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Cover design by Jess Jonsson, Atomic Images & Design

ISBN 978-0-9859349-4-1
www.Aeclipse-Press.com



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a book review.

*for my husband, Seeker Within
who has been ridiculously supportive and proud*

Sample file

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Glossary

- ani** — elder brother, formal and archaic; with suffix, *ani-ue* (The twins each refer to the other as the elder, the rascals.)
- ara** — syllable of exclamation, such as “oh” or “ah” in English
- ashiguru** — foot soldier
- ayakashi** — any of several supernatural entities, similar to *youkai*
- bakemono** — any of several supernatural entities
- bakeneko** — cat spirit
- bouzu** — often a playfully-derogatory honorific to a younger male
- chan** — a diminutive or cutesy honorific mimicking a childish pronunciation of *-san*. Can also be used affectionately.
- chichi** — father, archaic, formal (with suffix, *chichi-ue*)
- chokuban** — a square divination board based on astrological, astronomical, and seasonal influences
- daijoubu desu ka** — roughly, are you all right?
- daikon** — large, mild species of white radish
- daimyou** — territorial lord serving the *shogun*, during the shogunate
- de gozaimasu, de gozaimashita** — phrase to accompany and formalize other speech (“*yoroshiku de gozaimasu*”)
- dono** — archaic formal honorific
- doumo arigatou gozaimasu** — thank you very much
- fundoshi** — loincloth
- fusuma** — opaque doors of wooden lattice overlaid with paper
- futago** — very roughly, “the two, the pair”
- futagokyoudai** — twin siblings
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futon — sleeping mat
Genji & Kaworu — Genji Hikaru and his son Kaworu, famed philanderers of Lady Murasaki’s fictional *Tale of Genji*
gochisousamadeshita — literally, “it has been a feast;” traditional polite phrase used at the end of a meal
gumo — spider
haha — mother, archaic formal (with suffix, *haha-ue*)
hai — affirmative
hakama — pleated leg garment
haori — men’s jacket-type garment
happi — men’s jacket-type garment
hime — princess or daughter of a high house
himo — belt, tie, sash
hitatare — a garment for the upper body, open in front and on the sides, with hanging sleeves
hitotsu-me-nyuudou — one-eyed priest, a *youkai* named for its appearance
hoshi no tama — “star-stone,” a jewel or ball belonging to a kitsune
ichimonji — the first defensive position of *taijutsu*
itachi — weasel; some *youkai* legends feature weasels which move at the speed of the wind
itadakimasu — literally “I humbly receive,” a polite phrase said at the beginning of a meal
jinmaku — camp curtains, a fabric wall used to define outdoor spaces
kai — a syllable of mystical release, empathy, or foreknowledge
kamikakushii — literally “hidden by gods or spirits,” usually translated “spirited away,” or abducted by *youkai*
kanji — written characters imported from China
kappa — predatory water *youkai*
kata — choreographed movement or form, often used in the practice of martial arts and dance

kawauso — river otter spirit
kekkaï — mystic barrier
ki — spiritual energy
kimono — literally “clothing,” but most often referring to the long body robe
kisama — a rude form of address (making Genji’s “Ki-sama” rather borderline!)
kitsune — fox spirit
kitsune-bi — foxfire, a cool supernatural flame
kitsune-mochi — fox possessor, a human who bound or used *kitsune*
kitsune-tsuki — state of being possessed by a fox spirit
koku — unit of measure, enough rice to feed one person for one year
konbanwa — good evening
kosode — loose garment with smaller sleeve openings
kuji-in — “the nine syllables,” mystic mantras used in religion and martial arts for defense, attack, meditation, and magics
-kun — honorific to address one of lower status or, often, a young male
kuso — from the verb “to stink” or “to smell foul,” a profanity
-me — a disparaging form of address
mon — crest, a heraldic symbol
mononoke — general term for supernatural entity, usually harmful
naginata — polearm, a staff with a long curved blade at the end
nozuchi — a thick, snake-like *youkai*
odaiko — great drum
ofuda — a paper strip on which has been inked a spell, used for sealing or dispelling spirits
ohisashiburi de gozaimasu — it has been a while, or very colloquially, “Long time, no see.”
oji — uncle; may be used literally or figuratively (as with the

