

predicted.

"The moment has come for me to kill myself," said Yoshitsune to Kanefusa. "How shall I do it?"

"People are still praising Satō Tadanobu's suicide in the capital," Kanefusa replied.

"There is no reason why I should not choose the same method. A wide wound would be best."

Shortly after Yoshitsune's arrival at Kurama as a page, the abbot had given him a six-inch dagger. It was a weapon forged by Sanjō Kokaji and presented to the temple in fulfillment of a vow; the abbot himself had later removed it from the sanctuary, christened it Ima-no-tsurugi, and stored it carefully away. Yoshitsune had kept it on his person always, secreting it under his armor throughout the western campaigns. With that very dagger he stabbed himself below the left nipple, plunging the blade so deep that it almost emerged through his back. Then he stretched the incision in three directions, pulled out his intestines, and wiped the dagger on the sleeve of his cloak. He draped the cloak over his body and leaned heavily on an arm rest; then he summoned his wife.

"I want you to go to Hidehira's widow or to his father-in-law. They

are both city people who will treat you kindly and arrange for your return to the capital. Even in the life to come, I shall be worried by the thought that you are grieving with no one to protect you. Remember that everything comes from our deeds in previous existences, and do not mourn unreasonably."

"Always since our departure from the capital, I have been ready to die without warning," she said, clinging to him. "I was certain that I would be killed if anything happened on our journey here, so I am not in the least frightened now. Make haste and kill me."

"I wanted to urge you to die while I still lived, but the words refused to come. You must ask Kanefusa now. Come close, Kanefusa."

Kanefusa fell at Yoshitsune's feet, horrified at the thought of plunging a dagger into the lady's body.

"Had my father not been such a deplorable judge of character, he would never have selected such a coward to be my guardian," the lady said. "You ought to kill me without waiting to be ordered. Is it a kindness to humiliate me by forcing me to remain alive? Here, give me the dagger."

"It is not surprising that I should be a coward in this one matter. Three days after your birth, when your father committed you to my care, I went to the lying-in chamber and held you in my arms for the first time. From that day to this, you have never left my thoughts for a moment, even when we were parted. I had hoped to make you a junior imperial consort, and perhaps in time an empress, but all that was out of the question after your mother and father died. Never for an instant did I dream that my prayers to the gods and buddhas would be in vain! Never did I think I should see you in such a plight as this!" He pressed his armor sleeve to his face, weeping bitterly.

"Cease at once! Grief is useless now. Enemies are approaching," she insisted.

Though Kanefusa's eyes clouded and his senses reeled, he agreed that it must be so. Drawing the dagger from his waist, he seized the lady's shoulder and swiftly made an incision from her right side to her left. She died instantly, gasping the name of Amida Buddha.

Kanefusa drew a cloak over her body, laid her beside Yoshitsune, and rushed to the place where a nurse was holding Yoshitsune's five-year-old son. "His Lordship and Her Ladyship are crossing Shide Mountain on their way to the remote boundary of hell. They in-

structed me to send their son after them at once." The child put his arms around the neck of his executioner, saying, "Let us hurry to that mountain, whatever it is called. Take me there now, Kanefusa."

Kanefusa, all but fainting, and weeping uncontrollably, said, "He must have committed a crime in his last life. What a tragedy that he should meet such a fate after being born the son of Minamoto Yoshitsune! I can still hear His Lordship saying, 'Abandon him' in the Kamewari Mountains." His tears flowed bitterly again, but the enemy were drawing very near. "It must be done now," he thought. He stabbed twice and the child died with but a single cry. Kanefusa laid his body under Yoshitsune's cloak. Then he killed Yoshitsune's seven-day-old daughter, laid her under her mother's cloak, and staggered to his feet, intoning over and over, "Hail, Amida Buddha! Hail, Amida Buddha!" Yoshitsune was still breathing. He opened his eyes to ask, "My wife?" "She lies dead by your side." Yoshitsune's hand groped for her. "Who is this, the boy?" He reached over the child's body and touched his wife. Kanefusa's grief became unendurable. "Quickly, quickly, set fire to the house." With these last words Yoshitsune died.