

SAMURAI'S BLOOD™



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SAMURAI'S BLOOD

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BENAROYA PUBLISHING

WWW.BENAROYAPUBLISHING.COM

The last remnant of the Sanjo Clan -- Katashi, Jun, and Mayuko -- have come to Yamagata City, sworn to vengeance against the evil Gakushi and Araku. But Mayuko has been kidnapped, only found by the others only after a long and desperate search.

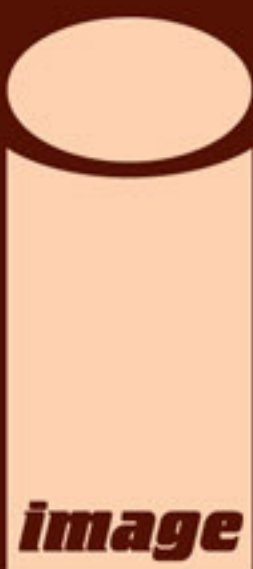
Yet between the moment of her kidnapping and the moment they find her is a lifetime for this strong, proud young woman.

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ON A NAMELESS ROAD FAR FROM THE CITY OF YAMAGATA.
ONE WEEK AFTER MAYUKO'S KIDNAPPING.



THERE ARE FOUR ASCENDING LEVELS OF SUFFERING
IN THE WORLD. THE FIRST LEVEL OF SUFFERING IS TO
WITNESS THE PAIN OF AN INNOCENT. THIS OFFENDS THE
HEART OF ANY PERSON WHO TREASURES JUSTICE.



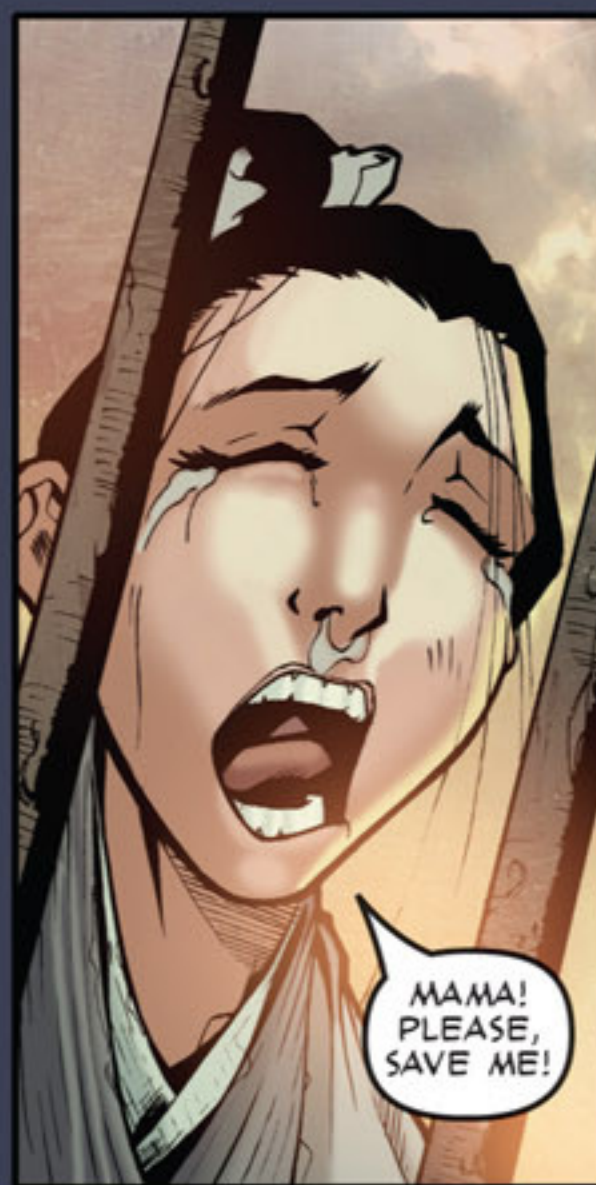
MAMA!



YOU
THERE! STOP
CRYING!



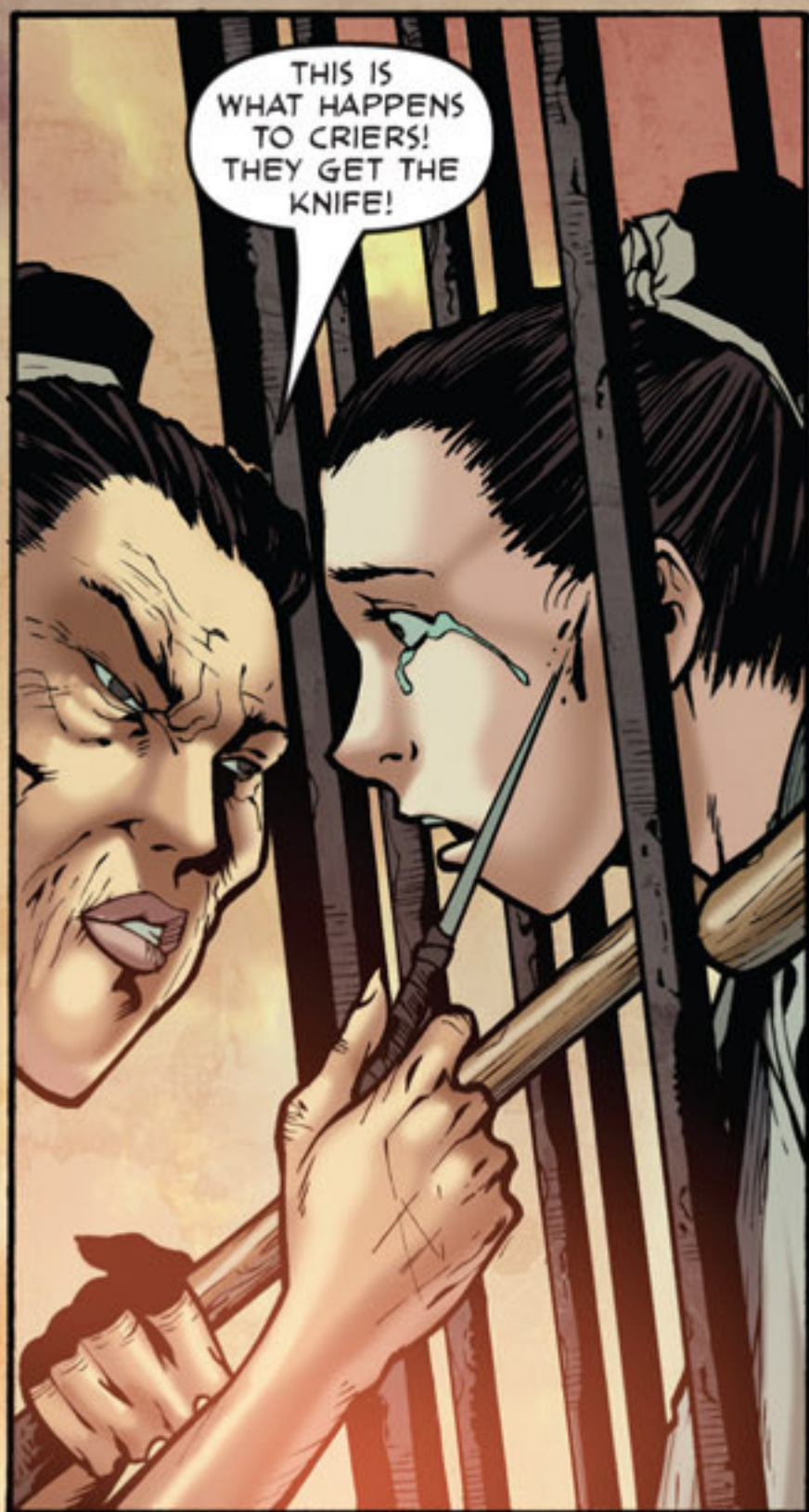
SILENCE!



