

SAMURAI'S BLOOD

4 of 6

Owen Wiseman
Nam Kim
Matt Dalton
Sakti Yuwono



SAMURAI'S BLOOD

CREATED BY MICHAEL BENAROYA & OWEN WISEMAN

SCRIPT: OWEN WISEMAN

PENCILS: NAM KIM

INKS: MATTHEW DALTON

COLOR: SAKTI YUWONO OF IMAGINARY FRIENDS STUDIOS

LETTERING: JOSH AITKEN

COVER: JO CHEN

EDITOR: DAVE ELLIOTT

PROMOTION: GIANLUCA GLAZER

Katashi, Jun, and Mayuko have come to Yamagata City seeking vengeance against the evil Gakushi. Mayuko has been kidnapped and Jun has found her, imprisoned as a prostitute in the Kinjo House. Mayuko's harrowing journey has taken her innocence, and left her nearly broken. Now Jun and Katashi must balance the need to free her against their task of vengeance, and must contemplate the terrible costs they will have to pay on their journey down either path.



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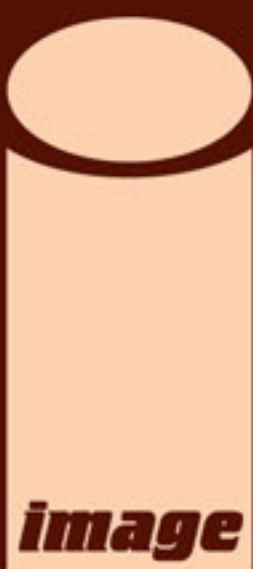
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TOSHIMITSU,
YOU ARE A FOOL!
YOU LOOKED INTO
MY EYES AND YOU SWORE
TO LEAVE ARAKU ALONE,
AND THE MOMENT MY
BACK WAS TURNED
YOU BETRAYED
ME!

YOU
HAVE RUINED
EVERYTHING! HOW
CAN YOU CALL
YOURSELF A
SAMURAI?

HOW
CAN YOU CALL
YOURSELF ONE,
FUKUYAMA, WHILE
ARAKU WALKS
THE EARTH? WHILE
GAKUSHI GOES
UNPUNISHED?



I RESPECTED
SECREC. I COVERED
MY FACE, THOUGH IT
PAINED ME TO
DO SO.

THAT'S
WORSE! IF YOU
HAD CHALLENGED HIM
DIRECTLY PERHAPS YOU
COULD HAVE GOADED ARAKU
AT LEAST INTO A FIGHT!
NOW HE LIVES STILL, AND
GAKUSHI THINKS THE ENTIRE
PROVINCE IS CRAWLING
WITH NINJA!



WHAT
EXACTLY IS A NINJA,
ANYWAY? THE VERY
WORD SETS HEARTS TO
QUIVERING WHEREVER
IT'S SPOKEN.

THERE ARE
MORE IMPORTANT
THINGS TO CONCERN
OURSELVES WITH
NOW.



HORIMOTO,
WHAT IS IT?

I HAVE
FOUND MAYUKO,
THOUGH YOUR
FOOLISHNESS HAS
LIKELY MADE RESCUING
HER FAR MORE
DIFFICULT.

THAT SAME NIGHT.
AT THE KINJO HOUSE

ALL BETRAYAL BEGINS WITH LOVE. WITHOUT
THAT BOND, WITHOUT THAT VULNERABILITY,
THERE IS NOTHING TO BETRAY.

MAYUKO, I HAVE DREAMED SO LONG OF THIS
TOUCH. EVEN IN MY DARKEST MOMENT I NEVER
DOUBTED THAT I WOULD HOLD YOU AGAIN.

PROMISES MADE WITH EYES
AND TONGUES AND HEARTS...

BECOME BLOOD SPILLED WITH
SWORDS AND TEETH AND CLAWS.

WAIT, MY LOVE. THERE ARE SOME...
DIFFICULT THINGS YOU MUST HEAR.

THE
HANDS OF OTHER
MEN HAVE BEEN ON
ME. I WAS RAPED, NOT FOR
MONEY BUT TO SHAME ME.
TO BREAK ME. YOU SAY YOU
NEVER DOUBTED,
BUT I DID.

I DID
DOUBT, AND I
GREW FRIGHTENED,
AND I... I CAUSED
THE DEATH OF AN
INNOCENT YOUNG
MAN.

AFTER THAT,
I LOST HOPE. I
ADMITTED MY LIMITS.
I MADE MYSELF A WHORE.
NOT FIT TO BE A SAMURAI'S
WIFE. NOT WORTHY OF ONE
SUCH AS YOU. I AM
SORRY, KATASHI.

IF YOU WERE THE MEANEST WHORE ON
THE FOULEST STREET IN EDO MY HEART
WOULD BURN FOR YOU. IF YOU WERE
THE CAST-OFF OF A CHINESE SAILOR
I WOULD BEG YOU TO
BE MINE.

NO
MATTER HOW MUCH
YOU DESPISE YOURSELF,
I COVET YOU WITH ALL MY
HEART. PLEASE, IF YOU
LOVE ME STILL, THINK
NO MORE OF
THE PAST.

THE NEXT MORNING.
IN THE NEARBY OFFICE
OF THE MISTRESS OF
THE KINJO HOUSE.

GOOD
MORNING, HANIYA
IZUMO NO KAMI
TOSHIMITSU. DID YOU
ENJOY YOUR
EVENING?

INDEED.
IN FACT, IT IS MY
DESIRE FOR YOUNG
KIMURA TO PERMANENTLY
JOIN MY RETINUE. WHAT
PRICE WILL YOU TAKE
FOR HER?



AH, I MUST
REGRETFULLY TELL
YOU THAT KIMURA-CHAN
IS NOT FOR SALE. SHE IS
ONE OF MY MOST TALENTED
YOUNG GIRLS. SHE HAS
A LONG CAREER AHEAD
OF HER, AND MANY
POSSIBILITIES.



SURELY
WE CAN COME TO
SOME AGREEMENT. I
HAVE COIN TO BE
RID OF.

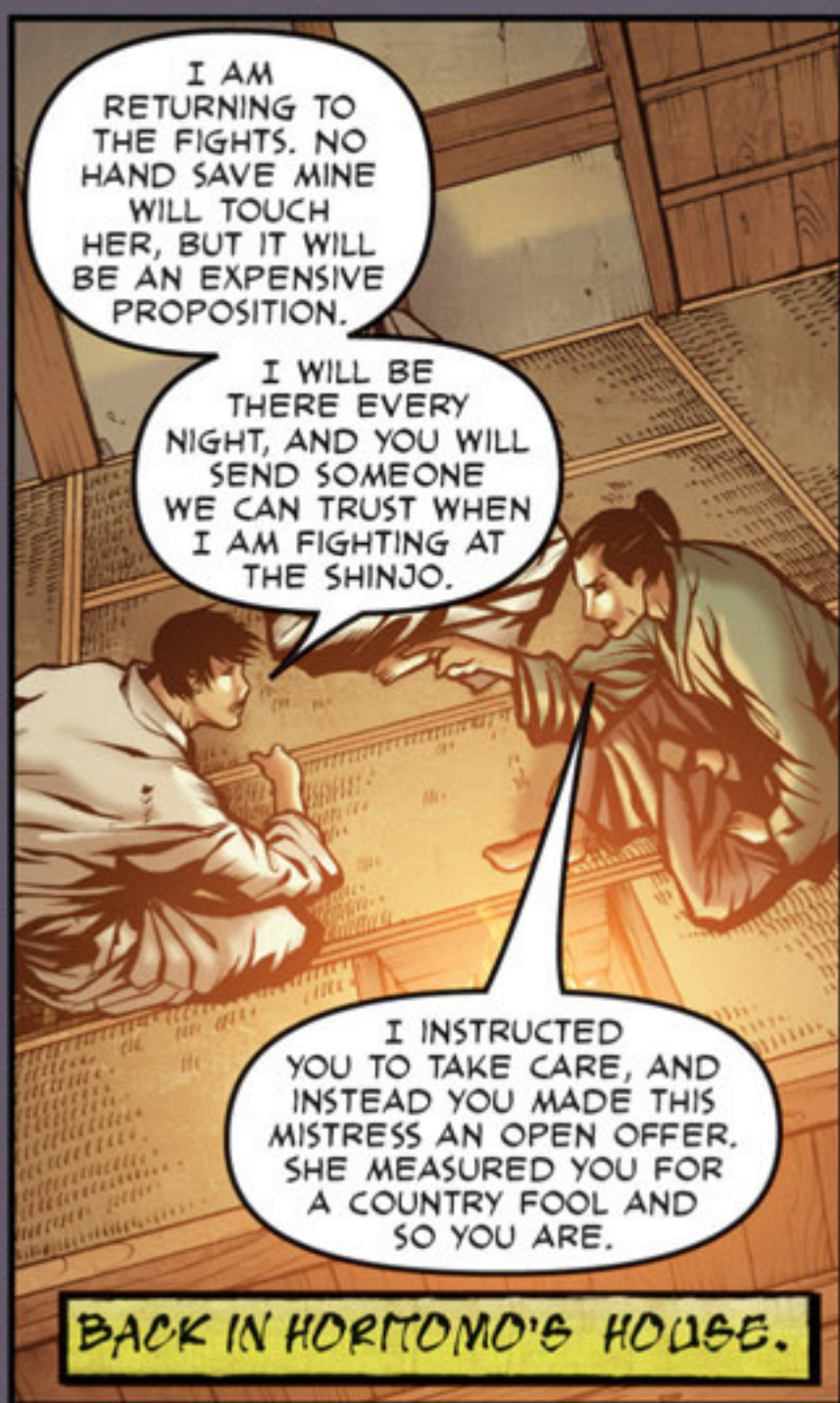


IT'S
JUST THAT KIMURA-
CHAN IS SUCH A VALUABLE
ASSET TO OUR HUMBLE
HOUSE. SO VALUABLE IN
FACT, THAT I AM DOUBLING
HER RATE, STARTING
TONIGHT.

I THOUGHT
YOU SHOULD KNOW,
IN CASE YOU
DECIDE TO VISIT
AGAIN.



