



SAMURAI'S BLOOD

5 of 6

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[Handwritten signature]

SAMURAI'S BLOOD

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Katashi, Jun, and Mayuko came to Yamagata City seeking vengeance for the death of their parents against the evil Gakushi. Mayuko was kidnapped and put into service as a prostitute in the Kinjo House. For Katashi this was all too much. Also his dreams of becoming an honorable samurai now lie in ruins. There is only one person left he can turn his frustrations against. His best friend Jun.



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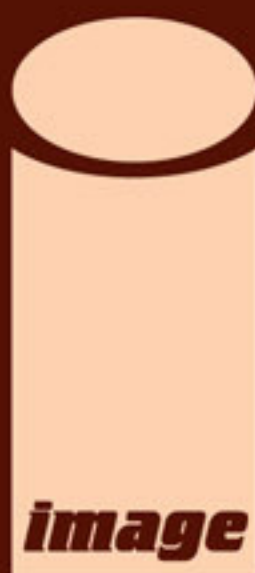
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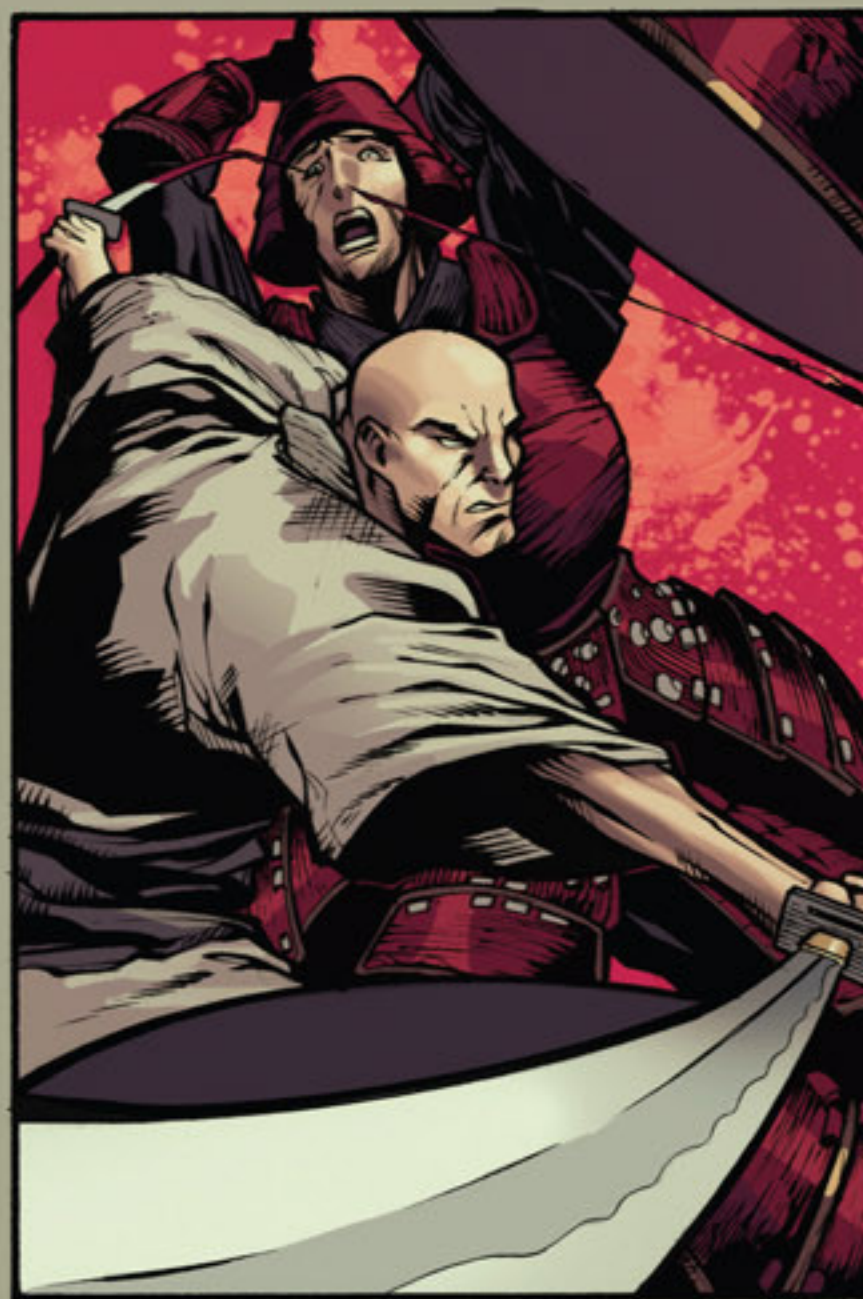
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I AM KOGA IEMITSU. AND I CAN SEE BY YOUR FACES THAT YOU KNOW I WOULD NOT BE SO FOOLISH AS TO CLAIM THAT NAME AND WEAR THIS SYMBOL, UNLESS IT WERE SO.

THE NINJA WOULD DESTROY ME.



IMPOSSIBLE. KOGA IEMITSU IS DEAD.

GODS DO NOT DIE. THEY ONLY WAIT.



I OFFER YOU THIS ONE CHANCE TO ESCAPE WITH YOUR LIVES. RUN, NOW, AND NEVER RETURN TO THESE LANDS.

RUN UNTIL YOU REACH THE END OF OUR ISLAND, THEN HIRE A BOAT TO TAKE YOU TO ANOTHER LAND SO YOU CAN RUN SOME MORE.



COWARDS! COME BACK! HE IS JUST A MAN!

EVERY TIME YOU THINK YOU HAVE RUN FAR ENOUGH, AND CONSIDER STOPPING, MY EYE WILL BE ON YOU! THE MOMENT YOU TURN TO LOOK FOR HOME, MY SWORD WILL PIERCE YOUR HEART!



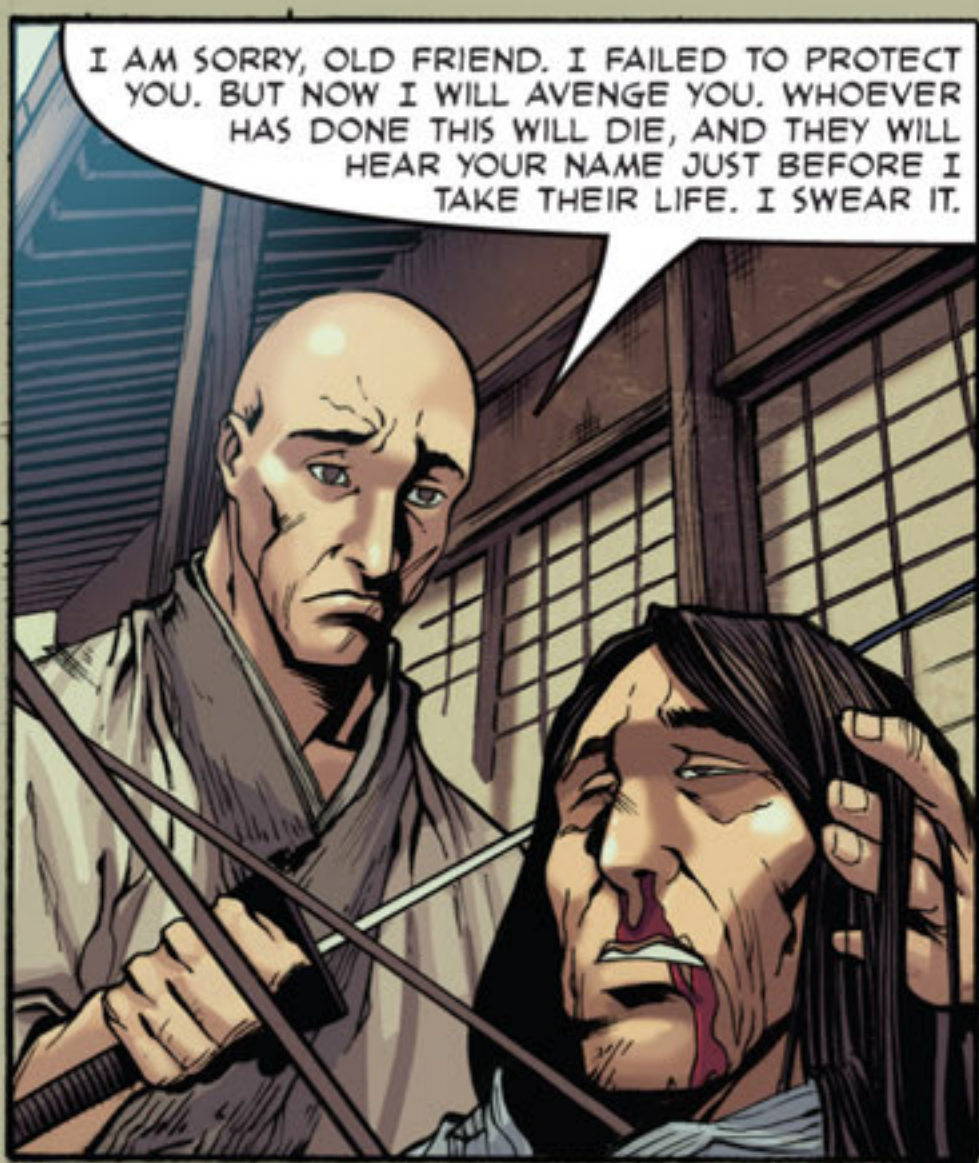
NOT YOU. YOU LED THESE MEN. FOR YOU, THERE IS NO SUCH MERCY. YOU CAN DIE WITH HONOR, OR YOU CAN DIE WITHOUT. THE CHOICE IS YOURS.



I ONLY ASK THAT YOU TELL WHOMEVER INQUIRES, THAT TODAI GEROMITSU DID NOT BEG.