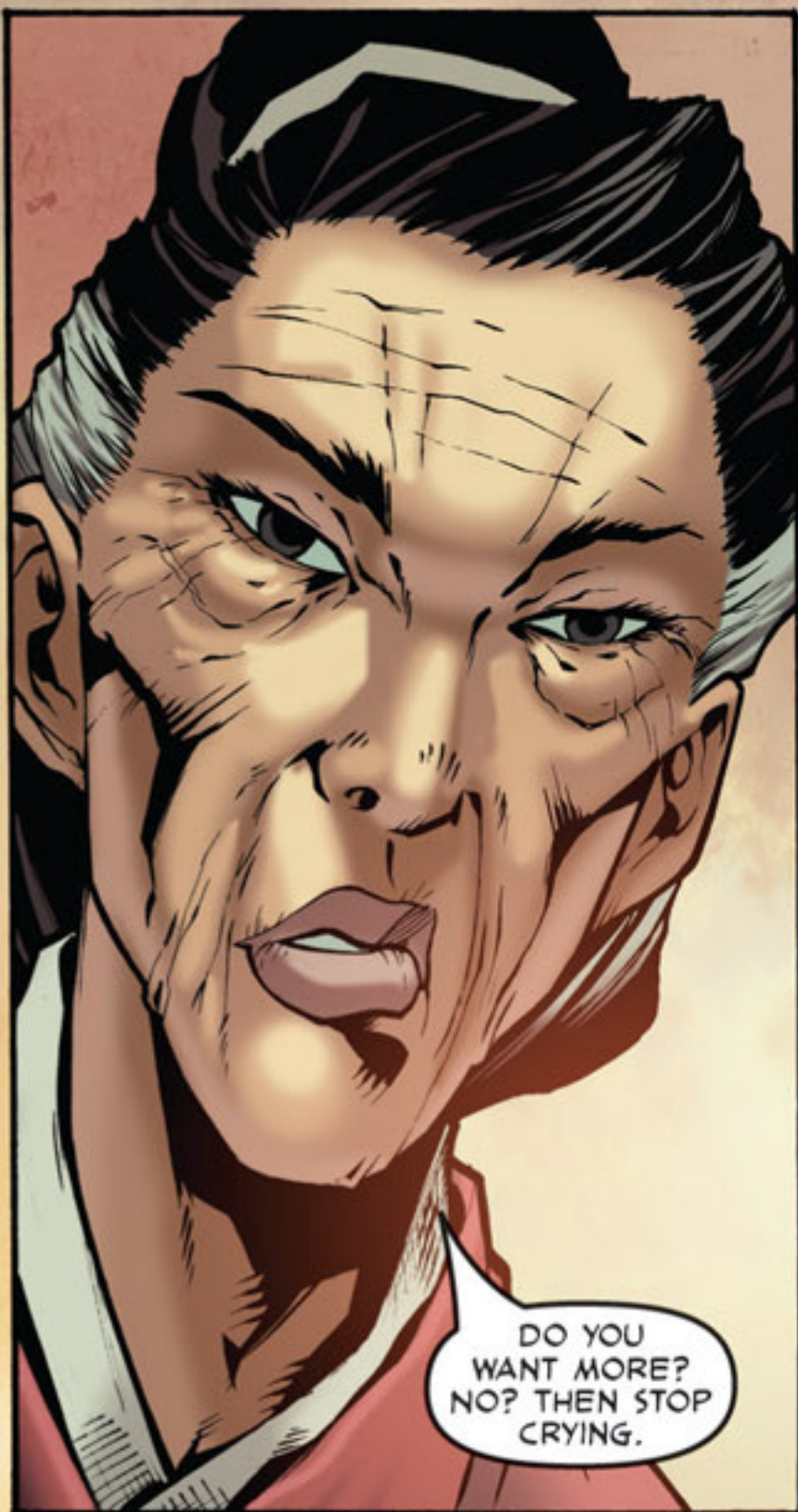
MAMA!
PLEASE,
SAVE ME!



COME
HERE YOU
STUBBORN
CHILD!



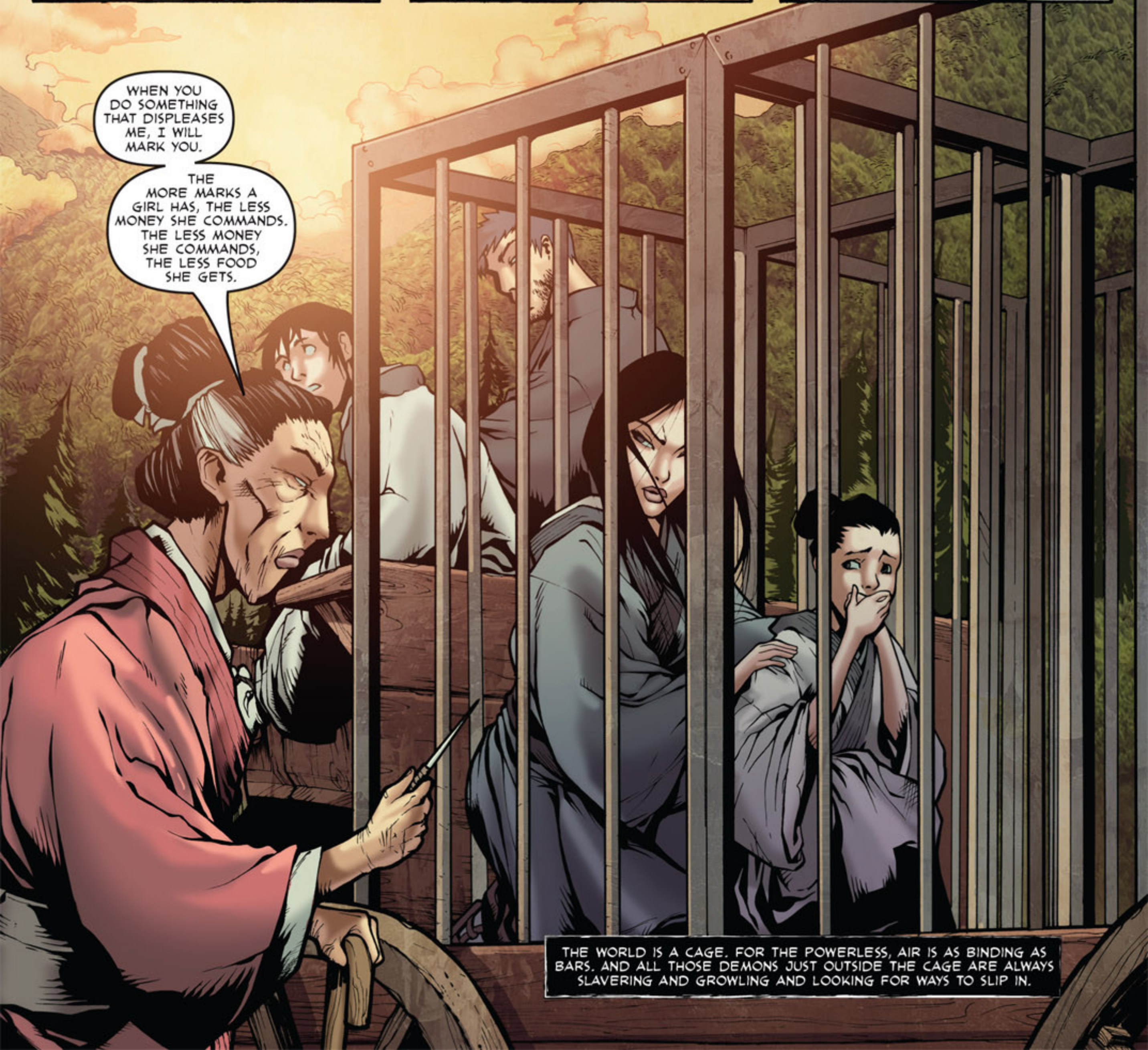
THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS TO CRIERS! THEY GET THE KNIFE!



DO YOU WANT MORE? NO? THEN STOP CRYING.



SHHH... QUIET NOW.

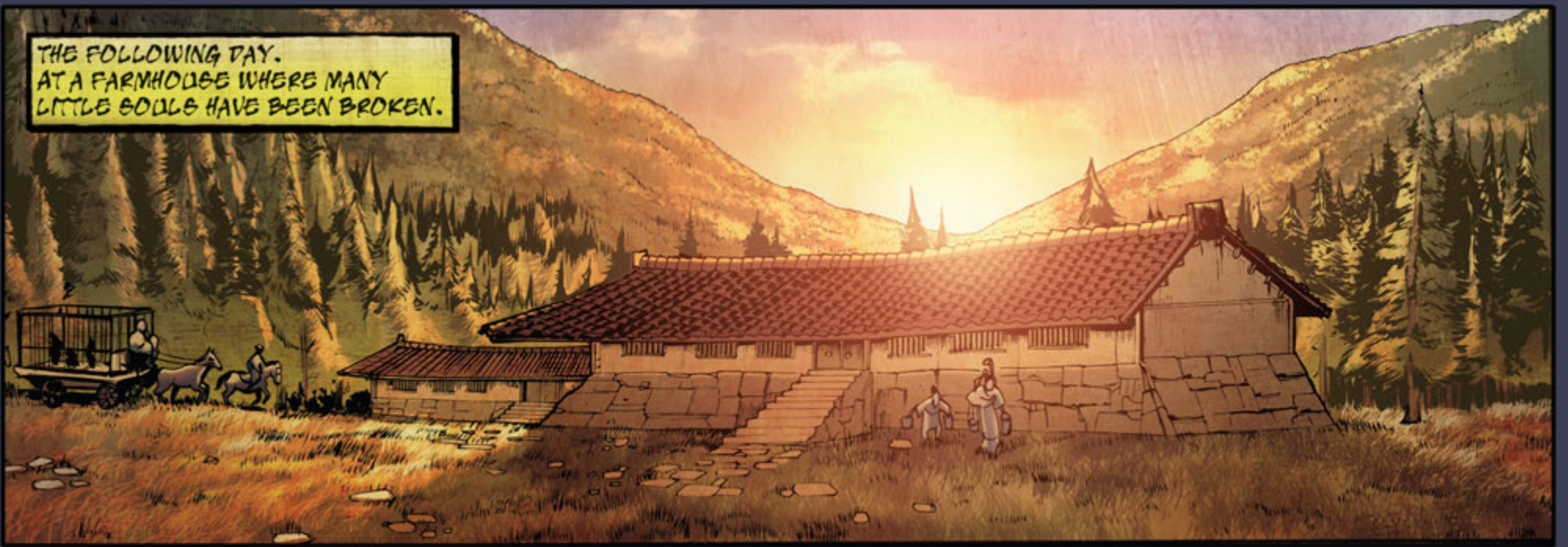


WHEN YOU DO SOMETHING THAT DISPLEASES ME, I WILL MARK YOU.

THE MORE MARKS A GIRL HAS, THE LESS MONEY SHE COMMANDS. THE LESS MONEY SHE COMMANDS, THE LESS FOOD SHE GETS.