LOVE MAKES US FOOLS. IT
MAKES US BLIND. IT CAPTURES
OUR EYE AND LEAVES BLIND
SPOTS IN WHICH OUR
ENEMIES CAN HIDE.





WHEN YOU ARE A MASTER, YOU MUST ACCEPT THE WEAKNESSES OF YOUR RETAINERS AS YOU WOULD THE WEAKNESSES OF YOUR OWN HANDS OR YOUR OWN FEET.

THEIR FAILINGS ARE YOUR FAILINGS, BUT YOUR FAILINGS ARE NOT THEIR FAILINGS. THIS IS THE BURDEN OF COMMAND.

COMMAND? WHO SAYS I COMMAND TOSHIMITSU?



DO NOT WASTE YOUR BREATH ON LIES. I KNEW THE MOMENT OUR EYES MET THAT YOU WERE BORN FOR COMMAND, AND KNEW THAT YOU KNEW IT.



I MAY NOT KNOW YOUR TRUE NAME, BUT I KNOW PERFECTLY WELL IT IS NOT KAIO FUKUYAMA, JUST AS TOSHIMITSU'S NAME IS NOT HANIYA TOSHIMITSU.



IF YOU HAVE DISCOVERED US, THEN I HAVE A REQUEST. I MUST FIND A WAY INTO THE TOP BOX, WHEN TOSHIMITSU NEXT FIGHTS. I MUST BEGIN TO MOVE AMONG THAT CLASS OF PEOPLE IF I AM TO DO WHAT MUST BE DONE.

VERY WELL. I WILL SPEAK TO AIMORI, THOUGH IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME. HE PRIZES ADMISSION TO HIS PRIVATE BOX QUITE HIGHLY, BUT YOU MUST HEED MY WARNING, REGARDING TOSHIMITSU. HE IS PURE, IN A WAY THAT IS RARELY SEEN IN THE WORLD TODAY.

THE LAST OF THE TRUE SAMURAI ARE DYING. THE STRUGGLE HAS TAKEN THE BEST OF US, SO ONLY THE HESITANT AND THE SHREWD REMAIN. I AM NOT HALF THE MAN MY GRANDFATHER WAS.

HOW ARE WE DIFFERENT NOW?

ANY WARRIOR'S CODE IS BUT A WHETSTONE TO SHARPEN HIMSELF. SOME MEN CAN SHARPEN THEMSELVES UNTIL ONLY THE EDGE REMAINS. TOSHIMITSU IS ONE OF THOSE.



BUT I AM NOT.

MEN LIKE YOU AND I SEE THE WORLD TOO CLEARLY FOR THAT SORT OF ABANDON. WE'VE HAD SO MUCH WAR, I FEAR THE COMING PEACE MAY BE FILLED WITH SUCH MEN.



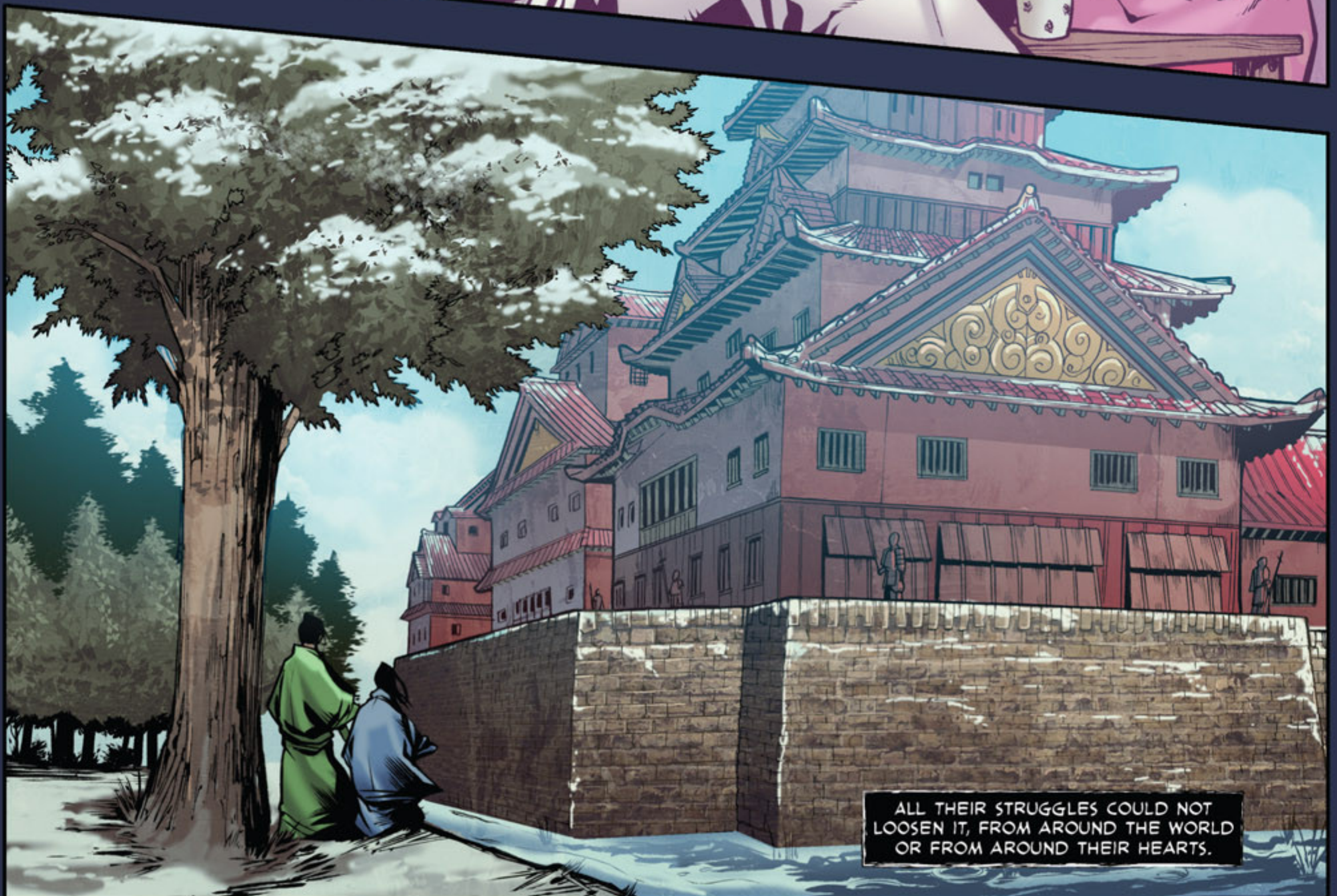
SUCH A POWERFUL FORCE, OF SUCH IMPERIOUS COMPLEXITY, IS NOT TO BE FOUND ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD. LOVE AND BETRAYAL ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME, PRECIOUS COIN.




SUCH WAS THE IMPASSE
ALL THROUGH THAT
COLD, DARK WINTER.



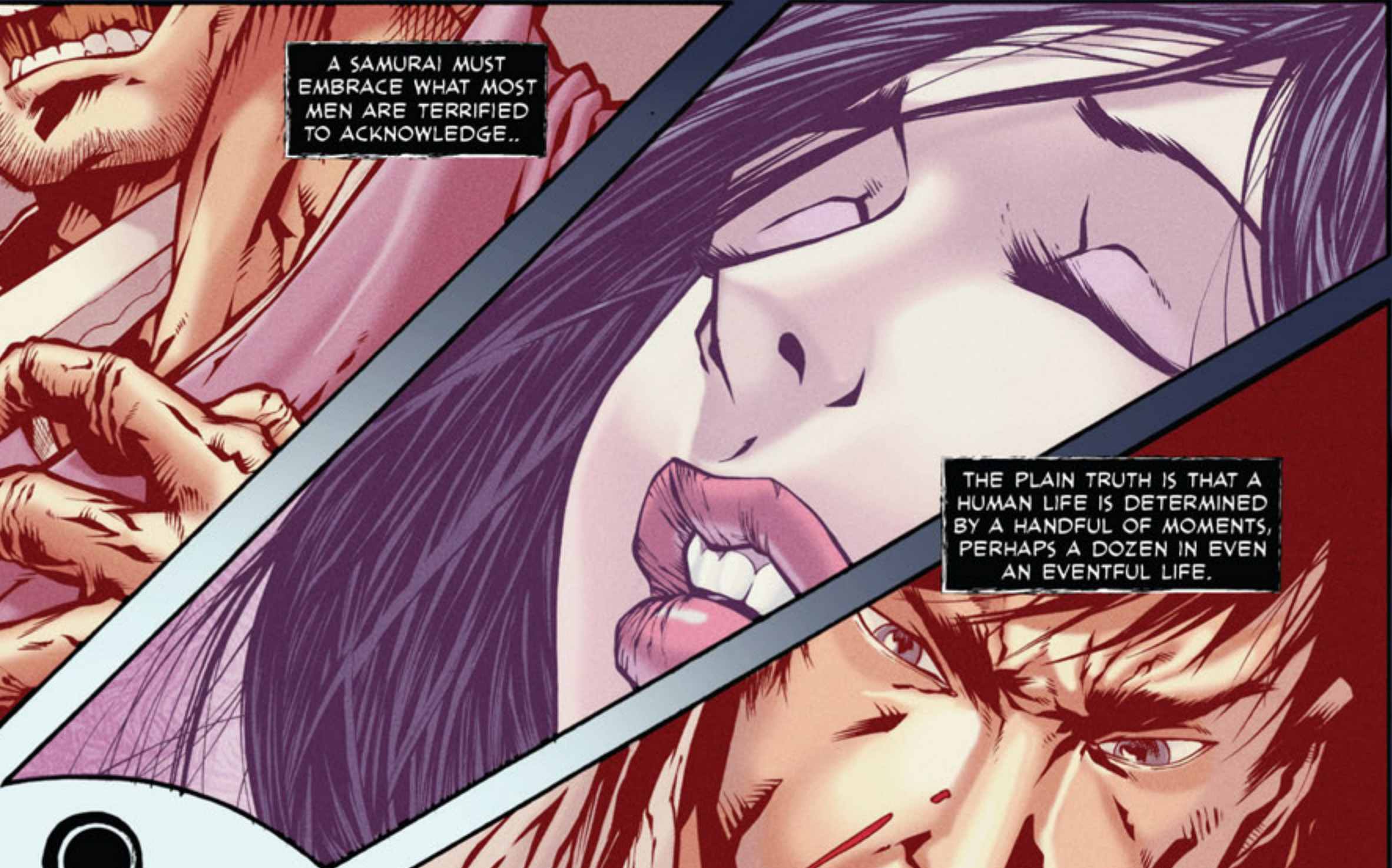
A BLANKET OF PURE WHITE SWADDLED THE
LAST THREE SERVANTS OF THE SANJO CLAN,
AND NEARLY SUFFOCATED THEIR LITTLE WORLD.




