



BOOK 1
SIVIGIN VALLEY

CURTLY FERGUSON

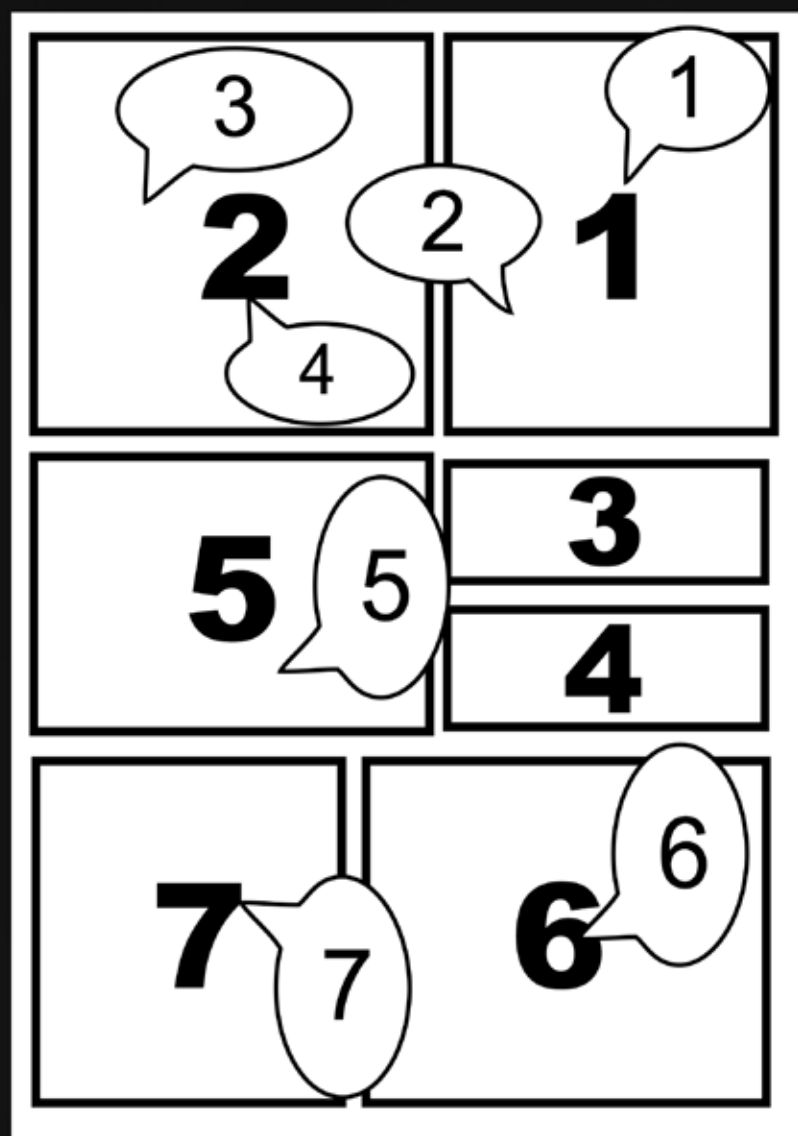
C.H. BARNETT

WAIT!

**THIS BOOK READS FROM
RIGHT TO LEFT!**



(FOLLOW ALONG THIS WAY)



In order to enjoy this book properly, read it **from right to left!** Japanese books read from right to left. we have formatted our manga in the traditional japanese way. We have done this for the familiarity of other manga fans, and to pay homage to the whole manga tradition in general!

THANK YOU!



AKIO

BOOK 1

SVIGIN VALLEY

CREATED BY
CURTLY FERGUSON
C.H. BARNETT

A
DREAM

BAKED
PRODUCTION

STAFF CREDITS
C.M. BARNETT
CURTLY FERGUSON
C.H. BARNETT

VISIT US AT
DREAMBAKED.COM

AKIO
BOOK 1
DREAMBAKED
DIGITAL EDITION

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This is a work of fiction.
Names, characters, places, and
incidents are used fictitiously.
Any resemblance to actual
events, locales, or persons
is entirely coincidental

RATED
12
TEEN

This volume contains graphic
scenes of fantasy violence, &
Alcohol and drug references

Author's Note

I can't say how excited I am to have finally finished creating book 1 of AKIO, and found time to write this note to you. This manga was inspired by a dream to add something new to the manga industry that will inspire people in the same way I was. A dream to create something I can be proud of.

That dream has been made a reality by the people around me that have invested their time and effort into helping and without them involved this wouldn't have been possible. So to those people I thank you, and I greatly appreciate you. I hope you all enjoy reading, and stick around for more AKIO!

Big up Femi and Moses Mckenzie, and Calvin Bennett for their early input and encouragement. Much love to the dons at Dreambaked Studio who went, and continue to go above and beyond to bring this project to life!

BLESS.
-Curtly Ferguson



(Putting in groundwork, fronting in a shop in Japan, the mecca of manga, with the first release of AKIO. Respect to the dons that came with me and helped out!)



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CHAPTER 1: READY OR NOT



You must see...

There is much more to this world than meets the eye.
What you can and cannot see in this world is limited
to the breadth and strength of your mind.

You must understand...


THE SOUL is where the spirits of light and shadow reside.
The symphony of life and soul flows through our world eternally.
It's power is magnificent, stateless and subjective.

You must control...

Your **MIND** is **THE BRIDGE** between this realm and the soul's.
you must build your bridge strong in order to harness and
use the power of the soul. For weak bridges will crumble.




DALOS




DALOS IS A COMPLEX AND UNFORGIVING LAND.
RAVAGED BY ENDLESS WARS BETWEEN
THE 7 KINGDOMS THAT RULE.
INVASION FROM DISTANT NATIONS ARE FREQUENT.

MYSTERIOUS, AND MURDEROUS
CREATURES TERRORIZE THE COUNTRY.



THE LIGHT OF THE SOUL GUIDED
THE PEOPLE THROUGH THE DARKNESS.



Over countless years, the knowledge and understanding of the Soul's power became greater, and more refined.

Through the understanding of the soul, the Martial Arts were formed.

The people used the Martial Arts as a shield. Savage warrior tribes could not harass them. Nor could rich and powerful monarchies subjugate them.



And all the other evil that haunted the people was repelled.



THE ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE SOUL, AND THE MARTIAL ARTS STYLES WAS RECORDED CAREFULLY OVER MANY YEARS. WRITTEN IN THE BOOKS AND SCROLLS OF HISTORY THROUGHOUT THE AGES. THESE TEXTS WERE KEPT IN THE 7 GREAT LIBRARIES ACROSS DALOS. PROTECTED BY THE MOST POWERFUL SERVANTS OF THE MONARCHIES, AND THE STRONGEST MEMBERS OF THE CLANS.

PROPER TRAINING IN THE CONTROL AND USE OF THE SOUL WAS REQUIRED BEFORE PUTTING CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE INTO PRACTICE. FOR IT COULD END IN TRAGEDY FOR AN UNREADY STUDENT. THIS IS WHY THE KNOWLEDGE WAS CAREFULLY PROTECTED.

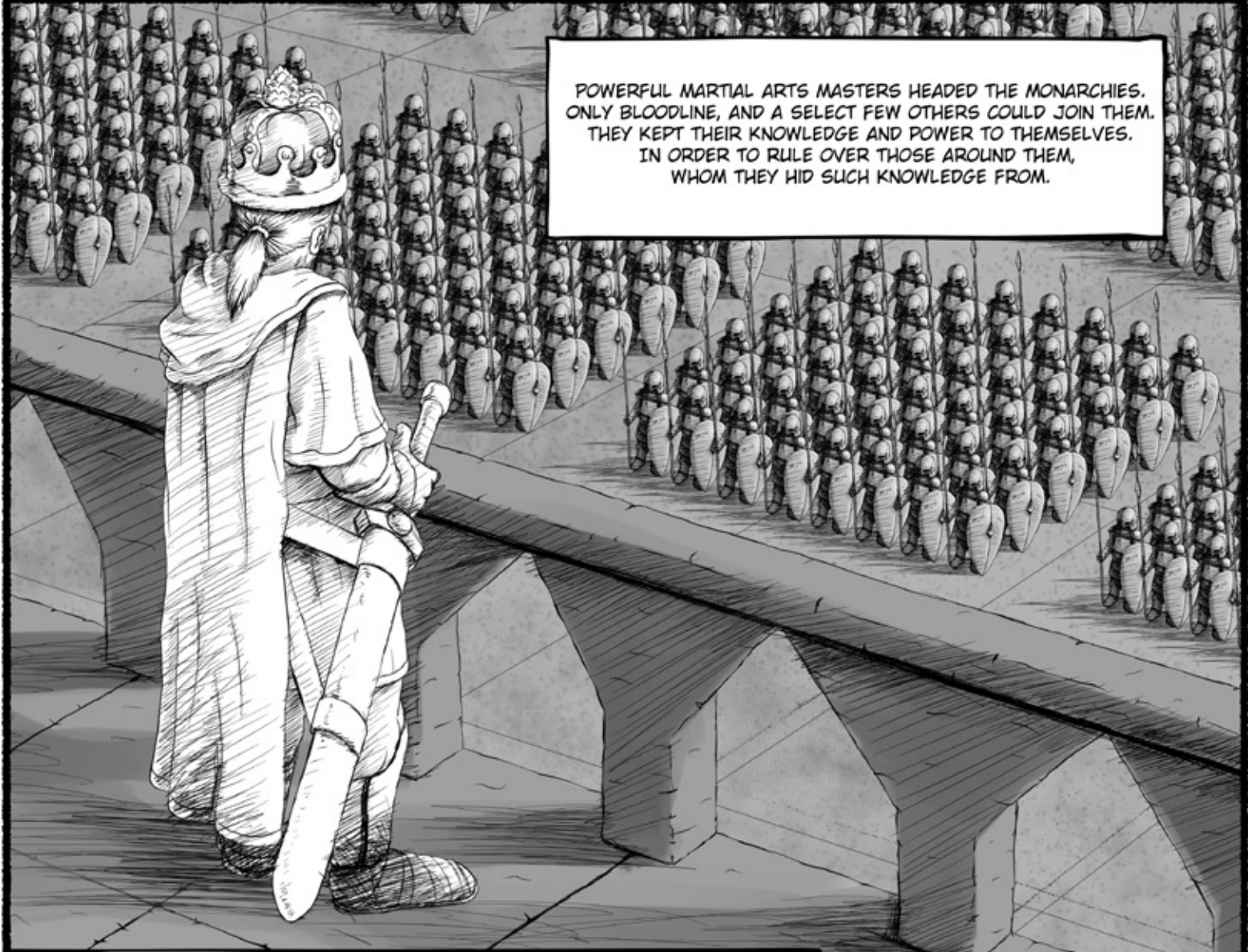
THERE EVEN EXISTED KNOWLEDGE THAT SHOULDN'T BE REVEALED TO ANYBODY. FOR IF PUT IN TO PRACTICE, DEATH AND CATASTROPHE WILL COVER ALL OF DALOS.



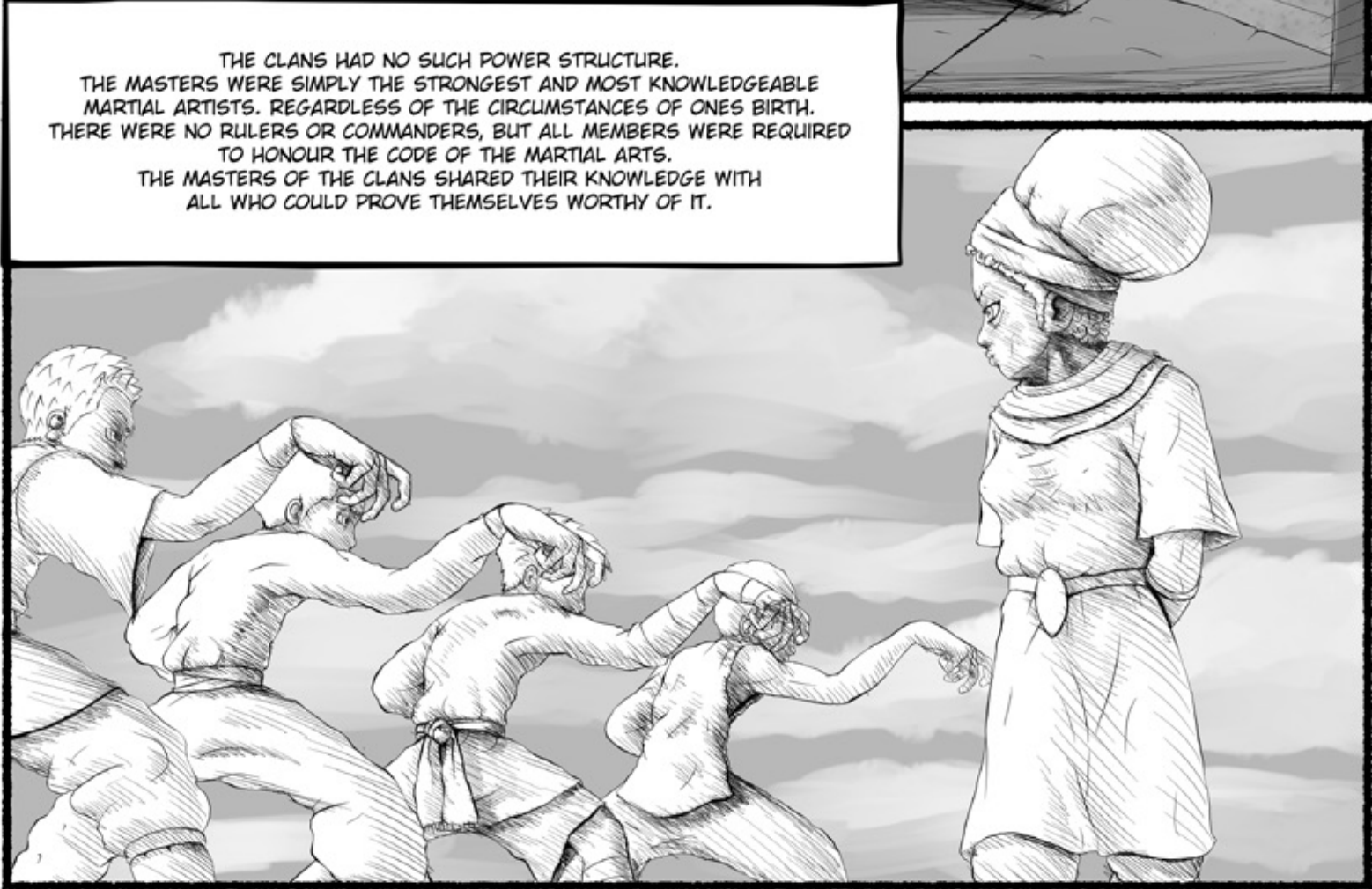
OVER THE COURSE OF TIME, NUMEROUS MARTIAL ARTS STYLES WERE DEVELOPED, WITH THEIR OWN PATH TO THE SOUL. SOME STYLES GAINED SO MUCH REPUTE, THAT POWERFUL CLANS AND MONARCHIES ROSE UP AROUND THEM.



NO STYLE IS STRONGER THAN ANOTHER BY DEFAULT. A STYLE'S POWER IS SOLELY DEPENDANT ON THE USERS UNDERSTANDING OF THE SOUL.



POWERFUL MARTIAL ARTS MASTERS HEADED THE MONARCHIES. ONLY BLOODLINE, AND A SELECT FEW OTHERS COULD JOIN THEM. THEY KEPT THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND POWER TO THEMSELVES. IN ORDER TO RULE OVER THOSE AROUND THEM, WHOM THEY HID SUCH KNOWLEDGE FROM.