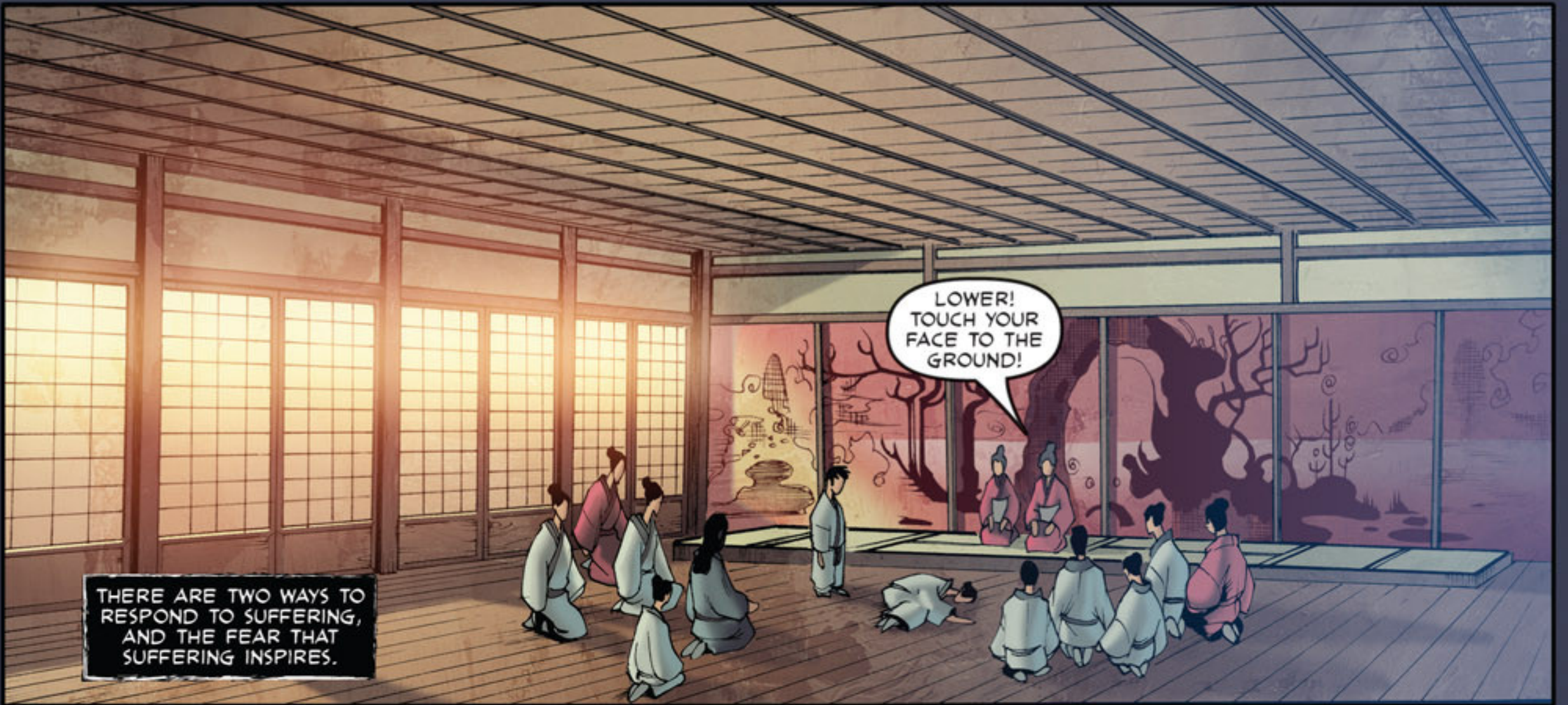
THE WORLD IS A CAGE. FOR THE POWERLESS, AIR IS AS BINDING AS BARS. AND ALL THOSE DEMONS JUST OUTSIDE THE CAGE ARE ALWAYS SLAVERING AND GROWLING AND LOOKING FOR WAYS TO SLIP IN.

THE FOLLOWING DAY.
AT A FARMHOUSE WHERE MANY
LITTLE SOULS HAVE BEEN BROKEN.



LOWER!
TOUCH YOUR
FACE TO THE
GROUND!

THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO
RESPOND TO SUFFERING,
AND THE FEAR THAT
SUFFERING INSPIRES.



THERE IS THE WAY OF THE COMMONER,
AND THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI.



THE COMMONER'S WAY IS THE
WAY OF RETREAT, THE RETREAT
OF LOWERED EYES...



THE RETREAT OF A YOUNG,
BEATEN DOWN SERVANT BOY...



THE RETREAT OF A GIRL WHO
KNOWS SHE IS AN EXAMPLE...





BUT A SAMURAI DOES NOT
RETREAT, NOT FROM FEAR,
AND NOT FROM SUFFERING.



A SAMURAI WAITS, AND GATHERS
SUFFERING AS FUEL FOR THE
FIRES OF HER HEART.



SHE GATHERS ALL THE INDIGNITY
AND SHAME THE WORLD CAN
OFFER, AND FORGES HER SOUL
INTO A FINELY HONED EDGE.



A SAMURAI ACCEPTS SUFFERING
WITH THE FLUIDITY OF A RIVER,
AND THE STILLNESS OF A MOUNTAIN.



SHE BIDES HER TIME UNTIL
SHE ARRIVES AT THE
MOMENT OF HER FATE.





I HAVE SEEN YOU LOOKING AT ME WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOURSELF UNWATCHED. I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT.

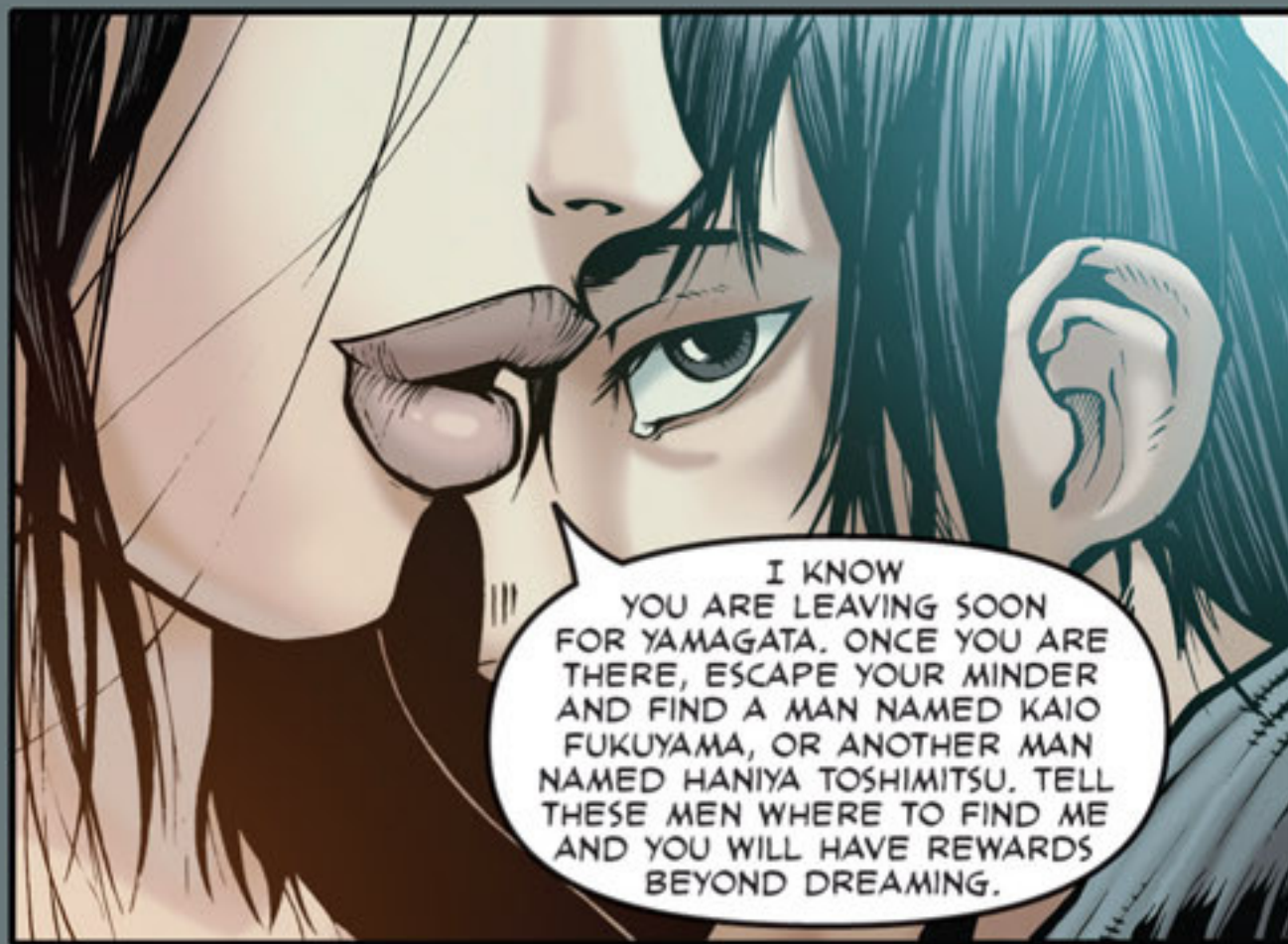


I... I...
I...

AND I CAN SEE THAT YOU HAVE NO GREAT LOVE FOR YOUR MISTRESS. I SAW THE TEAR IN YOUR EYE WHEN SHE CUT POOR LITTLE HANA THROUGH THE BARS OF HER CAGE. DEEP IN YOUR HEART OF HEARTS, YOU LONG FOR FREEDOM. DO NOT DENY IT.