ALL THEIR STRUGGLES COULD NOT
LOOSEN IT, FROM AROUND THE WORLD
OR FROM AROUND THEIR HEARTS.



A SAMURAI MUST
EMBRACE WHAT MOST
MEN ARE TERRIFIED
TO ACKNOWLEDGE..




THE PLAIN TRUTH IS THAT A
HUMAN LIFE IS DETERMINED
BY A HANDFUL OF MOMENTS,
PERHAPS A DOZEN IN EVEN
AN EVENTFUL LIFE.



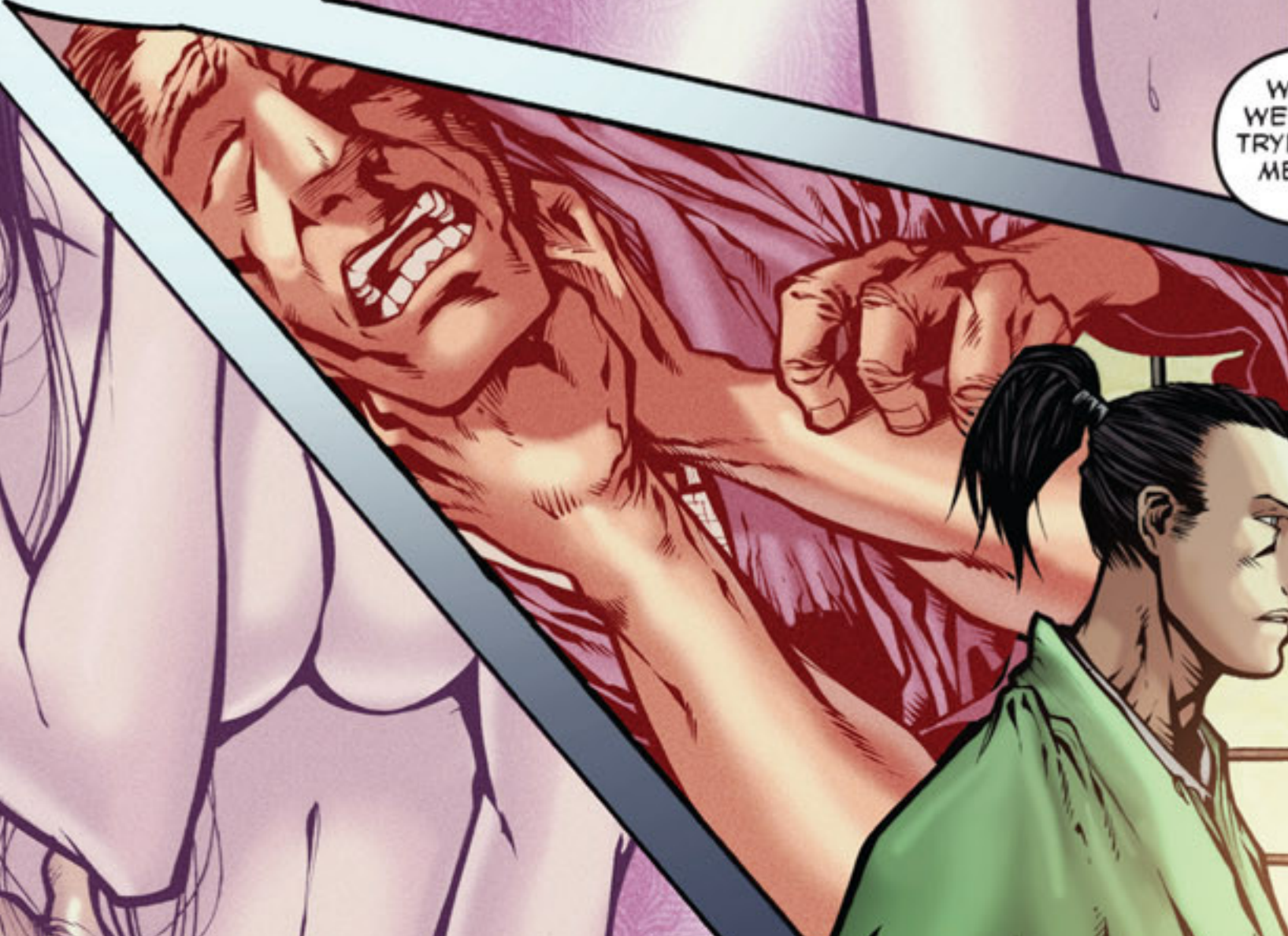
ALL THE REST OF LIVING IS
MERE RECOVERY FROM THE
LAST MOMENT OF FATE, OR
PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT.



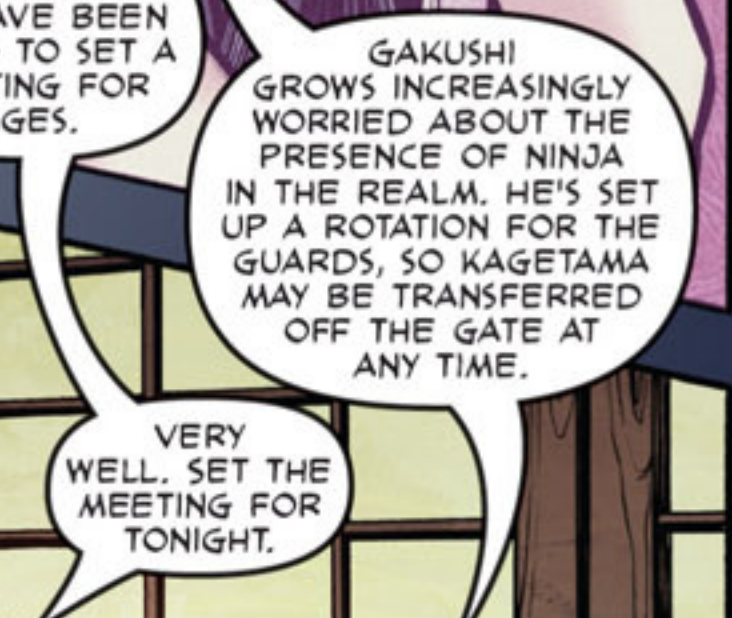
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MY COUSIN,
KAGETAMA,
HE IS READY TO MEET
YOU. HE IS READY
TO FALL TO US, BUT
HE SAYS THE
MEETING MUST
BE TODAY.



WHY TODAY?
WE HAVE BEEN
TRYING TO SET
A MEETING FOR
AGES.

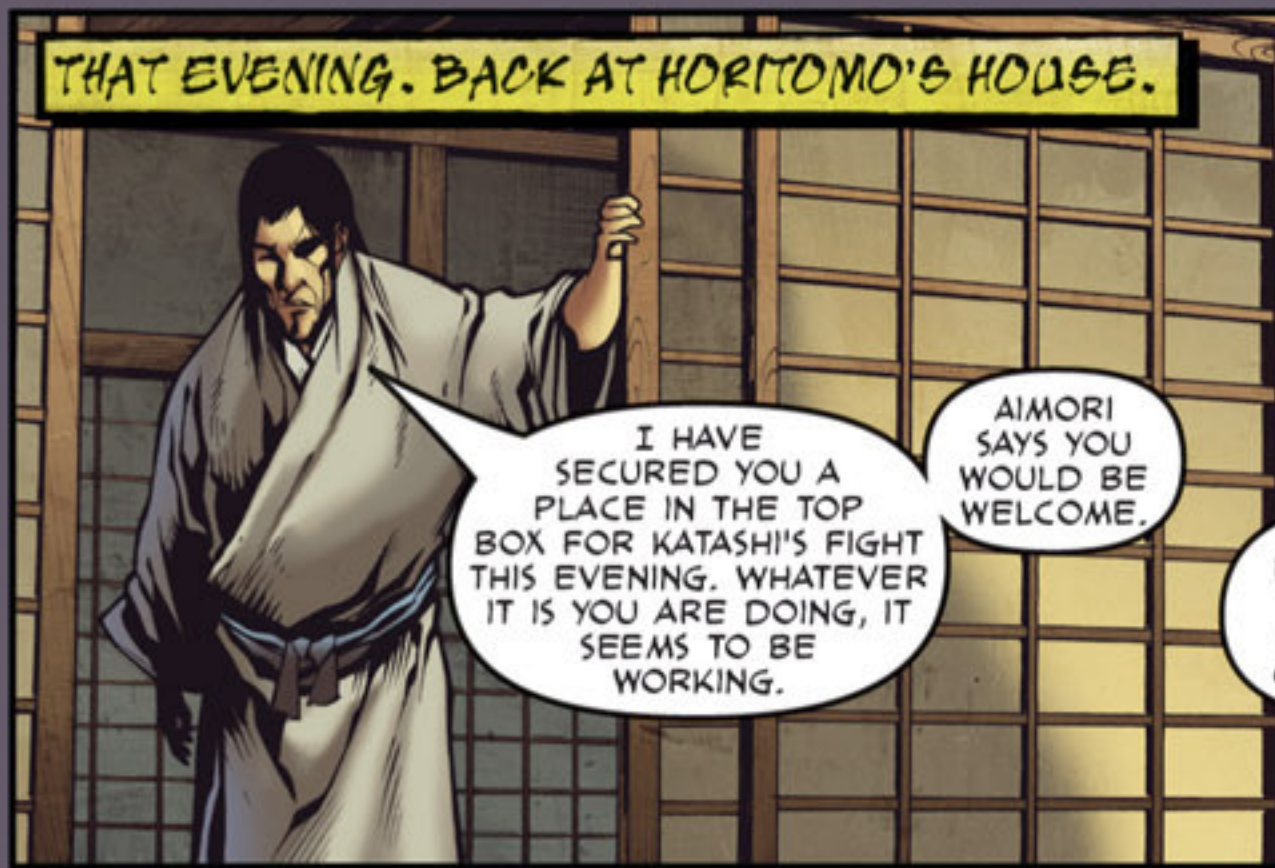


GAKUSHI
GROWS INCREASINGLY
WORRIED ABOUT THE
PRESENCE OF NINJA
IN THE REALM. HE'S SET
UP A ROTATION FOR THE
GUARDS, SO KAGETAMA
MAY BE TRANSFERRED
OFF THE GATE AT
ANY TIME.



