

Based on the true story of a fearless ninja  
and her network of female spies



# SHADOW

# WARRIOR

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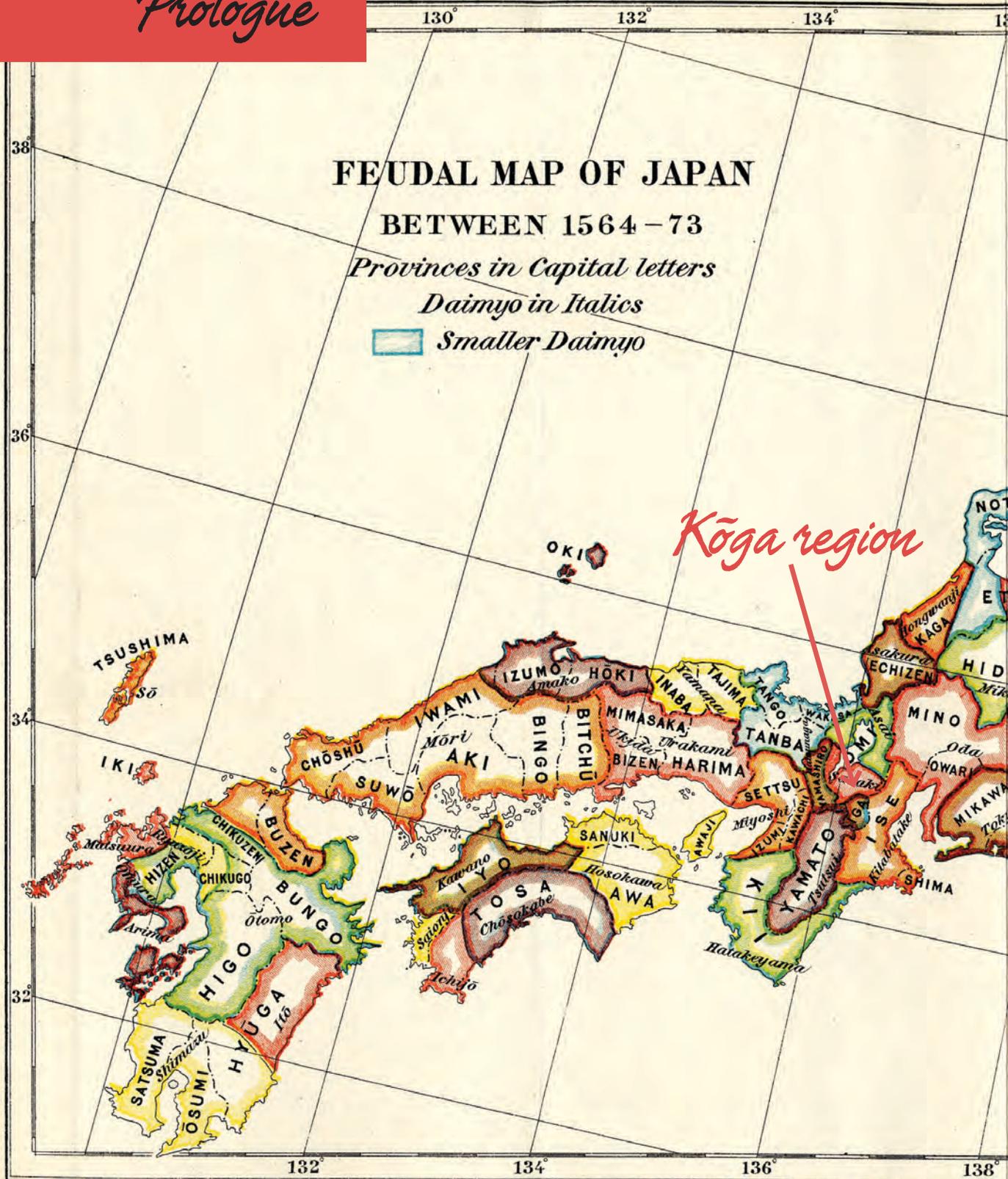
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# SHADOW WARRIOR