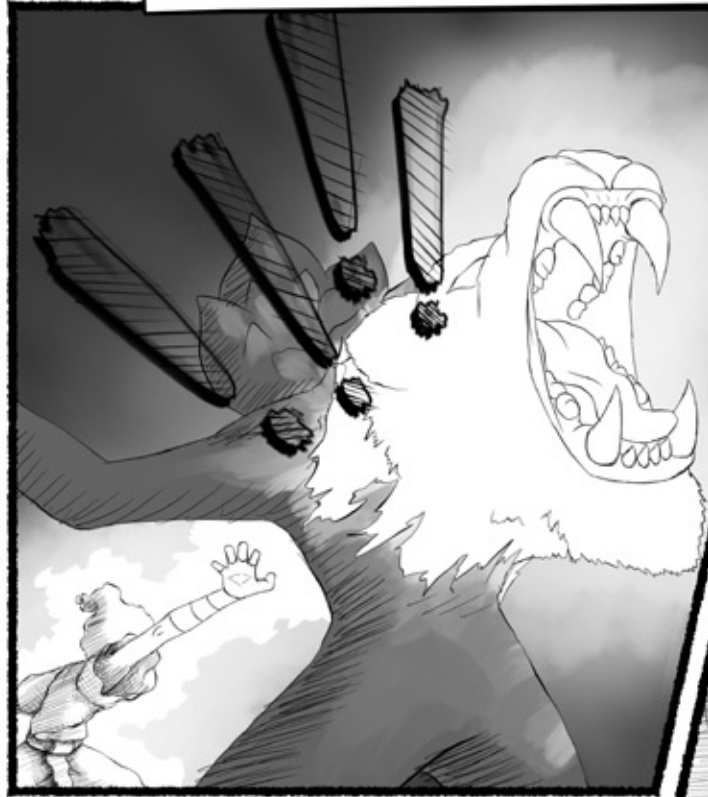
THE CLANS HAD NO SUCH POWER STRUCTURE. THE MASTERS WERE SIMPLY THE STRONGEST AND MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE MARTIAL ARTISTS. REGARDLESS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF ONE'S BIRTH. THERE WERE NO RULERS OR COMMANDERS, BUT ALL MEMBERS WERE REQUIRED TO HONOUR THE CODE OF THE MARTIAL ARTS. THE MASTERS OF THE CLANS SHARED THEIR KNOWLEDGE WITH ALL WHO COULD PROVE THEMSELVES WORTHY OF IT.



MANY MONARCHIES WANTED TO REMOVE THE MARTIAL ARTS CLANS. FOR THE CLANS CREATED EDUCATED PEOPLE, WHO NEED NOT LIVE AS SERVANTS AND SLAVES OF THE MONARCHIES.

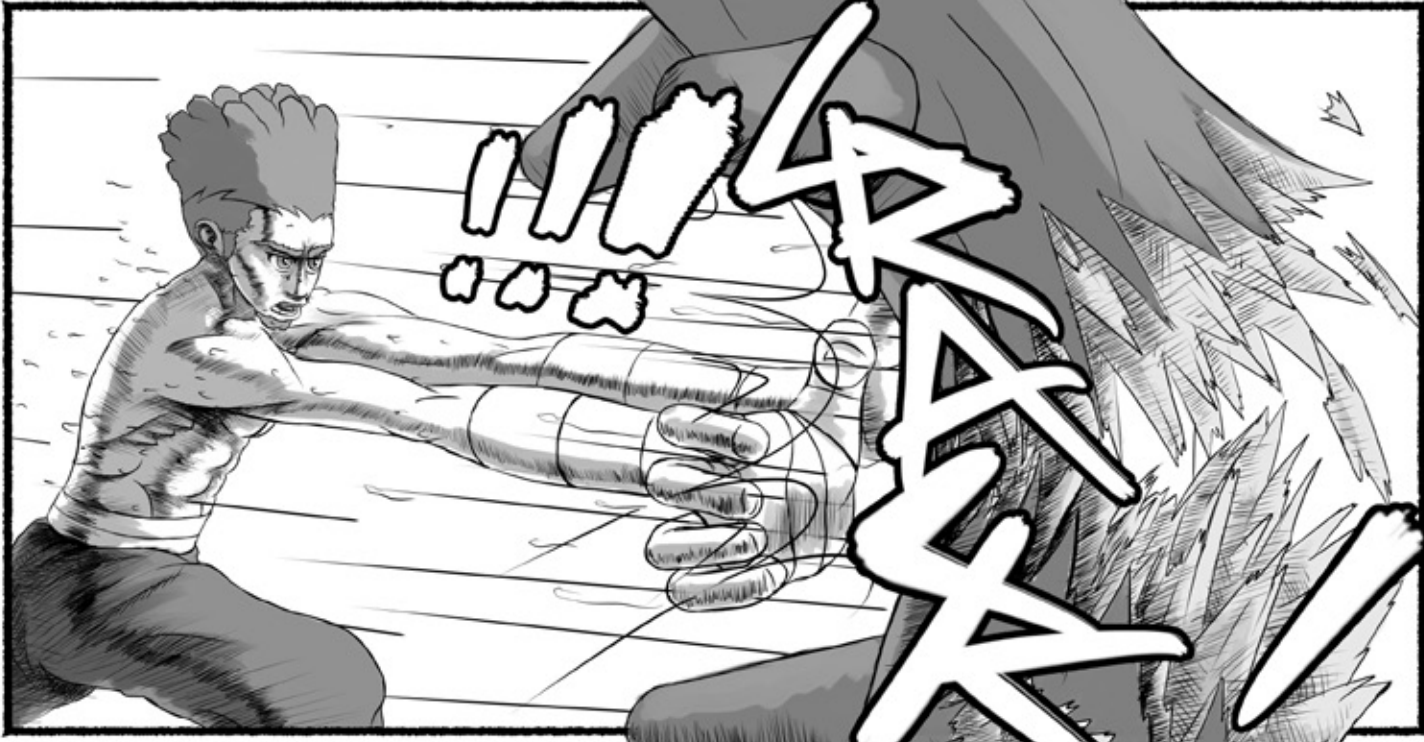
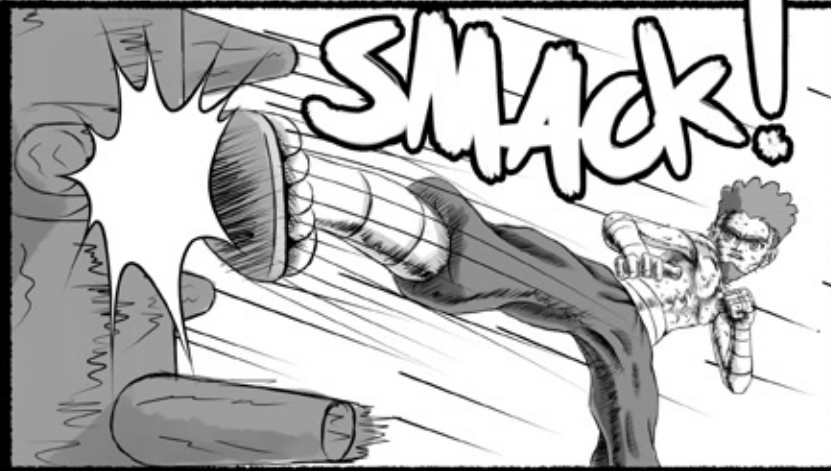


THEY DID NOT NEED THE PROTECTION OF THE MONARCHIES AND THEIR SOLDIERS. SO THEY DID NOT NEED TO SERVE THEM.



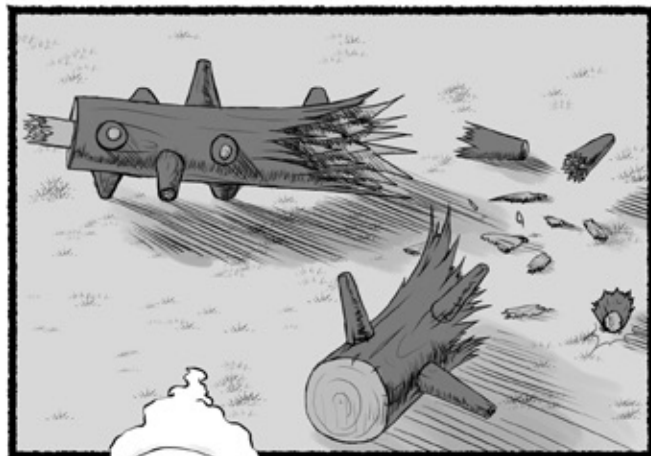


PRESENT DAY.





Phew!



Good Akio,
you are becoming
stronger everyday.



Thanks Gramps,
but did I have to
do it 101 times?



THOSE
TRAINING
DUMMIES
AREN'T
CHEAP
YOU
KNOW!!

SORRY



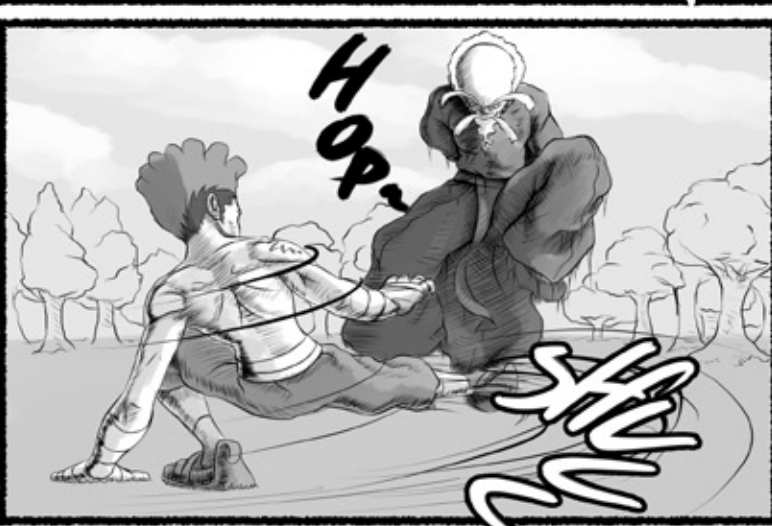
Akio?

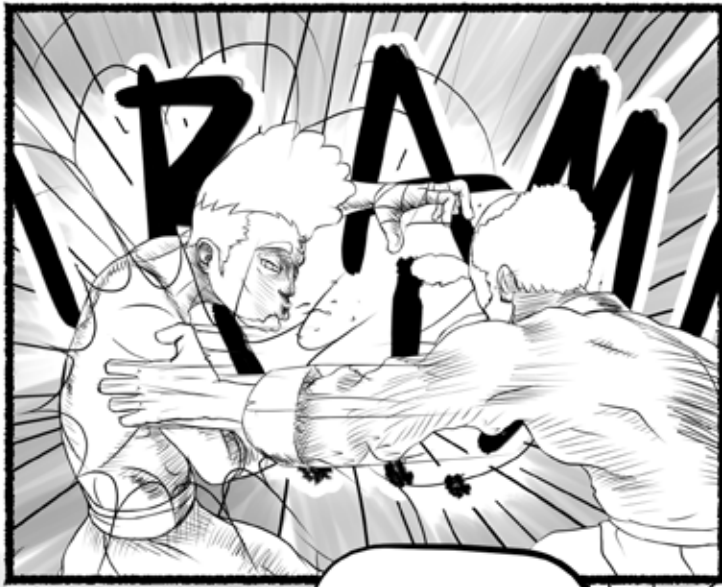
Yeah?



**THIS TIME...
THIS TIME,
I'LL LAND ONE!**







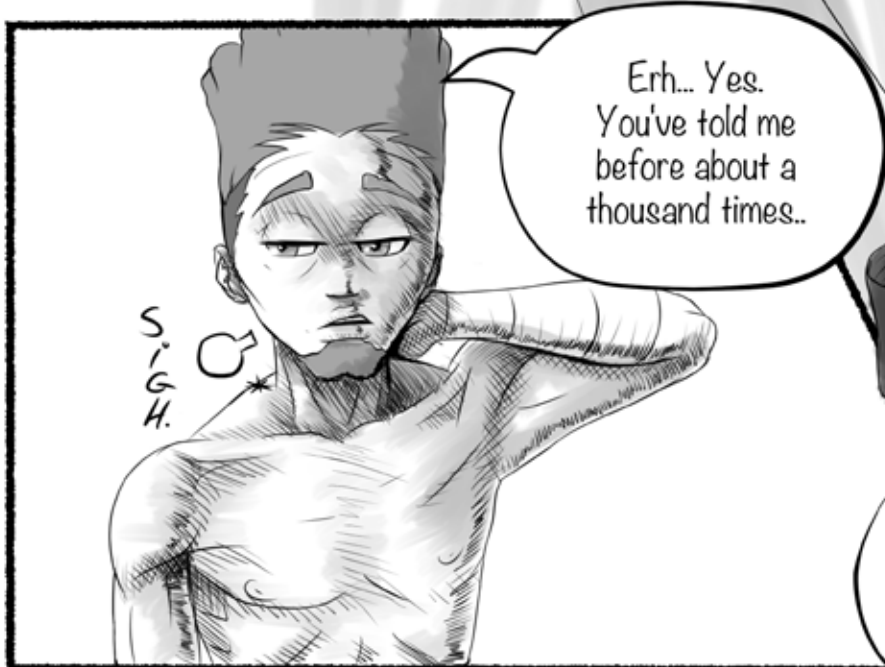
As usual Gramps,
you make it
look effortless.



As I keep telling you, Akio.
Physical strength has little to
do with the power of the **soul**.
You must focus and utilize your style.
For that is of greater significance.
Take for example,
the styles of the Gorilla and the Mantis.



I have! Yet you still don't listen,
so I'll tell you again.
I never had this problem with your
brother and sister



Erh... Yes.
You've told me
before about a
thousand times..



Martial arts styles are manifestations of the soul. Not physical weapons.
A strong martial artist is one that has great knowledge
and understanding of the mind and soul.
The individual's ability to combine their own style and soul
is what will determine the outcome of a fight.



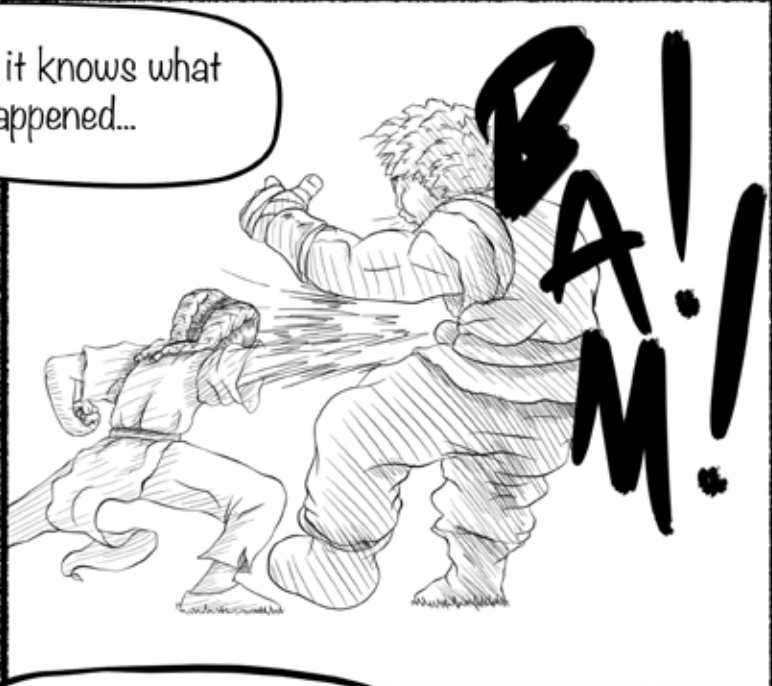
Should the Gorilla fail to
be vigilant in combat...

The brute strength of the Gorilla style
martial artist will not save them from the
speed and precision of a Mantis style fighter.



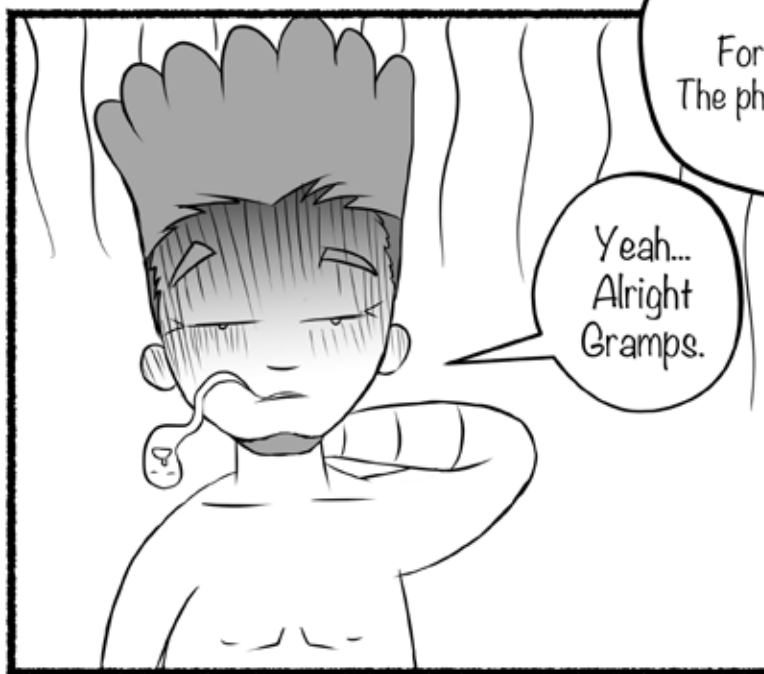


Before it knows what happened...

