By early September 1944, US forces in Guam were concentrating on mopping-up operations. Their main forces seemed to have embarked on preparing for battles nearer to mainland Japan, such as Iwo Jima (half way between Tokyo and Guam) and Okinawa. Their fleet was no longer visible. They extended our navy’s airfields on the island to operate a large number of huge aircraft.

One book has suggested that the number of surviving Japanese soldiers, who had hidden themselves in the jungle, was about two thousand. It was true that most of the Japanese, more than 20,000 strong in Guam, bravely fought to make themselves a shield against the US advance in the Pacific. Guam has generally been regarded as one of the islands where Japanese garrisons had completely perished in battle. Even so, it was also true that an uncertain number of soldiers survived the defeat, miserably wandering about in the jungle like us.

After parting with Lieutenant Inaba, with whom I had shared our fate since we were in Manchuria, our Yokoi group of five strong went to an upper stream of the River Talofofo from its mouth along its valley. We had no specific destination, but naturally we thought that access to water and food was an essential condition for our survival.

I told my fellow group members on the way:

Since the Platoon has been dissolved, I am the most senior person
among us. However, under the circumstances, I would like to be an ordinary Yokoi, just as our Platoon Commander had become an ordinary Inaba. Therefore, please do not call me ‘Squad Leader’ henceforth. Since we know each other well, we shall decide on our conduct democratically. OK?

As before, we hid ourselves in the jungle during the daytime and searched around for food cautiously in the early morning and in the evening. We were like stray dogs.

Tetsuo Unno had been attached to Lieutenant Inaba. He had secretly appropriated for himself the lieutenant’s blanket designed for officers. Soon, Takeo Morioka, who was allocated to the lieutenant’s group, approached Unno and demanded that it be handed over. ‘The person who has deserted us’, Unno said, ‘is no longer our boss!’ He refused to give the blanket back. There was no longer any hierarchy. There was only a relationship between man and man.

One day, we dried the blanket in the open air as it had been soaked in the rain. In the meantime, we hid ourselves in a small bush to take some sleep. Hearing birds clucking nearby, we woke up with a start, fearing enemy attacks. We crept out, rubbing our eyes and watching around carefully. What we saw were ten or so strong Japanese soldiers going after the birds, and one of them was carrying off Unno’s blanket. Unno exchanged a brief altercation with him. The soldier, however, did not listen and made off with the blanket. I regretted then my failure to suggest to Unno that anything which had been taken by force would be taken away. If the blanket were to be taken by somebody else, I should have told Unno in the first place, ‘the lieutenant is still your former commander. Give it back.’

There was an officer among the ten or so group of Japanese soldiers. I asked him to take us with him. ‘I am the 18th Regiment’s adjutant’, he said. ‘I have ten soldiers. I am sorry that I cannot have any more, because the greater the number, the more risky it is in jungle warfare. Please take responsibility as a section leader. Be patient and cautious. Don’t rush to die. The Japanese troops are coming to rescue us soon. OK? You shall wait until then.’ The officer parted with us rather reluctantly.