

SOMETHING had changed since Shinsaku's recovery: he couldn't deny it. Kogoro was still being careful around him, frowning every time Shinsaku dared cough – even going easy on him in their training fights, he suspected, although Kogoro always denied it.

They had both developed a sort of reverence for human life. The idea of it was strange. They had fought and wounded and killed so many men, always swearing it was the best way to ensure Japan stayed on the right path, certain that a few lives were a fair exchange. But his experience seemed to have thrown that into doubt. He could understand why Sakamoto had hesitated now; he could understand Genzui's despair. Master Shoin had died too, after all. Maybe they weren't doing the right thing – maybe they never had.