VERY
WELL. SET THE
MEETING FOR
TONIGHT.

THAT EVENING. BACK AT HORTOMO'S HOUSE.



I HAVE SECURED YOU A PLACE IN THE TOP BOX FOR KATASHI'S FIGHT THIS EVENING. WHATEVER IT IS YOU ARE DOING, IT SEEMS TO BE WORKING.

AIMORI SAYS YOU WOULD BE WELCOME.



THIS EVENING? VERY WELL. THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING, EXACTLY? I SMELL BLOOD IN THE AIR.



I KNOW THAT YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT THESE NINJA THAN YOU ARE WILLING TO SAY. PEOPLE IN THE CITY SAY THEY ARE SPIRITS. THEY SAY THEY HAVE MAGICAL POWERS. WHY DO YOU HIDE THEM FROM ME?



IF I AND MY SECRETS ARE FOREMOST IN YOUR MIND NOW, YOU MAY BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE. I HOPE TO SEE YOU THIS EVENING.



THERE IS NO LONELIER TASK THAN TO LEAD. IT SHARPENS TO A SOUL-PIERCING POINT ALL THE QUESTIONS OF LOVE AND BETRAYAL THAT MAKE THE WORLD ALREADY NEARLY UNBEARABLE. THE BURDEN HAS CAST DOWN MANY A GREAT MAN.



AS NIGHT IS FALLING, OUTSIDE THE CITY LIMITS OF YAMAGATA.

I THANK YOU FOR AGREEING TO THIS MEETING WITH LITTLE NOTICE. WE HAVE NO TIME TO WASTE. BEARING THAT IN MIND, I WILL WASTE NO TIME NOW. DO YOU HAVE THE MEANS TO TAKE THE CASTLE?

I APPRECIATE THIS MEETING, KAGETAMA-SAN. AND YET EVEN IN TIMES OF HURRY THERE IS GOOD SENSE IN DELIBERATION. TIME SPENT BUILDING TRUST IS NOT TIME WASTED.



WHAT TRUST CAN THERE BE BETWEEN THOSE WHO MEAN TO BETRAY? HATAMORI-SAN, YOU SAID HE WAS A SERIOUS MAN. YOU SHOW ME GREAT DISRESPECT TO TREAT ME THIS WAY.



THERE IS NO BETRAYAL, BECAUSE GAKUSHI HOLDS THIS LAND BY NO RIGHTFUL BLOOD. BUT I DO. I AM SANJO JUNICHI, AND I DO HAVE THE MEANS. WE WILL TAKE THE CASTLE, AND YOU WILL HAVE HIGH POSITION.



TAKE GREAT CARE FOR YOUR NEXT STEP. MY FRIEND DOES NOT MISS AT THIS RANGE. UNTIE YOUR SWORDS AND TOSS THEM AT MY FEET.

NO! HOW CAN THIS BE?



I HAD AN UNCLE IN EIWA. AKITA KONAI AND HIS CHILDREN.

GAKUSHI HAD YOUR UNCLE AND HIS FAMILY SLAUGHTERED.



HE WAS MY LEAST FAVORITE UNCLE, AND GAKUSHI PAYS WELL. THAT'S NOT EASY TO FIND IN THE WORLD TODAY.

ANY MAN, OF HIGH OR LOW RANK, HAS CAUSE FOR SHAME IS HE HAS NOT PUT HIS LIFE ON THE LINE AT LEAST ONCE.



YOU DESTROY YOURSELF WITH THIS TREACHERY. WALK AWAY NOW, AND PERHAPS YOU CAN--



YOU'RE MY OWN BLOOD! HOW COULD YOU DO THIS?! I'LL KILL YOU!

SHOOT HIM!



BLOOD CLEANSSES. IT PURIFIES.



IT REDUCES THE WORLD TO ITS MOST BASIC ELEMENTS.



LOVE AND BETRAYAL ARE THE SAME, FOR BOTH END ON THE POINT OF SOME SWORD OR ARROW.



ALL LIFE IS LOVE. ALL DEATH IS BETRAYAL.

NO ONE ESCAPES THESE THINGS.



AAAAAAAAAAAAIYA!

WAIT!
STOP!

IT IS WITH BLOOD, HIS OWN AND HIS ENEMY'S,
THAT A LEADER JUSTIFIES AND PURIFIES HIMSELF.



PLEASE!

IT IS HOW HE
PROVES HIS WORTH.



IT IS HOW HE EXCUSES ALL THE
TERRIBLE DEEDS WHICH SHALL
SURELY BECOME HIS FATE.



FOR BLOOD IS THE DESTINY
OF ALL THOSE WHO WOULD
DARE TO GREATNESS.

KERAK



I SORROW,
MY LORD. MY
BLOOD IS
WORTHLESS. I
SWEAR I DID
NOT KNOW.

HAVE NO
FEAR, HATAMORI-SAN.
YOUR COURAGE SHOWS
ME WHO YOU TRULY
ARE. BLOOD SPILLS EASILY
TO THE EARTH, BUT THAT
COURAGE IS FOREVER.
WE WILL ALL DO
WHAT WE MUST.

THERE IS NO OTHER PATH.



LATER.
IN THE TOP BOX OF DOKONEN SHINJO.

THERE IS ONLY BLOOD.

HERE
IT IS, MY LORD
TOKUGAWA, THE
FINEST WARRIORS
OF THE PROVINCE
IN MORTAL
COMBAT!



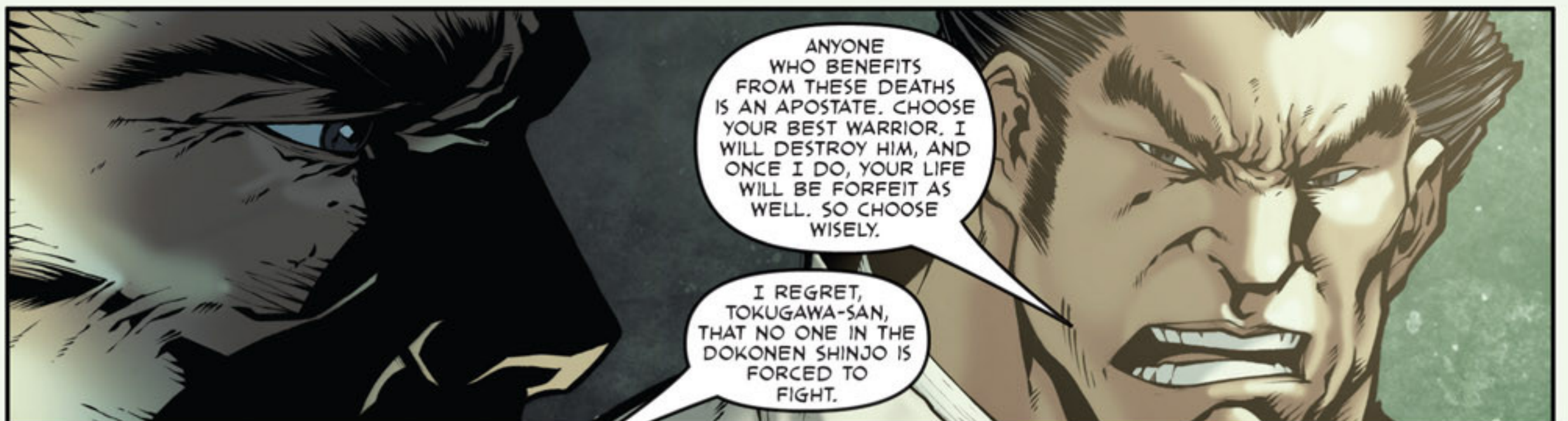
THIS IS
HOW WE KEEP
OUR BLOOD STRONG,
SO THAT WE MAY BE
READY WHEN THE
SHOGUN CALLS UPON
US TO SEND MEN
FOR HIS ARMY.



THIS?
THIS IS SHAMEFUL,
DOKONEN AIMORI.
WHAT SORT OF
DAIMYO COULD ALLOW
SUCH A THING IN
HIS REALM?

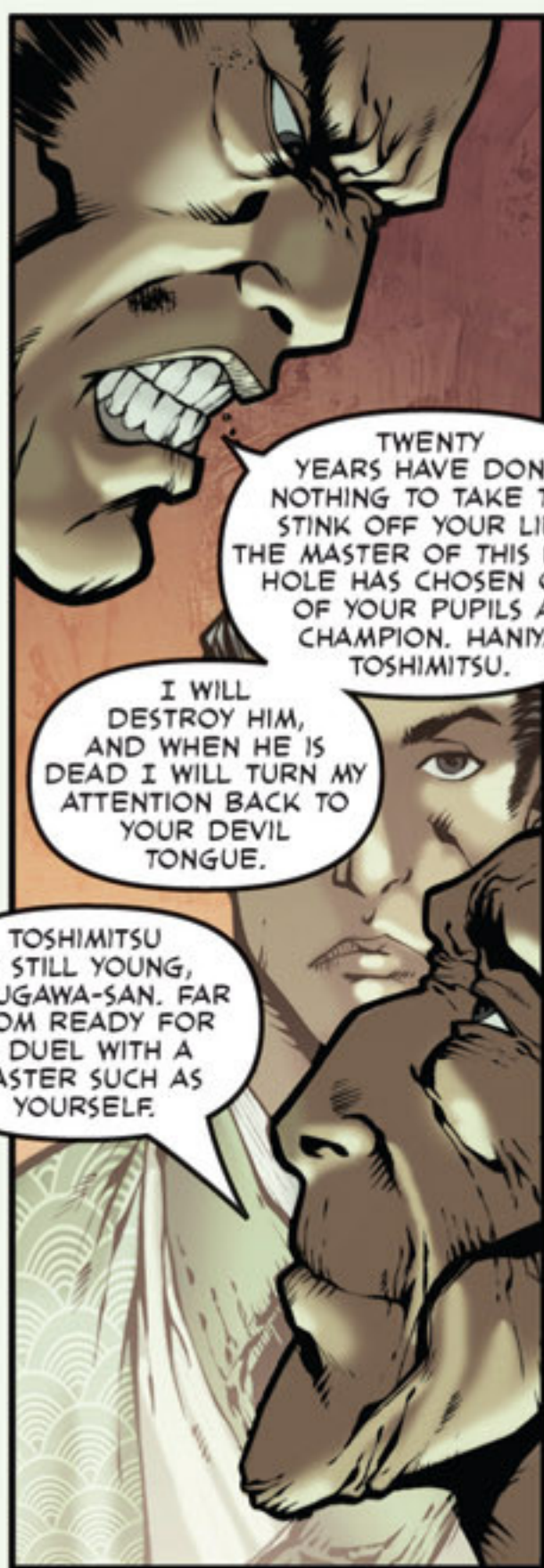


SADLY,
TOKUGAWA-SAN,
WE OF THE FAR-FLUNG
PROVINCES LACK SUCH
NOBLE LEADERS
AS ONE FINDS
IN EDO.