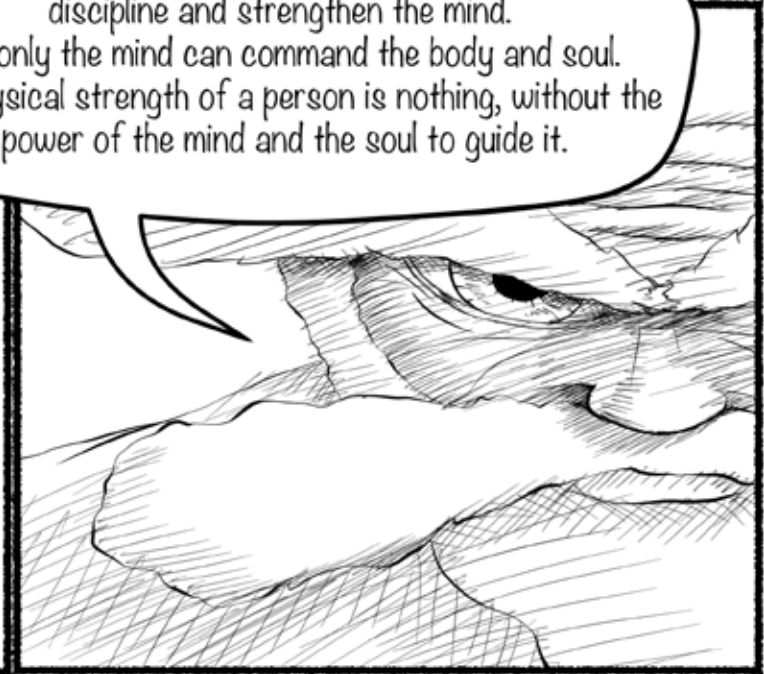


...It will be defeated.

The physical training we do is designed to discipline and strengthen the mind. For only the mind can command the body and soul. The physical strength of a person is nothing, without the power of the mind and the soul to guide it.



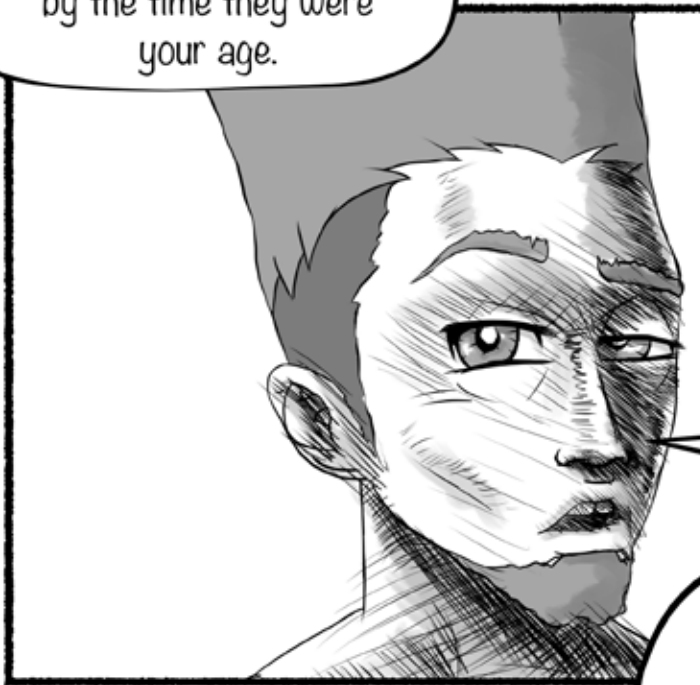
Yeah... Alright Gramps.





I certainly hope so, your brother and sister had a strong grasp on this by the time they were your age.

What were they like? I can't remember them clearly. You always had me studying those books, while they spent all their time training with you. Even though we lived under the same roof, I don't remember seeing them much.



They too had to study reading and writing before practicing martial arts. Your brain is the most important muscle in your body, and must be exercised even harder than your body. But it was their decision to train so hard not mine. We all have our own paths. If they have kept training diligently they should be strong martial artists by now, capable of wielding power beyond measure.



Unlike You...



It's just taking me a little longer is all.
But i'll grow stronger than them.
I'll become the strongest master
of the dragon style the world has ever seen.

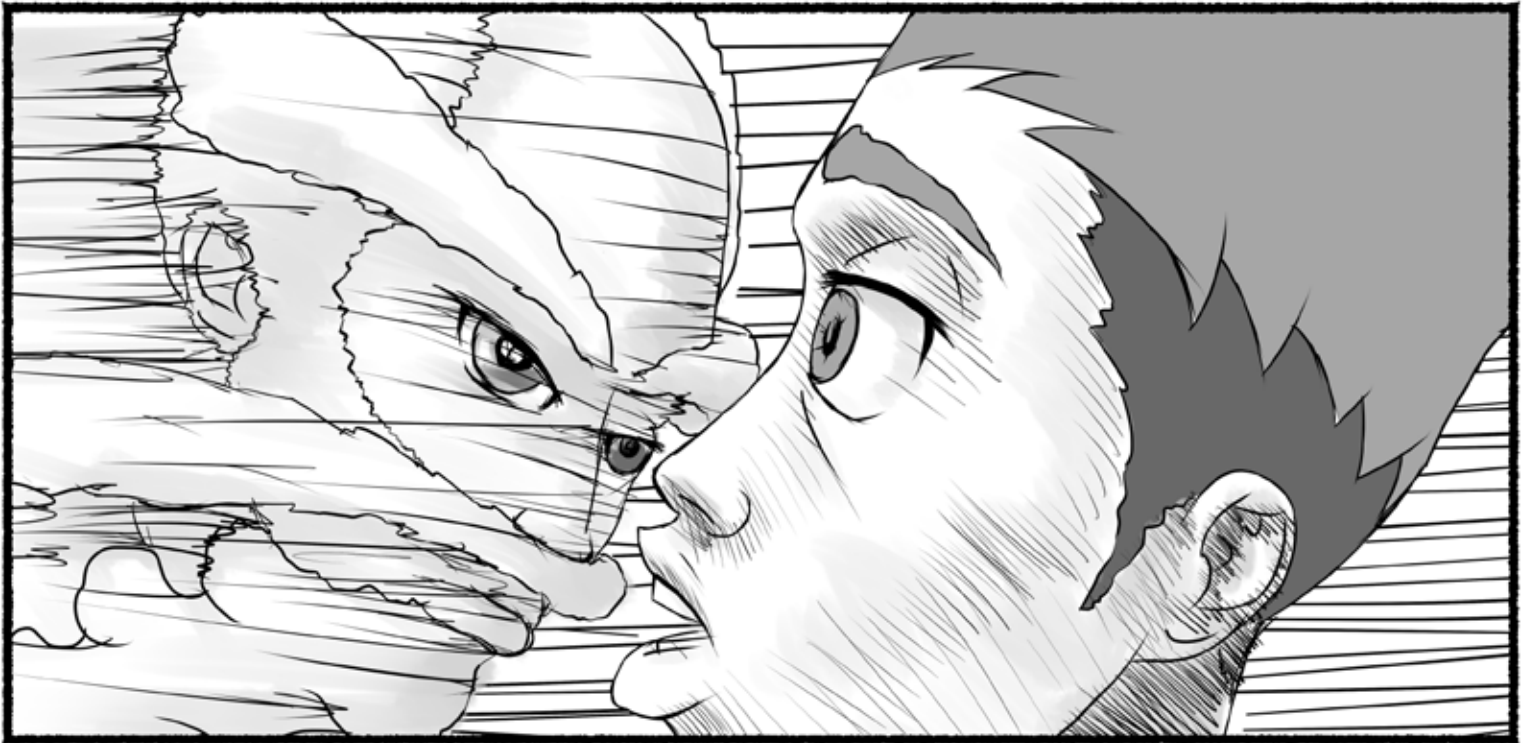
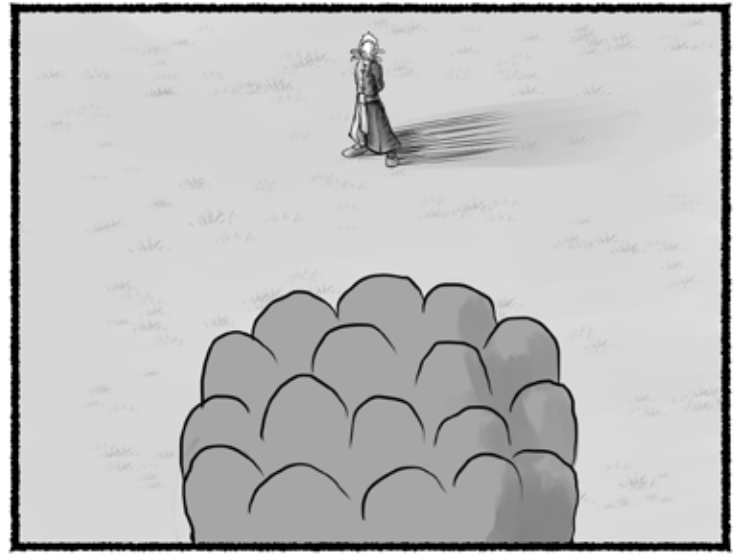
FWIP

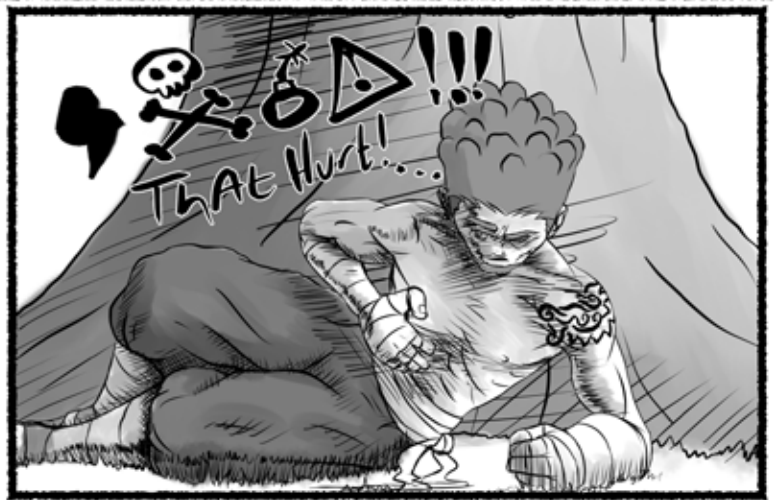
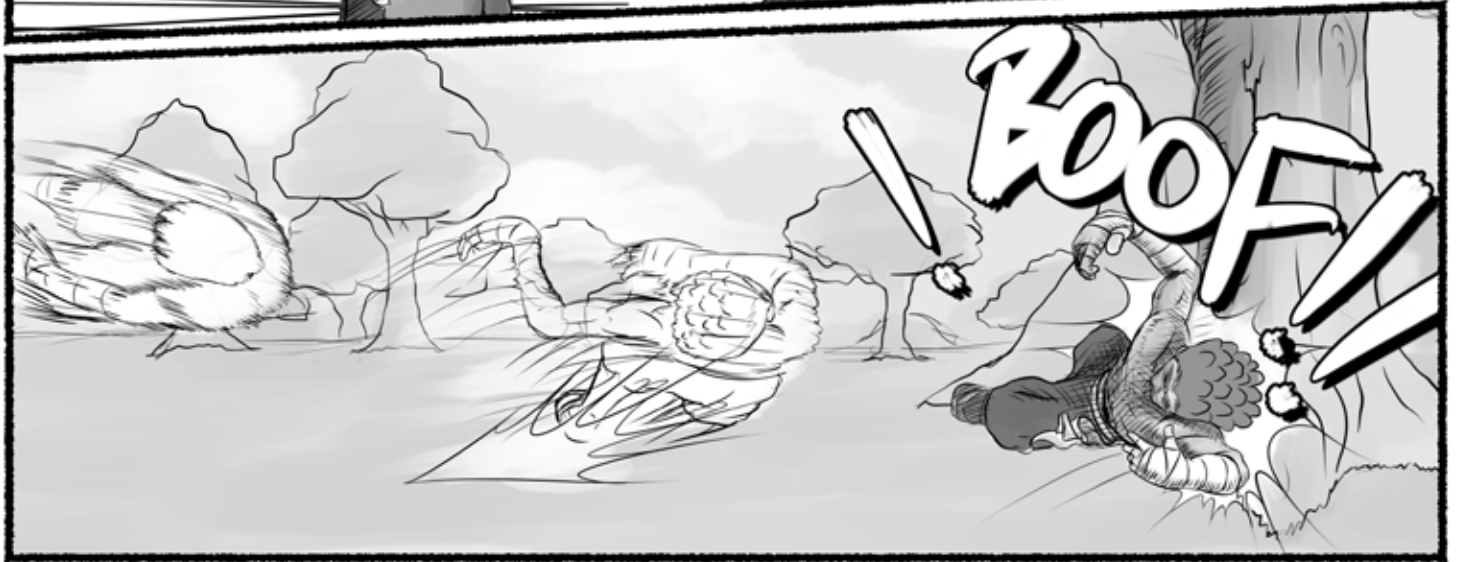
Fu Fu Fuu
perhaps..

perhaps
not...

But talk is
cheap Akio.

.....





Now he is strong enough. . .
I will show him
the power of the soul
In the form of the...

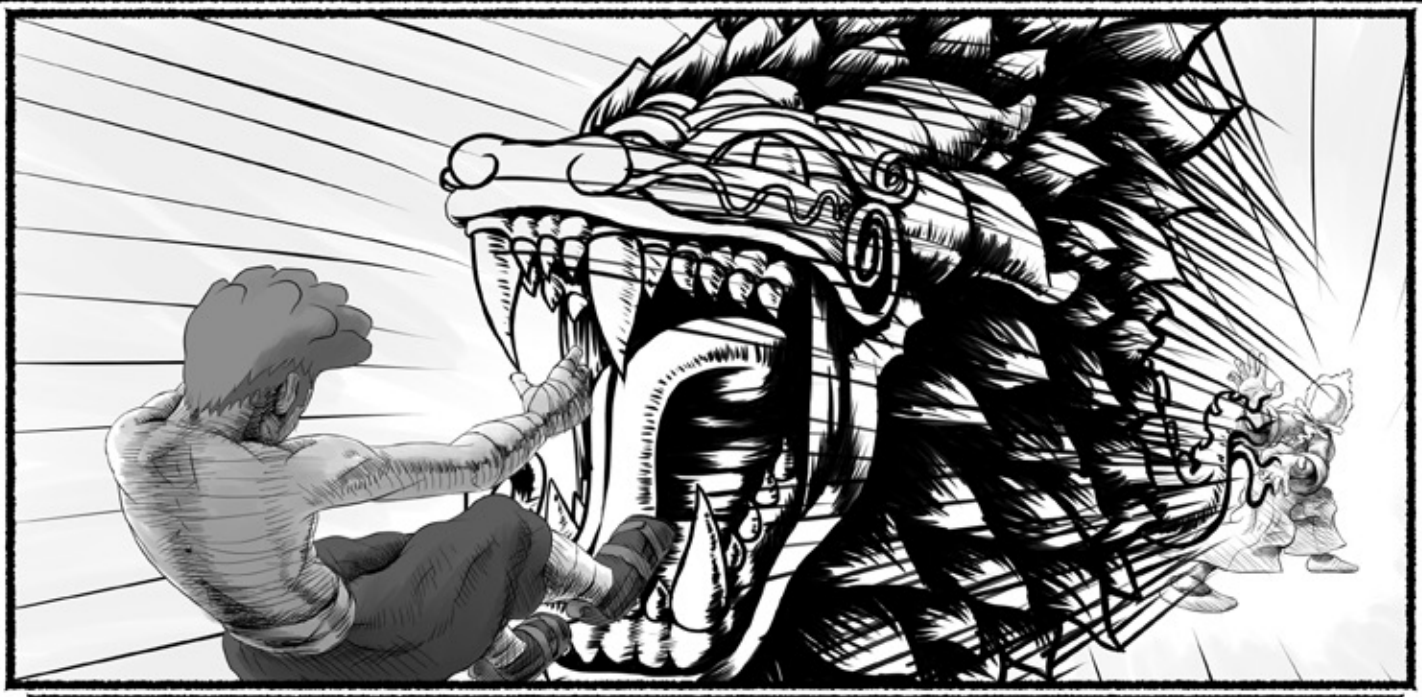




Something feels off



...Just Watch his movements carefully.
Guard and Counter...