# Prologue





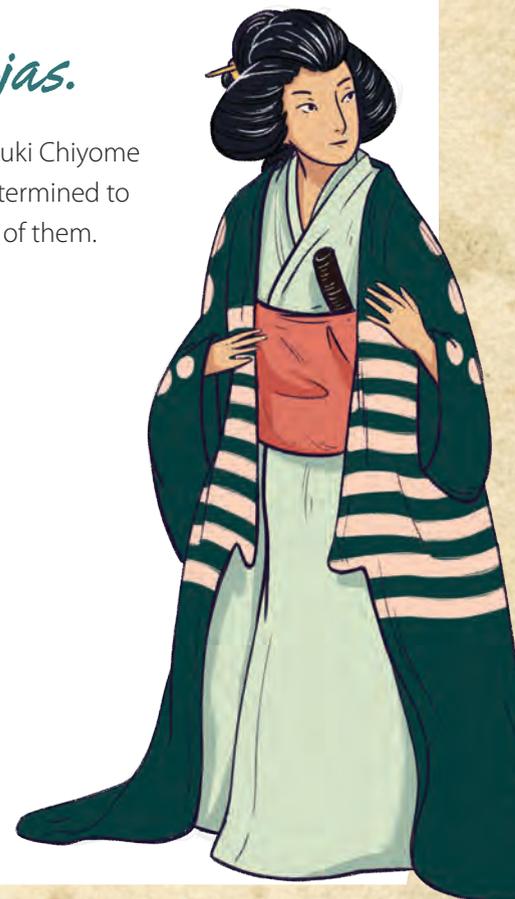
## *In the 1500s, Japan was battered by war.*

The country was broken into small states, ruled over by hundreds of warlords called daimyos. Each had his own castle and army of samurai warriors. Daimyos fought constant, brutal battles for power and land, leaving children orphaned and towns destroyed.

In the rugged Kōga region, a few small villages formed a quiet refuge from war. Tucked between treacherous mountain passes, the area was difficult for enemy armies to reach. But Kōga also had a secret weapon:

## *ninjas.*

Mochizuki Chiyome was determined to be one of them.



*Kōga, 1558*





**C**HIYOME DANGLED upside down from the cliff's edge. The blood rushed to her head, and the pounding in her ears drowned out the calls of forest birds. The breeze, which had seemed so mild a moment ago, now threatened to tear her from the rock.

Her training partner adjusted his grip on her ankles, giving them a tiny tug. Chiyome held back a scream. The rocks at the base of the cliff were jagged and seemed heart-stoppingly far below. If she fell ...

*Be patient.  
Conquer fear.*

Sensei's words from that morning echoed in her head.





She glimpsed her instructor on the cliff's edge above, watching her silently. A dozen other students, all boys, clustered nearby. Most had already completed this particular challenge.

She forced herself to take long, slow breaths as their voices drifted down to her.

"She'll give up soon."

"Maybe. But you know who her great-grandfather was, right?"

"Who?"

"Mochizuki Izumo-no-kami."

A murmur ran through the group at the sound of his name. He'd been one of Kōga's best fighters.

Chiyome felt her legs trembling. *Be patient. Conquer fear*, she repeated to herself. She remembered Sensei's lessons about practicing *zanshin*: calm awareness. She

tried to clear her mind, ignoring the boys and focusing only on the rhythm of her breath and the cold wind on her face.

For just a whisper of time the fear seemed to float away from her body before she heard Sensei speak: "Bring her up."

Once again Chiyome began to shiver. Her partner gripped her legs tighter as another boy reached down for her hand, and together they hauled her up over the edge, the rough granite scraping her elbows and knees. She sprawled on the ground, gasping for air, and glanced at her partner. He looked as shaken as she felt. Then she forced herself upright and bowed to Sensei, who nodded his approval.