English equivalent)

ojii — old man

okugata — form of address to or referring to the lady of the house

oni — large, strong *youkai* often compared to western trolls or ogres

onmyoudou — system of knowledge and mysticism which includes aspects of yin-yang, feng shui, astronomy, astrology, natural sciences, divination, calendar-keeping, etc. At one point a valued and vital government occupation with high position.

onmyouji — one who practices *onmyoudou*

onore — a first-person pronoun which may be used pejoratively as a second-person pronoun, now archaic

origami — art of paper folding

ougumo — great spider

oyakata — form of address to or referring to the lord of the house

rou — long raised wooden decks of corridor and rooms, connecting the *tai no ma* and *tsuridono* in a *shinden* house

sake — rice wine

-sama — respectful honorific

samurai — warrior caste

-san — less formal honorific (likely evolved from *-sama*)

sara — the depression in the top of the *kappa*'s skull which must remained filled with water, or the *kappa* weakens

sensei — teacher or master (of an art)

seppuku — ritual suicide

shakujou — priest's ringed staff

shikigami — spirit assisting an *onmyouji*, often using folded paper or similar constructs

shime-kazari — folded paper strips used to spiritually purify an area

- shinden** — primary building in a *shinden-zukuri*, the single-story style of house and estate popular among Heian nobles. At this transitional period, the iconic tower strongholds had not yet come into existence.
- shirikodama** — in folklore, a ball-like concretion of life energy found at the top of the rectum
- shishi-odoshi** — “deer-chaser,” a water-powered bamboo noisemaker to startle grazing animals from the garden
- shouji** — door or room-dividing screen. Today, *shouji* are generally of lattice and rice paper, but at this time, *shouji* were wood overlaid with paper like what is today called *fusuma*.
- sumimasen** — thank you, for an action (“thank you for taking the trouble”)
- sunoko** — a deck or open veranda running along the rooms and serving as corridor in a house. Today, *sunoko* refers more often to raised wooden slatted flooring often used as mats or steps.
- taijutsu** — literally “body technique,” martial art focusing first on body combat before weapons
- tai no ya** — an “opposed house” or pavilion attached to the *shinden*, or primary structure
- tama** — cut stone or gem
- tan** — a diminutive or cutesy honorific mimicking a childish pronunciation of *-san*
- tantou** — dagger
- tatami** — woven mat
- tengu** — mountain spirit often seen as a bird-headed man, or a man with bird-like characteristics such as a long, beaklike nose. Usually dressed as a *yamabushi* and carrying a *shakujou* and feather fan.
- tono** — lord, honorific
- torii** — gate at shrine

tsuridono — open pavilions at the end of the long *rou*, often extending into the garden or pond

uchiwa - fan

-ue — honorific, formal

ushi-oni — ox *youkai*, often a bull-headed humanoid but can appear in other forms

-wan-wan — Murame is not only using obnoxiously childish language (-chan and -tan) but is also referencing a dog's bark; in Japanese dogs say not “bow-wow” but “wan-wan.”

wataridono — corridors, open with rooms along one side, linking the *shinden* and *tai yo na*

yamabushi — mountain priest, traveling ascetic

yoroshiku de gozaimasu/gozaimashita — a polite phrase of introduction

youkai — any of many supernatural entities

you-ki — spiritual energy

youkoso — welcome, in a context of distant or special travel

yuki-onna — snow woman, a beautiful *youkai* which appears to travelers lost or struggling in snow and devours them

yuurei — a type of ghost

zen — low, individual title

zouri — woven sandals

Author's Note

This story takes place in Not-Japan.

This is an important note, because it affects everything one will read here. Were this an actual Heian/Kamakura transition period piece, some details would have to be changed for the sake of strict accuracy, from the language the characters use to the attributes of the *youkai* featured here. The supernatural creature of the eighth century is a very different creature than that of the eighteenth, and nearly unrecognizable when contrasted with that of the twenty-first.

Folklore changes, of course, and in the last century or so particularly, the inhuman have been sanitized and de-fanged like never before. This phenomenon isn't unique to Japanese folklore — Western faeries and elves were feared for centuries before they became Tinkerbell and Legolas, and the fearsome vampire's most distinguishing traits have in recent decades faded from mist-walking and hypnotic compulsion to emo self-absorption. We still remember older characteristics, but we remember for the space of a few hundred years, not a thousand.