HOW DO YOU DO THAT?!

Aah ha ha ha haa. Big bad Akio, floored by an attack that didn't even land!

No!
You definately
hit me!

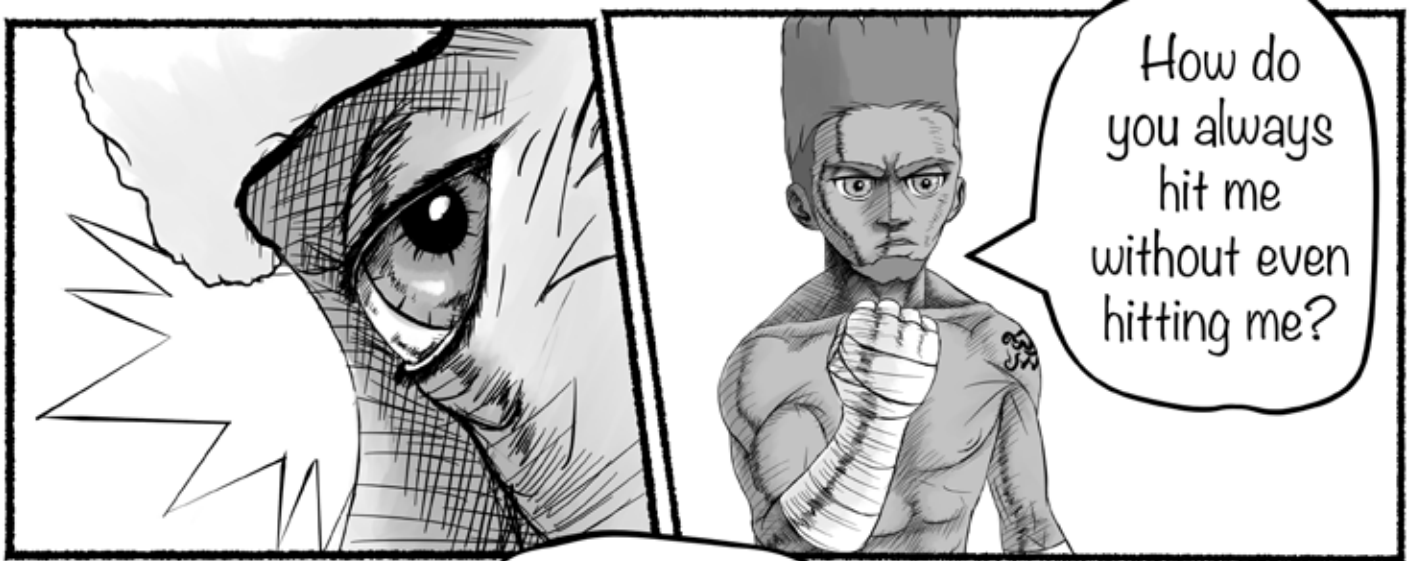
Well you
were out
well beyond
my reach,
So what
was it?

I don't know...
I couldn't
see it.
But I definitely
felt it...

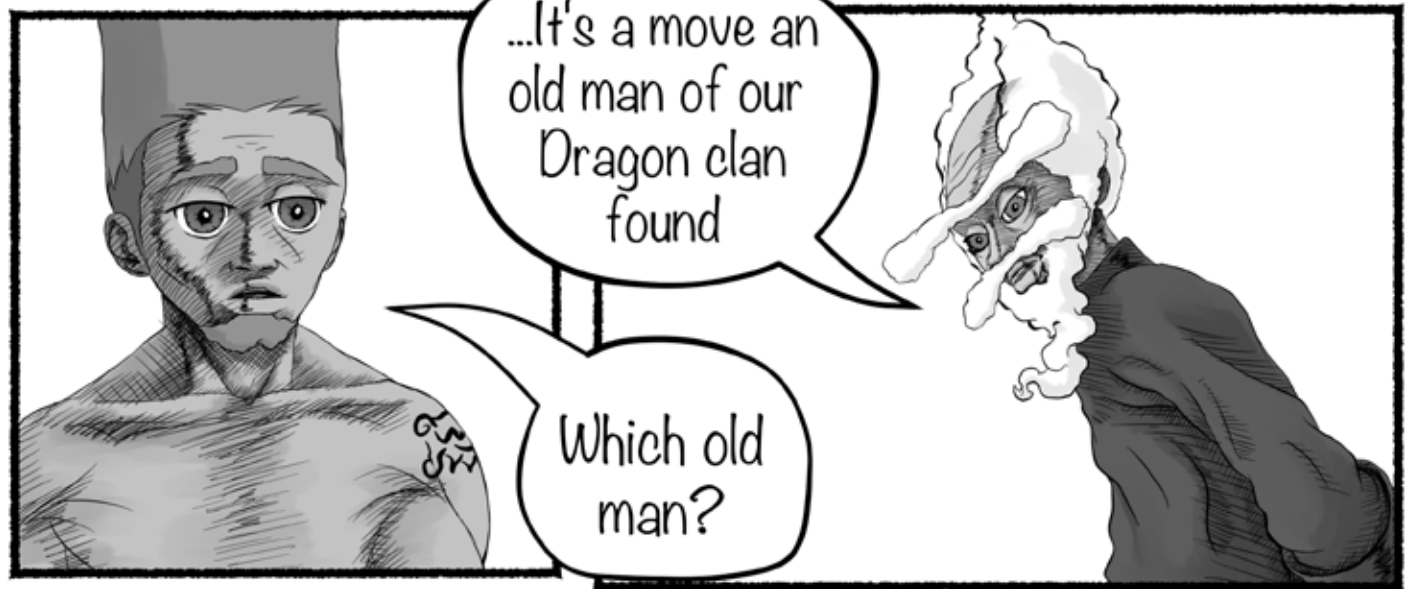
Wait
Gramps!

Interesting...
Let's end our
session there.
I'm starving!

STEP **STEP**

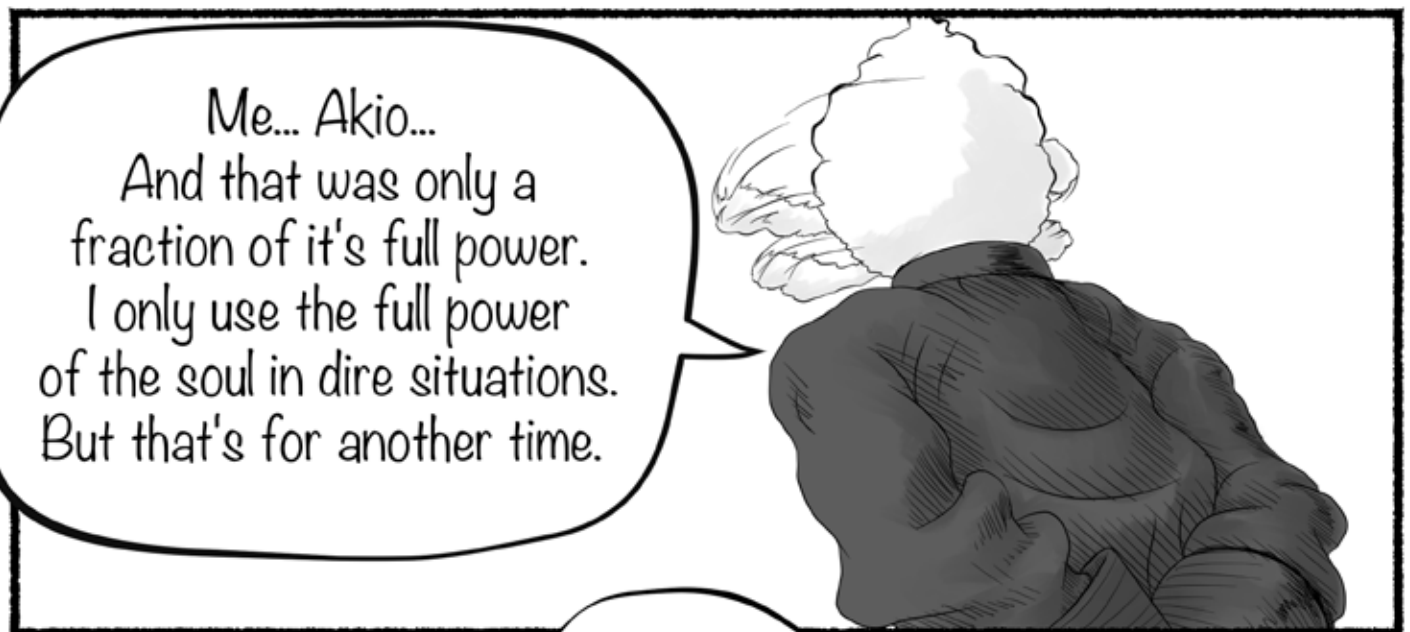


How do you always hit me without even hitting me?

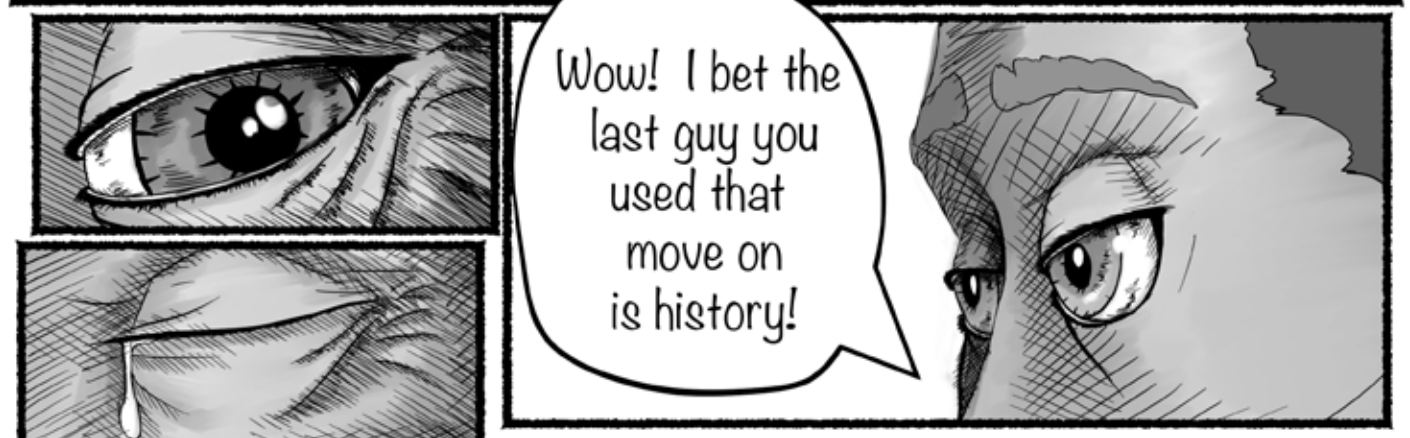


...It's a move an old man of our Dragon clan found


Which old man?




Me... Akio...
And that was only a fraction of it's full power. I only use the full power of the soul in dire situations. But that's for another time.




Wow! I bet the last guy you used that move on is history!



At one time I had many people under my protection. I had to use that move, and many others to defeat many enemies. But the last man I used them on is still out there.



How do you do it?
You have to show me!

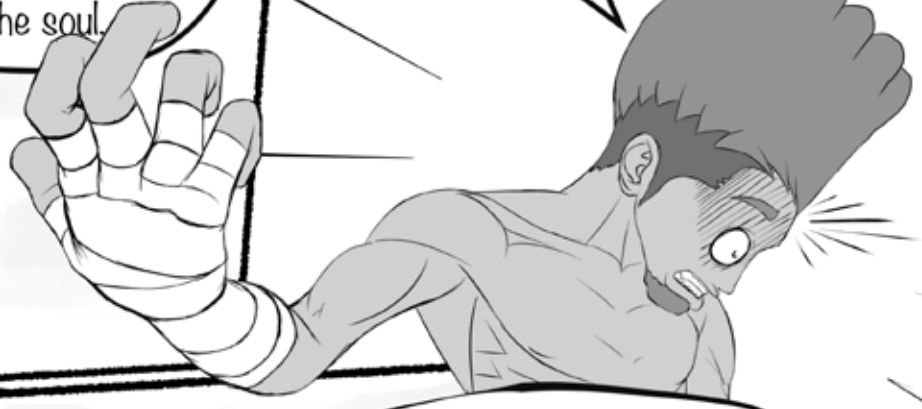


Soon Akio, but you aren't ready yet!



You are indeed very strong Akio! But physical strength alone will not permit you to use these kind of attacks. For these kinds of attacks come from the soul.

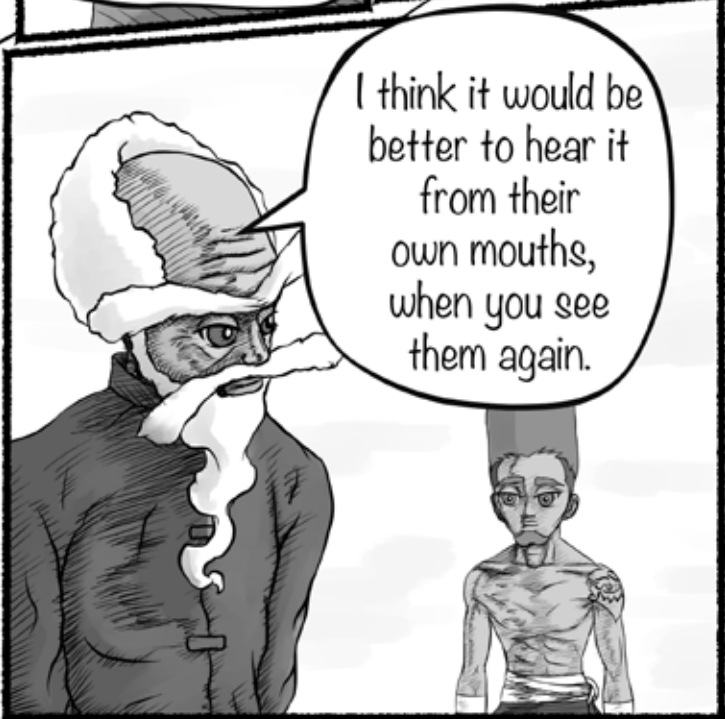
You're telling me, that after all of these years of training... I'm still not strong enough?!



...you can begin to project the power of the soul from your Martial Arts... But NOT before you are ready... As I always tell you.

...you must stay on the path of the **Dragon**, Akio. As you gain wisdom and experience on your journey down this path...


...Now, come let's go eat!




I think it would be better to hear it from their own mouths, when you see them again.




Hey Gramps! Why dont you tell me more about my brother and sister? Why did they leave?




Well, I think it would be just fine hearing it from you gramps!



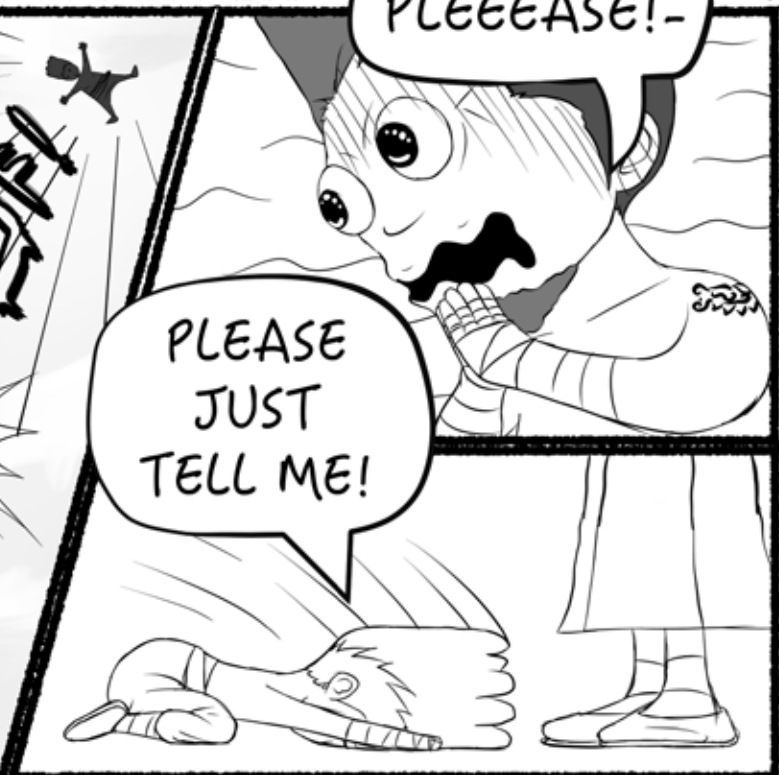
Oh, is that so? And if I Don't tell you?