"Next," Sensei called, and a boy to her right stepped unsteadily forward.



Chiyome leaned against a tree trunk. Another ninja test, and she had survived. Not only survived, but gained a rare nod from her teacher. Though she kept her face carefully smooth, she was beaming inside.

Once, her great-grandfather had helped establish Kōga's ninja traditions. Now, Chiyome would carry on his legacy. She'd serve as one of the guards and lookouts who ranged through the nearby mountains, protecting the local villages. Or she'd seek her fortune working for a faraway daimyo.

First, she needed to learn everything Sensei could teach: how to scale castle walls, how to make waterproof torches, and how to count the sleeping bodies in a darkened room. She'd practice disguising herself in the light and listening from the shadows.

Today's tests had just begun. As the last boy pulled his partner up over the edge, Sensei ordered them all to their feet. They'd be hiking down the mountain, he explained, and practicing their rock climbing once they reached the bottom.

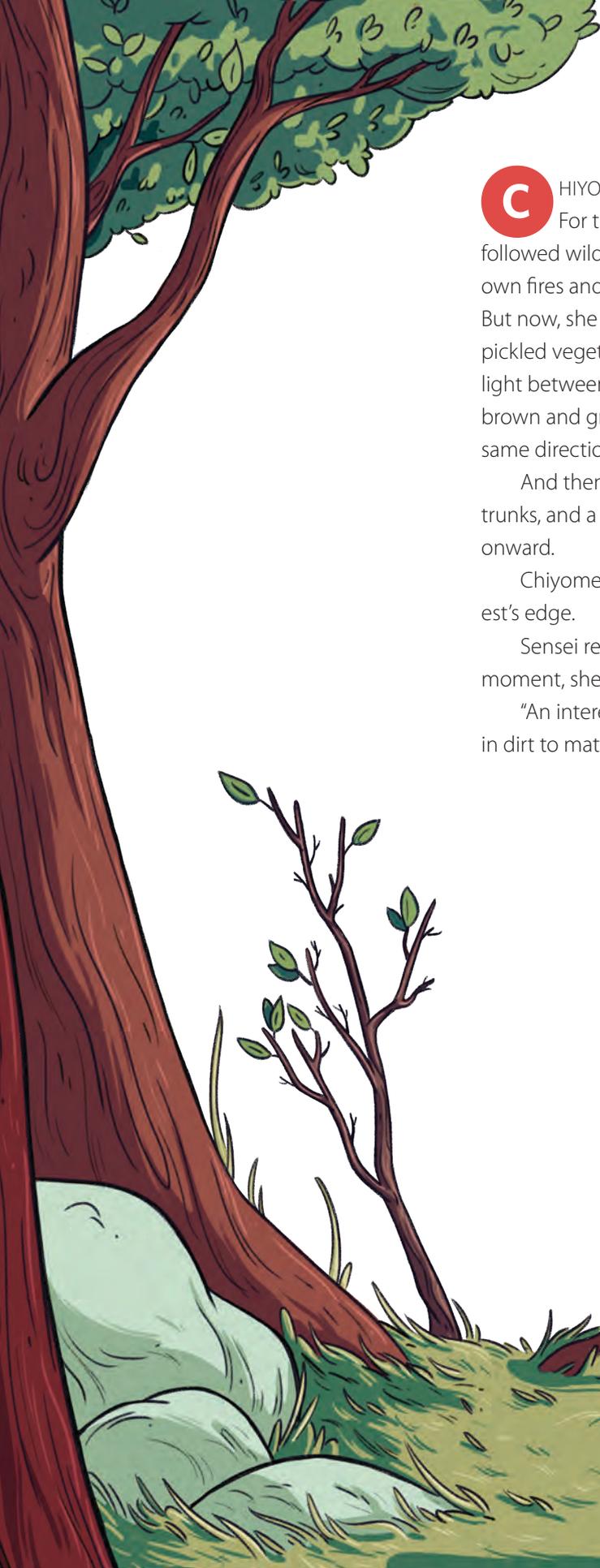
Chiyome hurried after him along the ridge, ignoring the drops on either side and refusing to think of the challenge still to come.