The denizens of Japanese folklore have similarly evolved, and I have chosen the creatures we have come to expect — the river predators referenced in period writings were very unlike modern *kappa*, yet what modern reader would be pleased with a *kappa* who did not like cucumbers? — and thus I have used primarily more recent incarnations of *youkai* myths.

Similarly, I have used more modern Japanese. The honorific *-san* probably did not come into general use until the

Edo period, for example, but it appears frequently here. Again, this is to prevent disrupting or confusing the modern reader.

I have set Gennosuke and his people slightly ahead of known history, but their very nature means their origins are misty. Also, I have blurred contemporary customs and features, blending aspects of Heian and Kamakura eras because, after all, eras do bleed into one another rather than abruptly and distinctly changing, especially in a more rural house such as Naka no Yoritomo's. I feel what is presented is well within possibility, just as we might still listen to '90s pop music even in the twenty-first century, but if a scholarly reader feels otherwise, please remember that this is Not-Japan.

Thank you, and please enjoy!

Sample file

“You don’t know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, but that ain’t no matter.”

— *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain

This novel is a sequel to the novelette *Kitsune-Tsuki*.

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CHAPTER ONE

“KAGEMURA no Shishio Hitoshi would never have deserted his duty. If he cannot be found, he must be dead.” Naka no Yoritomo fixed unyielding eyes on Tsurugu. “How has this happened?”

Tsurugu bowed low. “I am sorry, *tono*. I cannot say.”

Naka no Yoritomo’s voice darkened. “I have paid well for an *onmyouji* so I would know exactly the dangers we face. I brought you to learn if *kitsune* were present, and I set Shishio Hitoshi to assist you. Is this how my generosity is rewarded?”

Tsurugu Kiyomori had not come for the gold, but that was not for Naka-dono to hear. “*Onmyoudou* gives many insights and a great deal of power, *tono*. It does not make us like the gods themselves.”

The *daimyou*’s voice quieted. “Tsurugu-sama, I have lost my eye, my hand, my shadow.” Tsurugu’s gut tightened. “What happened to him?”

“I cannot say.”

“You cannot say? Or you do not know?”

Tsurugu swore silently.

“Tsurugu-sama, I do not know even whether Shishio-san was lost to a *bakemono* or to a rival house, whether the danger is

political or supernatural. I must have information, if I am to protect my house, my people, my bride.”

“Be patient a short time, *tono*, and I will try to have an answer. With your permission, I will come again in one hour.”

He retreated to his room and seated himself before the *chokuban*, the divining board marked with stars and directions and lunar mansions. He would need no *onmyoudou* to answer the *daimyou’s* question, but it would be good to make an appropriate show for the servants.

He worked the desultory divination, his hands knowing the motions on the *chokuban* while his thoughts wandered. He had liked and respected Shishio Hitoshi, had even been his friend in an odd way, and he had never wished him harm. Even at the end, if there had been any way to speak reasonably to him, if Shishio had not tried to attack once more —

His fingers stuck on the *chokuban*, and Tsurugu looked down, startled. He blinked and reset the device, turning the stars to align with the myriad other markings, but the result was the same.

Was it *karma*, already?

He was still staring at the divination results when a sound at the door caught his attention. It was one of the *daimyou’s* pages, trying to look self-important while peeking at the divination materials. Tsurugu held up a hand to forestall the prompt. “I’m ready.”

When he returned, Fujitani no Kaede was seated near her husband, screened from Tsurugu’s view with only a bit of multi-layered train artfully displayed. He knelt, bowed, and then straightened to answer them. “*Oyakata-sama, okugata-sama*, I have something to report of your lost servant.”

“Please, speak.”

Tsurugu bowed again, an excuse to hide his face. “He died at the hands of the *kitsune* you feared. He discovered it and

fought it and was killed.”

Yoritomo was surprised. “But — *kitsune* do not often kill.”

“No, they do not.” Tsurugu could hear unsteadiness in his voice. “But he had trapped this one, and it seems it had no other chance to escape. It killed him and bore away his corpse. I am very sorry.”

“Rise, Tsurugu-sama, there is no need for apology in this. It was not your doing that Shishio fell in his duty.” The *daimyou* frowned. “Though it is unlike him to have acted alone, without informing me — or asking you to join him, when you were brought specifically to counter the *kitsune*.”

