. Then Gōsetsu began acting up again. He hired a man called Iwase Ken'uemon and by devious means obtained for him twenty *ryō* in cash and a stipend of twenty-two and a half bales of rice. His family once more came to me for help. I brought the matter to the attention of Commissioner Nagai Gouemon, and Ken'uemon was duly fired and replaced.

Young Magoichirō's mother died, and Gōsetsu took the opportunity to cook up some more schemes. I had

*A common practice among retired samurai during the Tokugawa period; Katsu himself became one upon retirement. It involved no religious training or discipline.

to settle these, too, and later when he bought a prostitute out of her contract and moved her in, I had to find a separate residence in Yanagishima.

A year went by. Gōsetsu became seriously ill, and as usual I took care of him. He called me to his bedside one day. "I don't think I'm going to pull through," he said. "Would you please look after my son? At least don't abandon him until you've found him a wife and made sure he has a government post." When I gave him my word, he looked very happy. He died the next day.

Again I had to take over and set things in order. But finding a wife for young Magoichirō was proving to be difficult—the mere mention of the name Okano would put off most parents. I finally had to settle for the daughter of Itō Gonnosuke in Ichibei-chō in Azabu.

Magoichirō's mother had said all along that anyone who married her son wouldn't need to bring a dowry. I bargained with Gonnosuke anyway and got him to agree to one hundred *ryō* in cash and a set of household furnishings suitable to a family of Okano's rank and station. When word of this got around, everyone—not least the peasants on his fiefs—was astounded. "Here we've been trying for two or three years to find a bride for the young master," they said. "But all we had to do was to say 'Okano', and people would break off negotiations. Now thanks to you, Katsu-sama, every one of us, not to mention the young master himself, can breathe a sigh of relief. And a dowry, too! We are most grateful."

The Okano family stipend was fifteen hundred *roku*, but for some reason Magoichirō owned not one piece

of weaponry. Even to report to his commissioner, he had to borrow a pair of swords each time. Small wonder that no parent wanted to give him a daughter. His house was in a shambles, too. So I summoned the peasants on his fiefs in Musashi and Sagami and over five or six days persuaded them to put up four hundred *ryō*. I had the house repaired and bought personal effects for the numerous household dependents. I also had a house built on the property for his uncle Sennosuke, a lay priest, and procured a concubine for him. The members of the family talked as though I were a god. On top of all this I had the living expenses provided by his fiefs raised from two hundred *ryō* to three hundred, saw to it that his men were assured of a year's stipend so they could take various lessons, and even obtained a horse for his use. It was, I knew, a bit extravagant for a family with a stipend of fifteen hundred *koku* and an outstanding debt of five thousand *ryō*. But since when have fools been known to deny themselves?

Meanwhile I was getting poorer and poorer. With nowhere to turn, I decided to throw myself on the mercy of the goddess Myōken and beg her to save me from my poverty. I undertook a Hundred Days Pilgrimage, performing cold water ablutions three times a day, eating sparingly, and praying with all my heart. Eighty or ninety days went by.

While this was happening, it seems that my friends in Shitaya had gotten together and wondered why I hadn't shown up in the neighborhood for such a long time. When they heard from my man Kobayashi that I was down on my luck, they discussed what they could

do to repay me for past favors. They hit on the idea of forming a savings association and inviting me to be a non-paying member, but they thought I would refuse if it were put to me that way and decided instead to ask me to head the association. In any event, Suzuki Shinjirō, a student of Inoue Denbei, came to the house one day.

"Katsu-san, my friends and I are forming a savings association to go on pleasure trips. Most of the work has been done, and we'd be honored if you would serve as the head."

"That's very kind of you, but I will have to decline. You see, I can barely make ends meet, let alone join your group."

"It will fall apart if you don't join—"

"Yes, but I can't even put up the initial payment."

"That's all right with us."

I agreed to join and sent him on his way.

Suzuki returned in two or three days. He set down a big ledger, and placing five *ryō* on the cover, he said, "This is for you. And from now on whenever any business comes up, a member of the association will come by."