You sure you want to find out, old man?



Fu fu fuuu! Sure! Why not?



PLEEEASE!-




GET UP! YOU FOOL!

PLEASE JUST TELL ME!




Arghhhhhhhh.....



Akio.
I could show you the move again and again,
every day,
for the next month and you still won't know
how to use it yourself.

These moves can only be found
within yourself, by yourself.
Through immense time and effort
in your work and training,
using wisdom and knowledge gained
in your life experience and meditation.
You will be able to reach into your soul
and bring forth these moves.



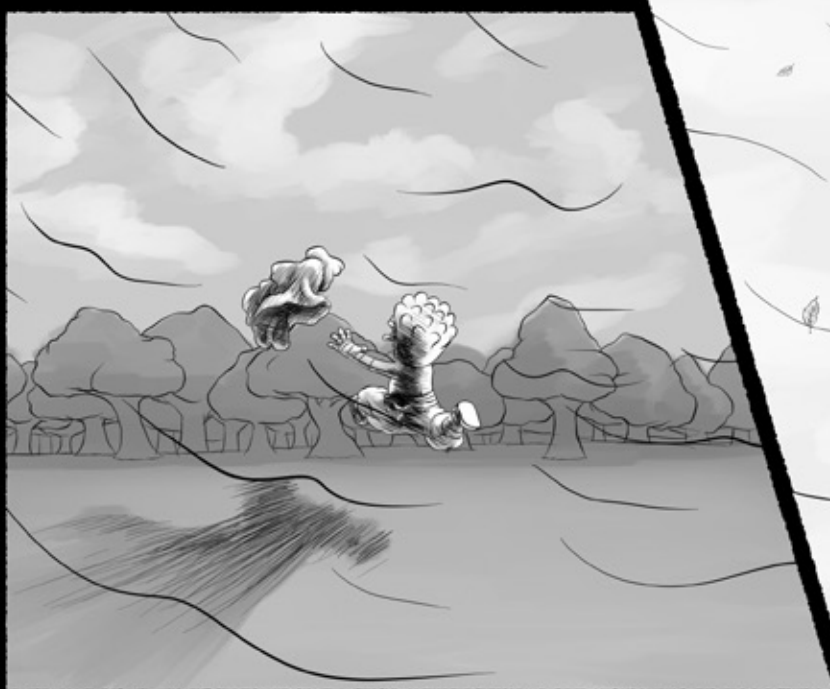
... What if I train extra hard...
Will you teach me
how to use that move?
... And tell me about my
brother and sister?

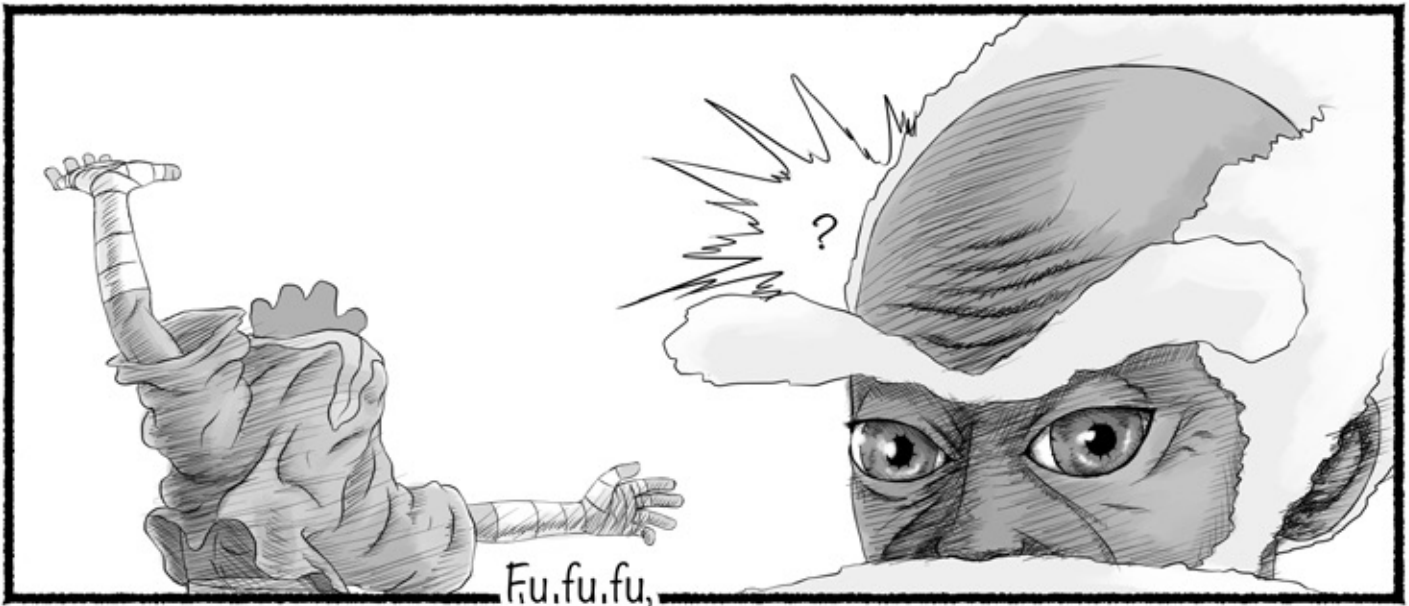
Have patience young man!
Your time will come.
Let's focus on your
development for now.



Alright...

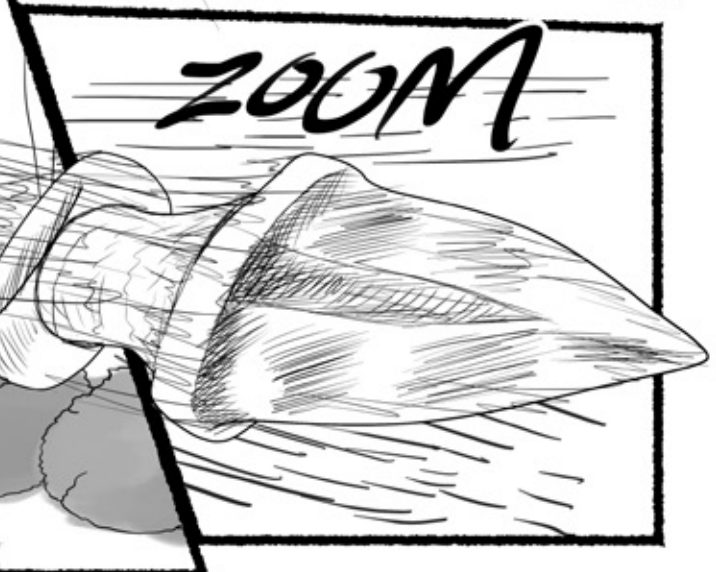
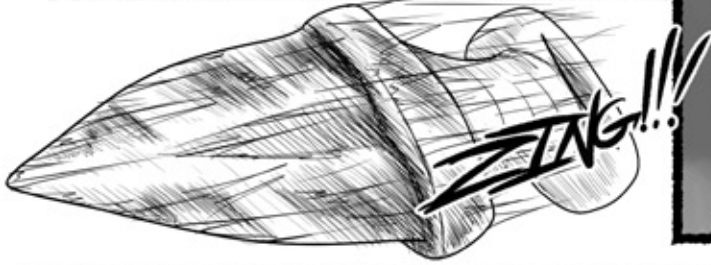
Now, catch
up to your
shirt and
meet me
inside for
dinner.





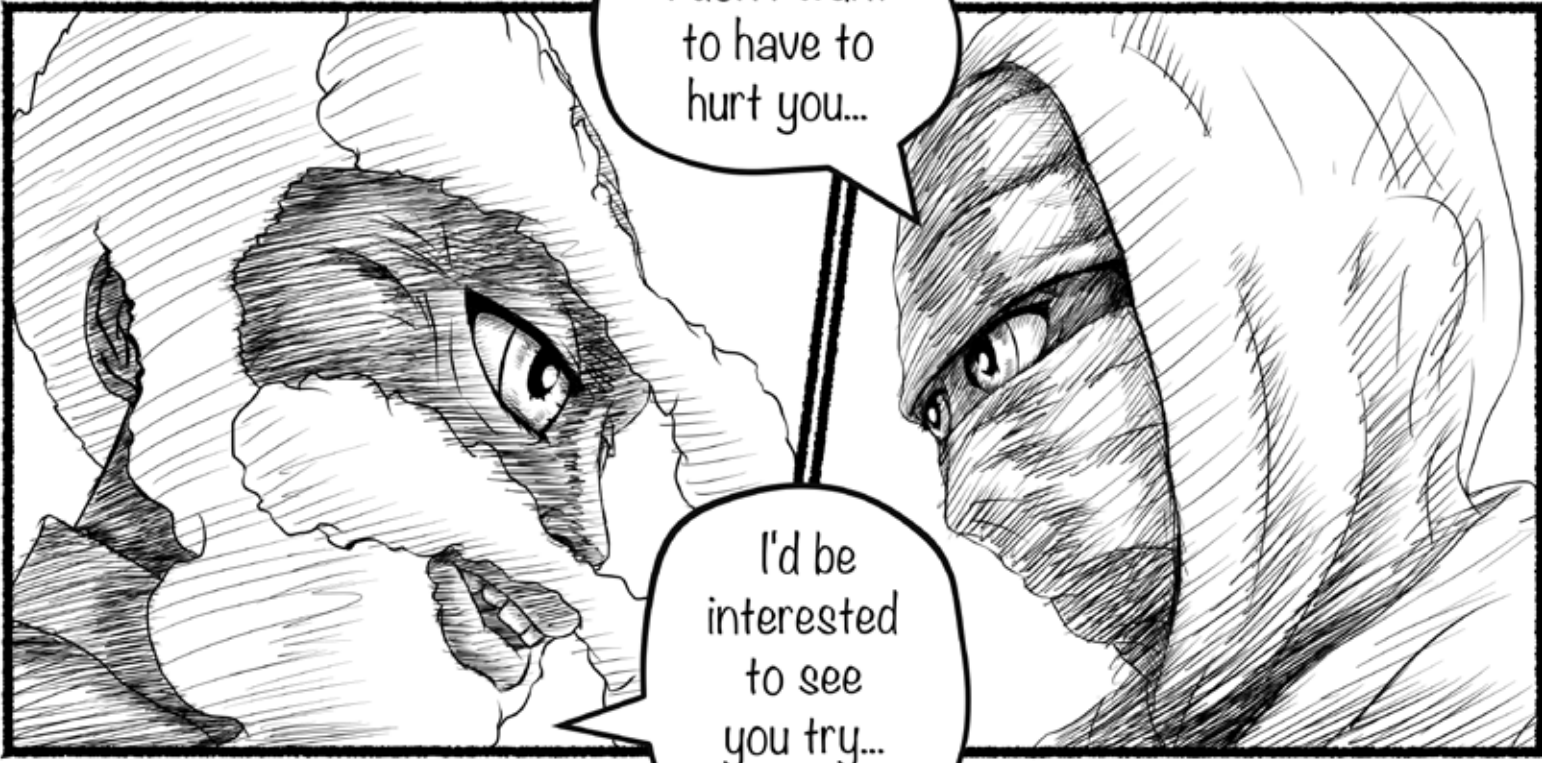
Fu.fu.fu,

It's been a while
since i've seen
some real action!



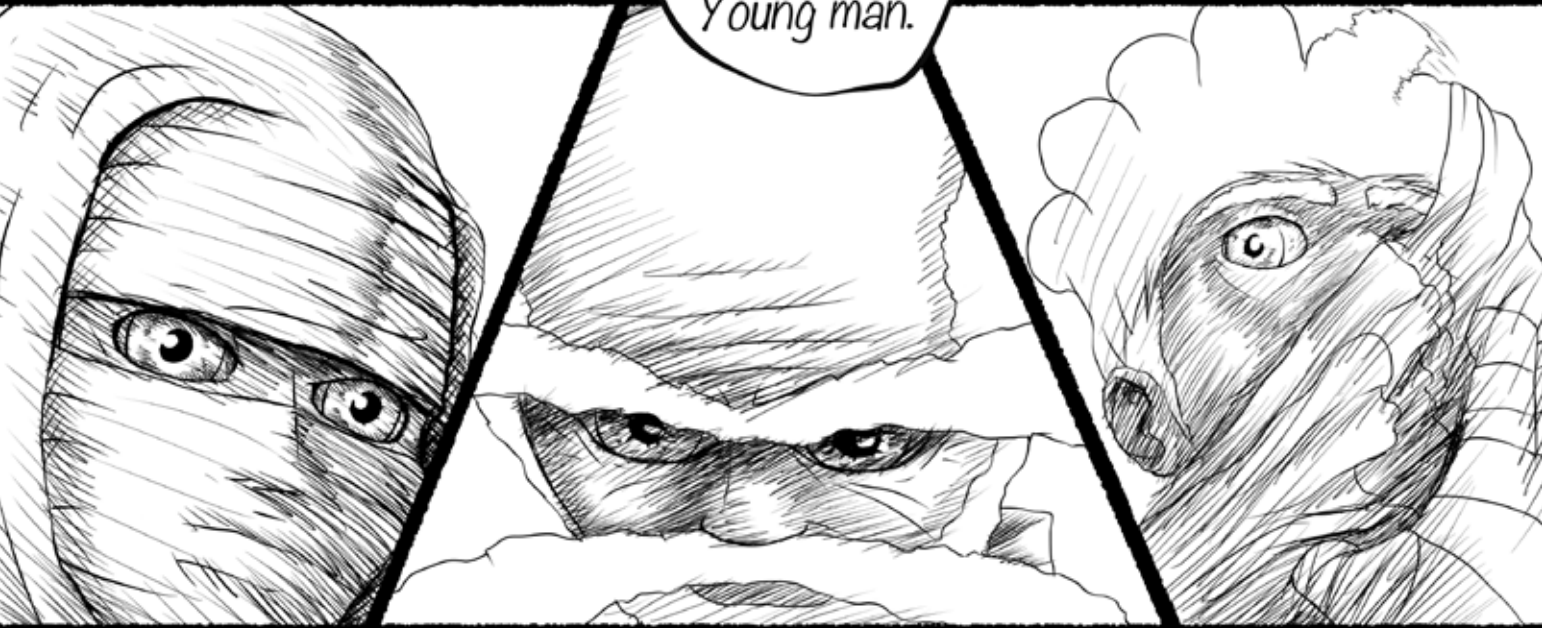



Hand it over,
old man!




I don't want
to have to
hurt you...

I'd be
interested
to see
you try...
Young man.





I won't say it again!
Hand over the gem or I'll
take it by force!