“He may have come upon the creature while it was trapped or weakened, *tono*, perhaps changing forms or otherwise hampered,” came Kaede’s rich voice. “He might have thought the opportunity too rare to lose.”

Tsurugu nodded. “If the creature had no other escape....” Though humans killed the trickster spirits, *kitsune* did not often kill humans. It was almost unthinkable. Nearly unbearable.

Naka no Yoritomo sighed. “Still, a mistake, and one which has cost us all. Tsurugu-sama, do you wish to add something?”

Tsurugu clenched his fists, fearing what the *daimyou* had seen in his face. “No, *tono*. It is only — he was my friend.”

Naka no Yoritomo nodded. “We will honor him.”

Dismissed, Tsurugu fled to his room, where he hugged his knees close and pressed his face into them. If Shishio had not been stopped, they would all have suffered, even died — Tsurugu, the twins, Hanae, and Fujitani no Kaede herself. He had done what was necessary. He could not allow harm to come to Kaede-dono, and it was foolish not to protect his own life. What had been done was now done.

And he had new matters to occupy him.

He waited until evening, when fireflies came out to play among the yard's carefully arranged stones. Tsurugu rose, bound his *hakama* to his legs so the fabric would not sag damply with dew, and went out into the night. They would meet in the far reaches of the garden, in the artful wilderness beyond the house. There were few secrets within a house of moving walls.

The twins were there already, rolling in the grass in their play. One glanced up as Tsurugu approached, and his brother promptly pinned him. "Unfair!" yelped the one in the wet grass.

"*Konbanwa*, Kiyomori-sama," greeted the upper youth. He slid from his position of advantage and leaned lazily upon his reclining brother.

They had, in private moments, little appreciation for the delicacies of rank, though at least Tsurugu had been accorded his proper honorific. "Up, you two," Tsurugu admonished mildly. "You're soaking."

The twins rolled up from the flattened grass with wide grins. Genji and Kaworu — Tsurugu had facetiously named them for the irresistibly handsome philanderers of the popular novel — were identical to the casual human eye. They were Fujitani no Kaede's servants, brought to the household when she married Naka no Yoritomo. They were excellent dancers as well, despite their lowly status in the household, and almost never seen singly.

"While we are alone..." Tsurugu withdrew from his clothes a plum-sized ball, iridescent in the moonlight. He let the *hoshi no tama* roll over his fingers, toying with it. "Which of you lost this?"

Genji held out a hand. "It is mine, Ki-san."

"See that you do not lose it again. And do not call me Ki-san."

"Ki-sama, then."

Tsurugu cuffed him. "There are limits, Genji-kun."

Genji made a face. "My *tama*?"

"Tsurugu Kiyomori-san," called a lilting voice, "please finish your business, so we may join you without recalling that one of these had carelessly lost something precious."

Genji retreated a few steps, tucking the ball safely within his clothing. He and Kaworu bowed as Kaede-dono, followed closely by her maid Hanae, came to join them.

Tsurugu bowed as well. "*Konbanwa*, Kaede-dono." He straightened. "And the *tama* was not found by anyone who knew its nature. There was no danger of it betraying us."

"Only through good fortune." Kaede looked at the twins, ruffled and damp. "*Ara*, what a disheveled mess you look. This will never do when—"

"*Okugata-sama!*" A voice rang through the garden, and a torch flared beyond a line of trees. "Kaede-dono! *Okugata-sama!*"

"I am here alone," Kaede ordered in a hushed tone.

Tsurugu nodded, and there was a brief blur of colors as his vision shifted. A moment later, he was a fox, disappearing into the hydrangeas and flattening himself to the ground. A few paces away, two pale young foxes slipped into the darkness.

Hanae draped a robe across the ground; safe with her mistress, she had no reason to hide. Kaede sank upon the robe. "Here I am," she called. "Who's there?"

There was a crash of foliage as someone came nearer, raising the torch. "Kaede-dono! We have—"

"Stay where you are!" snapped Hanae with uncharacteristic authority. "Your lady is unveiled."

Kaede raised a silk sleeve to conceal herself from the torchlight, as ladies of rank were not to be viewed by servants or strangers. "I came out to gaze upon the moon, and to think upon a poem. Has my lord called for me?"

“I beg your pardon, Kaede-dono. You were missed, and there was an alarm.... The *kitsune*...”