Once again Myōken-sama had answered my prayers. I went back immediately to my sword business. At the end of the month I made eleven *ryō* selling a Sukekane of Bizen sword to Matsudaira Hōki-no-kami for Matabei, a clerk at the shogunate warehouse. I got an extra five *ryō* from Matabei as a tip. Every night I went to the secondhand goods markets in Kanda and Honjo, and being a pretty sharp bargainer, I soon set aside a tidy sum.



A Secondhand-Book Stall. Kuwagata Keisai (1764–1824).

Many of the friends I'd helped in times of trouble came to me when they had swords to sell. But since they were not knowledgeable about swords, I never had a loss. At the markets I made a practice of spending half of the profits to treat my fellow dealers to buckwheat noodles or occasionally, sake. They addressed me as "Lord and Master" and secretly alerted me beforehand if they heard of a customer coming with a piece of goods.⁴⁰

At the auction market, if I guessed wrong and put in a written bid of fifteen silver *monme* for something worth only three *monme*, the auctioneer would take out my slip of paper from under the straw hat and say, "For Katsu-sama, it's three and a half *monme*," and let me off with a loss of only half a *monme*. To make up

for this, though, even if there were as many as fifty people, I treated everyone to buckwheat noodles after the markets closed down. The tradesmen—always ready to bicker over a single penny—so appreciated my generosity that they ordered special cushions for me to use at the markets.

My friends were envious. "How is it that the tradesmen fall all over themselves for you?" they asked. When I told them what I did, they said, "That's no way to make money." But make money I did—and plenty of it. My stipend was forty bales and I had a debt of over 350 gold *ryō*. Each time I made a profit, I paid back a small amount—no greater than the cost of a visit to a brothel—and within two and a half years, my debts had dwindled to thirty or forty *ryō*. It was simply amazing.

I always put giving to others first, helping neighbors as a matter of course and those in need according to who they were. Perhaps, because of this, even in the leanest years of the Tenpō famine, I had one-sixteenth of a *ryō* of spending money each day.

I also helped tide my friends over through hard times. This meant I had to work hard, so I attended the secondhand goods markets diligently and thought of it as a regular job. I took a commission of 4 percent on sales, and in three months cleared three and a half *ryō*. I ordered a sword for myself.

Whenever swordsmen got together I was invariably seated at the place of honor ahead of even the teachers. At the one-year memorial match for Master Fujikawa Chikayoshi, attended by over 580 people, I judged the

contestants of the competing "Minamoto" and "Taira" teams.* I also officiated at the memorial match for Master Akaishi Fuyu—this was at Master Danno's hall—and at the memorial match for Master Inoue Denbei and the formal opening of the Otani practice hall. Whether it concerned a dispute between rival schools, disagreements between fellow students, or initiations into secret techniques, I was the one who was usually called in. For that matter Master Danno made a point of consulting me about initiations at his school. And not one person ever contested my decisions. Stranger still, all the men in Shitaya and Honjo copied me—my taste in swords, my clothes, even my hairstyle!

Back then rules of etiquette were observed with utmost strictness in the practice halls. It was unheard of, for instance, for a master and student to sit down together in the same room. If a master from another school sent word that he was coming, a top student always went to his home to carry his sword and teachers were expected to greet the visitor in the front entrance. Nowadays anything goes. No one pays attention to the rules, and no one seems to mind. Things will change, I suppose. It used to be that only two teams were allowed to compete at one time at fencing matches. Even that rule is often disregarded.

A certain Chichibuya Sankurō lived in Tōrimachi. A purveyor of cloth and sundries to the shogunate, he had lately fallen on hard times. Other merchants had

*Teams are traditionally named after the two leading rival families of the twelfth century and distinguished by their headbands—white for the Minamoto and red for the Taira.

become established as purveyors to the shogunate, and he had little hope of getting any orders. I heard this from my friend Takata Tōgorō, who went on to say that the youngest daughter of the shogun was about to move to Aki Province on the occasion of her betrothal and that Chichibuya was most anxious to be named official purchasing agent.