HOW CAN YOU KNOW THIS OF ME? ARE YOU A WITCH?



I KNOW YOU ARE LEAVING SOON FOR YAMAGATA. ONCE YOU ARE THERE, ESCAPE YOUR MINDER AND FIND A MAN NAMED KAIO FUKUYAMA, OR ANOTHER MAN NAMED HANIYA TOSHIMITSU. TELL THESE MEN WHERE TO FIND ME AND YOU WILL HAVE REWARDS BEYOND DREAMING.



I WILL MAKE CERTAIN OF THAT PERSONALLY. DO NOT FAIL ME. REPEAT THE NAMES.

KAIO FUKUYAMA.
HANIYA TOSHIMITSU.



I... I WILL DO AS YOU ASK. I SWEAR.



GOOD. THEN BEFORE LONG YOU WILL SEE ME AGAIN.

NOT LONG AFTER.
AS AUTUMN IS
BREATHING ITS
LAST GASP.

THE WAITING OF A SAMURAI
WILL PERSIST LONG AFTER
ITS NOVELTY IS GONE.



SUFFERING IS A CONSTANT
PRESENCE IN THE WORLD.

THE RHYTHM OF SUFFERING CAN
GRIND EVEN THE STRONGEST
SAMURAI INTO A COMMON WRETCH.



EVEN POURING TEA CAN
BECOME AN ACT OF SHAME.



BUT A TRUE SAMURAI, OF PURE BLOOD AND
SHARP MIND, DOES NOT BECOME UNBALANCED.
HER WAITING WILL TAKE HER EVEN UNTO THE
ENDING OF THE WORLD.





MISTRESS, MAY I KNOW WHERE I AM TO BE TAKEN? WILL I REMAIN NEAR MY HOME?

IT IS BETTER NOT TO KNOW, CHILD.



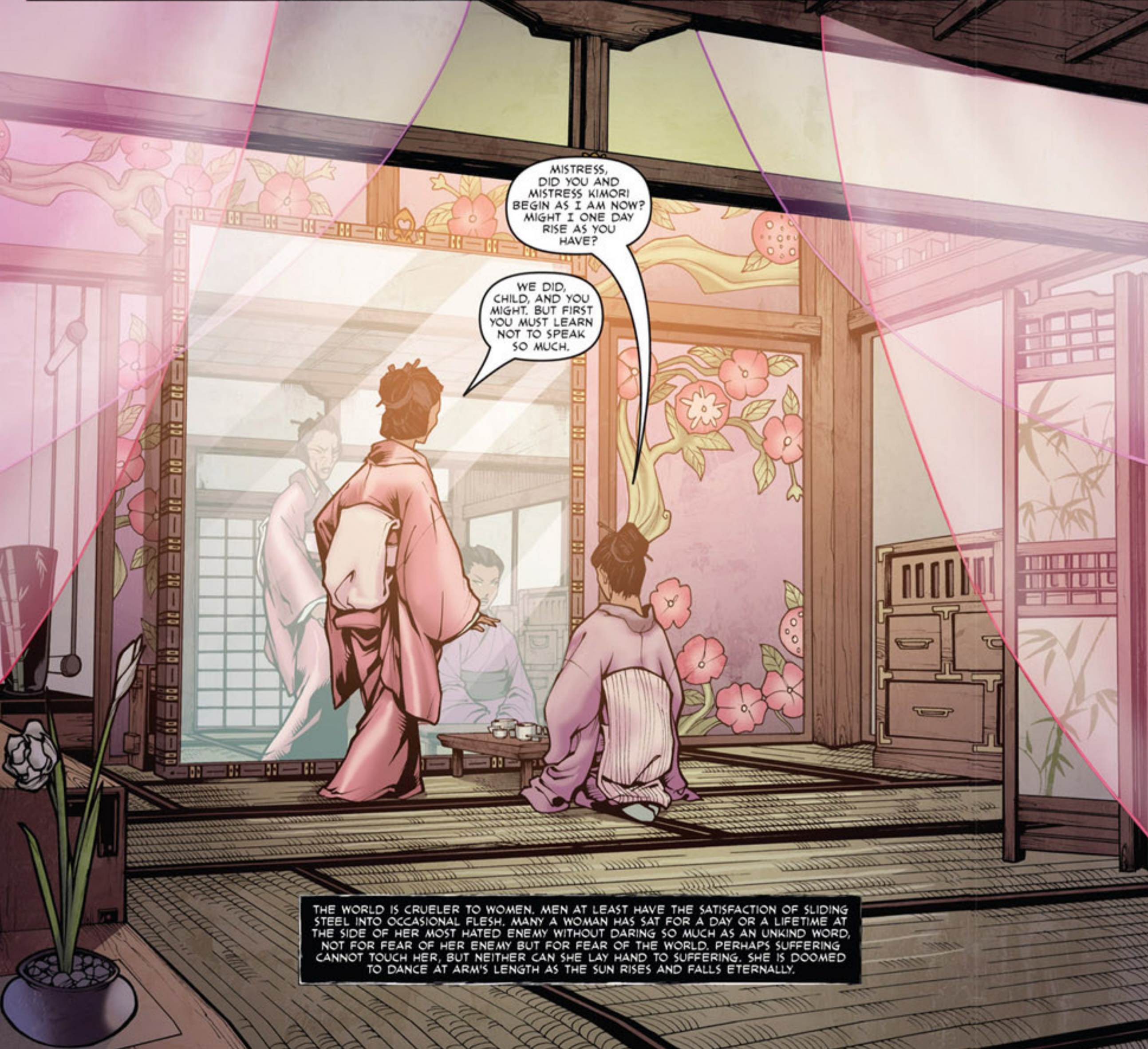
IF I AM TO BE A REAL O'IRAN GIRL, I MUST BE MOVING SOMEWHERE. THEY SAY ONLY FINE CITIES HAVE REAL HOUSES.



THESE ARE JUST TRAPPINGS, CHILD, SO THE FOOLS CAN CONVINCE THEMSELVES YOU ARE WHAT THEY WISH YOU TO BE. THERE ARE MANY KINDS OF BAISHUNJO, AND O'IRAN GIRLS BEGIN THEIR TRAINING FAR YOUNGER THAN YOU ARE NOW.



NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO, MAINTAIN YOUR PACE THROUGH THE DIFFICULT AREAS. HESITATION ONLY CREATES DIFFICULTY.



MISTRESS, DID YOU AND MISTRESS KIMORI BEGIN AS I AM NOW? MIGHT I ONE DAY RISE AS YOU HAVE?

WE DID, CHILD, AND YOU MIGHT. BUT FIRST YOU MUST LEARN NOT TO SPEAK SO MUCH.

THE WORLD IS CRUELER TO WOMEN. MEN AT LEAST HAVE THE SATISFACTION OF SLIDING STEEL INTO OCCASIONAL FLESH. MANY A WOMAN HAS SAT FOR A DAY OR A LIFETIME AT THE SIDE OF HER MOST HATED ENEMY WITHOUT DARING SO MUCH AS AN UNKIND WORD, NOT FOR FEAR OF HER ENEMY BUT FOR FEAR OF THE WORLD. PERHAPS SUFFERING CANNOT TOUCH HER, BUT NEITHER CAN SHE LAY HAND TO SUFFERING. SHE IS DOOMED TO DANCE AT ARM'S LENGTH AS THE SUN RISES AND FALLS ETERNALLY.



I THINK PERHAPS THE TIME HAS COME TO CLEAR AWAY SOME OF YOUR CONFUSION.



MISTRESS, WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



COME WITH ME. DO NOT UNMAKE YOUR FACE.