Kaede rolled her eyes behind her sleeve. “The *onmyouji* has given me a charm which he promised would protect me for this evening. I thank you for your concern, but I am perfectly safe.”

“We could not find the *onmyouji* when we went for him.”

Even behind her sleeve, Kaede had the presence of mind to resist glancing at the flowering bush hiding Tsurugu’s fox form. Kaede always had great presence of mind. “It is possible he went out as well, for it is a lovely night. You may find him yet, and soon if you keep up this racket. Tell my lord Yoritomo-dono that I am found, that I am safe, and that I beg him to join me in my room shortly.”

“Yes, my lady.” The torch moved away.

Kaede lowered her sleeve; her *kitsune* had the intimate privilege of looking upon her. “Come, we must finish quickly.”

Three foxes slid from their hiding places and faced her, becoming human once more. The twins were grinning; Tsurugu would have sworn them against teasing the searching servants before returning to the house.

“Very briefly,” Kaede said, “Midorikawa-dono is coming.”

Tsurugu heard an intake of breath, almost too soft to note, and when he looked, the twins’ grins had vanished.

“When?” he asked.

“In a fortnight or so. I will tell you when he’s come.”

As if they would need telling.... The arrival of Midorikawa-dono would stir every *youkai* in the mountain. And with the warnings he had seen.... Tsurugu would be kept busy, for the *daimyou*’s household would surely notice the increased supernatural activity.

“Now go, and leave no suspicion.” Kaede gestured.

Tsurugu bowed. Beside him, the twins became pale foxes once more and slipped into the darkness. He did not worry that they would find trouble. The news of Midorikawa-dono would have quelled their taste for excitement.

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CHAPTER TWO

to the west, domain of Sanjou no Takeo

OGASAWARA no Manabu hurried into the room and knelt on the *tatami*, pressing himself forward in a deep bow. He drew a slow, ragged breath. “*Tono.*”

Sanjou-dono sat upright on his dais, his face a rigid mask. This was worrisome. The *daimyou* was an expressive man, given to wild gestures and curses which vented steam from the kettle and averted an explosion. “Ogasawara-san, face me.”

Ogasawara did, schooling his distress into polite passivity. “How may I serve you, Sanjou-dono?”

The mask cracked as an eyebrow twitched. “Now you wish to serve me? Why now, Ogasawara-san? Why not two weeks ago, when Naka no Yoritomo must have sent this man on his errand? Why not yesterday morning, when he crept into my house, past all defenses?” The mask broke further. “Why not yesterday evening, when he entered my wife’s room to kill her and my unborn heir?”

Ogasawara's fingers dug into the *tatami*. "He was stopped, Sanjou-dono. And, if I may add, at great personal cost to myself."

"Great cost," snorted the *daimyou*.

Broken bits from the *tatami* splintered into Ogasawara's fingers. "With respect, Sanjou-dono, it was my wife who leapt between the assassin and the *okugata-sama*. It was my wife who died."

"There are no secrets in my house; she was no loving wife to you."

You are wrong — she was everything to me. We were unhappy, yes, arguing, yes, but — we still loved one another. And now I can never apologize, I can never tell her I love her, I can never make it right.

Sanjou no Takeo took Ogasawara's silence for assent. "Why did you not predict this, Ogasawara-san? Why did you not warn us?"

"*Onmyoudou* is not so simple." Ogasawara tried to moderate his voice. "It is not possible to predict exactly that an assassin will come at such and such an hour. I had indeed warned of a possible danger from the east, and the lady was securely in her chambers because I had told her it was an unlucky date for her and she should be cautious."

"It was your own warning which placed my pregnant wife so predictably within his grasp." Sanjou's face hardened. "We have no need of an *onmyouji* whose *onmyoudou* is useless or dangerous. You are banished, Ogasawara no Manabu, from my domain."

Ogasawara stared. "But—"

"If you are here when the gate closes at twilight, you will be executed for a traitor. If you are seen within my borders this week, you will be flogged out of them. If you are seen within my borders after seven days, you will be put to death."

Ogasawara gulped and bowed. “Sanjou-dono, is there nothing I can do to—”

“Earn my trust? After you have allowed an assassin into our very chambers?” Sanjou barked a cold, derisive laugh. “Bring me the head of Naka no Yoritomo’s bride, if you wish. Visit him as he has visited me. That is your just duty now.”