I persuaded Seyama-san, a lady-in-waiting at the main keep of the castle, to speak to Kurenai-san, the woman who had been put in charge of the trip. Now Chichibuya had confided to me that if he were appointed, he would present thirty *ryō* to Kurenai-san and an equally suitable sum to Seyama-san. Apparently, the moment Seyama-san mentioned this to Kurenai-san, the greedy woman had consented eagerly. She issued an appointment to Chichibuya and, for a start, placed an order in the amount of seventy *ryō* of goods. She also demanded the money.

Chichibuya went back on his word, saying how difficult things were and so on, and refused to show his face. I ordered him to come to my house and said that I would have nothing to do with him in the future. Chichibuya, on his part, had already received an official procurement order and was confident that his appointment would not be revoked. Within a day or two it was revoked, the order was canceled, and Chichibuya was left with a pile of unwanted goods. He came running over with his wife. He gave one apology after another, but I was so put out that I left matters as they were. In the end Chichibuya lost close to forty *ryō*. What's more, his store was razed in a big fire, and from all accounts he now lives in some obscure back alley.

There are plenty like him out in the world. Watch out, or they'll trick you the first chance they get.

My second-oldest brother, Matsusaka Saburōemon, received an appointment as district administrator. We'd had nothing to do with each other for ten years, ever since the big row at Hikoshirō's house over a loan of eight *ryō* he had refused to repay me. One day, quite unexpectedly, he sent me a letter—maybe he'd had a change of heart. "It's a shame we haven't seen each other for such a long time," he wrote. "Come and visit us if you are in the neighborhood." Enclosed with the letter was half a *ryō*. Wondering what to do, I went to Kamezawa-chō to talk it over with Hikoshirō's wife. "Since he's asked, I think you should go," she said.

I left immediately for Saburōemon's house in Hayashi-chō. The entire family came out to greet me and treated me to a delicious dinner. There was a great deal to talk about, and by the time I was ready to leave, my brother and I had pretty much made up. A day or so later Saburōemon's wife sent my wife a note saying how much they had enjoyed my visit.

I saw Saburōemon frequently after that, and when he learned that he would serve as district administrator in Suibara in Echigo Province—the very same job that Hikoshirō had held—I told him what I remembered of the customs of the area, the character of the residents, and the general duties involved.

On the seventh day of the first month, when government offices traditionally opened, Saburōemon's oldest son, Chūzō, was slashed by a ruffian who had

sneaked into the house during the night. A messenger arrived with the news, and though I ran all the way to Hayashi-chō, Chūzō was already dead. I had an inkling who the murderer might be, so the next day I went around Koishikawa, but the suspect had apparently cleared out.

Hikoshirō and other relatives asked me to stay at the house in Hayashi-chō for the time being. I slept there every night and returned home in the morning to attend to my business. The investigative officer came on the twenty-fifth, and on the twenty-ninth Chūzō's wife, Saburōemon's wife, and Chūzō's oldest son, Juntarō, were summoned to the shogunate court that handled the affairs of retainers. Kurobe Tokusaburō, Saburōemon's third son, and I accompanied them. We went there regularly about twice a month for the rest of the year.

Once, while waiting in one of the rooms at the court, I got into a big argument with Kamiue Yatarō, a senior policeman in the service of Ōkusa Noto-no-kami. It took three men—the custodian of the court, Kamio Tōemon, his inspector-aide, Ishizaka Seizaburō, and a policeman, Yuba Sōjūrō—to convince me to let him off without reporting it to his lord. The altercation lasted about two hours and sent everyone in the room into such a dither that it was all I could do not to laugh in their faces. Samurai, indeed!

This was the year that Saburōemon made his first trip to Echigo. He asked me to look after his affairs in his absence. I got rid of my debts, took pleasure trips, frittered money away on one foolish thing after

another, but I knew enough not to fall into debt again. When Saburōemon returned to Edo, I gave him a full written account. He seemed satisfied.