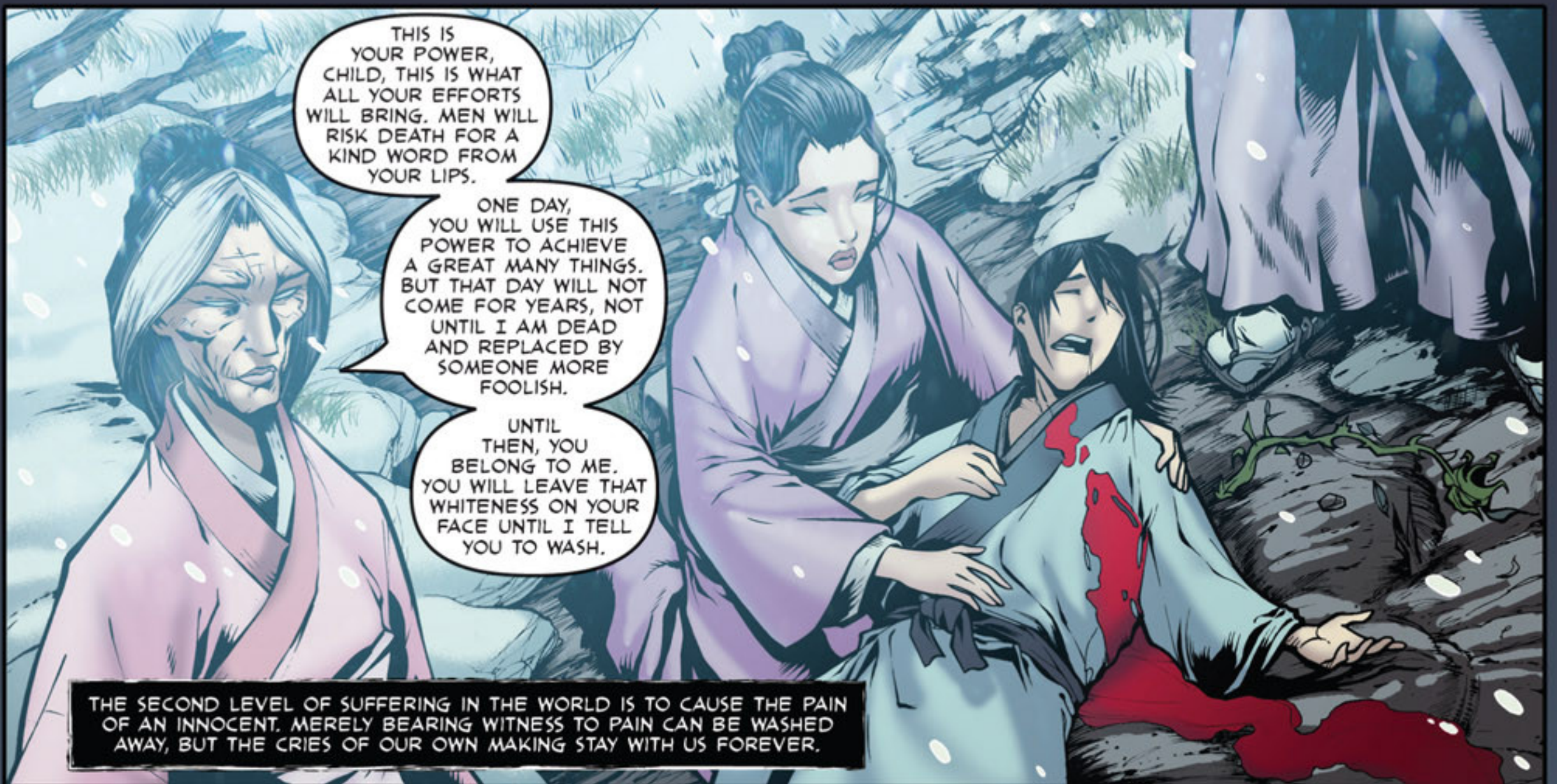


SUFFERING IS LIKE THE FALLING SNOW. TINY FLAKES COVER ALL THE GROUND IN THE WORLD. A SAMURAI WAITS, AND DANCES, AND STRUGGLES, AND TRIUMPHS, YET SUFFERING PILES UP AROUND HER, UNCARING FOR ALL HER BEST EFFORTS.



WHAT IS THIS?

OH, NO.



THIS IS YOUR POWER, CHILD, THIS IS WHAT ALL YOUR EFFORTS WILL BRING. MEN WILL RISK DEATH FOR A KIND WORD FROM YOUR LIPS.

ONE DAY, YOU WILL USE THIS POWER TO ACHIEVE A GREAT MANY THINGS. BUT THAT DAY WILL NOT COME FOR YEARS, NOT UNTIL I AM DEAD AND REPLACED BY SOMEONE MORE FOOLISH.

UNTIL THEN, YOU BELONG TO ME. YOU WILL LEAVE THAT WHITENESS ON YOUR FACE UNTIL I TELL YOU TO WASH.

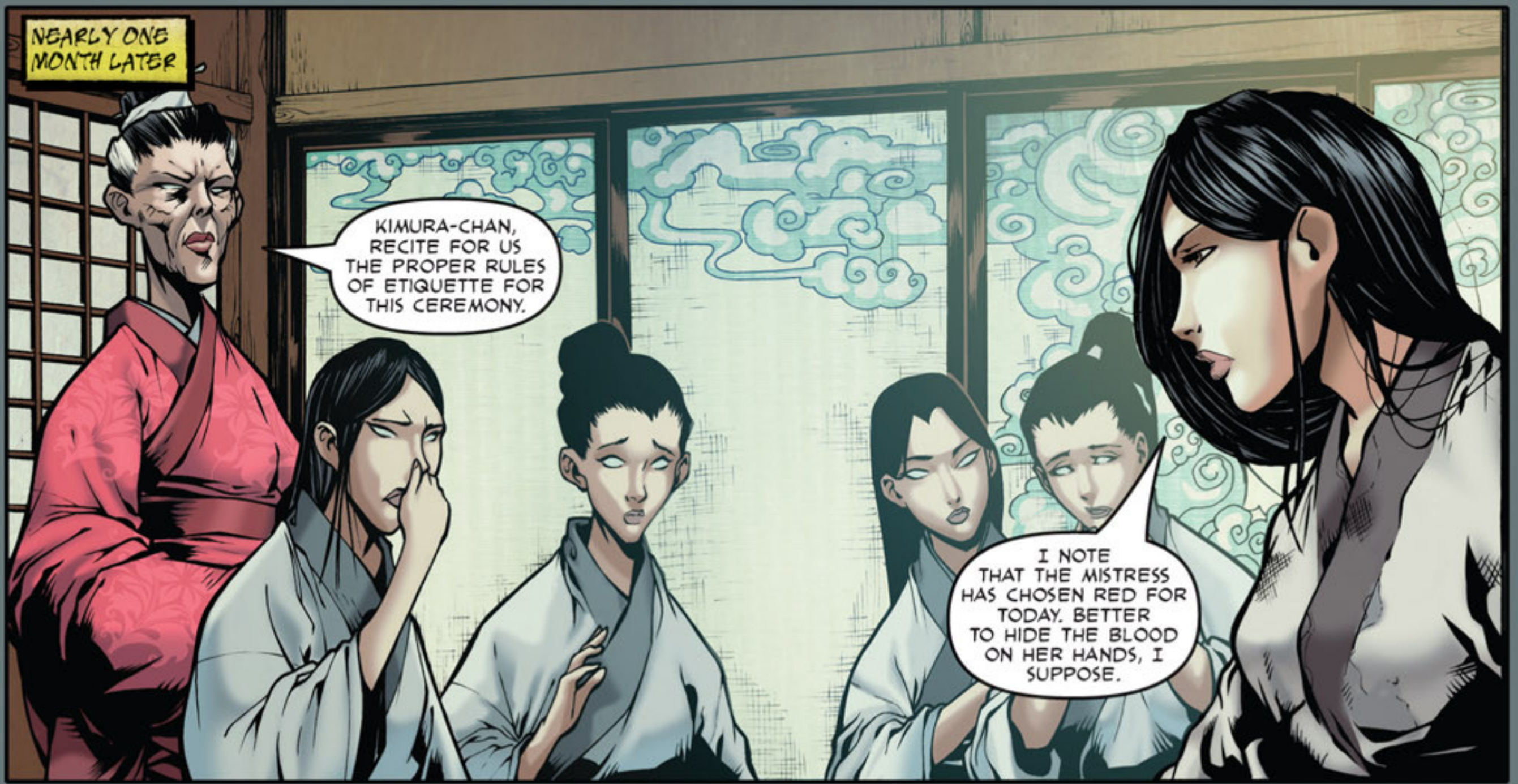
THE SECOND LEVEL OF SUFFERING IN THE WORLD IS TO CAUSE THE PAIN OF AN INNOCENT. MERELY BEARING WITNESS TO PAIN CAN BE WASHED AWAY, BUT THE CRIES OF OUR OWN MAKING STAY WITH US FOREVER.



I HAVE PUT ON THE CLOTHES OF A WHORE WITH MY OWN HANDS, AND SO I WILL NOT TAKE THEM OFF UNTIL BIDDED. AS FOR ME, DO WHAT YOU WILL, BUT I AM NOT YOURS. I WILL NEVER SUBMIT TO YOU AGAIN.



'AS FOR ME, DO WHAT YOU WILL'. GIRLS ALWAYS SPEAK SUCH JUST BEFORE THEY BREAK AND START BEGGING FOR MERCY.



DAYS LATER.
BACK IN THE CITY OF YAMAGATA.
INSIDE THE KINJO HOUSE.

I HAVE HEARD OF THE TROUBLES YOU GAVE TO MY SISTER. I HOPE YOU HAVE LEARNED ALL THE REQUIRED LESSONS, FOR YOU WILL FIND ME NOT NEARLY SO INDULGENT AS SHE IS.

TELL ME, MISTRESS, DO YOU EVER HAVE DREAMS ABOUT THE MEN WHO HAVE VIOLATED YOU? WHAT ABOUT THE LAST WHO PAID A FEW COINS TO RAVAGE YOU? DO YOU REMEMBER HIM CLEARER THAN THE OTHERS?

I WILL NEVER SELL MYSELF. NOT FOR YOU, OR FOR ANYONE.

THIS IS WHY I NEVER TAKE GIRLS AT YOUR AGE. STILL, I MUST SAY, I HAVE NEVER SEEN ONE WITH SUCH SPIRIT.

IT WOULD BE A SHAME AGAINST COMMERCE TO MARK THAT BEAUTIFUL FACE OF YOURS, SO IF YOU NEED SOME TIME TO CONSIDER, I WILL ALLOW IT. OF COURSE, THERE ARE ALWAYS PENALTIES FOR STUBBORNNESS.

YOU FOOLISH CHILD.

THE THIRD LEVEL OF SUFFERING IN THE WORLD IS TO HAVE PAIN IMPOSED ON ONE'S SELF BY ANOTHER. IN THIS CASE, FAR GREATER THAN ANY SENSATION OF PAIN IS HELPLESSNESS.



WHAT ARE YOU...