Ogasawara pressed himself forward, careless of his dignity as he blinked hot tears from his eyes. “Sanjou-dono, I beg you — do not be so hasty. Let me serve you, let me bury my wife—”

“Go! Or I shall have you flogged from this place this very hour.”

Ogasawara’s chest spasmed and he drew himself up. “As you command, *tono*.”

He was halfway to the door when Sanjou-dono spoke again. “But for all that she did not love you, she did you one excellent favor in her death — because my heir is not dead, you have not died this night. Perhaps that will give you some comfort as you remember her.”

Ogasawara did not trust himself to speak, and he had little left to lose by not answering the *tono*, so he clenched his aching jaw and left without response.

狐

Ogasawara lay still against the tree, his limbs too heavy to move. He was weary with travel — three days of pushing his servant Hideo to greater speed, ducking off the road at each sound of approach lest it be *daimyou*’s men, sleeping in chilly thickets rather than inns to avoid being identified — and more weary with grief. Dear Matsue’s body had been removed for cleaning and preparation, and he had not been able to find her before Sanjou’s twilight ultimatum. He had not been able to say goodbye.

They were near an inn but safely hidden off the road. Hideo had set down his load and unpacked, and when he'd thought Ogasawara distracted with his musing, he had quietly left. Drinking, no doubt, but Ogasawara wasn't alarmed. Hideo was an ox, strong and lazy and not particularly bright. He would unwisely drink his little money away, but he would not betray his master.

Ogasawara rubbed his face. He should eat something, he knew. The flight was grueling and his grief had left him without appetite, and his condition was beginning to suffer. He should have gone with Hideo, if only for a meal.

He shivered; he had feared drawing attention from the road with a fire. It was an unlikely chance that some random patrol of Sanjou's men should be the one to see and investigate their camp, but the potential consequences were worth avoiding. But the night was cooling fast, and perhaps it was late enough to risk flame, as most travelers and soldiers would be off the road already.

He had just coaxed a small fire to life when he heard Hideo returning. "Did you happen to bring me dinner?" he asked, feeding sticks into the fire.

Hideo rubbed his hand across his mouth and blinked. "Er, no. Didn't think to."

Ogasawara regarded him dubiously. "I can see that thinking would come hard now," he observed. "Don't think you can sleep this off in the morning."

Hideo shook his head slowly, more like an ox than ever.

Ogasawara sighed and stood. He still had to look up at Hideo. "Must have been a cheap inn. I didn't think you carried enough to drink so much." Hideo had lost much of his savings the previous week in a gaming session. "Or did you play for it?"

His foot came down on something in the low grass, and an icy chill pierced him in uncanny certitude. He reached

slowly down for the comb, mother-of-pearl blossoms reflecting the low firelight in a soft gleam.

Hideo's eyes widened in his bovine face. Ogasawara turned to their supplies and opened a wooden box he had packed nearly empty — there had not been much to fill it. It had held a silken *himo*, a fan, a few combs. Now it was empty.

Hideo started backward, raising his hands in placation or defense. Ogasawara made a series of savage gestures and snapped a command, and two inhuman figures dropped from nothingness to either side of Hideo, seizing his arms and forcing him to kneel. Hideo shook his head, suddenly sober. “No, great master — be merciful!”

“Merciful?” Ogasawara could hardly form words. “When you have stolen my only mementos of my dead wife?”

“I needed a drink,” pleaded Hideo. “It’s hard, running like this, and you don’t know how I needed it.”

“It will be harder still when your back plowed like a field,” snarled Ogasawara. He clipped open a second box, and a stream of paper unfurled into the air. Hideo blinked, his mouth working silently. Ogasawara raised his hand, and the paper spiraled into a long form, wrapping tightly into a flail. Little strips protruded from its length where pieces had twined together.

Hideo shook his head and tried to clasp his hands in supplication, but the figures on either side held him firm. “No, please — great master, I will earn their cost, I will—”

“You cannot buy back a memory!” shouted Ogasawara. “On his face, and bare him.”

Hideo was pressed forward, his arms wide and shoulders driven hard into the ground. He dragged his face to one side, but his clothes were pulled loose and thrown over his head, leaving only the narrow *fundoshi* about his hips and between his buttocks.