*Zanshin. Be patient. Conquer fear.*



*Kōga, 1560*  
*Two years later*





**C**HIYOME PICKED HER WAY OVER ROOTS AND FALLEN TREES. For three days, she'd foraged for edible plants and followed wildlife trails through the woods. She'd sparked her own fires and slept on the embers at night to keep herself warm. But now, she was exhausted. Her legs felt as thin and limp as pickled vegetables. And these trees ... there was still no sign of light between them. The forest was starting to blur into endless brown and green. She struggled to keep herself pointed in the same direction.

And then, finally, a hill she recognized. A thinning of tree trunks, and a glimpse of sun between them. She forced herself onward.

Chiyome finally emerged, battered and bruised, at the forest's edge.

Sensei remained stone-faced as she approached. But after a moment, she caught a glint in her teacher's eye.

"An interesting disguise for a ninja," he said. "Are you covered in dirt to match the trees?"







She barely heard his teasing. *A ninja!* She repeated it to herself as she ran home. He'd called her a ninja. And her challenge in the forest had marked the end of her training. She could do anything now. She could seek work, she could travel . . .

As she neared her house, she saw visitors leaving. They wore formal clothing with swords at their hips. She spotted a round *mon*, or crest, on one of the men, but she couldn't see it closely enough to spot the family pattern before they stalked away.

"Who were those men?" she asked her parents, both still standing in the doorway.

"Visitors from Kōfu," her father replied.

Chiyome's eyes widened. Hours to the northeast, Kōfu was the home of Takeda Shingen, one of the most powerful daimyos in all of Japan. People called him The Tiger because he was so ruthless and hungry for power.

"You'll be going there next week," Chiyome's father continued.

"To . . . to be a ninja?" she asked.