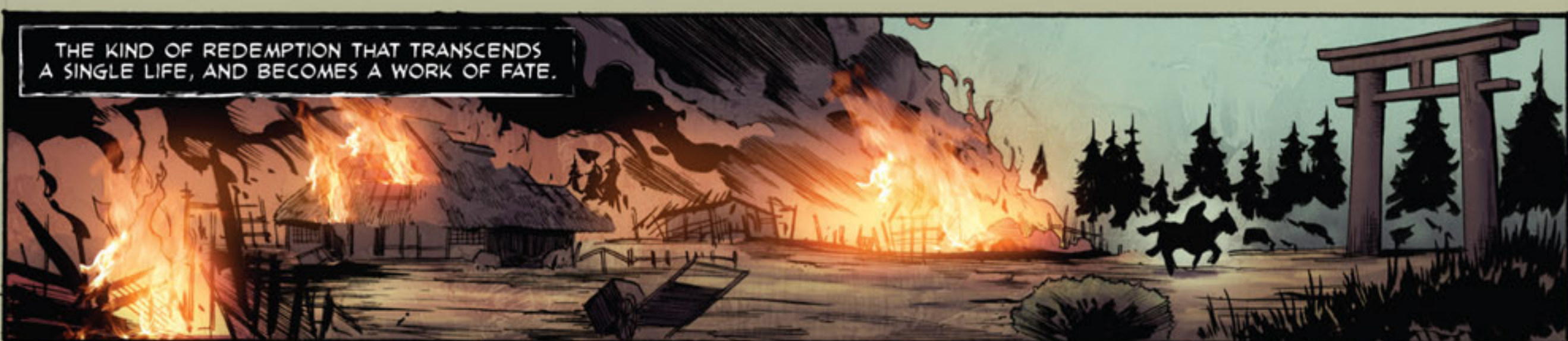
WELL DONE, TODAI-SAN.



I AM SORRY, OLD FRIEND. I FAILED TO PROTECT YOU. BUT NOW I WILL AVENGE YOU. WHOEVER HAS DONE THIS WILL DIE, AND THEY WILL HEAR YOUR NAME JUST BEFORE I TAKE THEIR LIFE. I SWEAR IT.



IT IS ONLY FROM THE DEEPEST DARKNESS THAT TRUE REDEMPTION IS POSSIBLE.



THE KIND OF REDEMPTION THAT TRANSCENDS A SINGLE LIFE, AND BECOMES A WORK OF FATE.



KOGA IEMITSU HAD ENTWINED HIMSELF WITH SUCH FATE BEFORE, MANY TIMES. BUT ALL THOSE OTHER TIMES HE HAD BEEN IN CONTROL. IT WAS THE FATE OF OTHERS THAT HE HELD IN HIS PALM.

BUT ON THIS DAY, ON THIS FATEFUL MORNING, HE WAS FINALLY CAUGHT BY THE WAVE THAT HAD BEEN CHASING HIM FOR SO LONG. ON THIS DAY, HE BECAME TRULY IN NEED OF REDEMPTION FOR THE FIRST TIME. HE WANTED TO BE RIGHTEOUS AGAIN.



DAYS LATER.
AT THE STOLEN
CASTLE SANJO.

YOU WERE NOT AMONG
THOSE I SENT, AND YOU HAVE THE
TEMERITY TO RETURN TO ME WITH A
HEAD YOU CLAIM IS MY ENEMY'S. EVEN
FOR A NINJA - IF INDEED YOU ARE ONE
AT ALL - YOUR IMPERTINENCE
IS ASTONISHING.

AND ON TOP
OF IT ALL, YOU REFUSE
TO KNEEL BEFORE THE
DAIMYO OF ALL THE
REALM. WHO ARE YOU
TO DEFY ME?

I AM KOGA
IEMITSU.



IMPOSSIBLE.

IT
CANNOT
BE.



WHERE
ARE MY
MEN?

THEY
MANAGED TO
DESTROY THE VILLAGE
OF EIWA, BUT THEY ALL
PERISHED FROM THE EFFORT.
SANJO GORO FINISHED THE
LAST OF THEM, AND THEN
I FINISHED HIM.



THE TOKUGAWA
CLAN WOULD BE
MOST INTERESTED TO
LEARN OF YOUR SURVIVAL.



BUT THEN
I COULD NOT
MAKE YOU
SHOGUN.



HA HA HA
HA HA HA
HA HA HA



SHOW ME
YOUR FACE, NINJA,
AND PERHAPS I
WILL BELIEVE YOU
ARE WHO YOU SAY
YOU ARE.



AND YET TO HOLD SOMEONE ELSE'S FATE IS VERY DIFFERENT THAN TO BE AT FATE'S MERCY.



KOGA IEMITSU WAS ACCUSTOMED TO DIRECTING THE RIVER'S CURRENTS.



AND SO HE HAD FORGOTTEN THAT A SWORD RAISED TO STRIKE MAY CUT THINGS OF WHICH THE MAN WIELDING IT IS UNAWARE.



A BLIND STRIKE MAY KILL ANYONE.



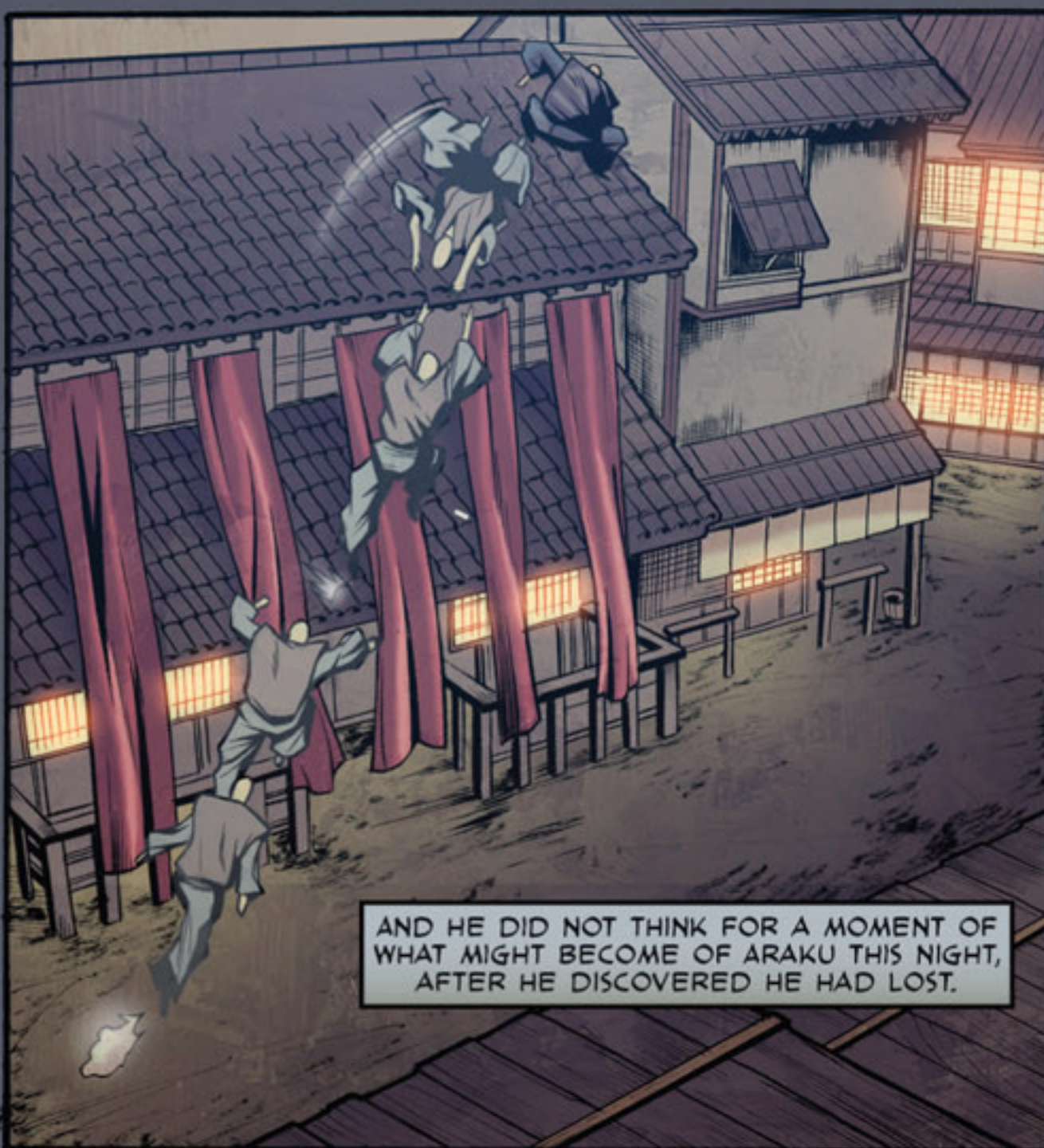
ON THAT NIGHT, KOGA IEMITSU THOUGHT OF NOTHING MORE THAN WINNING AGAINST ARAKU'S PURSUIT.



OF JUST WHAT OR WHO MIGHT BECOME THE OBJECT OF HIS OWN EVIL VENGEANCE.



AND HE DID NOT THINK FOR A MOMENT OF WHAT MIGHT BECOME OF ARAKU THIS NIGHT, AFTER HE DISCOVERED HE HAD LOST.



DAMN.



TOO SLOW, FOOL.



NO MAN SEES THE WORKINGS OF FATE UNTIL IT HAS HIM BY THE THROAT.

RUN, 'YUKO! HURRY!

MY MY, WHAT HAVE WE HERE?



HAD HE WAITED A MOMENT LONGER, ALL MIGHT HAVE BEEN AVOIDED. INSTEAD, REDEMPTION BECAME THE ORDER OF THE DAY.

MINUTES LATER.
IN THE HOME OF HORTOMO.

AND ONCE HE IS IN FATE'S GRIP, THERE ARE NO MORE CHOICES. ONLY REDEMPTION. ONLY VENGEANCE.



YOU ARE NOT NEARLY SO STEALTHY AS YOU USED TO BE.



SANJO LIVES. THE CHILDREN OF SANJO GORO. MY SON KATASHI IS WITH THEM, AND THEY MUST BE SOMEWHERE IN THE CITY.

THERE IS NOWHERE ELSE THEY COULD GO. I WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD LOOK FOR THEM.