ANYONE
WHO BENEFITS
FROM THESE DEATHS
IS AN APOSTATE. CHOOSE
YOUR BEST WARRIOR. I
WILL DESTROY HIM, AND
ONCE I DO, YOUR LIFE
WILL BE FORFEIT AS
WELL. SO CHOOSE
WISELY.

I REGRET,
TOKUGAWA-SAN,
THAT NO ONE IN THE
DOKONEN SHINJO IS
FORCED TO
FIGHT.





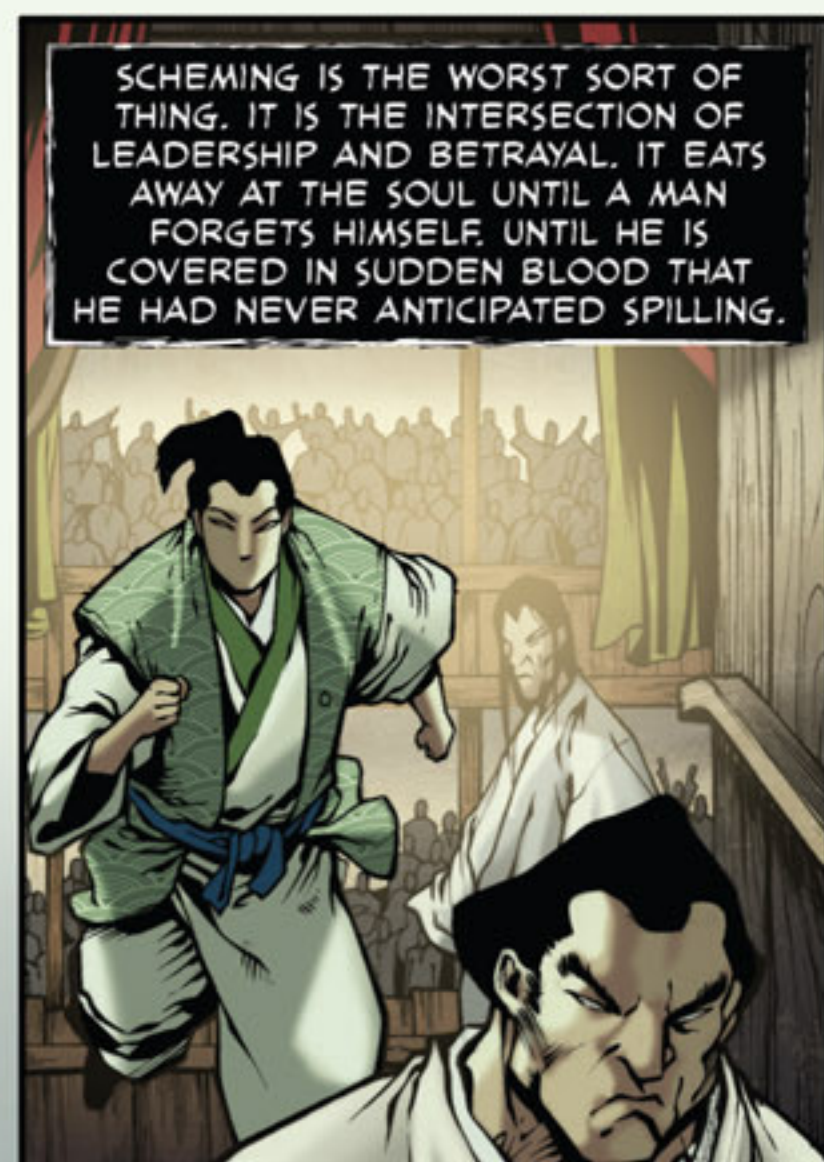
YOU HAVE SECRETS ON TOP OF SECRETS, IT SEEMS. WHO IS THIS MAN WHO SPEAKS TO YOU IN SUCH MANNER?

TOKUGAWA DAIGAN ROSE FROM A COMMONER TO CAPTAIN OF THE MIDDLE PALACE GUARDS, AND MARRIED A DAUGHTER OF THE SHOGUN. HIS COURAGE AND PROWESS ARE UNMATCHED.



AND WHO ARE YOU TO HAVE SUCH HISTORY WITH HIM?

NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, BOY.



SCHEMING IS THE WORST SORT OF THING. IT IS THE INTERSECTION OF LEADERSHIP AND BETRAYAL. IT EATS AWAY AT THE SOUL UNTIL A MAN FORGETS HIMSELF. UNTIL HE IS COVERED IN SUDDEN BLOOD THAT HE HAD NEVER ANTICIPATED SPILLING.



YET A GREAT MAN CAN HARDLY REACH HIS DESTINY WITHOUT SCHEMES.

PARDON ME, TOKUGAWA-SAN. A MOMENT, IF IT PLEASES.



IF I MAY BE SO FORWARD, TOKUGAWA-SAN. THE MAN YOU SEEK TO DUEL IS IN LOVE WITH A GIRL AT THE KINJO HOUSE. HER NAME IS KIMURA.

TO GAIN HER FREEDOM HE WOULD FIGHT YOU, NO MATTER WHAT HORITOMO-SAN SAYS.

WHY WOULD YOU TELL ME OF THIS?



BECAUSE LIKE YOU, I AM SICKENED BY THESE FIGHTS. MY FRIEND HAS LOST HIMSELF, AND I WOULD RATHER THAT HE DIE THAN CONTINUE TO LIVE IN THIS WAY.

I SEE. WELL, AT LEAST THERE IS ONE MAN OF HONOR IN THIS BACKWARD PROVINCE. VERY WELL. I WILL MAKE INQUIRIES AT THIS KINJO HOUSE.



FOOL!
WHAT DO YOU
KNOW OF THIS
MAN?

I KNOW
HE HAS THE
POWER TO FREE
MY SISTER.



AND
HOW DOES
ONE GET THAT
KIND OF POWER?
DOES IT INVOLVE
LOSING MANY
DUELS?

DO
YOU FEAR
YOU CANNOT
DEFEAT
HIM?



YOU HAD
NO RIGHT TO
PUT HER FATE IN
SOMEONE ELSE'S
HANDS!

I PUT
HER FATE IN YOUR
HANDS. ALL OUR
FATES. IF YOU LOSE,
AND MAYUKO IS GONE,
I WILL RETURN HERE,
OPEN MY STOMACH,
AND JOIN YOU IN
DEATH.



DAIGAN
HAS LEFT KINJO
HOUSE
WITH THE GIRL.
SHE IS FREE.
BUT...

WHAT?



TOKUGAWA
DAIGAN HAS
DEMANDED A BARE-
HAND DUEL. HE
WILL ACCEPT
NOTHING LESS IN
TRADE FOR HER.



OH,
NO...



I THINK HANIYA-SAN HAS A CHANCE. HE IS YOUNG, AND TOKUGAWA-SAMA IS NOT SO YOUNG OR SO FAST AS HE ONCE WAS. HE DID GREAT THINGS ONCE, BUT ANY MAN CAN BE DEFEATED WITH TIME.

FORGET IT! HANIYA TOSHIMITSU MIGHT BE GOOD FOR THIS PROVINCE, BUT TOKUGAWA-SAMA IS A REAL MAN!



HE ONCE HELD A MOUNTAIN PASS FOR A MONTH WITH A HUNDRED MEN AGAINST THREE THOUSAND!

BETRAYAL CAN COME FROM ANYWHERE. FROM A MASTER. FROM A LOVER. FROM A FRIEND. ANY OF THESE BETRAYALS CAN DESTROY.



THIS MAN HAS FOUGHT WITH HONOR IN MORE BATTLES THAN I CAN COUNT. AND WHAT IS MORE, HE IS RIGHT ABOUT THESE FIGHTS. I DISHONOR MYSELF EVERY TIME I PARTICIPATE.

AND YET, IN SPITE OF HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, I AM NOW GOING TO TEAR HIM LIMB FROM LIMB, AND FOR NOTHING MORE THAN OUR CONVENIENCE.

LET US HOPE THAT YOU ARE.

I HAVE BEEN BORN WITH THE POWER TO KILL, WANTING ONLY TO BE A SAMURAI, TO GAIN HONOR WITH THE FORCE OF MY STEEL, BUT THERE IS NO HONOR HERE. IS THIS SHAME WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SAMURAI?



THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ALIVE. PEOPLE TAKE THE THINGS YOU LOVE, AND YOU TRY TO RECLAIM THEM.



EASY TO SAY WHEN ALL YOU HAVE ON YOUR HANDS IS GREASE!



IF YOU WILL NOT KILL THIS MAN TO SAVE MY SISTER, THEN YOU DO NOT LOVE HER.

BUT NO BETRAYAL CAN MATCH THE BETRAYAL OF SELF.



WHERE WERE YOU BORN? YOU SEEM FAMILIAR. WHAT WAS YOUR FATHER'S NAME?

NONE OF YOUR CONCERN.



YOU WERE A FOOL TO FIGHT ME BARE-HANDED.