I HAVE BEEN GIVEN PERMISSION, MY PET.



NO PAIN IMPOSED FROM WITHOUT CAN PENETRATE DEEPLY ENOUGH TO DESTROY WHAT WE ARE, BUT THAT HELPLESSNESS CAN CUT TO THE VERY CORE.



JUST KEEP QUIET AND LET IT HAPPEN, AND IT WILL HURT A LOT LESS. SCREAMING WILL DO NOTHING, ANYWAY. I HAVE PERMISSION.



TOUCH ME AND YOU WILL DIE. I SWEAR IT.



NO.

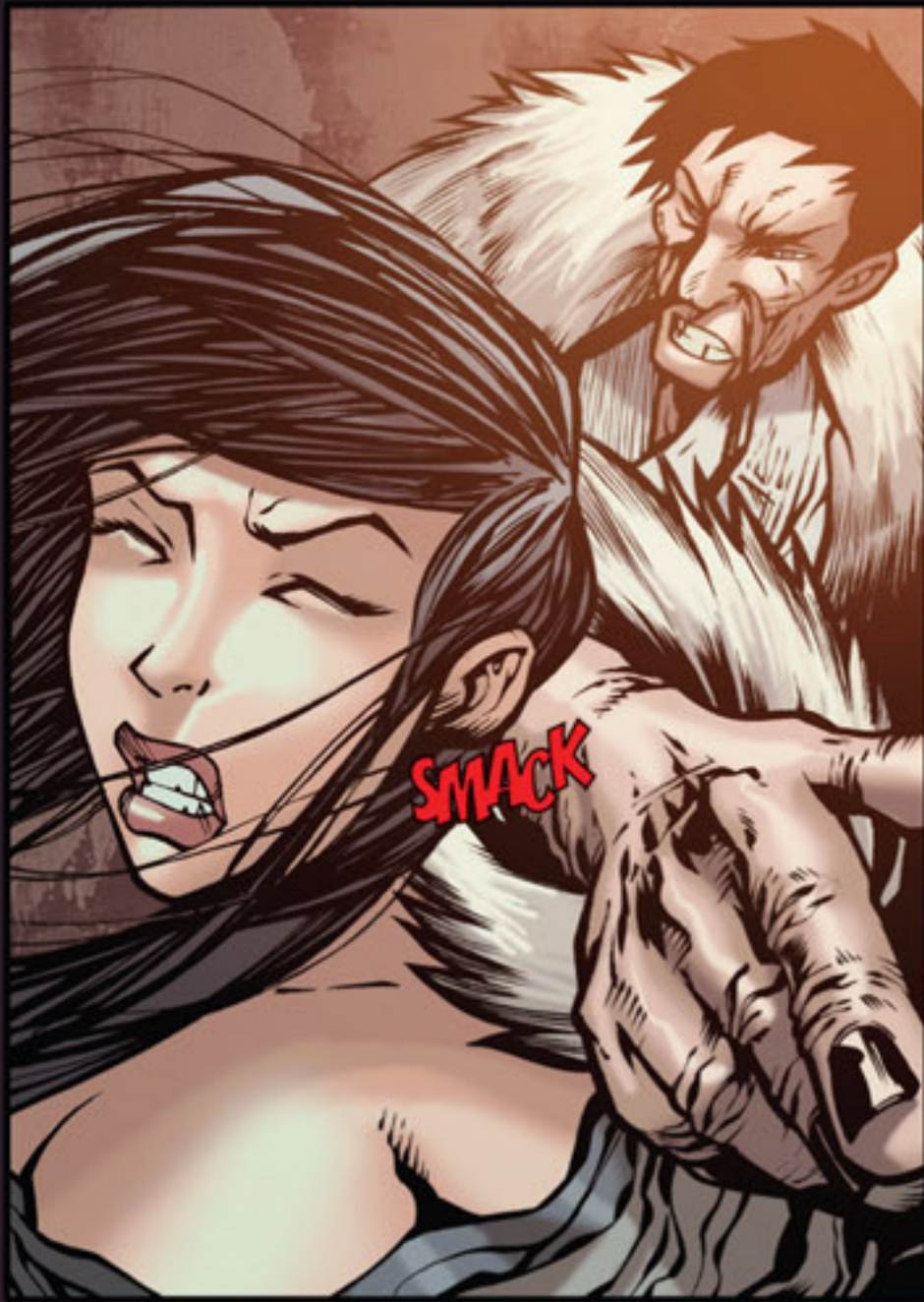
WAIT A MOMENT.



EMBRACE YOUR NEW LIFE AND IT WILL NOT BE UNPLEASANT. REFUSE, AND THIS SHALL BECOME YOUR NIGHTLY RITUAL. YOU WILL BECOME THE PLAYTHING OF MY FAVORED GUARDS. IS THAT WHAT YOU WISH?



YOU WILL MAKE ME NOTHING, OLD WOMAN!



SMACK



I AM ONLY WHAT I MAKE MYSELF. NOTHING YOU CAN DO CAN TOUCH ME.



YOU ARE VERY LUCKY THAT YOU AMUSE ME. KNOW THIS: WHEN I BREAK YOU, IT WILL BE FOREVER.



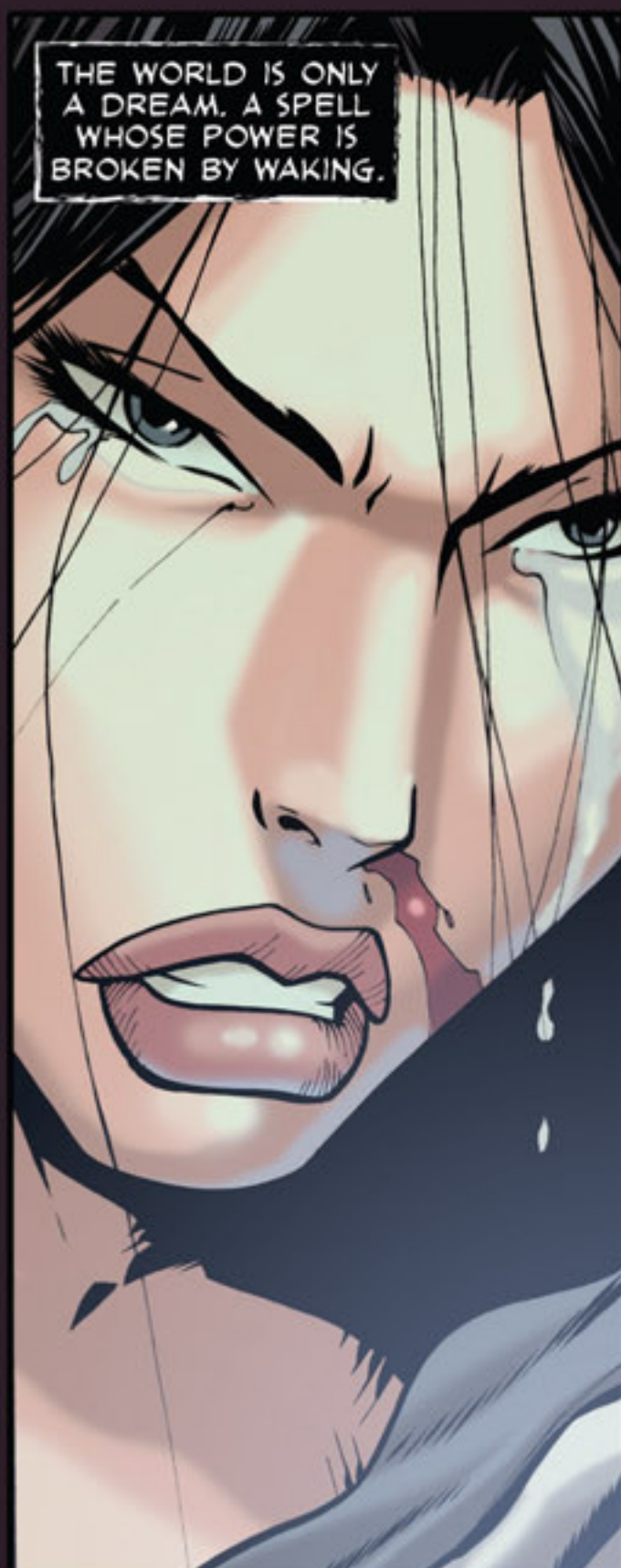
DO AS YOU WISH WITH HER, BUT LEAVE NO MARK.



YOU BELONG TO ME NOW. GROW ACCUSTOMED TO MY TOUCH, SO YOU MAY REMEMBER IT WHEN NEXT I HAVE MY TURN WITH YOU.



YES! GIVE IN TO ME! YOU ARE MINE!



THE WORLD IS ONLY A DREAM. A SPELL WHOSE POWER IS BROKEN BY WAKING.



WHEN YOU REALIZE THIS, EVEN A NIGHTMARE CANNOT HOLD YOU IN ITS GRIP.



IF YOU BEG ME, I WILL LET YOU REST UNTIL TOMORROW NIGHT'S PUNISHMENT.

I WOULD RATHER HAVE YOUR KNIFE IN MY RIBS THAN YOUR KINDNESS.



VERY LATE THAT NIGHT.

DEATH IS A REALM WHERE SHAME CANNOT FOLLOW.



WE CANNOT REMEMBER OUR CURRENT LIFE IN THE NEXT. THIS IS THE MERCY OF THE UNIVERSE.



WHY ARE YOU AWAKE? WERE YOU WISHING FOR ME? HERE I AM. COME TO STICK MY KNIFE IN YOU AGAIN BEFORE THE NEXT MAN'S TURN TOMORROW.