EVERYONE HAS COME FROM SOMEWHERE, AND THUS THE STORY OF ANY LINEAGE IS AS OLD AS THE LAND ITSELF, AND ENDLESS CYCLE OF BETRAYAL AND VENGEANCE, OF FATE AND REDEMPTION. FOR ANY FAMILY OF VENERABLE NAME, THERE HAVE BEEN HEROES AND VILLAINS. THERE HAVE BEEN STALWARTS AND COWARDS. THERE HAS BEEN VICTORY AND DEFEAT. IT IS THOSE WHO ENDURE WHO MAKE THE BOTH THE FUTURE AND THE PAST.



I LOOK FORWARD TO A MEETING WITH THE SON OF KOGA IEMITSU. BUT IF I MUST LOOK FOR HIM, DOES THIS MEAN YOU ARE LEAVING? WHAT OF GAKUSHI?



SANJO GORO WAS A MAN OF HONOR, AND I MUST HONOR HIM IN TURN. I WILL NOT SNEAK IN THE NIGHT AS IF GAKUSHI WERE ANY OTHER MAN.

I HAVE REVEALED MYSELF TO HIM, AND WHEN I TAKE HIS LIFE, HE WILL LOOK INTO MY EYES AND I WILL BLIND HIM LIKE THE SUN. I HAVE SWORN THIS.



IT SEEMS AS IF YOU HAVE LEARNED A FEW THINGS FROM THE SAMURAI AFTER ALL. I COULD NEVER TEACH YOU ANYTHING WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG.

YOU TAUGHT ME MUCH AND HELPED ME MORE. AND NOW I MUST ASK AGAIN FOR YOUR AID. DO YOU HAVE ANY FRIENDS INSIDE THE HOUSE OF TOSHIRO NIBUNE?

I MUST MAKE ALLIANCE WITH HIM, BUT HE MAY NOT LIKE THE TERMS AND I HAVE HEARD HE IS STUBBORN.



STUBBORN AND DISCIPLINED. HE KEEPS AN ORDERED HOUSE, AND HIS SERVANTS ARE LOYAL. BUT, YOSHIKI-SAN STILL HAS HIS SHOP IN THEIR VILLAGE. HE MAY KNOW SOMEONE.

YOSHIKI-SAN STILL LIVES? THE ALCHEMIST?



I THINK THAT DOG HAS DISCOVERED THE SECRETS OF IMMORTALITY AND WON'T SHARE WITH THE REST OF THE OLD MEN.

DO YOU HAVE ONE OF HIS PIGEONS? I WILL BE ARRIVING WITH A COMPANION, AND WOULD PREFER TO LEAVE HIM THERE.



CAN YOU NOT DO THE DEED YOURSELF? IF HE DIES HE DIES, AND EXPLANATIONS ARE NEEDED UPON YOUR RETURN.

NO, NO. HE WILL LIVE A WHILE YET. ALL WE NEED IS A SCRATCH. ENOUGH TO SEND HIM BACK TO THE CASTLE AND KEEP HIM OUT OF MY AFFAIRS.

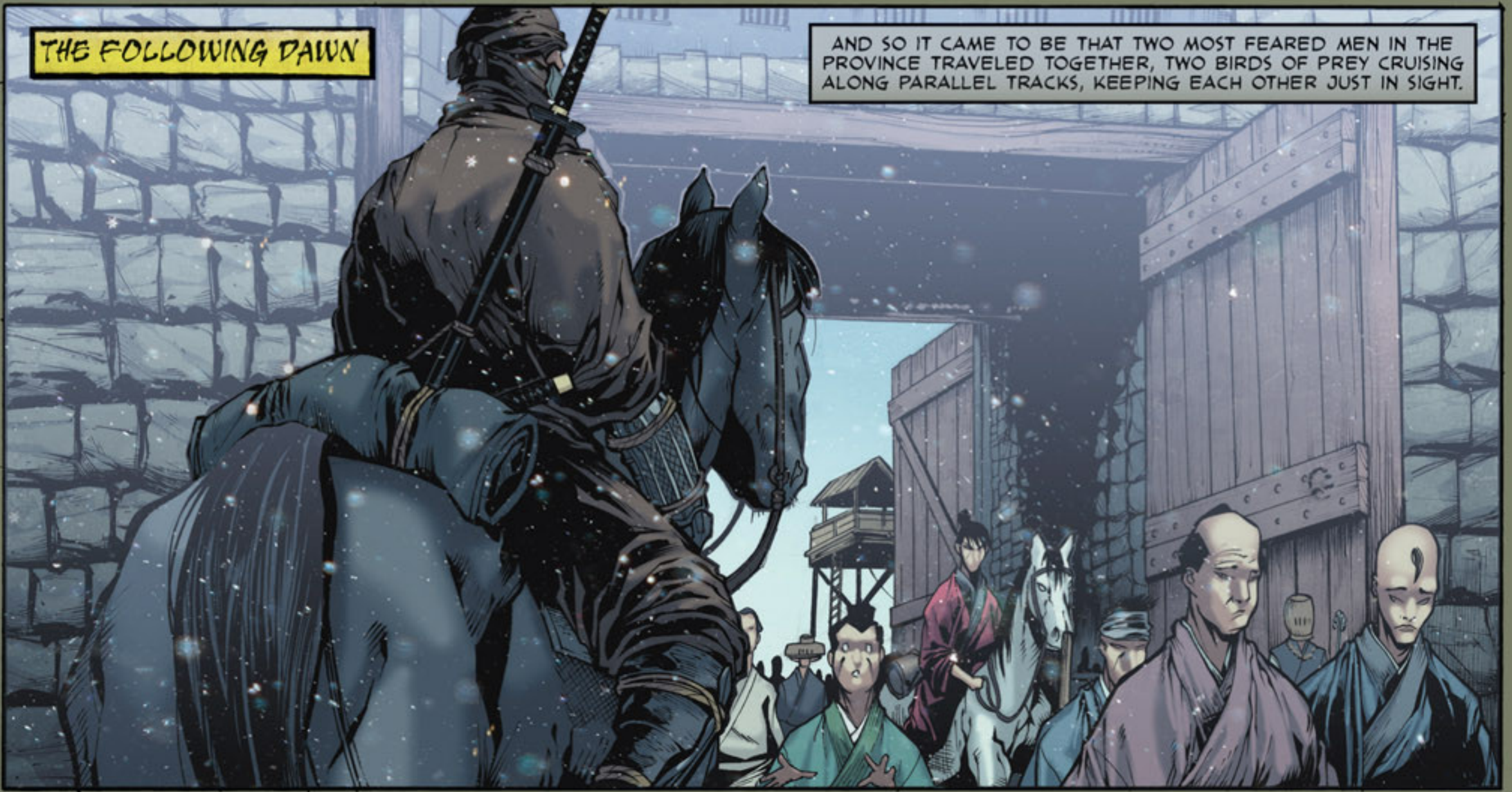


IT IS ALWAYS A PLEASURE TO SEE YOU, MY FRIEND. I ONLY WISH IT WERE ON BETTER TERMS WITH FATE.

SOMEONE'S FATE CHANGES EVERY TIME THE WIND BLOWS.

THE FOLLOWING DAWN

AND SO IT CAME TO BE THAT TWO MOST FEARED MEN IN THE PROVINCE TRAVELED TOGETHER, TWO BIRDS OF PREY CRUISING ALONG PARALLEL TRACKS, KEEPING EACH OTHER JUST IN SIGHT.



EVERY STEP OF THEIR HORSES, EVERY WHITE WISP OF THEIR BREATH, BECAME A SIGNAL AND A TESTING AND A MEASURING OF ONE ANOTHER.



PUT TWO OF ANYTHING IN A CAGE FOR LONG ENOUGH AND ONE OF THEM ENDS UP DEAD.



AND SOMETIMES, FOR SOME MEN OF GREAT PRIDE AND GREAT POWER, EVEN THE WHOLE WORLD IS TOO SMALL OF A CAGE TO LIVE IN TOGETHER.



IT IS THESE TOTAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN GREAT POWERS, WHETHER INSIDE A SINGLE MIND AND SOUL OR BETWEEN TWO BLOOD ENEMIES BOUND TO TRAVEL TOGETHER, THAT STOKES THE FIRES OF FATE TO THEIR WHITE HOT PEAK.



HAVE YOU NO TONGUE, KOGA-SAN? SURELY YOU HAVE SOME STORY WORTH TELLING FROM YOUR MANY YEARS OF RETIREMENT.

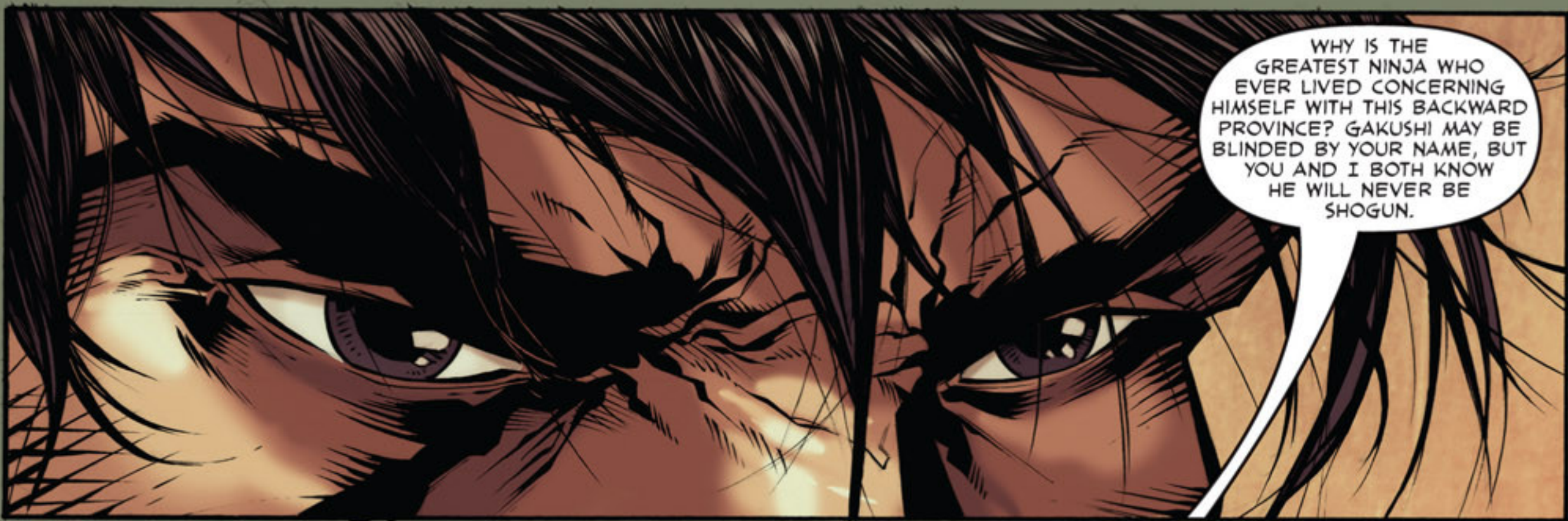
NOTHING TO SPEAK OF. THE PAST IS ONLY THE PAST.