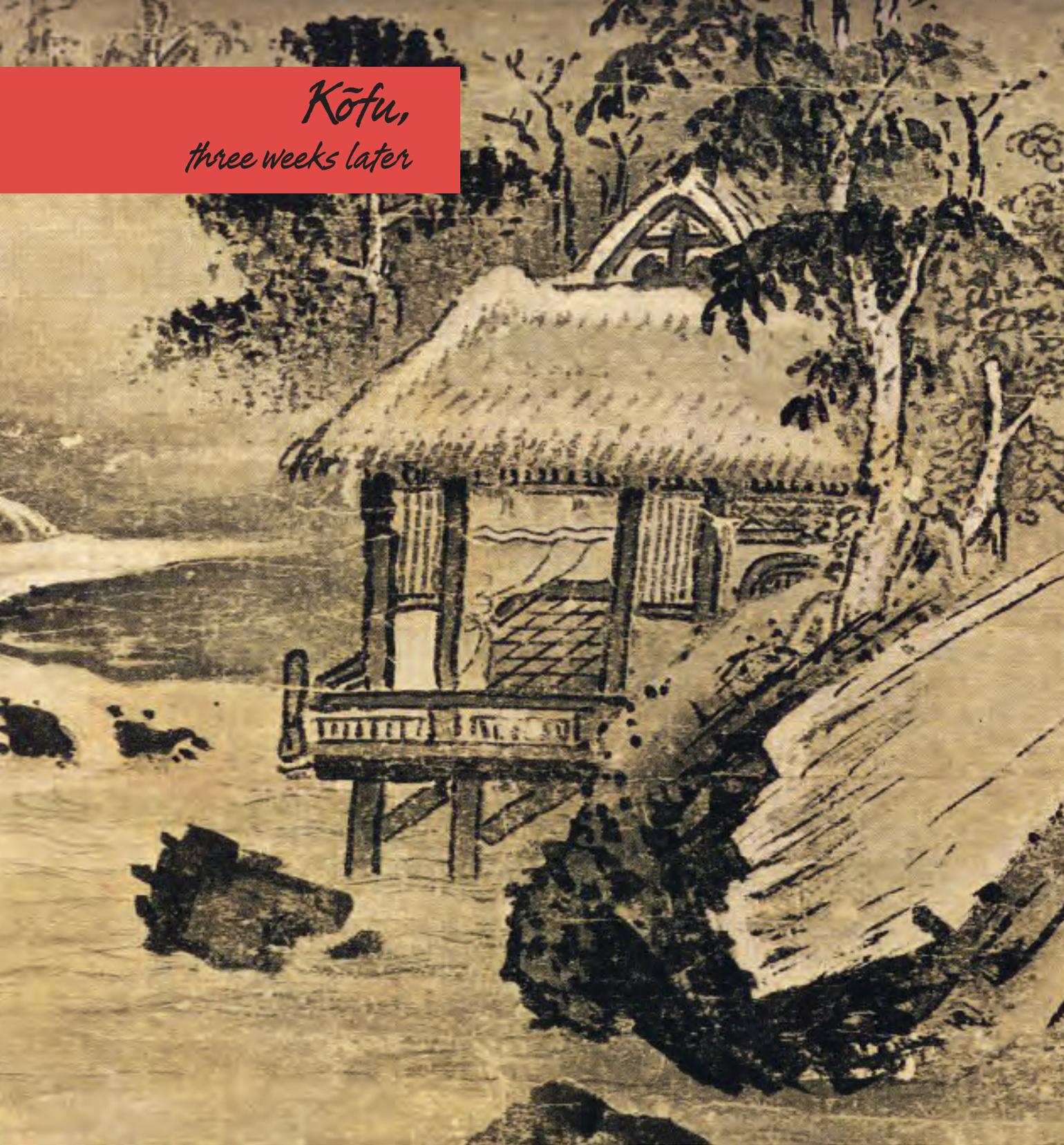
He laughed drily. "No. To be married, to Takeda Shingen's nephew. A samurai," he said.

"A good match," her mother added.

Chiyome half-listened as her parents discussed her escort for the road, and the honor of associating their family with that of Takeda Shingen. "This could be another layer of protection for Kōga," her father said.

Chiyome's head was spinning. An hour ago, she'd been dreaming of work as a spy and a warrior; now she was about to be married. She felt as if an earthquake was shaking her whole life. But for years, Sensei had taught her about duty, to her family and to her village. She struggled for acceptance. Was it possible she was never supposed to be a ninja? Maybe this marriage was her destiny.

*Kōfu,  
three weeks later*





**T**AKEDA SHINGEN STOOD in the largest room of his manor house, his relatives gathered on all sides to watch the wedding ceremony. He gazed with satisfaction at his nephew, the groom. Mochizuki Moritoki was a strong fighter with a keen mind. He'd be useful in upcoming battles.

And his new wife, standing even now before the Shinto priest ... she was an interesting one.

He smothered a smile as the girl sipped the ritual sake and coughed. She was probably overwhelmed by the riches of his home and the number of new family members around her, but if so, she hid it well. Ninja training, he'd heard.





Ninjas. He'd love to turn them loose on Uesugi Kenshin. That daimyo was a constant problem. Even now, he was probably sitting within his castle walls planning his next attack. Again and again, Shingen had squared off against Kenshin on the plains of Kawanakajima, but he'd never managed to demolish the other leader's armies. Maybe this summer. Maybe this would be the battle ...

Shingen's wife touched his arm, drawing his thoughts back to the ceremony. His nephew was presenting a new kimono to Chiyome. The wedding was over. Thankfully, Shingen had a battle to plan.