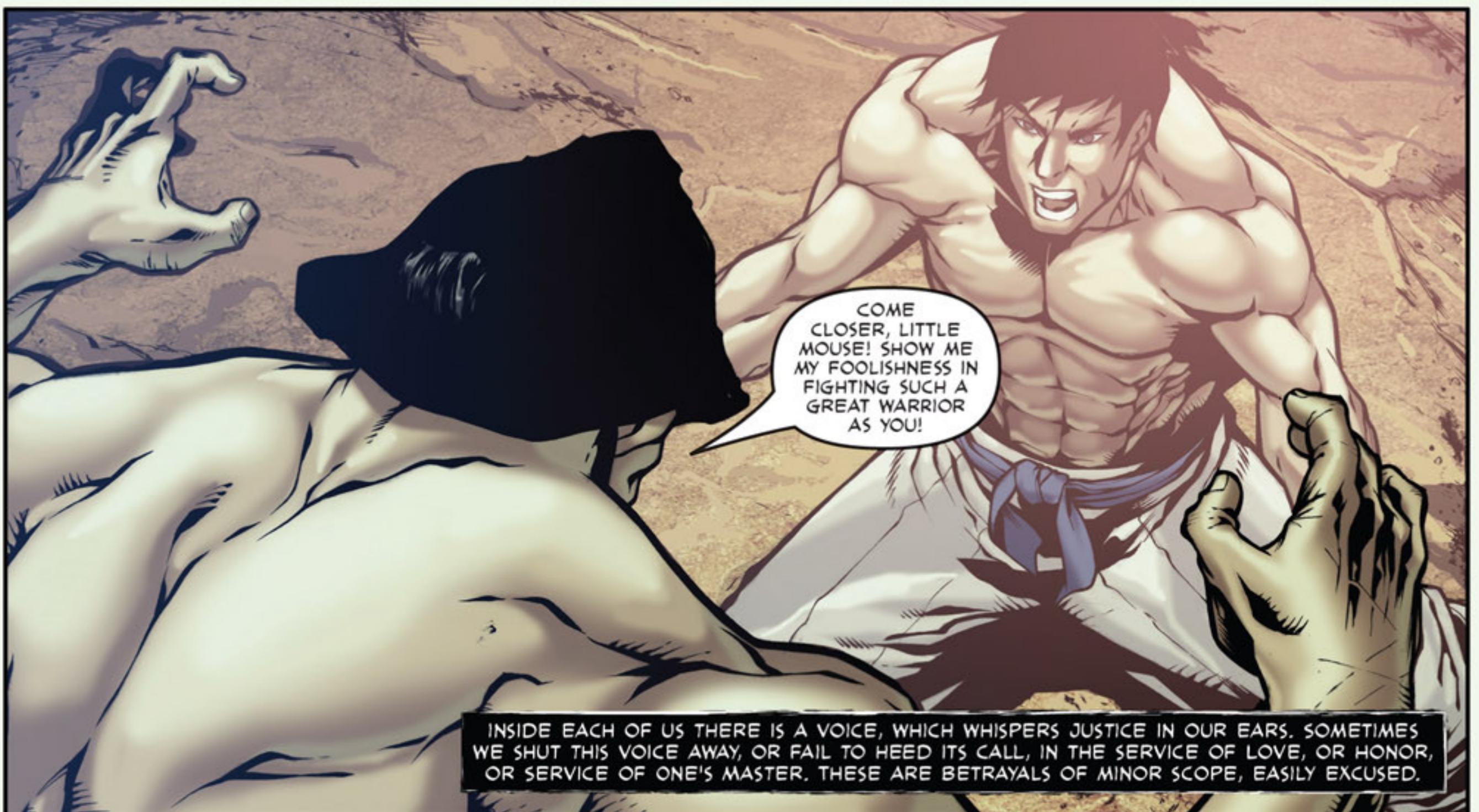
YOU WERE A FOOL TO FIGHT ME AT ALL.



THIS DUEL WILL BE CONDUCTED WITHOUT WEAPONS, AND, BY AGREEMENT OF THE PARTICIPANTS, WILL NOT END UNTIL ONE OF THEM IS DEAD!



IN THE EAST, TOKUGAWA EDO NO KAMI DAIGAN! IN THE WEST, CHAMPION OF THE DOKONEN SHINJO, HANIYA IZUMO NO KAMI TOSHIMITSU! NOW, **FIGHT!**



COME CLOSER, LITTLE MOUSE! SHOW ME MY FOOLISHNESS IN FIGHTING SUCH A GREAT WARRIOR AS YOU!

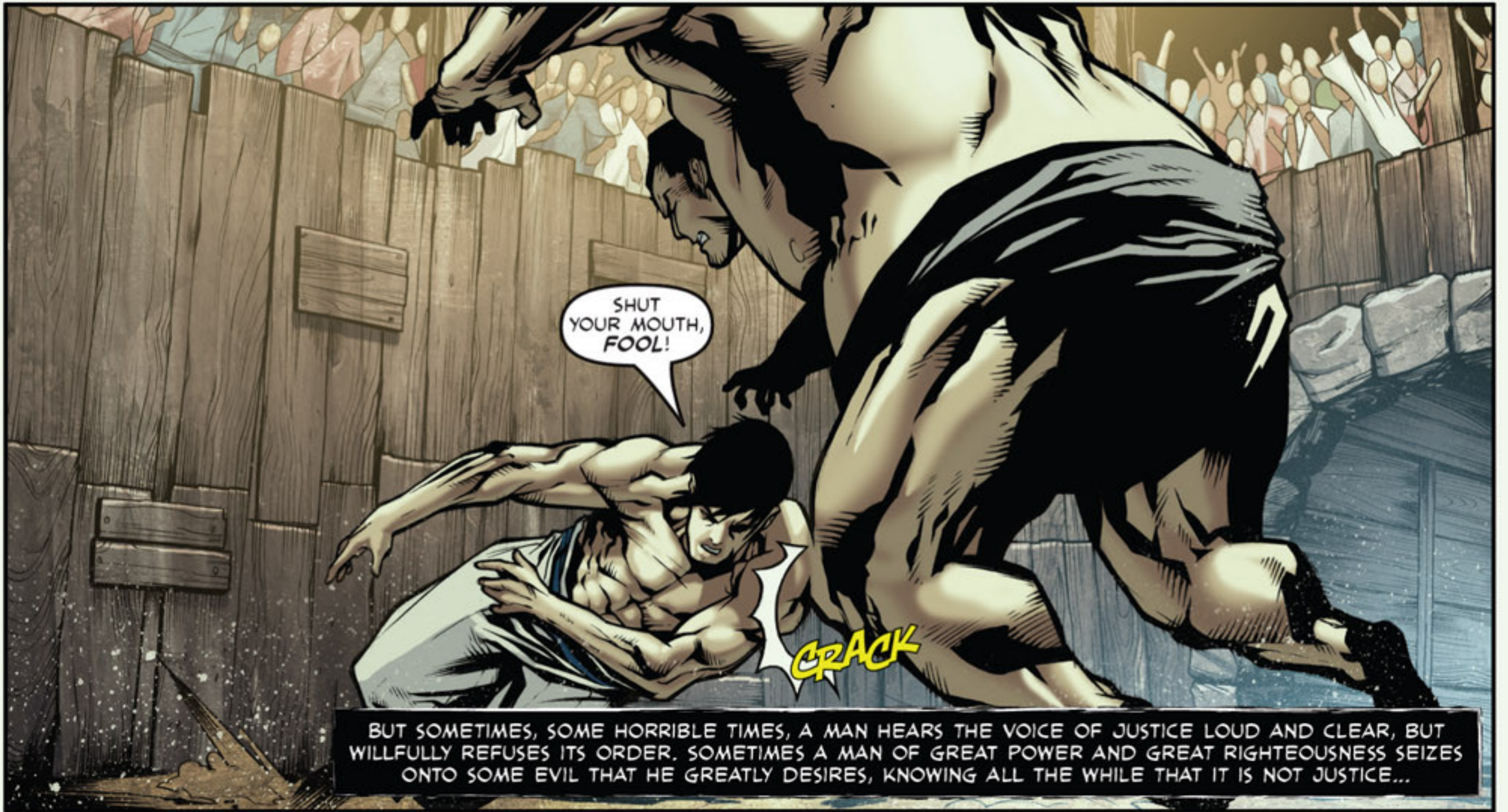
INSIDE EACH OF US THERE IS A VOICE, WHICH WHISPERS JUSTICE IN OUR EARS. SOMETIMES WE SHUT THIS VOICE AWAY, OR FAIL TO HEED ITS CALL, IN THE SERVICE OF LOVE, OR HONOR, OR SERVICE OF ONE'S MASTER. THESE ARE BETRAYALS OF MINOR SCOPE, EASILY EXCUSED.



COME ON, INSECT! FACE ME AND FIGHT!



YOU ONLY DELAY THE INEVITABLE RECKONING WITH ME!



SHUT YOUR MOUTH, FOOL!

CRACK

BUT SOMETIMES, SOME HORRIBLE TIMES, A MAN HEARS THE VOICE OF JUSTICE LOUD AND CLEAR, BUT WILLFULLY REFUSES ITS ORDER. SOMETIMES A MAN OF GREAT POWER AND GREAT RIGHTEOUSNESS SEIZES ONTO SOME EVIL THAT HE GREATLY DESIRES, KNOWING ALL THE WHILE THAT IT IS NOT JUSTICE...



FOOL BOY! MY KNEE! YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT!



DO NOT SUBMIT, MY LOVE! I KNOW YOU CAN DO IT! PLEASE!

THAT SEIZING IS WHAT IS CALLED MAKING A FRIEND OF HORROR.



AND HORROR IS A FRIEND WHICH CANNOT BE UNMADE.



NOW KILL HIM!



ONCE HORROR IS INSIDE US, IT DOES NOT LEAVE.



WE LIVE WITH IT, OR WE DO NOT, BUT WE ARE CHANGED IN EITHER CASE.



IT IS TIME TO DIE, LITTLE MOUSE.



THIS HORROR IS THE BETRAYAL OF SELF.

IT IS THE TAKING INTO ONE'S SELF ALL THE EVIL OF THE UNCARING WORLD.



I SAID COME HERE, BOY!