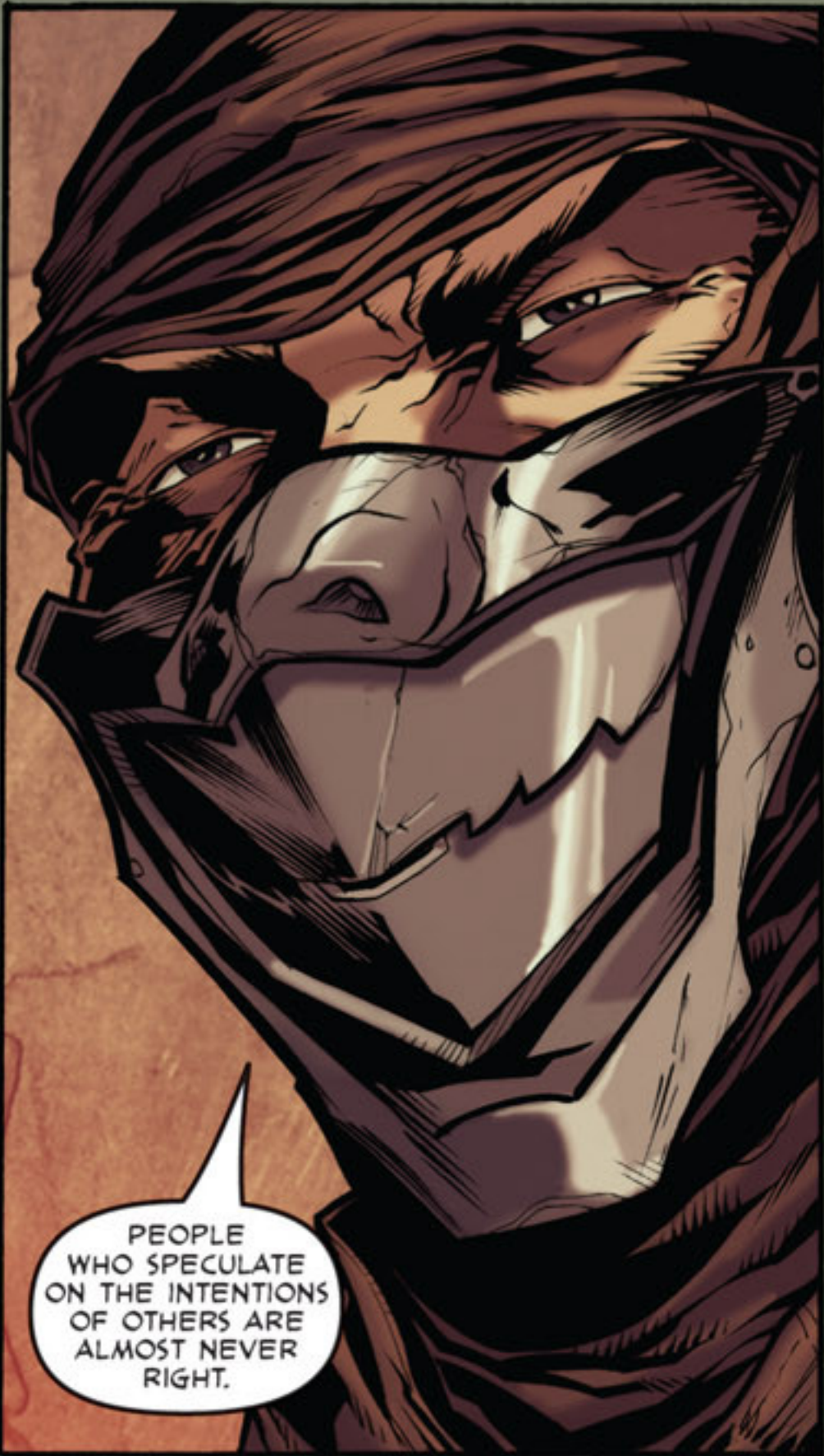
THEN TELL ME WHY YOU LEFT EDO. IF HALF THE RUMORS ARE TRUE, YOU HAD THE WORLD AT YOUR FEET. EVERY TONGUE TREMBLED AS IT SPOKE YOUR NAME, AND YOU HAD THE EAR OF THE SHOGUN HIMSELF.

THEN YOU DISAPPEARED. WHY?

YOU HAVE A VERY STRANGE IDEA OF THE WORLD AT YOUR FEET.



WHY IS THE GREATEST NINJA WHO EVER LIVED CONCERNING HIMSELF WITH THIS BACKWARD PROVINCE? GAKUSHI MAY BE BLINDED BY YOUR NAME, BUT YOU AND I BOTH KNOW HE WILL NEVER BE SHOGUN.



PEOPLE WHO SPECULATE ON THE INTENTIONS OF OTHERS ARE ALMOST NEVER RIGHT.



VERY WELL. AT LEAST TELL ME HOW WE WILL ENTER THE CASTLE TO KILL TOSHIRO NIBUNE.

WE WILL POISON A MEMBER OF THE CASTLE GUARD, THEN SNEAK IN DURING THE FUNERAL SERVICE.



AT THE SHOP OF YOSHIKI-SAN.
WITHIN SIGHT OF THE CASTLE
OF TOSHIRO NIBUNE.

夜台屋



WELCOME,
GENTLEMEN, TO
MY HUMBLE SHOP.
BROWSE BUT BE WARY
OF WHAT YOU TOUCH.
SOME WILL TOUCH
BACK.

錬金術



YOU KNOW
WHAT THIS MEANS.
YOU KNOW WHY I
AM HERE.

WHAT
IS YOUR CLAN
AFFILIATION?



I
AM KOGA
IEMITSU.



POOR
TOSHIRO
NIBUNE!







THE FOLLOWING DAY.
AT THE CASTLE OF
TOSHIRO NIBUNE

GREETINGS,
GOOD GENTLEMEN!
I HAVE BEEN LONG
IN THE MOUNTAINS,
MEDITATING ON THE
STRANGENESS OF
THE WORLD, AND
AM NOW ON MY WAY
BACK SOUTH FOR
THE WINTER.

MAY I
BEG A MEAL AND
A NIGHT'S LODGING
FROM YOUR
LORD?

SERVANTS
OF THE BUDDHA ARE
ALWAYS WELCOME HERE.
BUT AS THESE ARE
UNCERTAIN TIMES, MAY
I EXAMINE YOUR
BELONGINGS?

YOU SERVE
THE TOSHIRO CLAN
WITH DISTINCTION,
SAMURAI.

I HOPE THIS
WILL BE ACCEPTABLE,
HONORABLE ONE. MY
MASTER LIKES TO EAT WITH
GUESTS, BUT SPECIAL
CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE CASTLE
REQUIRE HIS ATTENTION
THIS EVENING.

DOES
MY PRESENCE
HERE CREATE
DIFFICULTY?

WE ARE HAPPY TO PROVIDE.
IF THERE IS ANYTHING ELSE
YOU REQUIRE, PLEASE
CALL ON ME. MY NAME
IS TOSHIRO
AKIMA.

BUT FATE DOES NOT ONLY TAKE
AWAY. NOT ONLY DESTROY.

MINUTES LATER.
INSIDE THE CASTLE.



FATE PROVIDES AS MUCH BOUNTY AS DEATH.



IT DELIVERS OUR ENEMY AS OFTEN AS IT LETS HIM SLIP AWAY.



EVEN FROM WITHIN ITS GRASP, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.



AND FOR A MAN WHO HAS COMMITTED HIMSELF, WHO WILL CUT OFF HIS LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, FATE WILL DO ALL THINGS.