The same year, I adopted the daughter of my cousin Takeuchi Heiuemon and gave her in marriage to Roku-gō Chūgorō, a student of mine with a stipend of three hundred bales.* About this time Takeuchi's son Sanpei was notified that he had received an appointment. Sanpei said he would have to decline, since he would not be able to meet the expenses of the office. I scraped up some money for him and saw to it that he reported the next day to Edo Castle. He was told that he had been made a member of the Great Guard. His father was overcome with joy. "Katsu," he said, "I won't forget this favor as long as I live." Years later, though, he didn't think twice about cheating me.

Toward the end of the year Saburōemon was slated to go again to Echigo. He was worried about his son Masanosuke, however, so I suggested that he take his son with him. He agreed. Before their departure I had a talk in private with Masanosuke about the office in Suibara—what to expect and how to behave, especially since samurai attached to district offices were able to make money during their tour of duty. He listened enthusiastically and promised to thank me properly when he came back.

After Masanosuke and his father had left for Echigo, I remembered that I had forgotten to tell Masanosuke how to go about measuring the rice crop for taxes. I sent off a letter. It somehow got misplaced and fell

*The adoption was an expedient to circumvent the shogunate prohibition against marriages between families of unequal status.

into his father's hands. Saburōemon returned to Edo and showed it to Hikoshirō in great indignation. Hikoshirō was furious and ordered me to come at once to Kamezawa-chō.

"What ever made you fill Masanosuke's head with all this vicious nonsense about the district office? You are wicked and utterly without scruples. And what's this you're wearing—a woolen *haori*?* Tell me, what makes you think you can act so arrogantly?"

"I have no memory of writing such a letter," I replied. "As for this woolen *haori*, I wear it because if I, with my low stipend, went around in shabby clothes, no one would lend me money. I have no choice."

"Well, I've heard other things about you—that you spend all your time carousing in the Yoshiwara. Most people your age have given up these things. But you are incorrigible."

"I agree you have a point there, but the acquaintances I make there are necessary to my livelihood."

My brother became even more furious. "No matter what I say, you talk back. There isn't one relative who talks to me like that. You're the only brazen one. Say another word, and I'll cut you down!" He grasped the handle of his sword.

"Even for you, dear brother," I said, "those are harsh words. May I remind you that I, too, am an honorable retainer of the shogun. We may differ in rank, but as the saying goes, 'dogs and hawks do serve the same master.' You are mistaken if you think you can cut me down just like that." I took hold of my short sword.

*Wool was a luxury item throughout the Tokugawa period.

At this moment Hikoshirō's wife intervened. After calming down the two of us, she took me to her room. She said, "Please settle this matter about Masanosuke."

I went straight to Saburōemon's house and said to him point-blank, "There's not much love lost between us brothers, is there?"

"But I was only thinking of your own good when I told Hikoshirō," he insisted.

I asked to have his head bailiff, Tarōji, come into the room. I told him how Saburōemon had bungled job after job in the past, how he was incapable of managing anything—even his household affairs—and that since he was unfit for his present assignment, the sooner he resigned the better. Tarōji looked puzzled. "Could you explain what you mean by that?"

"What I mean is that my brother can't even tell when something's been written by his own brother or not. So how can you expect him to handle important negotiations as a district administrator?"

Saburōemon reached over for the letter in the official document box and threw it at me angrily. "Look at this and tell me you didn't write it!"

I picked up the letter and asked for a candle. I read it out loud three times and returned it to my brother. "Someone has certainly done a good job of copying my handwriting—"

"So you still refuse to admit it's yours?"

"That's what I mean when I say you're not very smart. If I had written the letter, do you think I would have read it so smoothly and distinctly? Someone who has to deal with a lot of people would have surely

known that much—otherwise how is he to carry out an important job? I realize that all the relatives look down on me because I haven't received an appointment. Still, have you ever heard of anyone else who, while at the shogunate court, had the courage to stand up against an undeserved insult? Alas, that I should be so unworthy as to have a brother who cannot distinguish true from false—"

After that speech the two were at a loss for words. At length Saburōemon said, "I apologize. This must be a forgery."

"All right then. Send a note to Hikoshirō explaining everything."

