

VINTAGE MISHIMA



Runaway Horses



# Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Copyright](#)

[About the Author](#)

[By Yukio Mishima](#)

## **[Runaway Horses](#)**

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[Chapter 21](#)

[Chapter 22](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[Chapter 24](#)

[Chapter 25](#)

[Chapter 26](#)

[Chapter 27](#)

[Chapter 28](#)  
[Chapter 29](#)  
[Chapter 30](#)  
[Chapter 31](#)  
[Chapter 32](#)  
[Chapter 33](#)  
[Chapter 34](#)  
[Chapter 35](#)  
[Chapter 36](#)  
[Chapter 37](#)  
[Chapter 38](#)  
[Chapter 39](#)  
[Chapter 40](#)

This eBook is copyright material and must not be copied, reproduced, transferred, distributed, leased, licensed or publicly performed or used in any way except as specifically permitted in writing by the publishers, as allowed under the terms and conditions under which it was purchased or as strictly permitted by applicable copyright law. Any unauthorised distribution or use of this text may be a direct infringement of the author's and publisher's rights and those responsible may be liable in law accordingly.

Epub ISBN: 9781407053530

Version 1.0

[www.randomhouse.co.uk](http://www.randomhouse.co.uk)

Published by Vintage 2000

8 10 9 7

Copyright © Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1973

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser

Originally published in Japan as *Honda* by Shinchosha Company, Tokyo, 1970

English translation originally published by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.,  
New York, 1973

Vintage  
Random House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road,  
London SW1V 2SA

Random House Australia (Pty) Limited  
20 Alfred Street, Milsons Point, Sydney,  
New South Wales 2061, Australia

Random House New Zealand Limited  
18 Poland Road, Glenfield,  
Auckland 10, New Zealand

Random House South Africa (Pty) Limited  
Isle of Houghton, Corner of Boundary Road & Carse O'Gowrie,  
Houghton 2198, South Africa

The Random House Group Limited Reg. No. 954009  
[www.randomhouse.co.uk](http://www.randomhouse.co.uk)

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 9780099282891

Papers used by Random House are natural, recyclable products made from wood grown in sustainable forests. The manufacturing processes conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin

Printed and bound in Great Britain by  
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham, Wiltshire

## About the Author

Yukio Mishima was born into a samurai family and imbued with the code of complete control over mind and body, and loyalty to the Emperor – the same code that produced the austerity and self-sacrifice of Zen. He wrote countless short stories and thirty-three plays, in some of which he acted. Several films have been made from his novels, including *The Sound of Waves*; *Enjo*, which was based on *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*; and *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea*. Among his other works are the novels *Confessions of a Mask* and *Thirst for Love* and the short-story collections *Death in Midsummer* and *Acts of Worship*.

*The Sea of Fertility* tetralogy, however, is his masterpiece. After Mishima conceived the idea of *The Sea of Fertility* in 1964, he frequently said he would die when it was completed. On November 25th, 1970, the day he completed *The Decay of the Angel*, the last novel of the cycle, Mishima committed *seppuku* (ritual suicide) at the age of 45.

BY YUKIO MISHIMA

THE SEA OF FERTILITY, A CYCLE OF FOUR NOVELS

*Spring Snow*  
*Runaway Horses*  
*The Temple of Dawn*  
*The Decay of the Angel*

*Confessions of a Mask*  
*Thirst for Love*  
*Forbidden Colors*  
*The Sailor who Fell from Grace with the Sea*  
*After the Banquet*  
*The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*  
*Five Modern Nō Plays*  
*The Sound of Waves*  
*Death in Midsummer*  
*Acts of Worship*



IT WAS 1932. Shigekuni Honda was thirty-eight.

While still a law student at Tokyo Imperial University, he had passed the judicial civil service examination, and after graduation he had been given a probationary assignment as a clerk in the Osaka District Court. Osaka was his home from then on. In 1929 he became a judge, and last year, having already advanced to senior associate judge of the District Court, he had moved to the Osaka Court of Appeals to become a junior associate judge.

Honda had married at twenty-eight. His wife was the daughter of one of his father's friends, a judge who had been forced to retire in the legal reform of 1913. The wedding was held in Tokyo, and he and his wife came to Osaka immediately afterwards. In the ten years that followed, his wife had borne him no children. But Rié was a modest and gentle woman, and their relationship was harmonious.