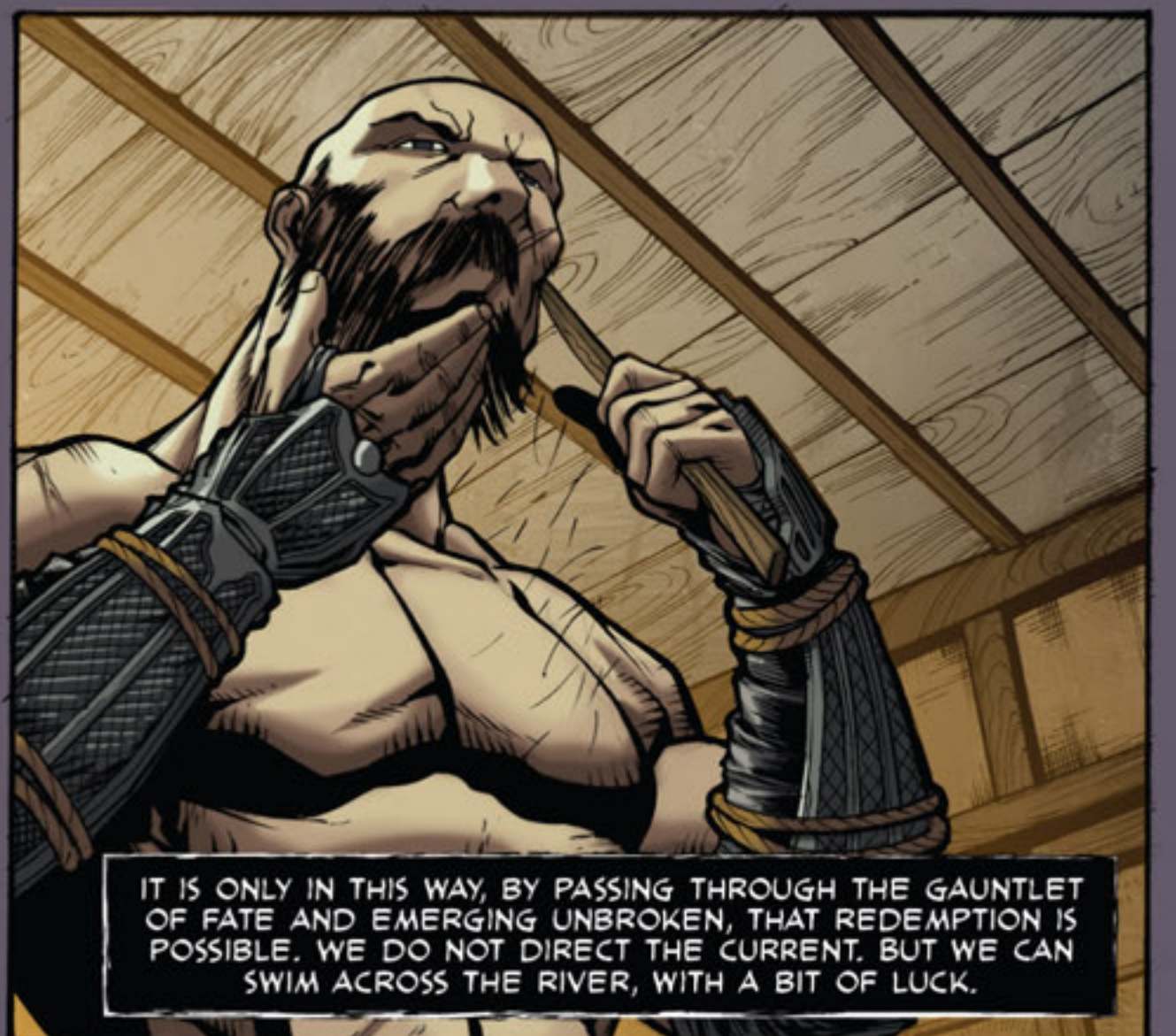
NO!
PLEASE!



PLEASE,
I'M SORRY! I
DIDN'T MEAN
TO DO IT!



FOR A MAN SUCH AS THIS,
FATE IS A TRUE FRIEND.



IT IS ONLY IN THIS WAY, BY PASSING THROUGH THE GAUNTLET OF FATE AND EMERGING UNBROKEN, THAT REDEMPTION IS POSSIBLE. WE DO NOT DIRECT THE CURRENT. BUT WE CAN SWIM ACROSS THE RIVER, WITH A BIT OF LUCK.



THAT NIGHT.
IN THE CASTLE'S
MAIN COURTYARD.

MURDERERS!
RAPISTS! MEN CONDEMNED
TO DIE IN ANY CASE! IF YOU WILL
NOT KILL THESE MEN, HOW CAN
YOU EXPECT TO KILL OUR ENEMIES?!
SHOULD I PERMIT MY HEIR
TO ACT LIKE A
COWARD?!

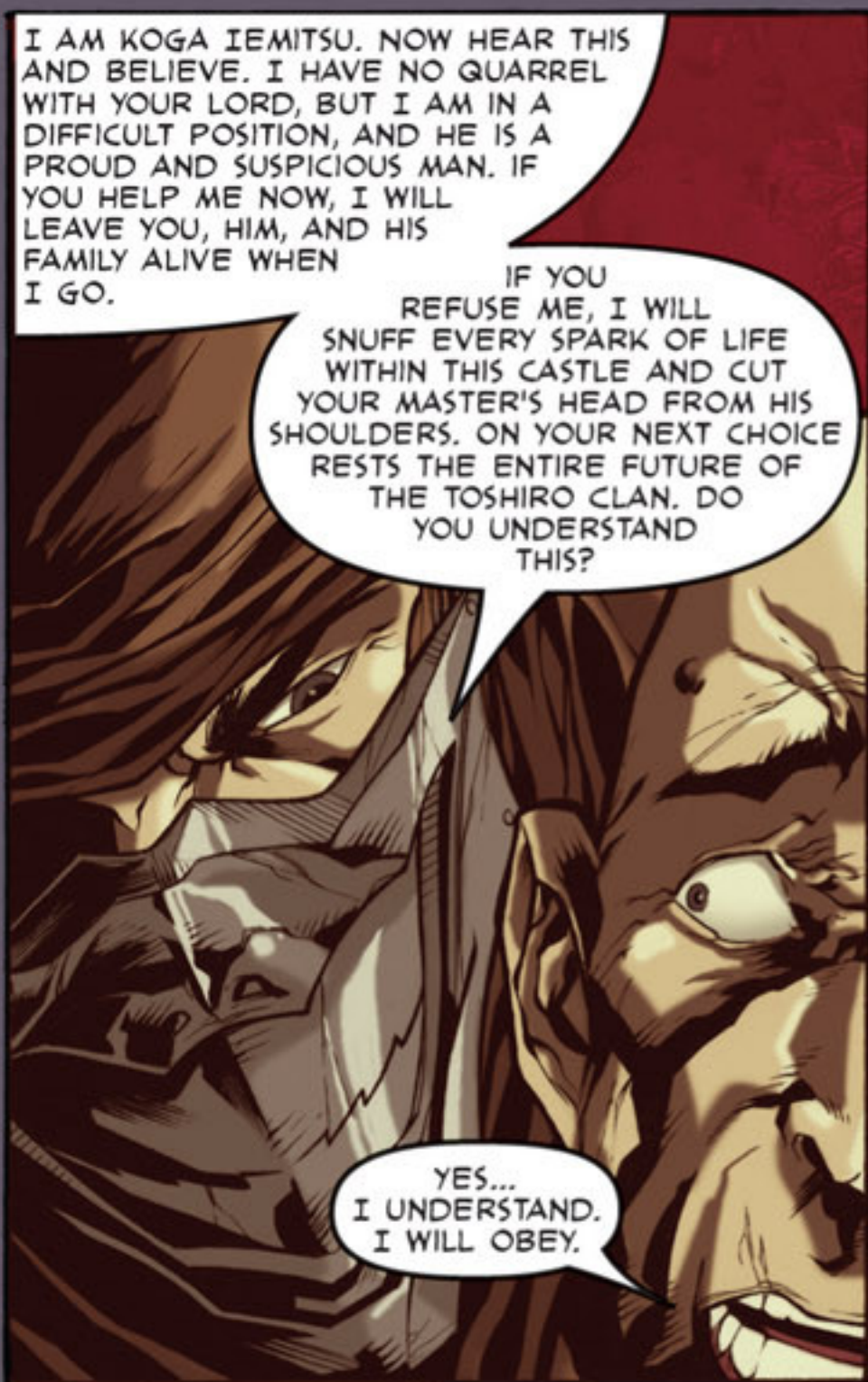


ON MY ORDER, YOU WILL
RAISE OUR SWORD AND
MARK YOUR COURAGE
ON THE GROUND IN
BLOOD! HIGH ON THE
NECK AND A
LEVEL SWING!



ARE YOU A
FAITHFUL SERVANT,
AKIMA? HAVE YOU EVER
DECEIVED YOUR MASTER
IN ORDER TO BETTER
SERVE HIM?

YES...
I HAVE.



I AM KOGA IEMITSU. NOW HEAR THIS
AND BELIEVE. I HAVE NO QUARREL
WITH YOUR LORD, BUT I AM IN A
DIFFICULT POSITION, AND HE IS A
PROUD AND SUSPICIOUS MAN. IF
YOU HELP ME NOW, I WILL
LEAVE YOU, HIM, AND HIS
FAMILY ALIVE WHEN
I GO.

IF YOU
REFUSE ME, I WILL
SNUFF EVERY SPARK OF LIFE
WITHIN THIS CASTLE AND CUT
YOUR MASTER'S HEAD FROM HIS
SHOULDERS. ON YOUR NEXT CHOICE
RESTS THE ENTIRE FUTURE OF
THE TOSHIRO CLAN. DO
YOU UNDERSTAND
THIS?

YES...
I UNDERSTAND.
I WILL OBEY.



GATHER THE SERVANTS. STATION
ONE NEAR EVERY TORCH OR
LIGHT THAT SHINES ON
THE COURTYARD.

AT MY
SIGNAL, YOU WILL
EXTINGUISH THEM ALL
AT THE SAME MOMENT.
HURRY. WE HAVE ONLY
MOMENTS.



FATHER...

I CANNOT
ABIDE A SON
WHO REFUSES
HIS DUTY!



TOSHIRO NIBUNE!!!

EVIL SPIRIT! SHOW YOURSELF!



THE TIME HAS COME, TOSHIRO NIBUNE, FOR A GREAT UPHEAVAL IN YOUR CLAN.

IF YOU ARE SUPPLE AND WISE, YOUR LANDS AND FORTUNES WILL INCREASE. IF YOU REFUSE ME, THEY WILL DECLINE.



I ANSWER TO NO MAN OR GHOST!



YOU HAVE NOT... UNTIL NOW!



AKIMA! THE LIGHT! BRING A LIGHT!





WEEKS LATER.

SO IT WAS THAT AS A THICK BLANKET OF SNOW MADE TRAVEL ALL BUT IMPOSSIBLE, THE EDO GHOST TOOK COUNSEL WITH THE HEAD OF THE TOSHIRO CLAN, AND THE TWO MEN MADE THEIR ALLIANCE AGAINST THE BETRAYER GAKUSHI. AND JUST AS THE BURDEN OF OPPRESSIVE WHITE BEGAN TO SHIFT UPON THE LAND IN A GESTURE TOWARD SPRING, KOGA IEMITSU SET OUT TO RETURN TO YAMAGATA AND MEET HIS DESTINY.

THE ARTS OF NINJUTSU ARE A MYSTERY, BUT ONE OF ITS FIRST PRINCIPLES IS STOUTNESS OF BODY. A MAN WITH THE PROPER DEGREE OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL TRAINING CAN OUTFRAN A HORSE OVER A LONG ENOUGH DISTANCE.