NO!



COME BACK HERE!

KERASH





TO FIGHT BACK IS THE HIGHEST OF CALLINGS.



SAGES HAVE WRITTEN OF ACCEPTING SUFFERING AS THE COURSE OF LIFE.



A SAMURAI HAS NO USE FOR SUCH WORDS.



KIMURA-CHAN? WHERE ARE YOU?

WORDS MEAN NOTHING WHEN THE MOMENT ARRIVES.



AAAAAAGH!!!

HIIIIIYA!

A SAMURAI SPEAKS WITH HER SWORD, WITH HER HANDS, WITH THE FIRES OF HER HEART.

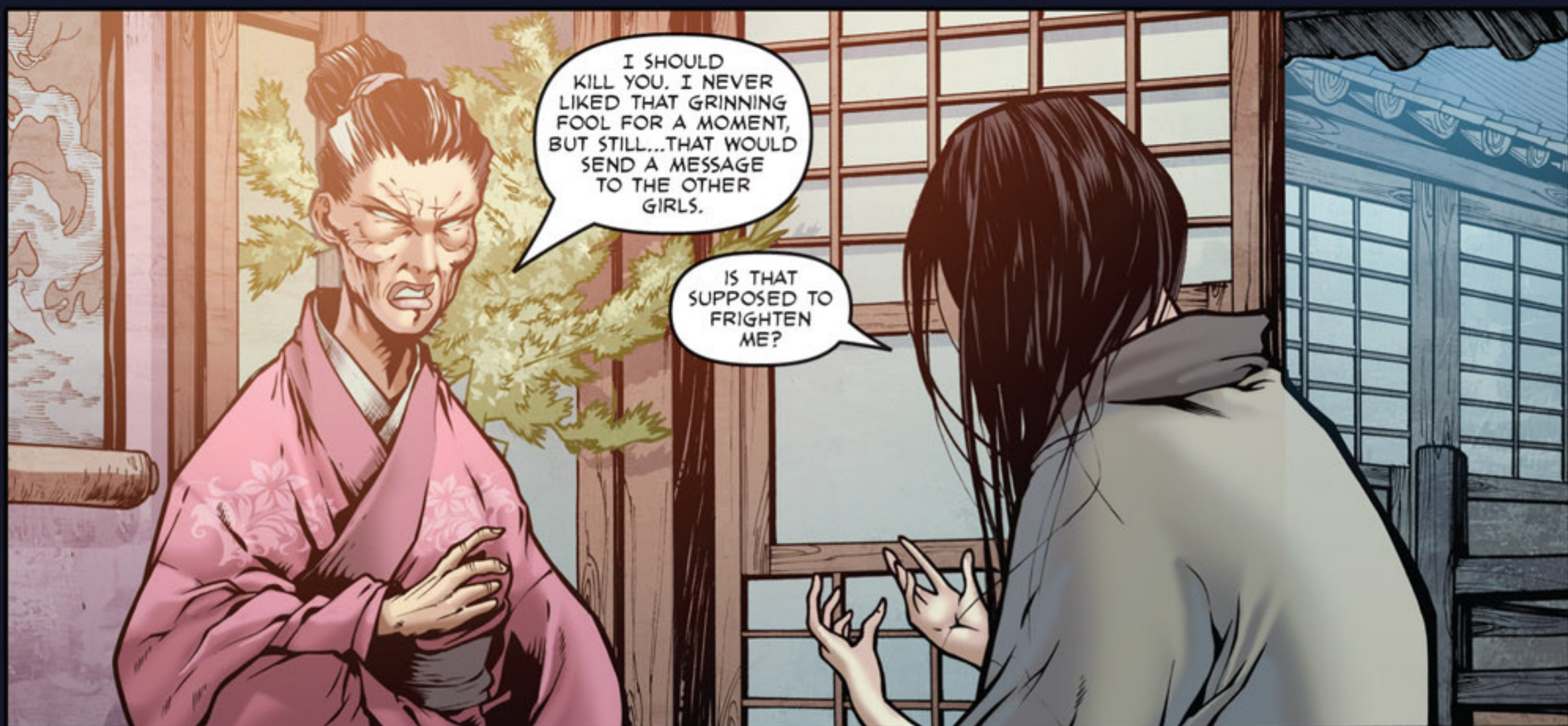
SHLUK



MY NAME IS NOT KIMURA. I AM SANJO MAYUKO, DAUGHTER OF SANJO GORO AND NEICE OF SANJO UJIMORI, RIGHTFUL LORDS OF THIS REALM. I WISH FOR YOU TO KNOW THAT BEFORE YOU DIE.



VENGEANCE TAKES A NEW FORM FOR EACH PERSON. LIKE A NAME. LIKE A FACE. LIKE A LIFE. VENGEANCE DOES NOT PREVENT SUFFERING. FAR FROM IT, BUT VENGEANCE CAN RELIEVE THE STING FOR ONE GLORIOUS MOMENT. THE MOMENT OF A SAMURAI'S FATE.



I SHOULD KILL YOU. I NEVER LIKED THAT GRINNING FOOL FOR A MOMENT, BUT STILL...THAT WOULD SEND A MESSAGE TO THE OTHER GIRLS.

IS THAT SUPPOSED TO FRIGHTEN ME?



BUT I THINK THE OTHER GIRLS WILL BENEFIT MOST FROM SEEING YOU HUMBLED. VERY WELL. PREPARE YOURSELF FOR YOUR FIRST EVENING OF WORK. I WILL SELECT YOUR FIRST CUSTOMER PERSONALLY.



DO YOU THINK IF YOU DESPERATELY REPEAT YOUR ORDERS I WILL BECOME MORE LIKELY TO OBEY?



THIS IS THE END OF THAT PATH. YOU HAVE CEASED TO AMUSE ME.



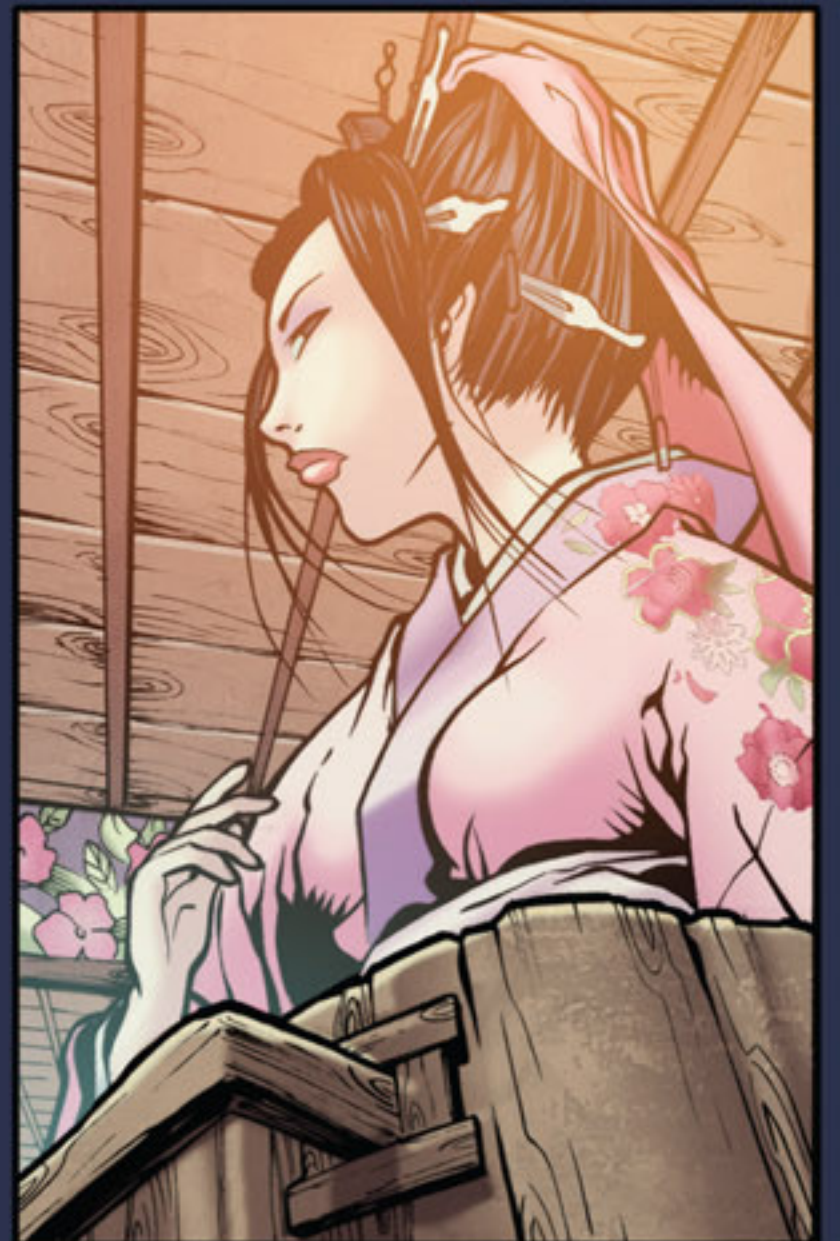
IF YOU REFUSE AGAIN, I WILL CUT OFF YOUR HANDS AND YOUR FEET. I WILL CUT OUT YOUR TONGUE, AND PULL EVERY TOOTH FROM YOUR MOUTH.