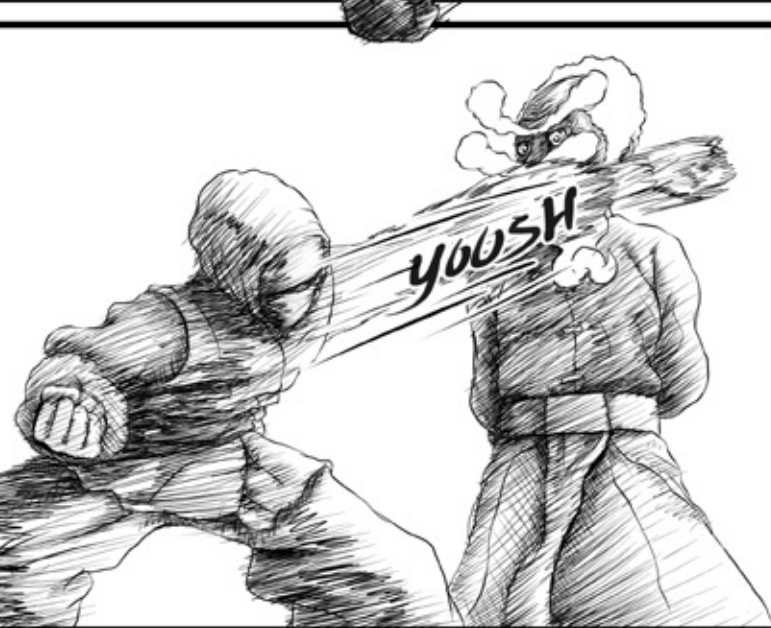
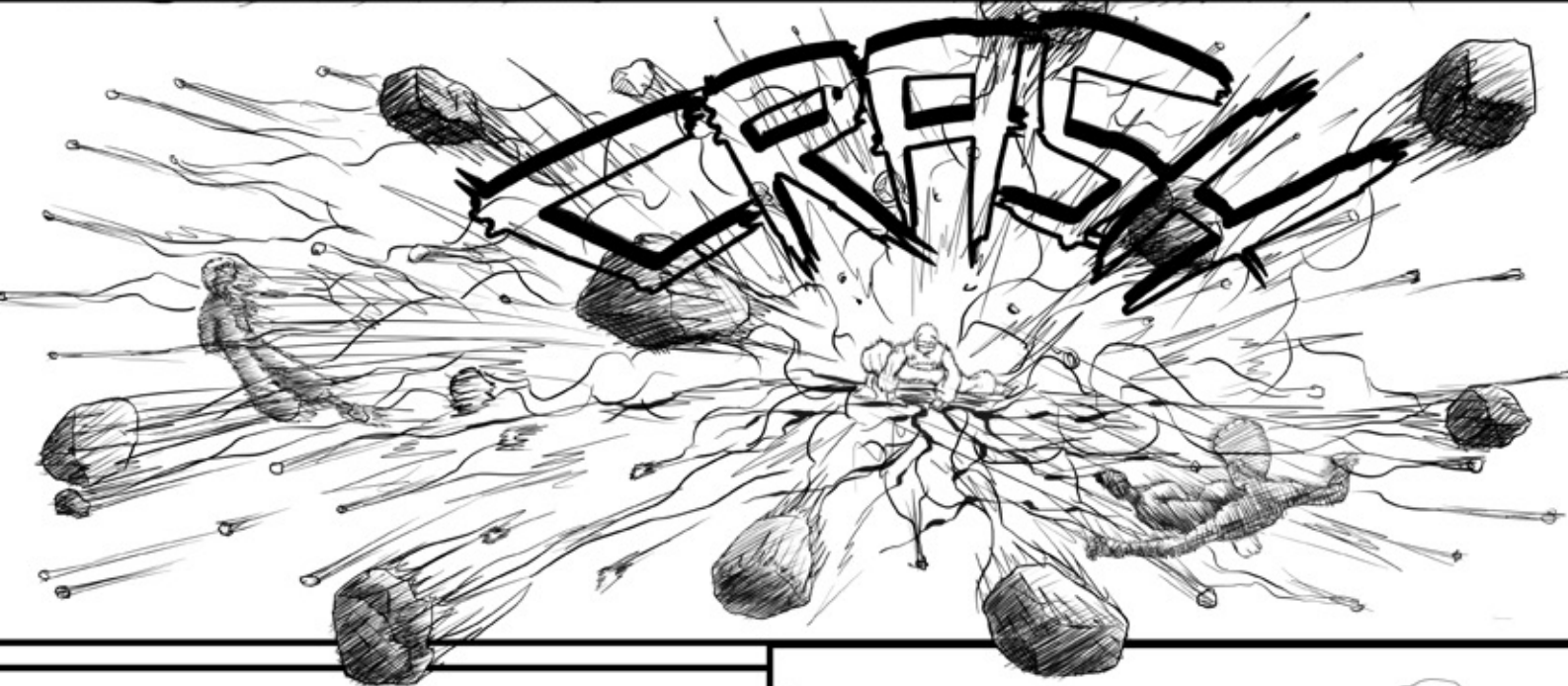


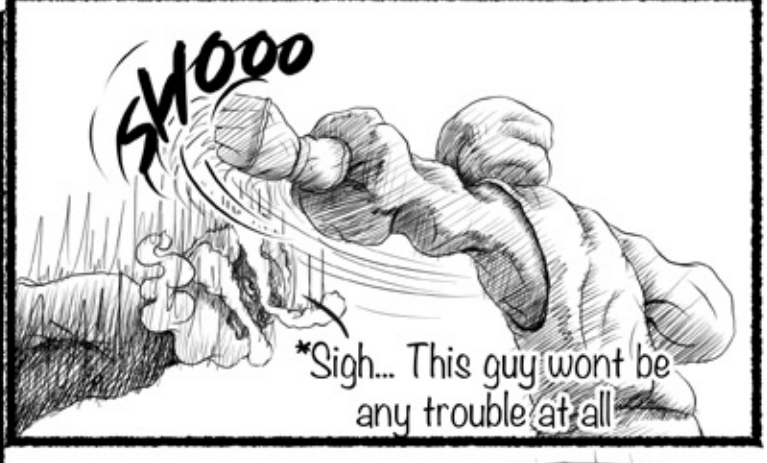
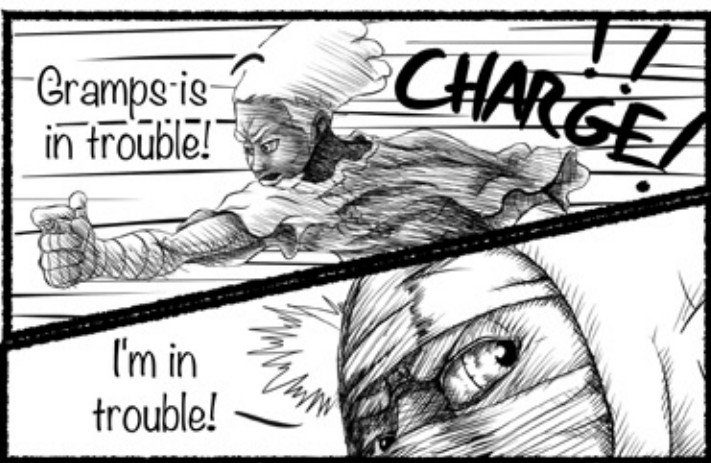
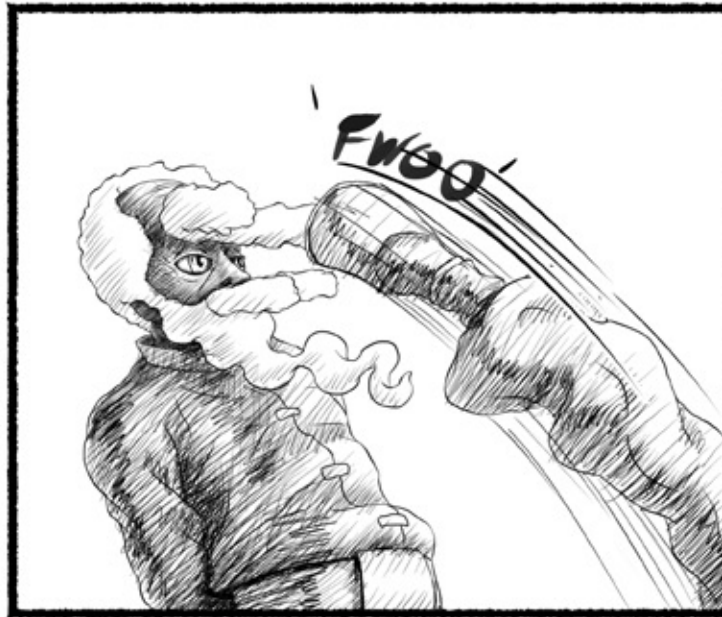
I wasn't expecting two of them...
No matter. I'll split them up and
make short work of them
one at a time.

BEETLE!!! AIR STRIKE!!!



Get ready
Akio!

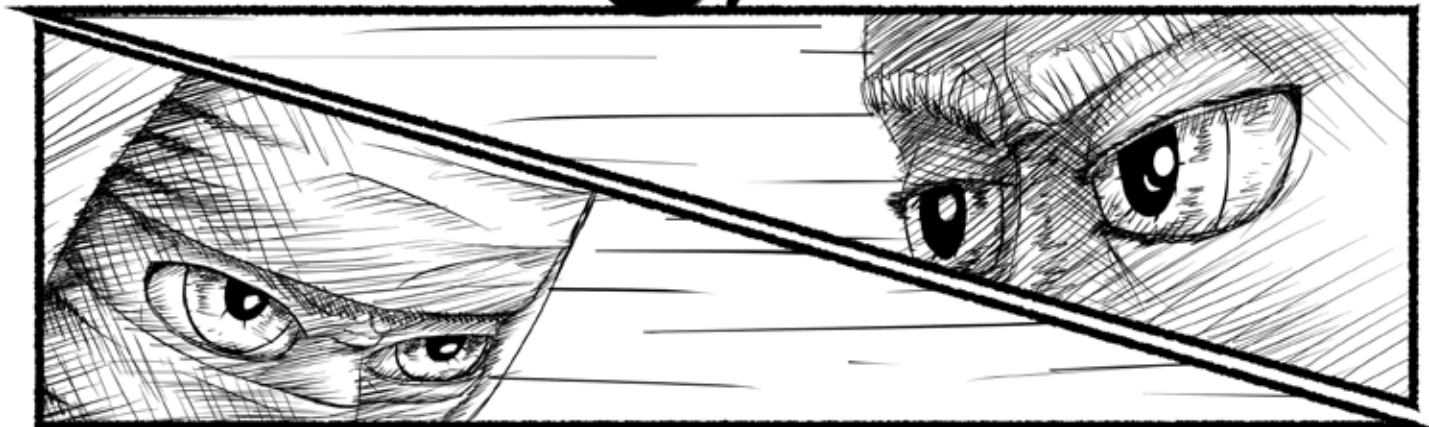


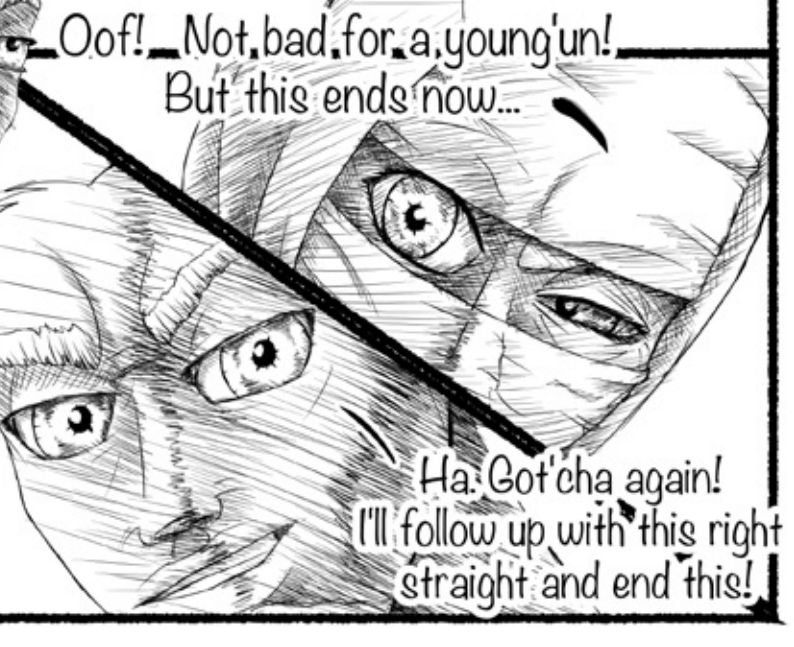
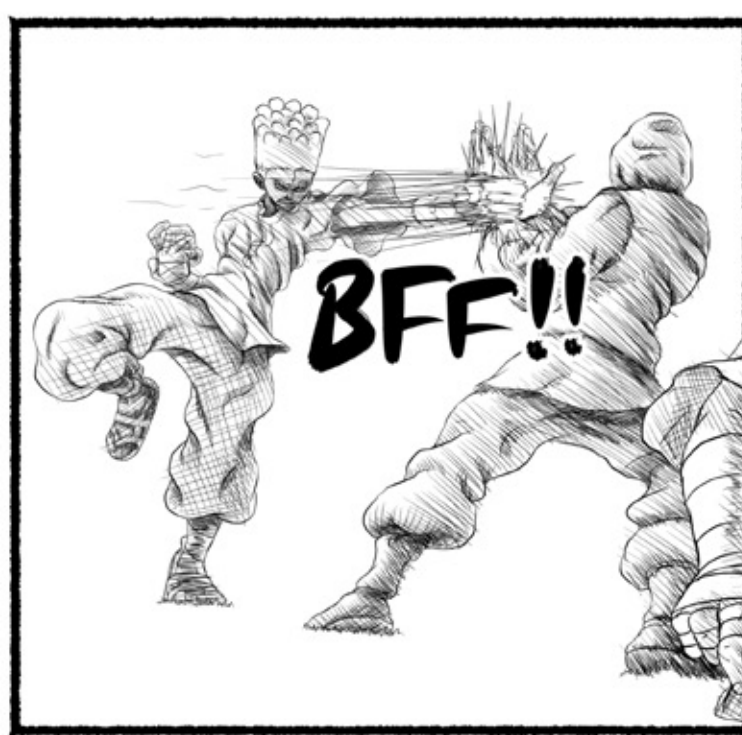


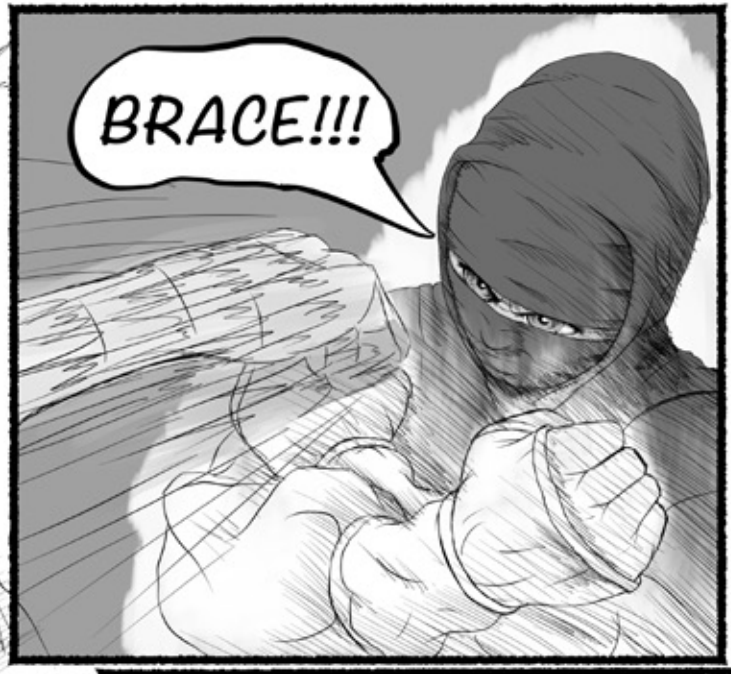


Eh!
I suppose the beating
he is about to get will be
a valuable lesson.

Akio! Wai-







I'm NOT playing around!