JUST WHAT IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE?

THIS IS THE HEAD OF TOSHIRO NIBUNE, AS YOU REQUESTED.

LIES! EVERY WORD OF THIS IS NINJA LIES!



SILENCE!



YOU STAND BEFORE ME IN A MASK, YET EXPECT ME TO TRUST YOUR WORD.

I EXPECT NOTHING. IF YOU ARE FINISHED WITH ME, THEN I WILL GO. IF YOU STILL WANT WHAT I CAN OFFER, THEN I WILL STAY. BUT, THIS IS THE HEAD OF TOSHIRO NIBUNE, AS YOU REQUESTED.



SHALL I APPROACH, SO MY LORD MAY MAKE A PROPER EXAMINATION?



NO. YOU ARE NEVER TO APPROACH ME.



THERE IS A MAN, RECENTLY ARRIVED FROM IZUMO, WHO HAS DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF. JUST BEFORE YOUR ARRIVAL HERE, I RECEIVED WORD THAT HE HAS KILLED TOKUGAWA DAIGAN IN A DUEL.

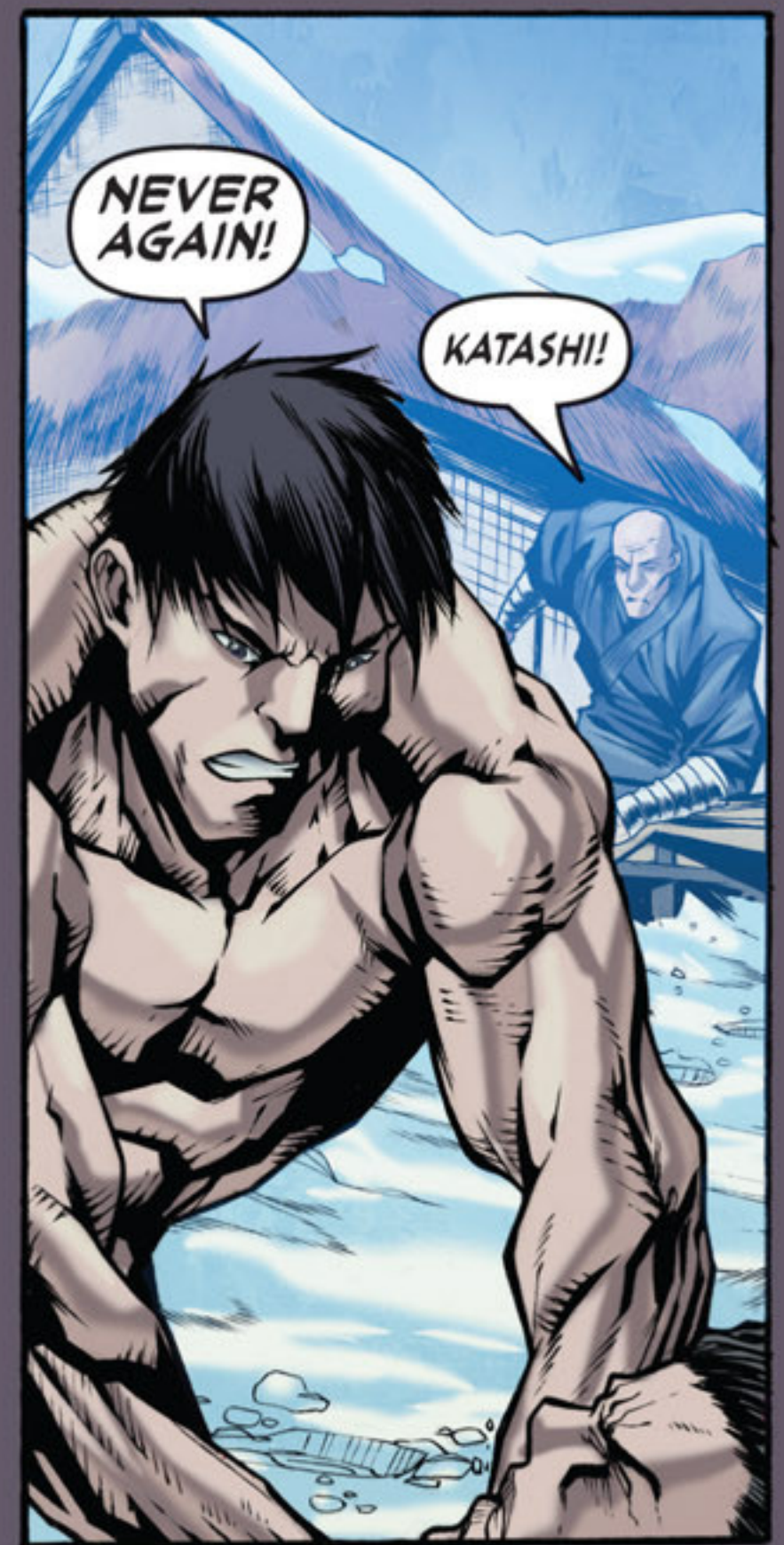
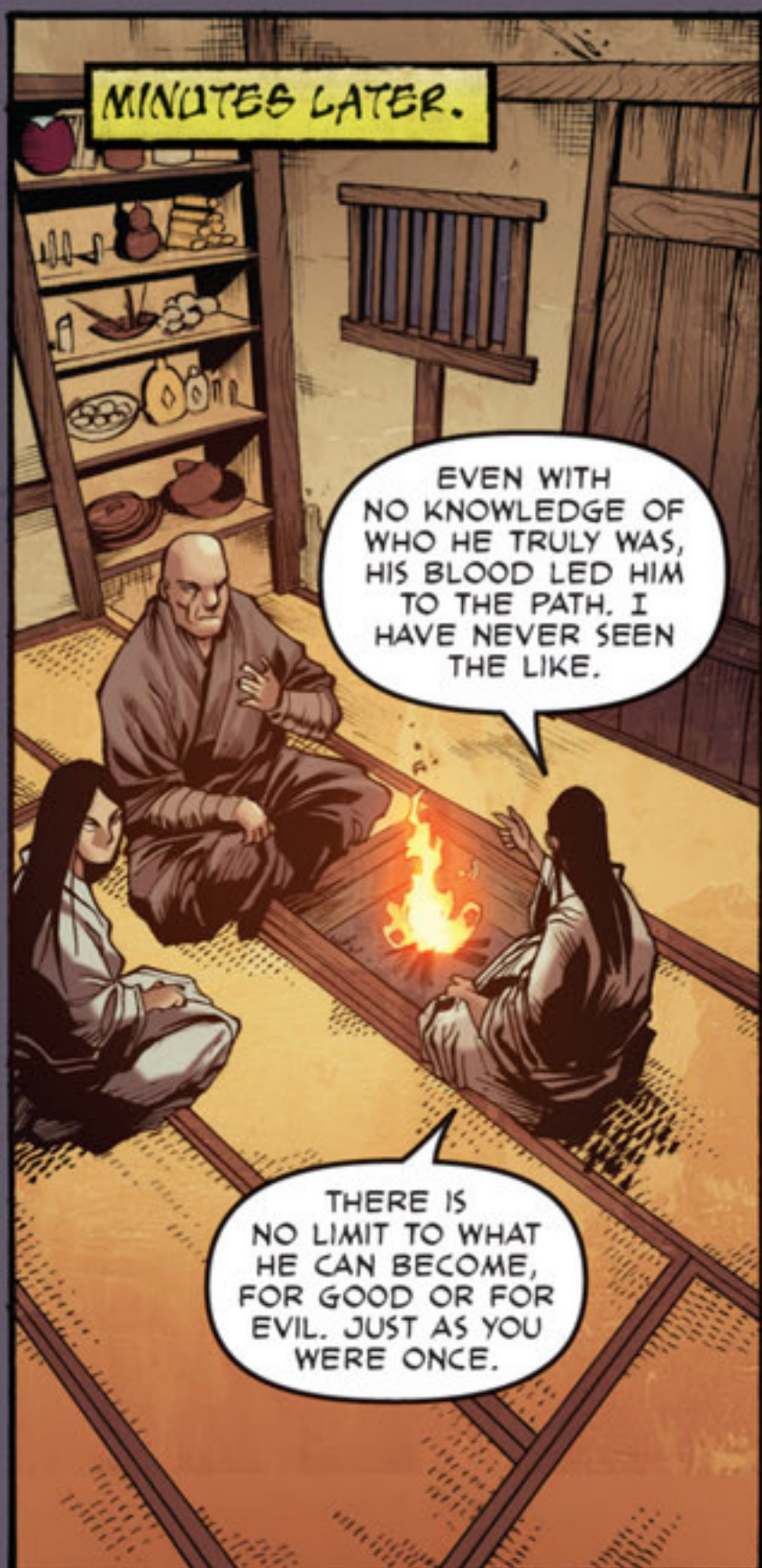
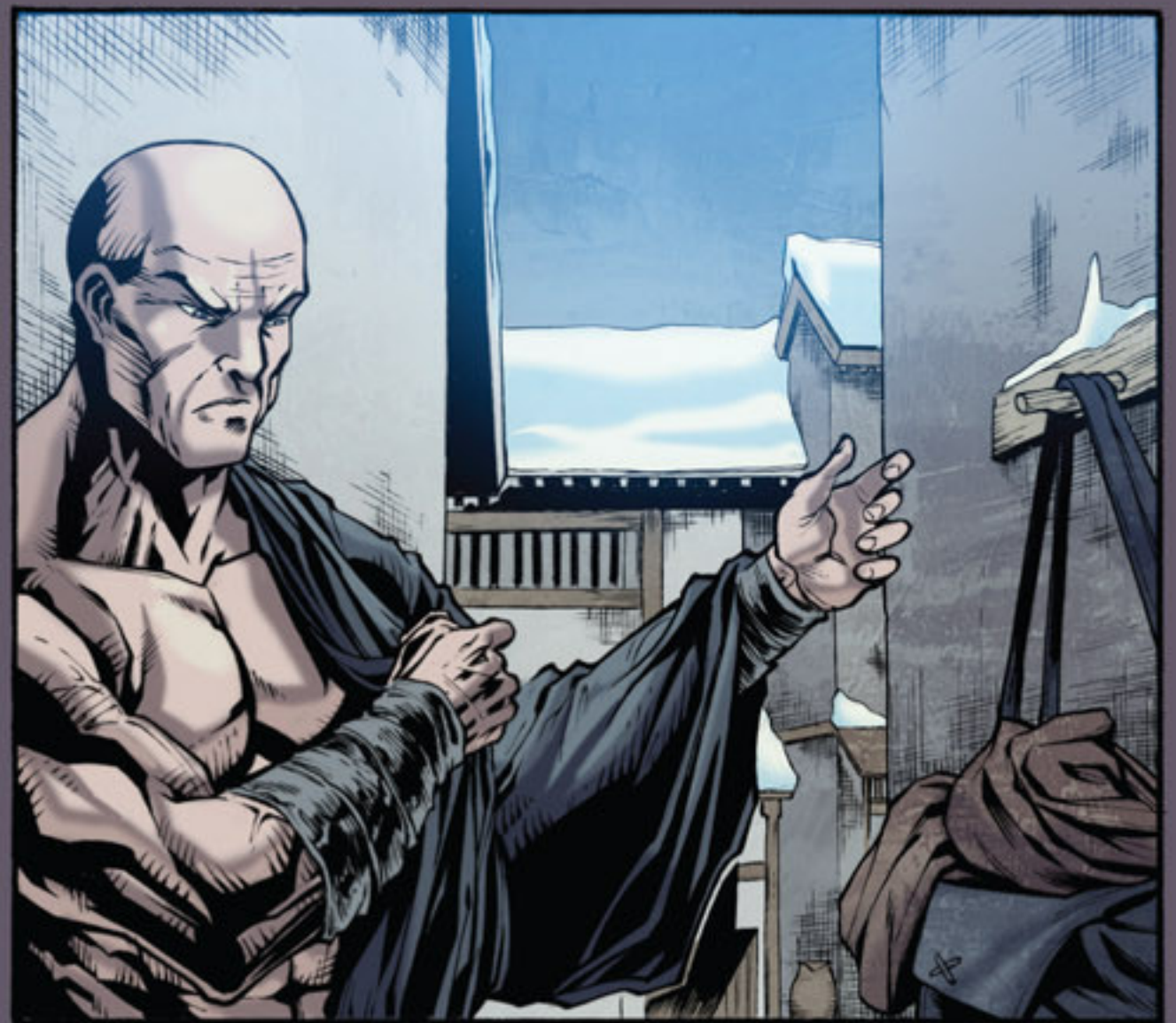
I BELIEVE YOU WERE FAMILIAR WITH TOKUGAWA-SAN.