His father had died three years before. At the time, Honda had considered disposing of the family home and having his mother come to Osaka. She had been opposed to this, however, and now she lived alone in the large house in Tokyo.

Honda's wife had one maid to help her care for the rented house in which they lived. There were two rooms on the second floor and five on the first, including the foyer. The garden covered somewhat more than seven hundred square feet. For this Honda paid a monthly rent of thirty-two yen.

Aside from three days a week at the court, Honda worked at home. To go to the Court of Appeals he took a streetcar from Abeno in Tennoji Ward to Kitahama in downtown Osaka. Then he walked across the bridges spanning the Tosabori and the Dojima rivers to the Courthouse, which stood close by Hokonagashi Bridge. It was a red brick building with the huge chrysanthemum of the imperial crest glittering above its front entrance.

A *furoshiki* cloth was indispensable to a judge. There were always documents to take home, usually more than a briefcase would hold, and a cloth-wrapped bundle could be either large or small. Honda used a medium-sized muslin *furoshiki* from the Daimaru department store, and, to be on the safe side, carried a second one folded up within it. For the judges these *furoshiki* bundles were vital to their work; they would never trust them to a

luggage rack. One of his colleagues would not even stop off for a drink on the way home without passing a cord under the knot of his *furoshiki* and then looping it around his neck.

There was no reason why Honda could not use the judges' chambers to compose his decisions. But on a day when court was not in session the crowded room would be ringing with vigorous legal arguments, as the probationary clerks stood about respectfully assimilating all they could learn. Little hope of his being able to write his decisions in peace. Honda preferred to work at home late into the night.

Shigekuni Honda's specialty was criminal law. He felt no concern that Osaka, because of its small criminal law division, was said to offer only limited advancement in this field.

Working at home, he would spend the night reading the police reports, the prosecutor's briefs, and the accounts of the preliminary examinations relating to the cases to be tried at the next session. After he had made extracts and taken notes he would pass the material along to the senior associate judge. Once a decision had been reached, it was up to Honda to draft it for the Chief Judge. The sky would already be growing light in the east by the time he finally plodded his way to "All of which having been considered, the judgment of this court is as has been hereinbefore stated." The Chief Judge would revise this and give it back to Honda, who now had to take up his writing brush and make the final copy. The fingers of his right hand had scrivener's calluses.

As for geisha parties, Honda attended only the traditional end-of-year celebration which was held at the Seikanro in the red-light district of Kita Ward. On that night superiors and underlings caroused freely together, and occasionally somebody or other, emboldened by saké, expressed himself to the Chief Justice with unwonted frankness.

Their usual diversion was drinking in the cafés and *oden* shops clustered around the streetcar junction of Umeda-Shimmichi. The service at some of these cafés knew no limits. If one were to ask the waitress what time it was, she would lift her skirt to consult a watch strapped to a plump thigh before answering. Some judges, of course, were altogether too dignified for this sort of thing, and even believed that cafés were merely places for drinking coffee. One of them happened to be presiding over an embezzlement trial, when the defendant testified that he had squandered all of the misappropriated thousand yen in cafés. The judge interrupted indignantly.

“How can you say that?” he demanded. “A cup of coffee is only five sen. Are you trying to tell us you drank that much?”

Even after the general reduction of civil service salaries, Honda had an ample income of nearly three hundred yen a month, the equivalent of a regimental commander. His colleagues gave their leisure to various pastimes: some read novels, others took up the chants and Nō plays of the Kanzé School, and still others gathered to write haiku and make sketches illustrating the poems. Most of these diversions, however, served as pretexts for getting together to do some drinking.

Then there were some judges, especially enthusiastic for things Western, who went to dances. Honda did not care for dancing, but he often heard his colleagues talk about it. Since a city ordinance forbade dancing in Osaka itself, devotees had to go to Kyoto, where the Katsura and the Keagé dance halls were popular, or else to Amagasaki, where the Kuisé stood isolated in the midst of rice paddies. The taxi ride to Amagasaki cost one yen. As one approached the gymnasium-like building on a rainy night, the shadows of dancing couples flickered past the lighted windows, and the strains of the foxtrot took on an uncanny quality across the flooded paddy fields gleaming in the rain.

Such was Honda’s world about this time.