

Kamakura Beach, 1333

by Mary Kendall



Photograph by Ana Prundaru. "Kamakura Beach, 1333" was written by Mary Kendall for *Rattle's Ekphrastic Challenge*, October 2015, and selected by Prundaru as the Artist's Choice winner.

The sea washed scarlet that night.

The tide rushed in—swelling and breaking—washing all traces out to sea on the waves of Kamakura Beach.

You know nothing of this, you who long for adventure and pleasure—youth who search desperately for meaning in lives that are too rich, too busy, and still so poor.

Your small boats arrive in early evening, the carmine sunset at your back, and you quickly gather driftwood, tinder, and fallen black pine branches to burn. You light the fire.

A trail of smoke begins funneling up to the starry sky. The fire burns hot and one by one, you feed it twigs, boughs, pine cones bursting into streams of sparks and wild flames.

And in your wanton rambling, one girl grows silent—she alone hears the hallowed chanting, the cries of battle, the shrieks of arrows piercing skulls, the stench of life exiting too abruptly.

She wanders over shallow rocks, her hand touching stone, knowing the pain hidden in the silence of eight hundred years. The rest of you are unaware ... you laugh too loudly, move

too fast, not noticing the shifting colors of the setting sun. Listen and you will hear the shogun cries of warriors and farmers that once shook the sacred sands of Kamakura Beach.

Can you smell the fierce fires, the burning buildings, the blazing rafters crashing and lighting the darkening sky? Can you hear the screams of those buried here long ago?

Time slipped by like swifts at dusk darting in the fading sky. The fire raged on and on, and lives were ravished in a single breath. It was our fate to die on Kamakura Beach.

With Samurai mind and clean, sharp blows, the sacred sword was swift. One by one, we died ... each of us choosing honor, this bleak beach now strewn with bones, bodies and blood.

You who come to visit—feel the cool churning lapis blue water, and see the late sun boldly brush red on sand, water and waves. Remember us—we who lie buried on Kamakura Beach.

Let your fires roar, let them spark in comets to the stars. Under the dark night skies long written in indigo and ink, we will walk together here on Kamakura Beach.

Morning tide will come—swelling and breaking—washing your presence out to sea—remembering our final night, a night of fire and blood, bone and bodies on Kamakura Beach.

The sea washed scarlet that night.