SOMEONE DEFEATED TOKUGAWA DAIGAN?



I WILL HAVE THIS HANIYA TOSHIMITSU IN MY ARMIES, TO LEAD MY MEN IN THE BATTLES WE WILL SOON BEGIN TO FIGHT.

YOU WILL FIND HIM, IN YAMAGATA, AND ESCORT HIM TO ME.





FATHER?
YOU'RE *ALIVE*?!
WHERE HAVE YOU
BEEN?!

THERE
ARE MORE NEEDS
IN THE WORLD THAN
YOUR OWN, MY
SON.



DOES THIS MEAN YOU
TRULY DEFEATED ALL
THOSE SAMURAI WHO
ATTACKED THE
VILLAGE?

MEN WHO
WILL COUNTENANCE
BETRAYAL AS THEY
DID ARE NEVER
STALWARTS.



WHAT OF
MY MOTHER AND
FATHER?

I AM
SORRY, JUN.
THEY DIED
WELL.



TELL
ME WHAT HAS
HAPPENED,
SON.

I FAILED
TO BECOME A
SAMURAI, FATHER. I
THOUGHT I WAS SUCCEEDING,
BUT WHEN I REACHED MY
DESTINATION I REALIZED THAT
I WAS FARTHER AWAY
THAN I EVER WAS IN
OUR VILLAGE.



WHAT HAPPENED TO THOSE
MEN, FATHER? TO THOSE
TRUE SAMURAI, WHOSE
MINDS EMBRACED
DEATH?

DID THEY
EVER TRULY
EXIST?

I KNEW
SOME ONCE.
THEY ALL DIED,
AND THOSE
WHO HUNG BACK
WERE ALL THAT
REMAINED.



I CANNOT
BE A SAMURAI
IN THIS WORLD. ALL
I CAN BE IS A
KILLER.

THAT IS
NOT TRUE, MY
SON. THERE IS
ANOTHER
WAY.



WHAT OTHER WAY, FATHER? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I WAS BORN IN THE KOGA PREFECTURE, HIGH IN THE MOUNTAINS. MANY GENERATIONS AGO, OUR PEOPLE WERE FARMERS, AND WE FELL UNDER THE YOKE OF A DAIMYO FROM OUTSIDE THE MOUNTAINS.

OUTNUMBERED, WITH NO WEAPONS, WE TOOK UP OUR FARM TOOLS AND BEGAN TO FIGHT.



MANY GENERATIONS BEFORE...

WE KNEW THAT WE COULD NEVER WIN BE STRENGTH OF ARMS.



WE WERE FEWER THAN THEY. WE HAD NO ARMOR. WE HAD ONLY WEAPONS MADE WITH OUR OWN HANDS.



INSTEAD, WE USED WHAT THE MOUNTAINS HAD TAUGHT TO DESCEND ON OUR ENEMIES UNSEEN, TO KILL WITHOUT DYING, AND TO CONTROL THE MINDS OF THOSE WHO WOULD ENSLAVE US.



AND STILL AN ARMY COULD NOT STAND AGAINST US.



SO BEGAN THE ART OF NINJUTSU.



I FIRST KILLED AT FIFTEEN. HE WAS A NINJA FROM A RIVAL CLAN, WHO HAPPENED AT THAT EXACT MOMENT TO BE TAKING AIM AT SHOGUN TOKUGAWA IEMITSU.



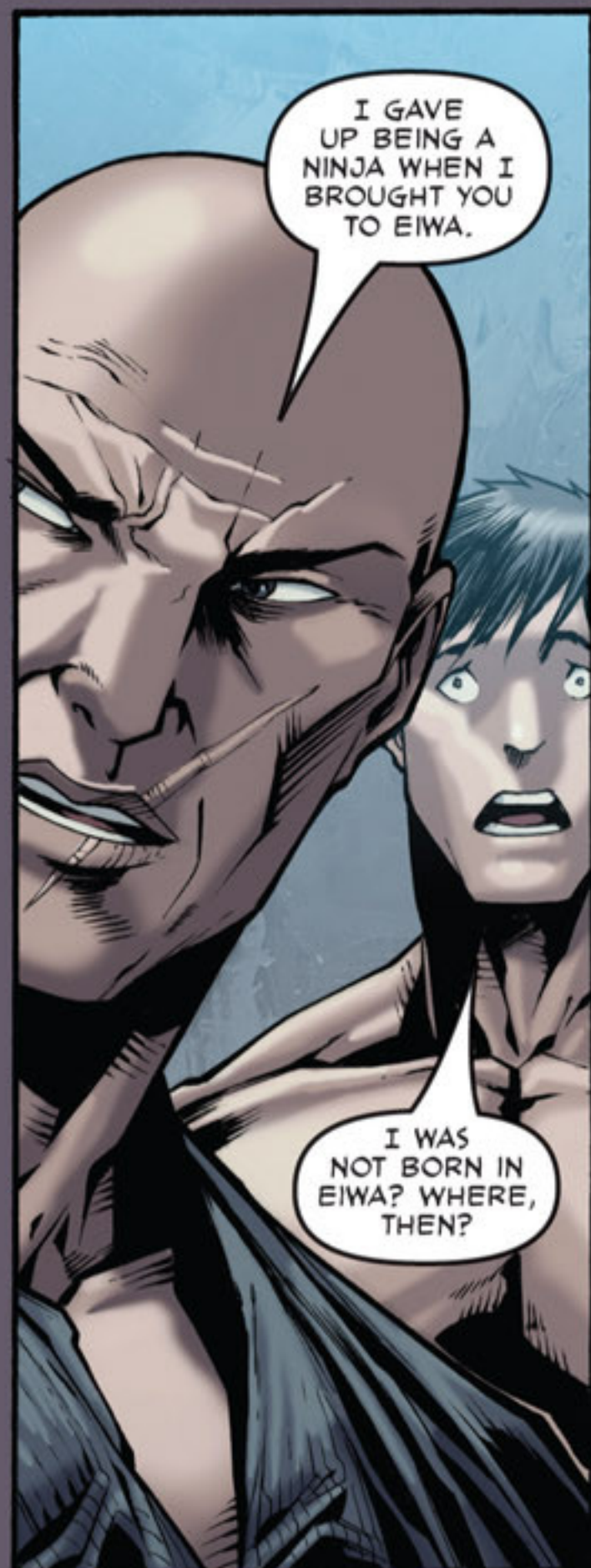
THE DEATH OF HIS ASSASSIN WAS PLEASING TO THE SHOGUN.



I WENT TO EDO AND BECAME THE TOKUGAWA'S RETAINER. I SET ENTIRE CLANS OF HIS ENEMIES AGAINST EACH OTHER, AND DESTROYED THEM WITHOUT EVER SHOWING THEM MY FACE.

I KILLED WITHOUT PASSION OR MERCY. I BECAME KOGA IEMITSU, THE EDO GHOST.

WHY HAVE YOU NEVER TOLD ME OF THIS?



I GAVE UP BEING A NINJA WHEN I BROUGHT YOU TO EIWA.

I WAS NOT BORN IN EIWA? WHERE, THEN?



I FELL IN LOVE WITH THE SHOGUN'S DAUGHTER, WHO WAS PROMISED TO ANOTHER. WE WERE TOGETHER ONLY FOR ONE NIGHT, BUT... YOUR NAME AT BIRTH WAS TOKUGAWA IETADA.