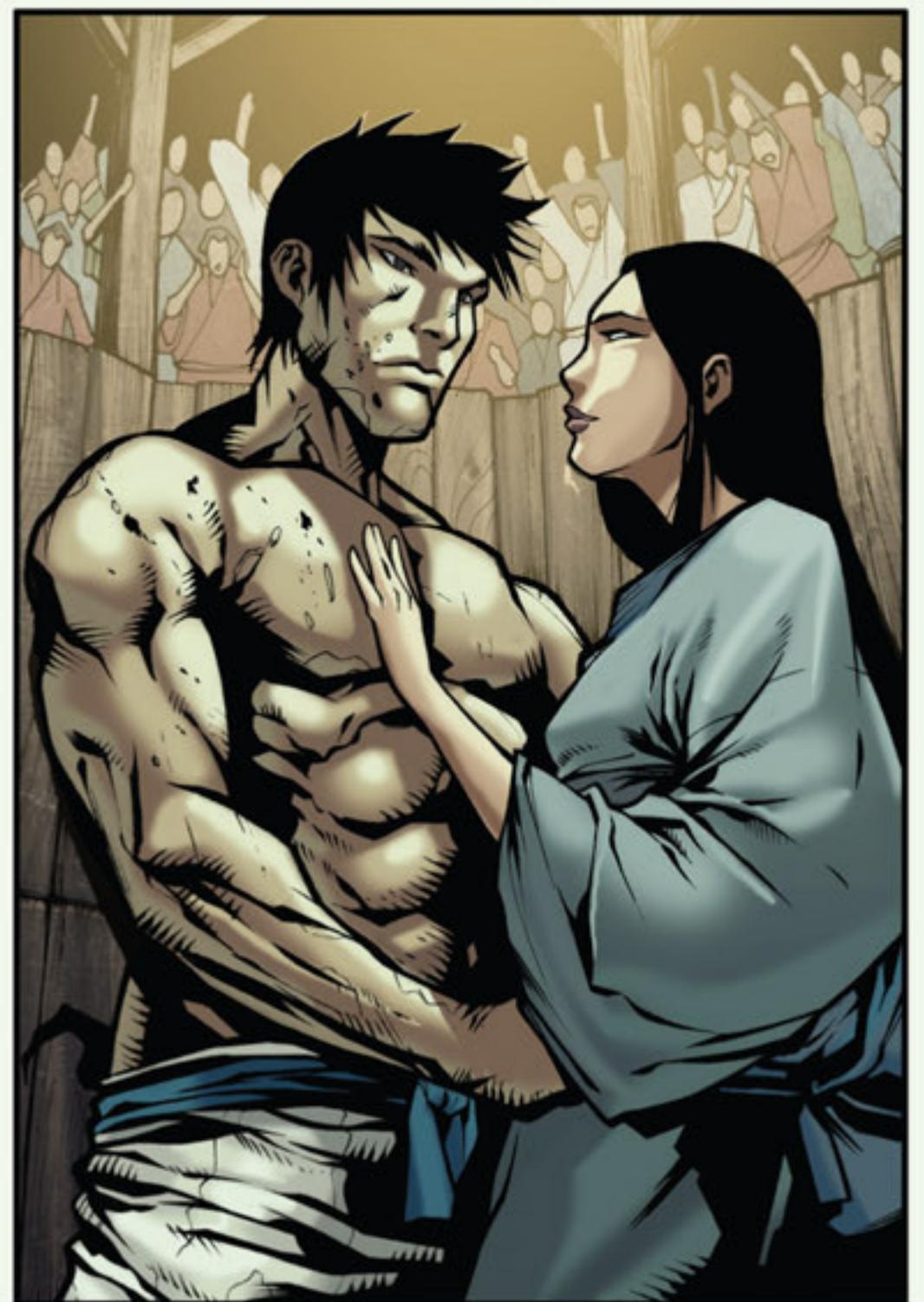
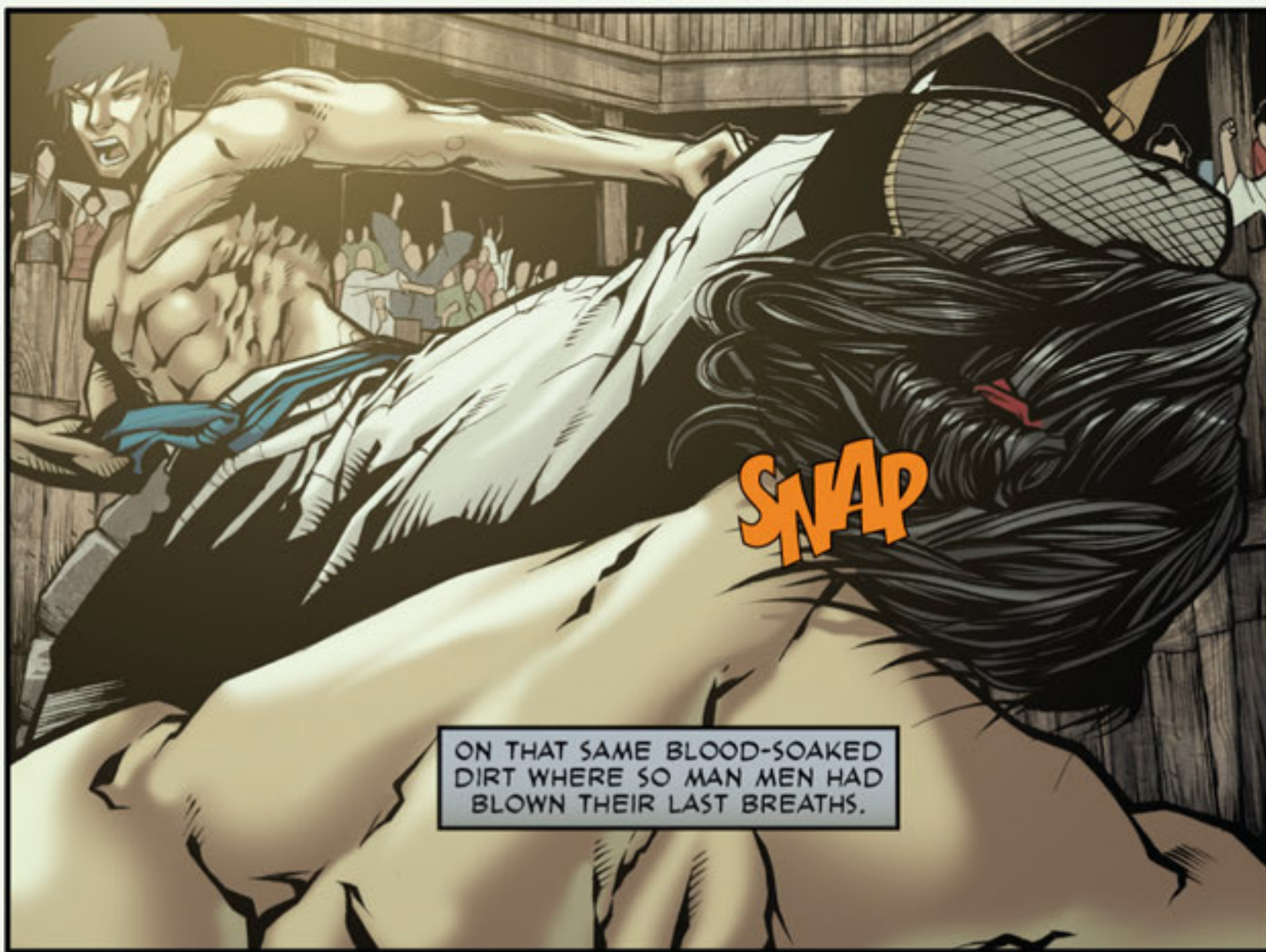


TOO SLOW, TOKUGAWA-SAN!

ALL OTHER BETRAYALS SPIRAL INTO THIS FINAL BREAKING. ALL LOVE, ALL SACRIFICE, ALL REASON OF ALL KINDS, FIND THEIR ENDPOINT HERE, AND CAN GO NO FURTHER.



HUMAN BEINGS CAN CHANGE, OH YES, BUT WE CANNOT CHANGE BACK. NOT FROM THIS.





I KNOW THAT WHAT I DID WAS WRONG, KATASHI. EVEN BY MY OWN MEASURE. BUT IT WAS THERE, THE MEANS OF HER SALVATION WERE DELIVERED TO US, AND I BELIEVED IN YOU. FOR GOOD REASON, IT SEEMS.

WHAT ELSE COULD I HAVE DONE? SHE IS MY SISTER, AND I CARE FOR HER DEEPLY, IF IN MY OWN WAY.

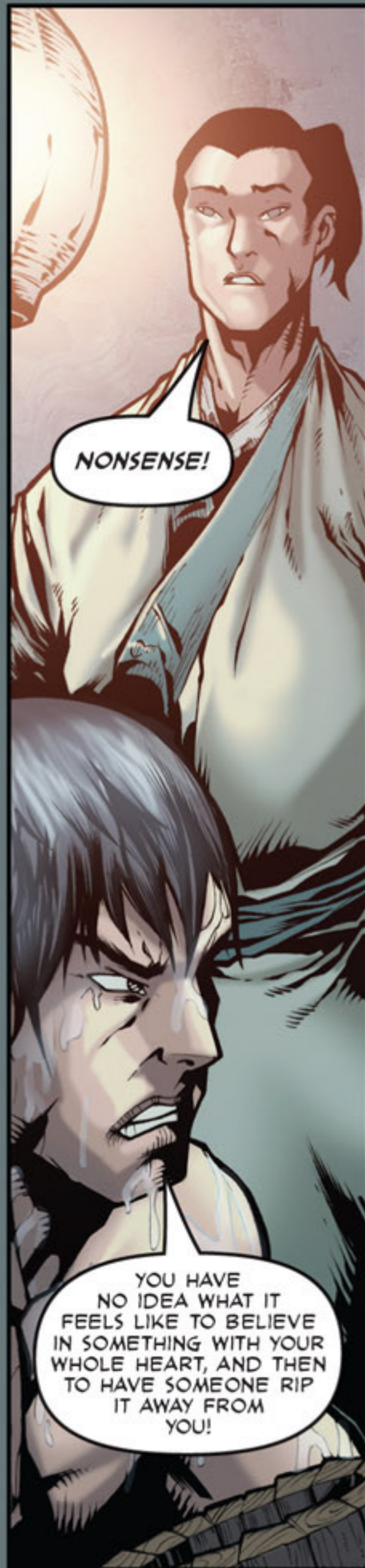


I MADE YOU PROMISE TO RETRIEVE HER, AND YOU DID. I HAVE NO QUARREL.