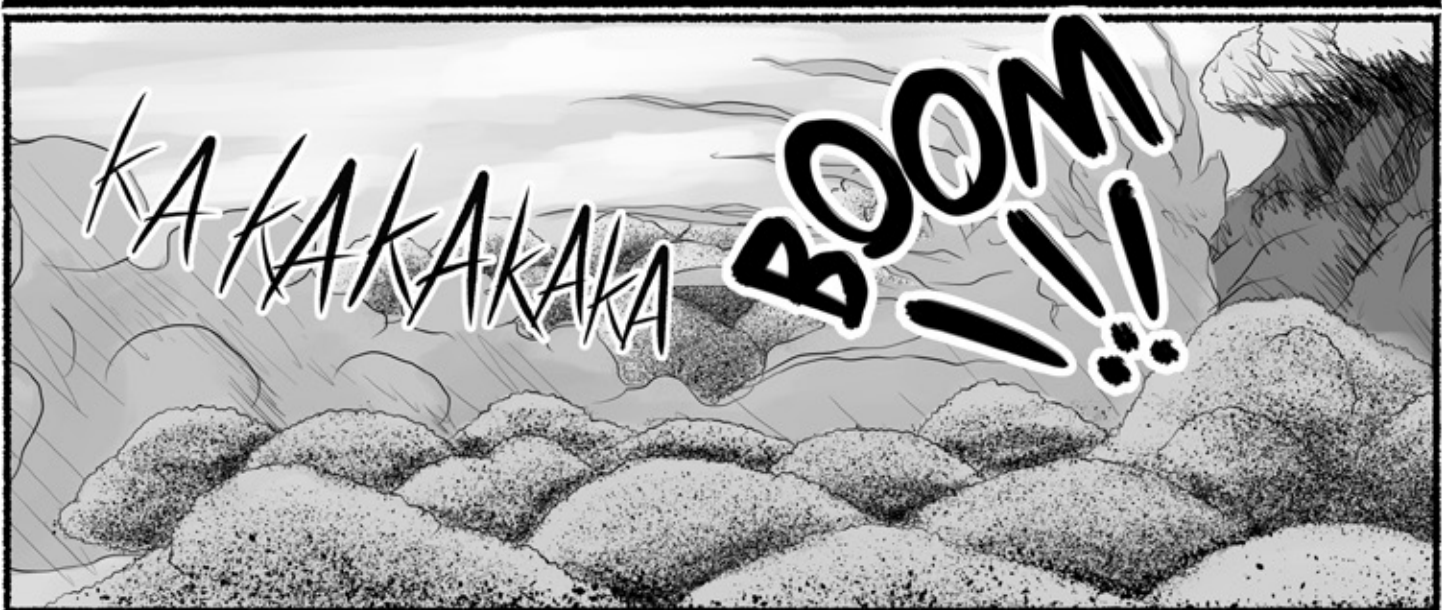
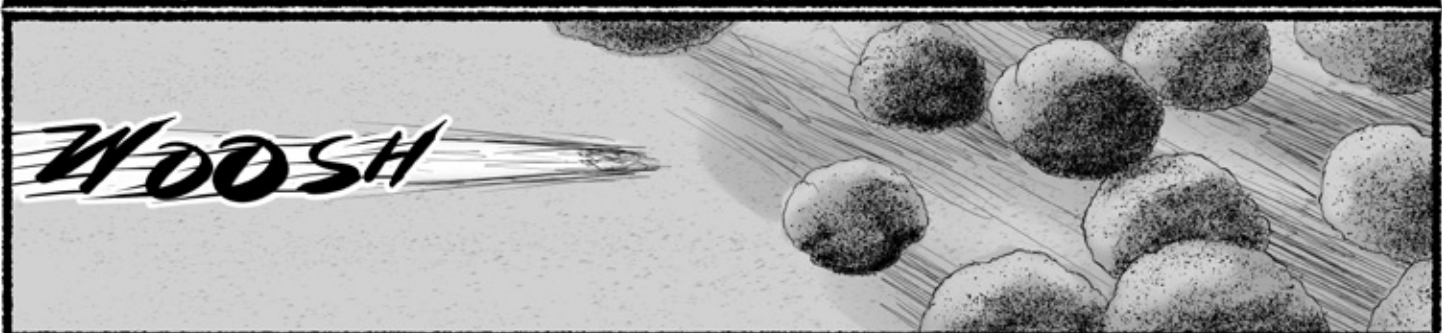
I think he's learnt his lesson

I can't even begin to escape this hold... And my strongest attack was useless...

I Can't Breathe!

Hand it over! Or i'll Break his-

GASP





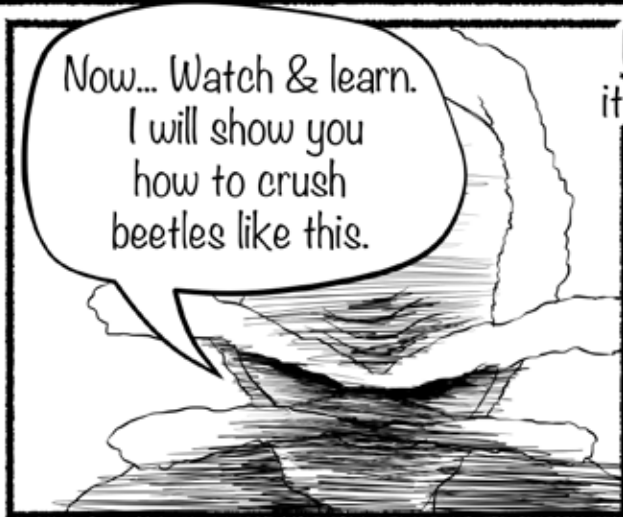
Damn...
I didn't realise Gramps
was that strong!



Ha! How's that
for a palm strike,
Aki?



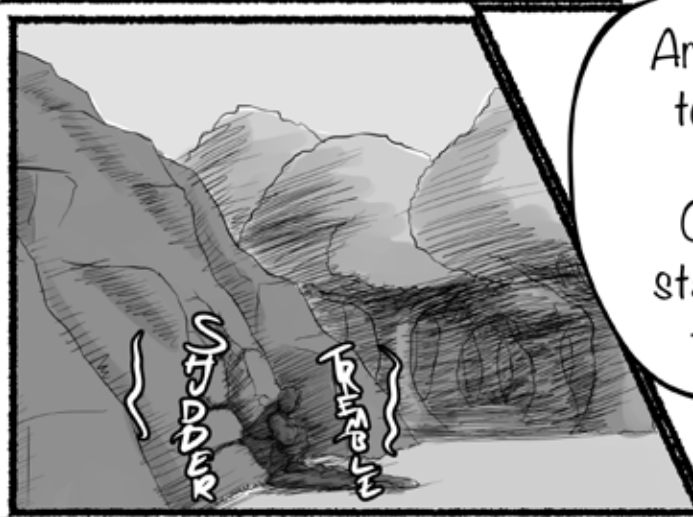
That old man nearly
killed me!



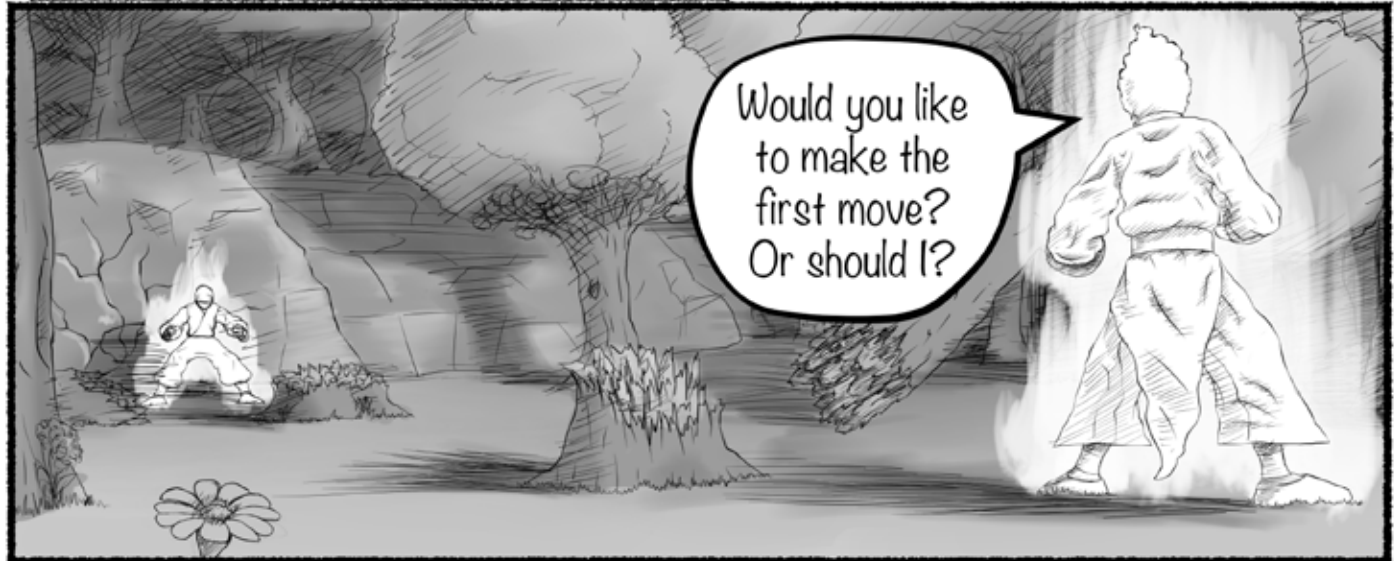
Now... Watch & learn.
I will show you
how to crush
beetles like this.



I hate to admit it. But
it looks like I'll need that
brats help after all...



Are you going
to sit down
all day?
Or will you
stand up and
face me?



Would you like
to make the
first move?
Or should I?



What is this energy I can feel?

Keep mocking me, and you'll have to answer to my **BEETLE HOOKS!!**

Feeling brave are we? Then show me the power of your style!



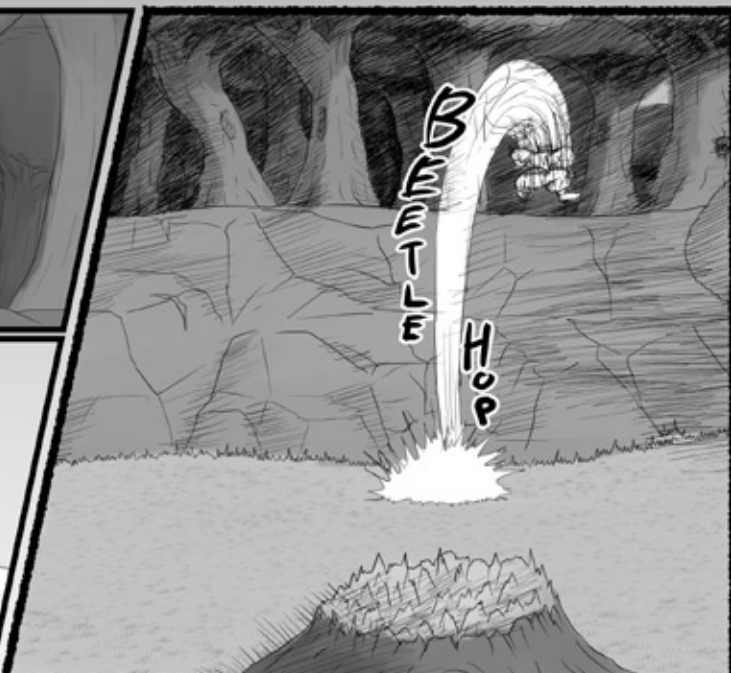
YELP~



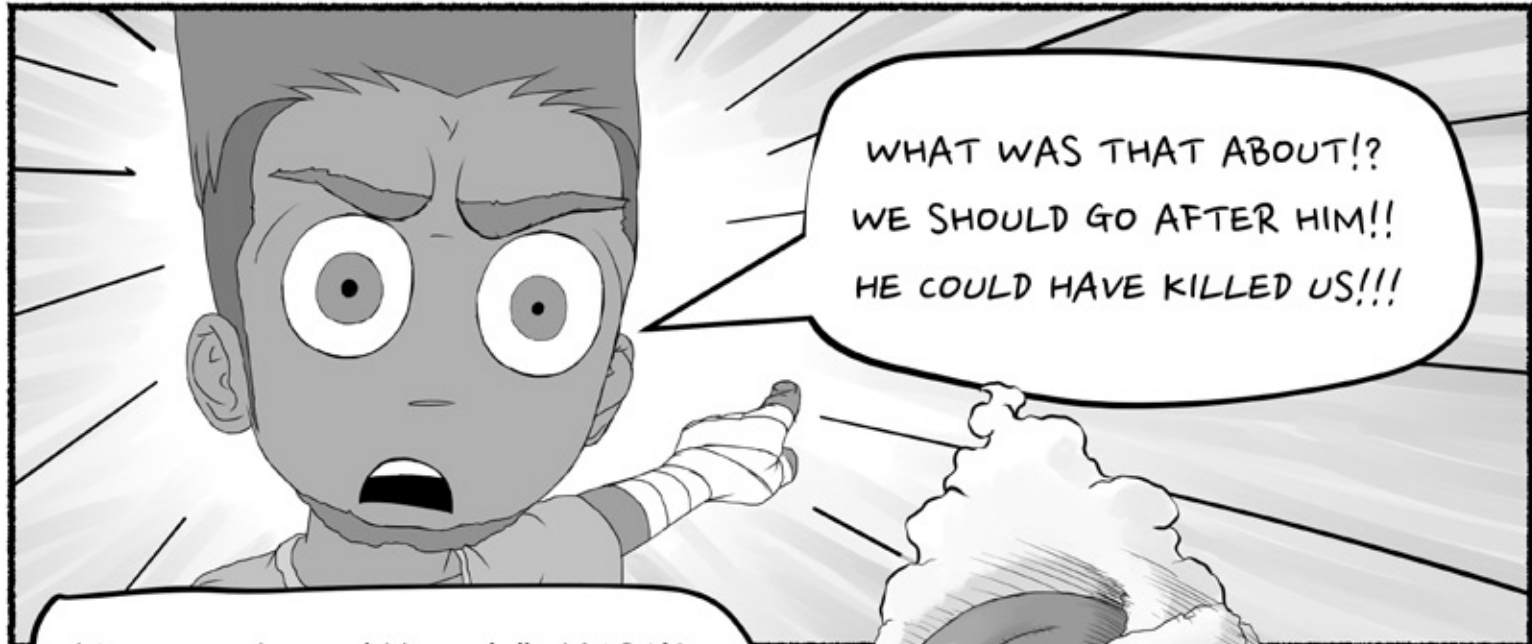
THIS ISN'T OVER!



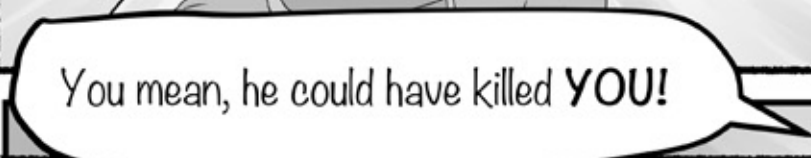
Hmph... He ran away... I thought someone much stronger was going to come for it... and much later on.



BEETLE HOOKS



WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT!?
WE SHOULD GO AFTER HIM!!
HE COULD HAVE KILLED US!!!



You mean, he could have killed **YOU!**



You see what happens when
you rush into things without thinking?



I'm sure you have many questions.
Follow me inside and I'll
show you everything I know.
There's no time to waste!



He was after
the Gemstone
in that ring,
hanging on the
mother dragon
statue's nose.



A few years
ago an old
friend of mine gave
me this ring
to keep safe.



He didn't have much to tell me about how it got to him.
But the main point was that your father gave it to him.



What about mum?
And my
brother and
sister?

To tell you
the truth...
I don't know where
any of them are.
And I don't know
what has
become of them...



The Monarchies wanted to keep the knowledge within their ruling class. For if nobody had the knowledge of the soul, then nobody would possess the power to refuse them. But they could never overcome the power of the clan's souls when we were united. We never took orders from them, and they had to work with us. Whether they wanted to or not. But over the years, the monarchies built their cities into quite the impressive nests. Where people could indulge in luxury, with a constant supply of bread and circus. Protected by the king's men and their high walls. All you have to do is pay your taxes and obey the rules.

Before we knew it, most of the people were living in their cities, under their rule. With most of the people all gathered into small pockets of space. It was easy for them to spread propaganda and lies about the clans and our martial arts. Slowly but surely, the clans were conquered ...our clan was the last one left.

You see, the monarchies rule with the styles of weaponry. They do not allow their souls to take up natural formations. Instead they pour it all into their swords and axes. Inanimate objects without conscience. Only capable of being swung by their master. They discard the teachings of morality that we clans etched into our teachings of the Martial Arts. Now that the clans are no more in Dalos, more and more people are following the path of the sword. Becoming less and less concerned with humanity. And more and more obsessed with excessive luxury, status and power over others.

Like many other clans, our Dragon Clan used to work within the borders of Dalos. The monarchs of the kingdoms have always wanted rid of us, for we made our Knowledge of the soul available to all. We raised many masters, outside of the monarchies control



Since the fall of the clans. The monarchies have heavily restricted access to the truth & wisdom in the libraries. They have replaced the original texts of knowledge and history. Replacing them with their own renditions, which distort the truths to suit their own agendas. They trick people into putting their faith into weapons of iron & steel. Leading them away from the knowledge of the martial arts.



Your parent's were young and strong-willed. They knew they could do nothing about the spread of corruption sitting at home. So they left, in order to seek out the source of the corruption and put a stop to it. By any means necessary.



Not long after they left, our home was burnt down.... I fled here to the Suigin Valley with you, your sister and brother, to join the many other outcast martial artists. Their clans and dojo's were torn apart like our own. I haven't heard from your parents since the day our clan was broken. Your sister and brother left here to look for your parents. And I haven't heard from them since they left either.



I still remember that fire!
I Can't stop thinking about it.
I want to catch that man and end him!
I bet that guy who attacked us had something to do with it.
I'm going after them Gramps!

You're going to leave me here like the rest of our family?
Let's get the fire going under the pot.