YOU WILL SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE SERVICING THE DREGS OF THIS CITY AT A FISH-BARREL RATE, INTERRUPTED ONLY BY BEING FORCE-FED ENOUGH MAGGOTY GRUEL TO KEEP YOU FROM STARVATION.



YES. I THOUGHT SO.

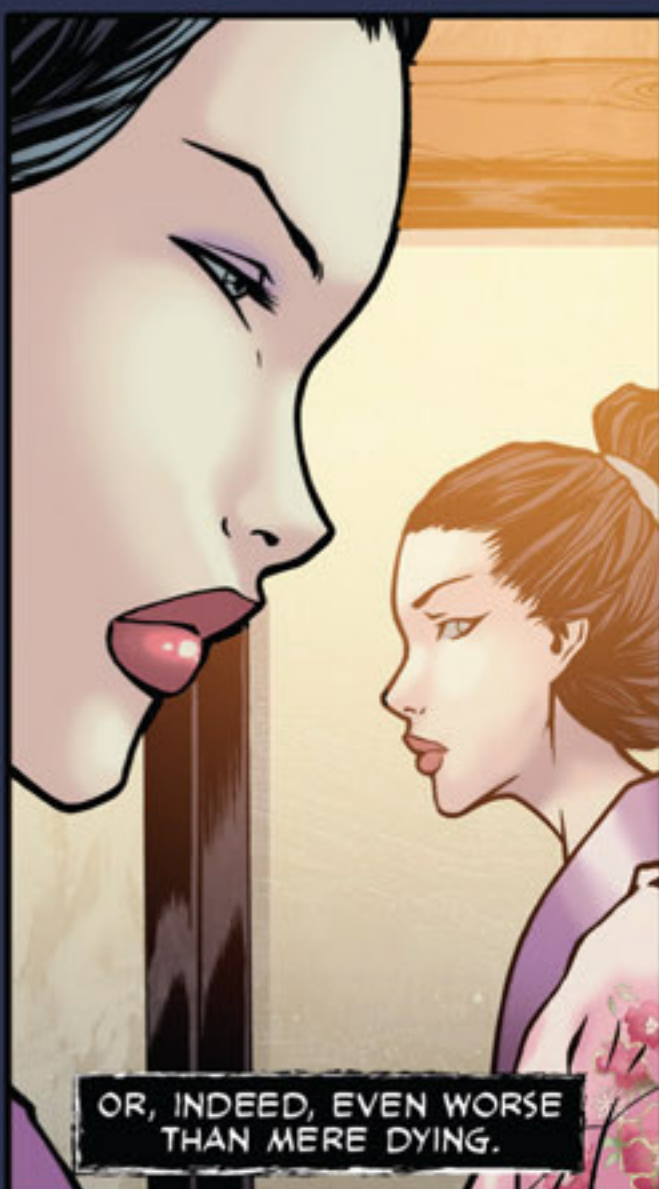
THE FINAL LEVEL OF SUFFERING
IN THIS WORLD IS THE PAIN
WE CAUSE OURSELVES.



TO GIVE IN TO FEAR OR DOUBT OR DESIRE AND WILLINGLY SACRIFICE
ONE'S SELF UPON ITS ALTAR IS THE DEEPEST FORM OF SUFFERING.



THIS SUFFERING IS
AKIN TO DEATH.



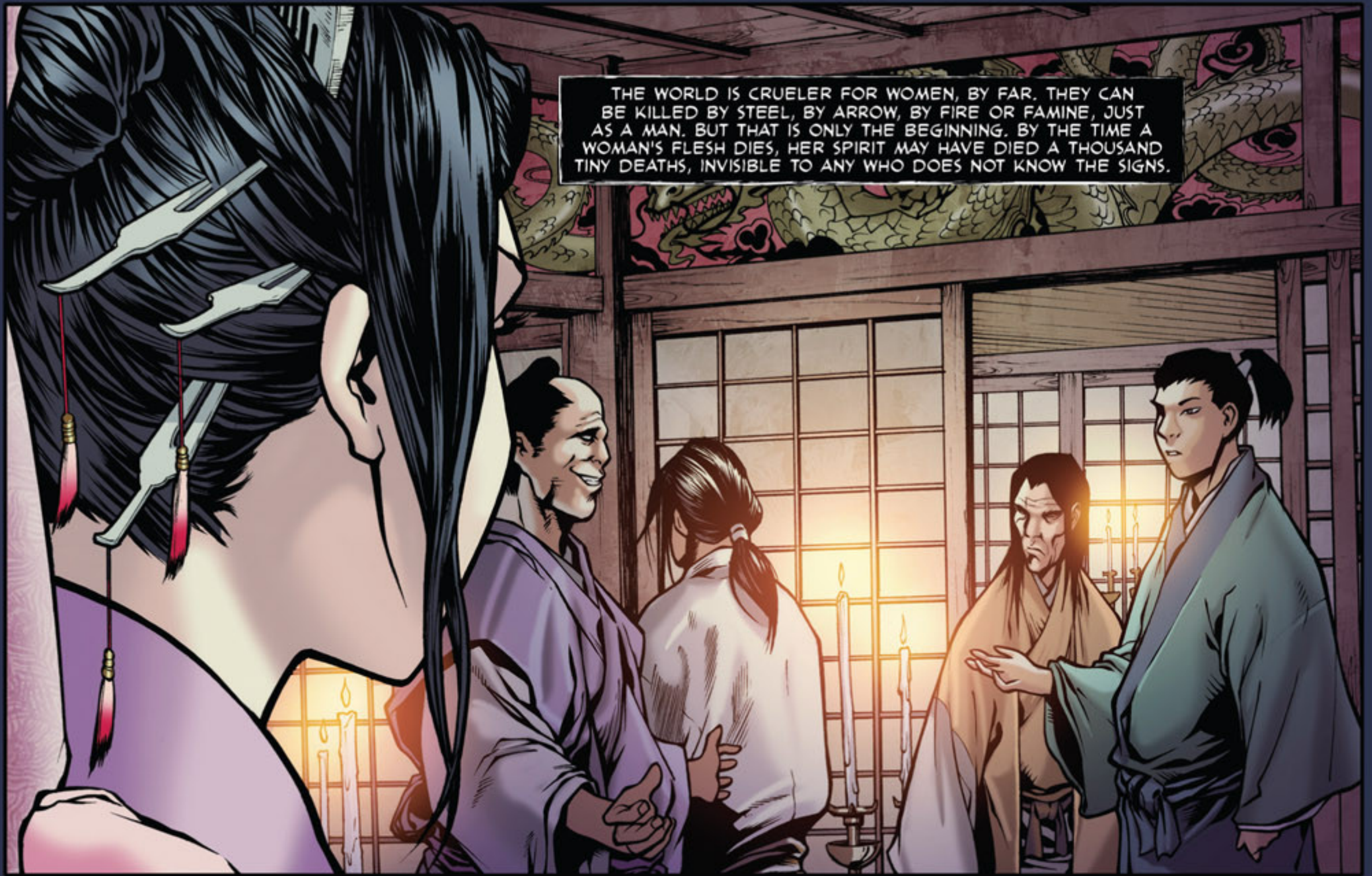
OR, INDEED, EVEN WORSE
THAN MERE DYING.



I AM
SORRY, KATASHI.
FORGIVE ME.



JUN...
AT LAST, MY
BROTHER, BUT
TOO LATE. THE
WORLD HAS
BROKEN MY
SPIRIT.



THE WORLD IS CRUELER FOR WOMEN, BY FAR. THEY CAN BE KILLED BY STEEL, BY ARROW, BY FIRE OR FAMINE, JUST AS A MAN. BUT THAT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING. BY THE TIME A WOMAN'S FLESH DIES, HER SPIRIT MAY HAVE DIED A THOUSAND TINY DEATHS, INVISIBLE TO ANY WHO DOES NOT KNOW THE SIGNS.



MY
SISTER...
FINALLY... MY
SEARCH IS
OVER.



FOR WOMEN MUST RUN GAUNTLETS IN THE
WORLD THAT MEN CANNOT BEGIN TO IMAGINE.



BACK IN THE ICY WATERS OF THE RIVER.



AT THAT EXACT MOMENT.



THE FATE OF THE SANJO CLAN WAS SWIRLING IN ANOTHER DIRECTION.

ALL THAT SUFFERS CAN SEEK VENGEANCE. ALL THAT SEEKS VENGEANCE WILL SUFFER. ALL WHO BETRAY WILL BE BETRAYED. ALL WHO USURP WILL BE USURPED. A SAMURAI OF TRUE CHARACTER KNOWS HE CANNOT PREVENT THIS CYCLE, BUT MANY A SAMURAI WHO HAS ENDED WITH WISDOM HAS BEGUN WITH ANGER. MANY WHO END WITH PEACE, BEGIN WITH HATE.



AND THERE, ON THE BANK OF THAT RIVER, SWALLOWED BY THE BELIEF THAT HE HAD LOST ALL HE EVER LOVED, KAJIRO KATASHI KNEW HATE. HE KNEW ANGER. HE KNEW SUFFERING, AND BY THESE THREE CHAINS, HE WAS BOUND EVER TIGHTER TO HIS FATE.

NEXT ISSUE:
*The Betrayal of
Kaio Fukuyama.*

DON'T MISS THE NEXT ISSUE!



SAMURAI'S BLOOD #4
ON SALE AUGUST 2011



MARKSMEN #1
ON SALE NOW



RED SPIKE #4
ON SALE NOW



THE VAULT #1
ON SALE NOW