GOOD. WE HAVE A GREAT CHANCE NOW, AND I MEAN TO TAKE IT.



NO, JUN. YOU HAVE BROKEN ME. I CANNOT KILL ANOTHER MAN AS YOUR SAMURAI, NOT EVEN IF IT WAS GAKUSHI. YOU HAVE MADE ME A MURDERER. I AM NOT A SAMURAI, NOT EVEN A MAN. I AM NOT HANIYA TOSHIMITSU, OR EVEN KAJIRO KATASHI. I AM NOTHING.



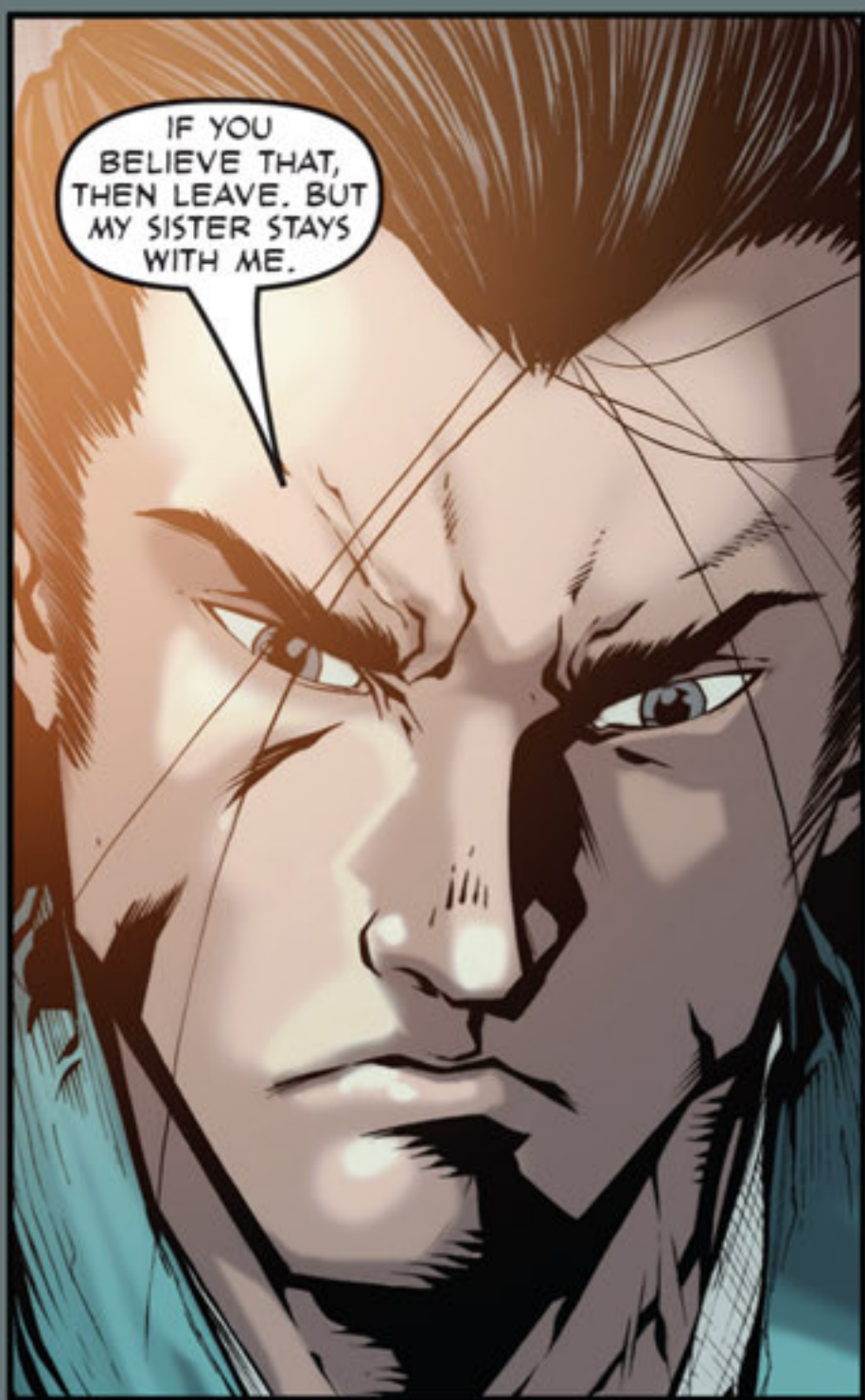
NONSENSE!

YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BELIEVE IN SOMETHING WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART, AND THEN TO HAVE SOMEONE RIP IT AWAY FROM YOU!



YES, I DO. I WOULD DIE FOR THIS. FOR MY CLAN. I WOULD DO ANYTHING.

YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN THAT. YOU JUST WANT POWER, JUST LIKE THE REST OF THEM. JUST LIKE GAKUSHI.





MY SON. WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO MY SWEET, INNOCENT CHILD?

FATHER?!

MINORU-SAN? YOU'RE ALIVE?!

YET EVERYTHING THAT IS HAS RISEN FROM THE ASHES OF SOMETHING ELSE. AND EVEN FROM THE DEPTHS OF GREATEST DESPAIR, EVEN FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN, EVEN FROM DEATH ITSELF, REDEMPTION IS POSSIBLE. THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF THE STRUGGLE.

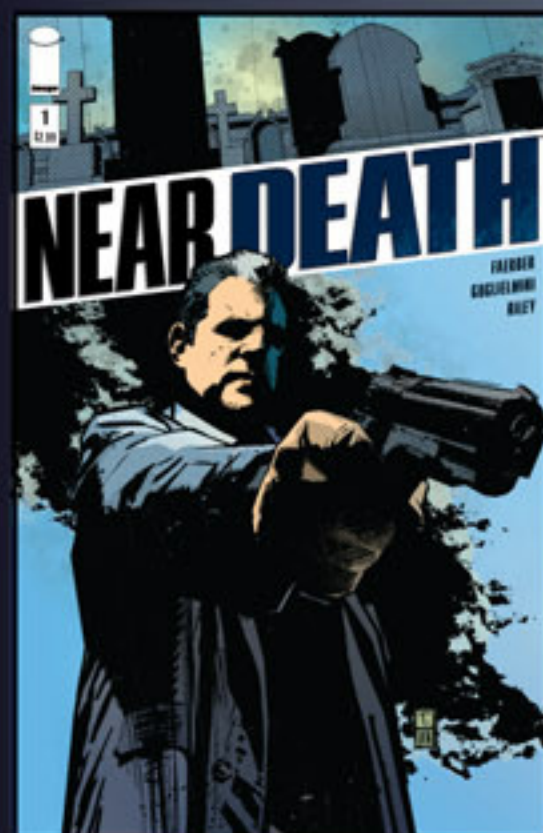
NEXT ISSUE:

The Return of Koga Jemitsu

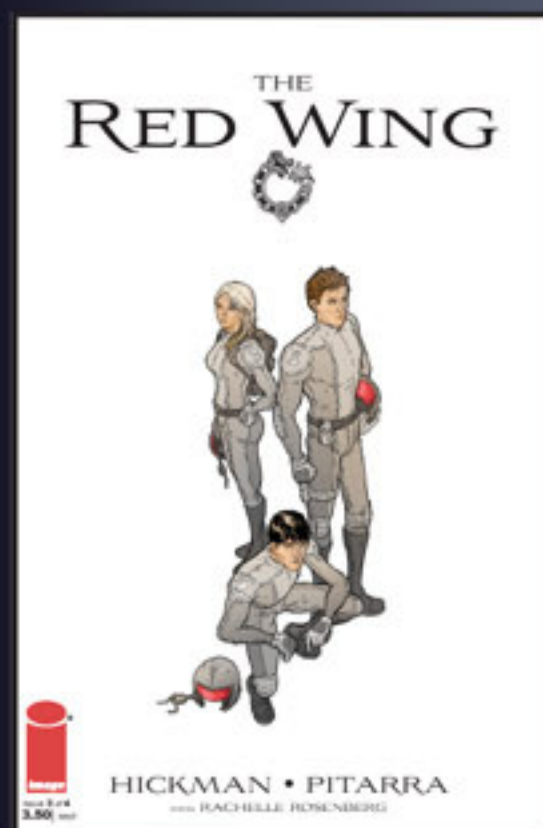
DON'T MISS THE NEXT ISSUE!



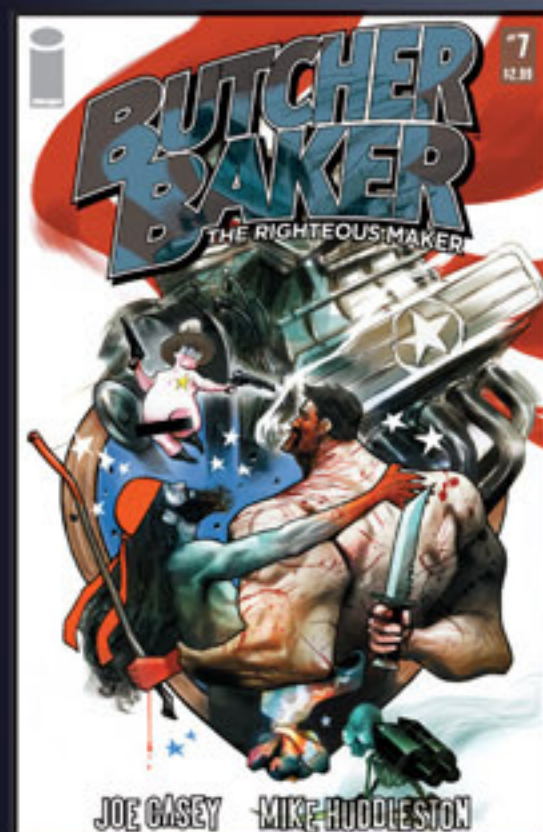
SAMURAI'S BLOOD #5
ON SALE SEPTEMBER 2011



NEAR DEATH #1
ON SALE NOW



THE RED WING #3
ON SALE NOW



BUTCHER BAKER #7
ON SALE NEXT WEEK