I BEGGED YOUR MOTHER TO RUN AWAY WITH ME, BUT SHE REFUSED TO ABANDON HER DUTIES. YOU WERE TO BE RAISED AS THE CHILD OF HER HUSBAND. SO ONE NIGHT, I KIDNAPPED YOU AND RAN.

SANJO GORO AGREED TO SHELTER ME, AND I NEVER LEFT EIWA AGAIN. UNTIL NOW.

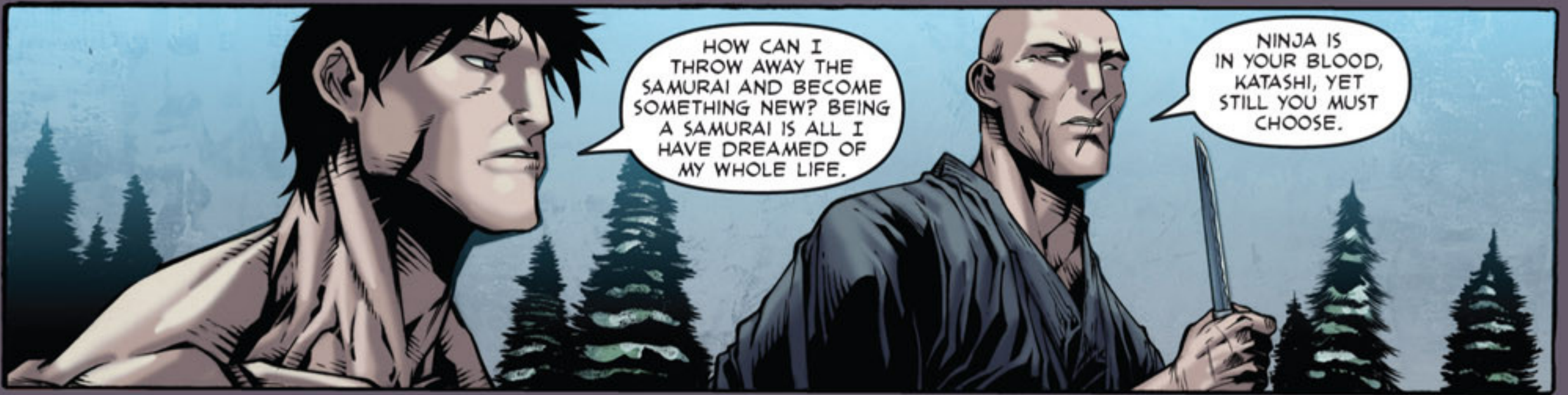


SO YOU ARE AN ASSASSIN. A MURDERER, WHO KILLS WITHOUT HONOR.

YOU HAVE KILLED ENOUGH MEN TO KNOW THERE IS NO HONOR IN IT, NO MATTER WHAT CODE YOU FOLLOW.

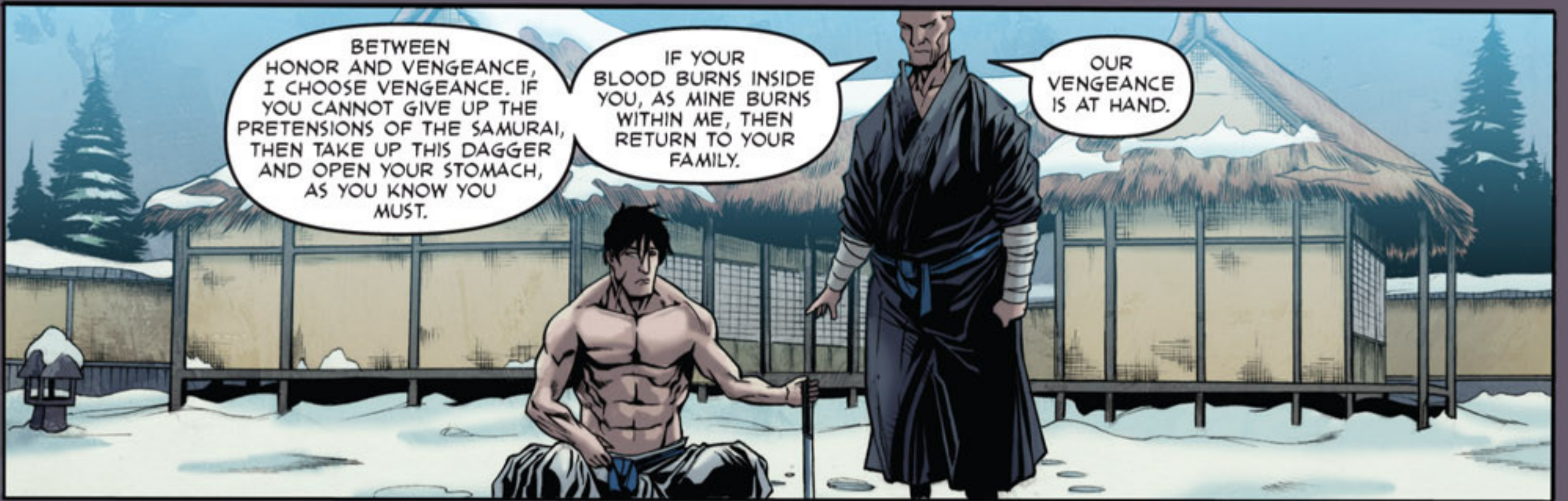
KILLING IS AN UGLY THING. I KILL BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT THE WORLD IS NO BETTER REASON AND NO WORSE.

BEING A NINJA MEANS ACKNOWLEDGING THE EVIL THAT I MUST DO IN SUCH A WORLD AS THIS.



HOW CAN I THROW AWAY THE SAMURAI AND BECOME SOMETHING NEW? BEING A SAMURAI IS ALL I HAVE DREAMED OF MY WHOLE LIFE.

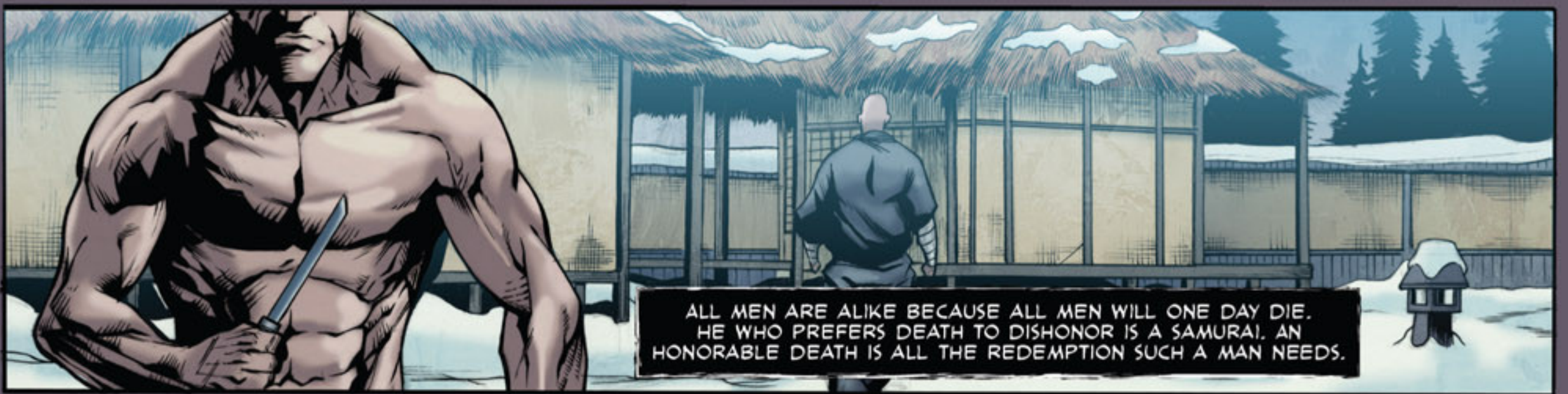
NINJA IS IN YOUR BLOOD, KATASHI, YET STILL YOU MUST CHOOSE.



BETWEEN HONOR AND VENGEANCE, I CHOOSE VENGEANCE. IF YOU CANNOT GIVE UP THE PRETENSIONS OF THE SAMURAI, THEN TAKE UP THIS DAGGER AND OPEN YOUR STOMACH, AS YOU KNOW YOU MUST.

IF YOUR BLOOD BURNS INSIDE YOU, AS MINE BURNS WITHIN ME, THEN RETURN TO YOUR FAMILY.

OUR VENGEANCE IS AT HAND.



ALL MEN ARE ALIKE BECAUSE ALL MEN WILL ONE DAY DIE. HE WHO PREFERS DEATH TO DISHONOR IS A SAMURAI. AN HONORABLE DEATH IS ALL THE REDEMPTION SUCH A MAN NEEDS.



BUT PERHAPS SUCH A SAMURAI IS ALSO A FOOL.



I CANNOT BE A NINJA SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU TELL ME I AM ONE. I CANNOT BE A SAMURAI BECAUSE I AM NOT ONE.

BUT I AM A MAN WITH VENGEANCE IN HIS HEART. I WILL SEEK VENGEANCE WITH YOU, NOT AS YOUR SAMURAI, OR AS YOUR RETAINER, BUT AS YOUR FRIEND.



I COULD USE A FRIEND.



SO TELL US, KOGA IEMITSU, HOW WILL WE KILL THE GREAT AND POWERFUL GAKUSHI?



THE PAST AND THE FUTURE ARE LONG AND UNCERTAIN. THEY CANNOT FIT WITHIN THE GRASP OF AN OUTSTRETCHED HAND. FOR LIVING THERE IS ONLY THIS ONE MOMENT CALLED NOW. ONLY THIS ONE MOMENT FOR REDEMPTION. ONLY THIS ONE MOMENT FOR VENGEANCE. ONLY THIS ONE MOMENT FOR FATE.

WE WILL TELL HIM THE TRUTH.

NEXT ISSUE:
The Righteous Vengeance of Clan Sanjo

**DON'T MISS THE
NEXT ISSUE!**



SAMURAI'S BLOOD #6
ON SALE NOVEMBER 2011



NEAR DEATH #2
ON SALE NOW



INFINITE HORIZON #5
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THE VAULT #3
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He has nothing to lose.
But does he have the heart of a champion?

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story by BLAIR BUTLER
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