Saburōemon agreed to this, and in a while an answer came from Hikoshirō saying that he was fully satisfied. I got up to leave, but on my way out I noticed that my nephews had lined up in the adjoining room, their short swords at the ready. "Ha ha ha," I laughed. "You should've been prepared like this the day your brother Chūzō was murdered—he might not have been done in so easily. Look at you, all set to attack your uncle. Is there no limit to stupidity?" I heard later that the whole family was enraged over what I had said.

Both of my older brothers kept a close watch on me. I couldn't care less and passed my days carousing to my heart's content.

Saburōemon's son Masanosuke stopped by one day to talk about his father. I had some bills at the brothels, but instead of paying them, I got hold of six *ryō* and invited Masanosuke and one of his father's retainers to the Yoshiwara. Saburōemon made such a fuss when

he heard of this that I finally went to see his wife. I cleverly evaded her questions, and the matter was considered closed.

Hikoshirō had heard right, though. For the last three or four years I had fallen into dissolute ways and been spending most of my time in the Yoshiwara. So much so that the roughnecks who prowled through the quarters had become my underlings, and no one dared defy me. Naturally, this took huge amounts of money, but I was determined not to fall into debt, and so I hustled every night at the markets. I just barely stayed ahead.

One day in the summer I was summoned to Hikoshirō's house in Kamezawa-chō. Before leaving I gave my wife instructions concerning the children and the house. At my brother's house everyone was in tears. His wife took me to Shintarō's room and said, "Kokichi, why do you persist in behaving so recklessly? Your brother has made inquiries about you here and there, and worried that you might do something truly dreadful, he's decided to lock you up in a cage. Shintarō and the rest of us tried to talk him out of it, but he wouldn't listen. The cage was finished yesterday—it's in the garden—and your brother was ready to throw you in last night. Shintarō persuaded him not to, but I really don't know what to do. Go take a look at the cage, in any case."

I went out to the garden. The cage was sturdily built with double enclosures. I said to Shintarō and my sister-in-law, "I appreciate my brother's concern. This time, though, may I suggest that you get some candles to light for me, because I've already made up my mind to stay in the cage for good and not come out even if

I'm forgiven. You see, around where I live in Honjo, I'm well known and regarded as a hero of sorts. The fact is that people who don't know me are looked down upon. But after a humiliation like this, I could never show my face to my fellow men. I will fast and die as soon as possible. Yes—I had a feeling that something like this was going to happen, and before coming I told my wife what to do just in case. So, Shintarō, here are my swords. I will do as you wish."

My sister-in-law pleaded with me. "Now that things have come to this, please turn over a new leaf."

"No, it's too late. I won't change my mind."

Shintarō spoke up. "I see what you mean, but I still think you should try—"

"What sense would there be if I did? Ever since my father died I've had no one to turn to, and as for any hope of obtaining office, I gave that up a long time ago. I decided I might as well do what I want and die. Well, I no longer wish to cause my brother trouble, so if I may enter the cage now—"

"I rather thought you would say you'd starve yourself to death," Shintarō said. "I tried my best to catch my father in a good mood and talk him out of it—and now look."

"What matters most is my brother's peace of mind," I assured him. "I really think it would be better if I went in the cage. I had an inkling about this for some time—my friends keep me informed, you know—and I was quite prepared. No, I wasn't surprised one bit."

"Couldn't you at least go home and talk it over with your wife?"

"That won't be necessary. As I said, I'm not at all

worried about my family. Rintarō is sixteen.* He'd be better off if I were dead. If I lived too long, I'd only be a nuisance. But I would be grateful if you would look after him—”

My sister-in-law insisted that I go home for the time being. I went home and waited. At eight I had still received no word, so I took off for the Yoshiwara and stayed for the night.

Shintarō urged me to write a letter of apology to my brother. “He'll have to be appeased one way or another,” he said. I couldn't be bothered. Then I heard that my sister-in-law, worried sick, was going from temple to temple asking for prayers on my behalf. I decided to put her mind at rest once and for all. The following spring I passed on the family headship to Rintarō.† I was thirty-seven.

*Rintarō was actually fifteen by Japanese count at the time.

†Tenpō 9 (1838).