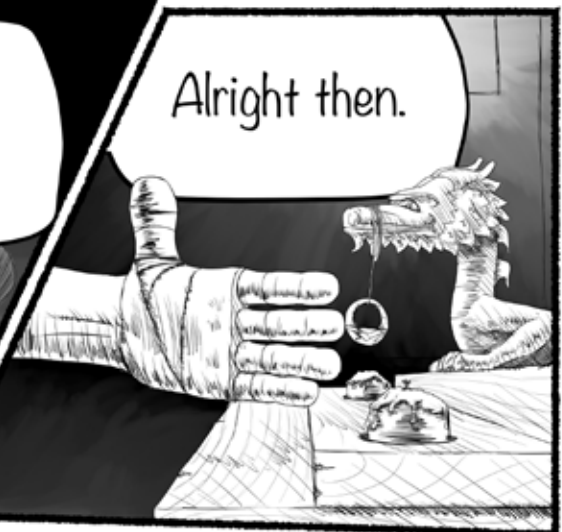


As much as I do not want to see the last of my bloodline disappear over the horizon... I think you are right. I hoped I would have more time for your training. But it seems they have caught up to us already.

Tomorrow when you get up, take the ring and bring it with you to Uncle Gussie's. Keep it safe at all costs! Let nobody know you have this ring. show it to gussie when you reach his place.. He will point you in the right direction.



Just leave it to me gramps!



Alright then.

Remember, it's not safe here in the valley any longer. That beetle will be back, with more fighters at his back. Make sure you are on high alert on your way to Gussie's. Move swiftly and make sure nobody follows you, Both yours and Gussie's lives could depend on it





Despite that, the Suigin Valley is far safer than all of Dalos. We are living in dark times, Akio. Death by violence is commonplace across the 7 kingdoms. Since the decline of the Clans, the kingdom's have done little other than wage wars.



Wars that devastate the country, taking countless lives.



While traumatising all those left alive.



Amongst so much war and chaos.
So many youth have had their families taken from them.
With no clans to turn to, they have little chance of finding their souls.
Gangs, rogues and bandits rise from the ashes of the chaos.
Peace is becoming extinct in Dalos.
before you leave you must understand...
The path of morality, according to the teachings of the martial arts that I raised you on...
Those ways are vanishing rapidly. Beyond Suigin, robbery, cruelty, extortion and murder have near become accepted normalities.

Make no mistake!
Dalos still has many Martial Artists,
from skilled apprentices,
up to bonified masters.
You must be weary of all of them.
For many of them are aligned with
the monarchies.



These days. If you do not belong to the ruling class.
The only way to learn to use the soul with
the Martial Arts is by ranking high enough in the military.



Therefore. Using the power of the soul in public will
make you a target of the authorities.
The enforcers of authority are made
up of skilled Martial Artists.
If you should take anything from today's lesson.
It is that you aren't ready to fight these people.



For now, avoid any confrontation with these types of people.
You must keep a low profile for the time being!
Refrain from making it known that you are a Martial Arts
student, as much as you possibly can!



For every kingdom has a ruling monarchy. On the path you are about to embark. You may come into contact with many members of these ruling classes. The members of the royal families are among the most skilled martial artists in the land. For above all else, it is their superior mastery of the martial arts that keeps them in power.



But you won't be alone in Dalos. It wasn't that long ago, that our Dragon Clan was held in high regard, across all the 7 kingdoms. There are those who will help you if they know that you are my grandson. The son of Heikichi Doragon!



Still, on your journey, never forget that Dalos has been engulfed by the darkness of the energies of the **shadow**. Be ever-weary of the **Shades** that lurk in the darkness.



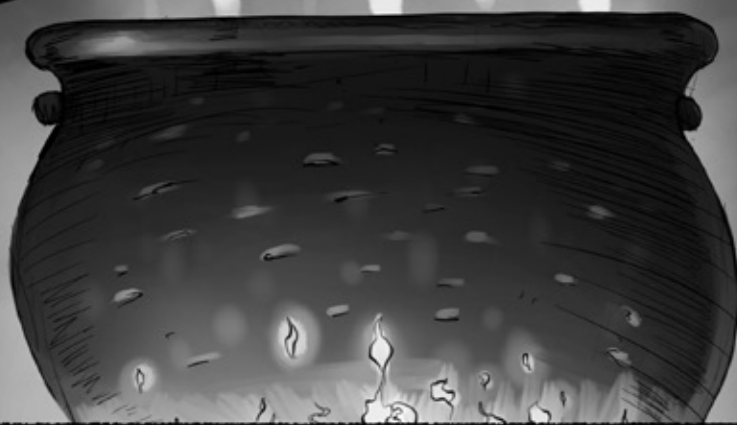


That doesn't scare me!
Like i said, just
leave it to me gramps!
I'll find our
family and bring
them home!

Fu fu fuuuu!
Well if your heart's resolve is even half that
of your stomach's, you should be fine!



I'm already looking
forward to your return,
with the rest of the family!



LATER THAT DAY...





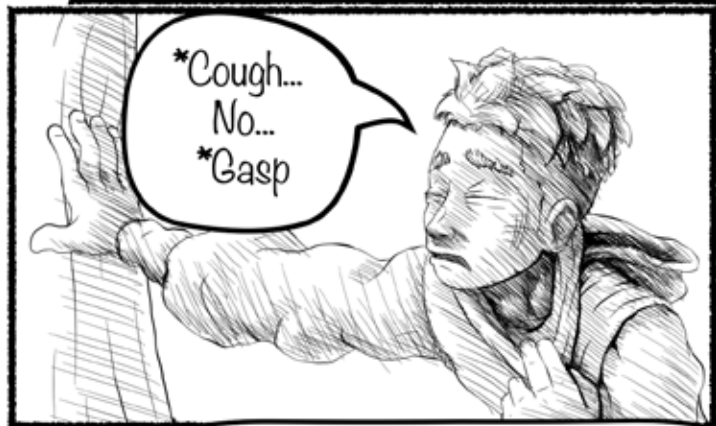
Relax Sota...



You didn't get it then?



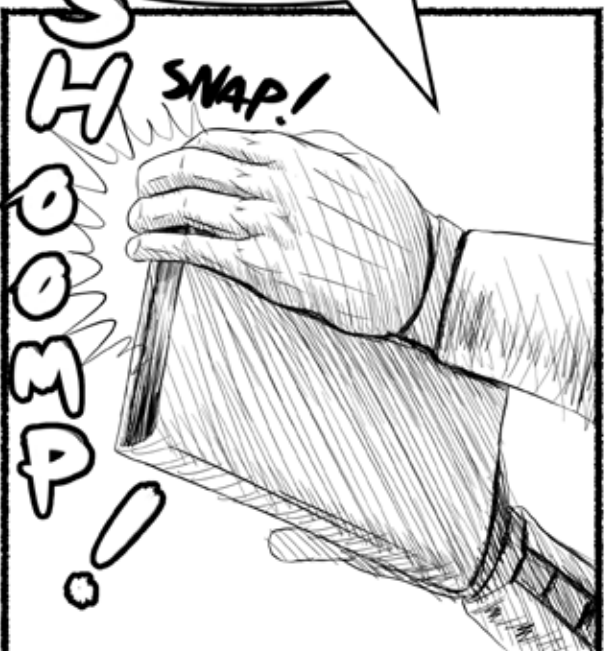
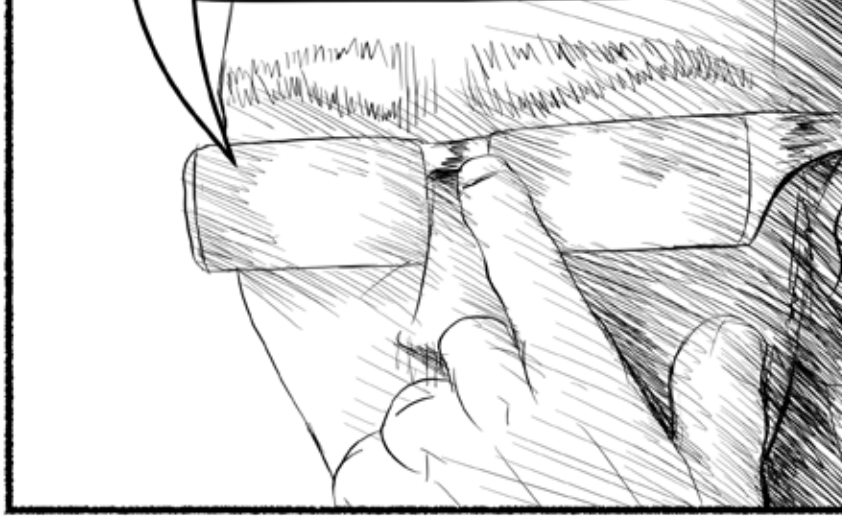
It's only me...




*Cough...
No...
*Gasp

You're far too confident in your abilities Kouki. Under-estimating your opponents like that is the surest way to get yourself sent crashing through the woods, and into the rocks..

I hate to say I told you so. But when you go alone, with no plan. You significantly reduce your chances of success...





So you were there! . . .
And you just hid away
and watched while I
took a beatdown?

Well obviously we need more fighters
don't we! Who aren't as wimpy as you!

I wanted to reach you and tell you my plan
to get the ring. But before I could do so,
you were hurling kunai at them and shouting
like a buffoon... After watching you fail to
even come close to striking the old man, I
realised we stood no chance,
so I returned to camp.

Listen Kouki. We can't just go dragging anyone into
this. The importance of this ring cannot be made public.
For now we will send word home that we have located it,
and we need support from those we can trust.
In the meantime we can only try to take the apprentice
and offer him up as ransom in exchange for the ring.
Although. You may have gone and made that impossible
by putting them on high alert.

Im not
that smart...
But i'm
much, much,
smarter now,
than you'll
ever be Kouki.

Who said you
were in charge?
You're not
that smart kid!
You're only
here because
of your dad,
you know that!?

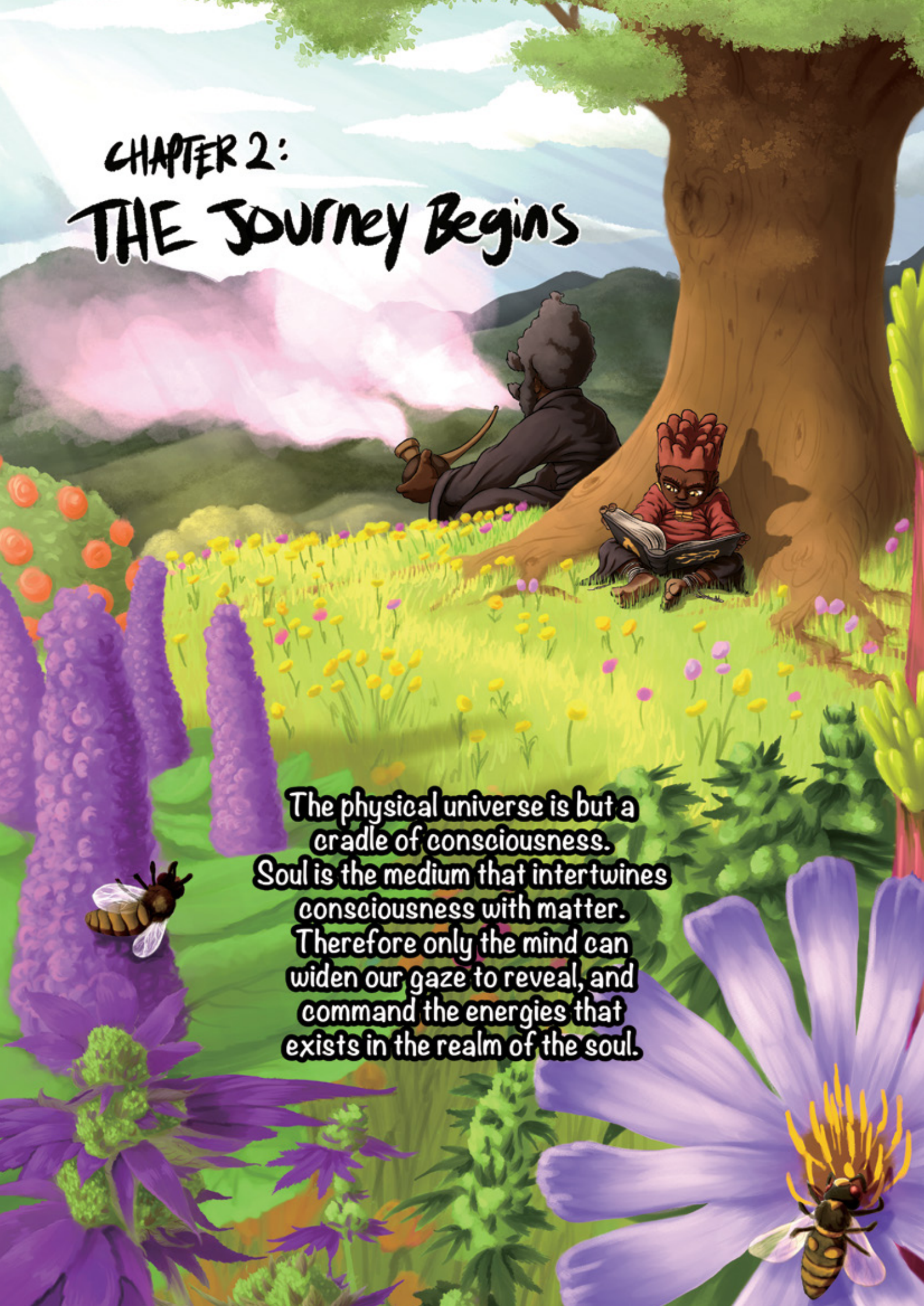


END OF CHAPTER 1





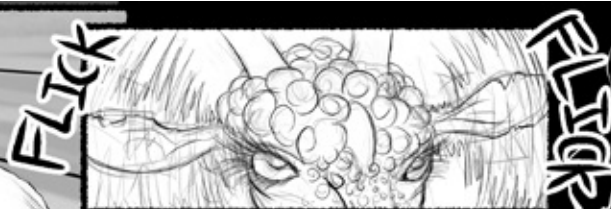
only A strong MIND
can begin to see the SOUL.
A strong body is WORTHLESS,
without a strong mind to Guide it...



CHAPTER 2: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

The physical universe is but a cradle of consciousness. Soul is the medium that intertwines consciousness with matter. Therefore only the mind can widen our gaze to reveal, and command the energies that exists in the realm of the soul.








GALOP GALOP GALO



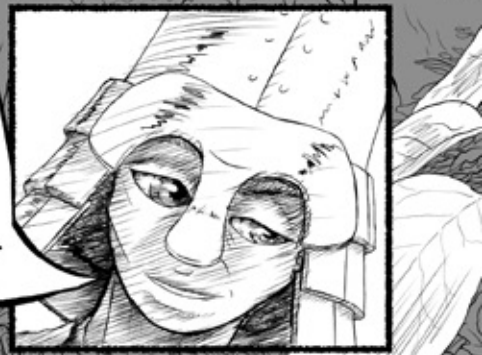


Ehh..
Jobe and them...
I'm not in the
mood for it today.

**OI TAKKI!
WAKE UP!**
We got work...



Eurgh... It's only Akio...
Ah well it's been a slow few weeks so we need anything we can get. Come, we go collect a few coins from him...
Get us some lunch.



Yo,
Aki!

ST...GT!
Not today...
I can't let them see the ring.



K...H!
R...P!
D...!
I hardly got any money as it is!
If they try to lift my things i'll have to bruise these plumbs!
Gramps can't get mad.

Where you been man?
How long's it been?
Nearly a month?
What you saying?

Yes highway patrol crew...
Yeah man i'm cool. Here I got 1 piece for you man.



You want to park all that kung fu crap and work on your maths mate...



You only have 1 piece for us? We haven't even seen you in about 4 weeks. 1 piece a week... I make it 4 pieces Aki.

Uhh.. You what?



Well... Beggars can't really be choosers can they? It's all I got so... take it or leave it...

He's Gd to Be Soking



Ay?! Beggars? Who are you calling beggars? We are professional warriors!



...Unless of course, you want to join us and help keep these roads safe! Or you can always volunteer as a practice dummy for our professional warrior skillsets?

We've been out here keeping these roads safe... You've been on your hilltop, practicing dance moves with your grandad. If you want to be safe on these roads then you need to help support us don't you? We aren't exactly asking for much are we?

PFFFT!!! IS HE SERIOUS?!



But I'm warning you now... I won't go easy on you.

Pffft!!! Professional what? Haha alright yeah cool... I could use some practice too! Lets go.

Ay!? W-What! You're a big badman all of a sudden now yeah!?



You really want to test my blade against your little dance moves? Don't be dumb! Now pick up that bag and give it to me!



SHOOK!

COME GET IT YOURSELF



WOOSH!

SHIIIIING!!!
STOP THAT SWORD...



FINISH-SWING!!
BINK - THIS...

WATCH THE COUNTER...

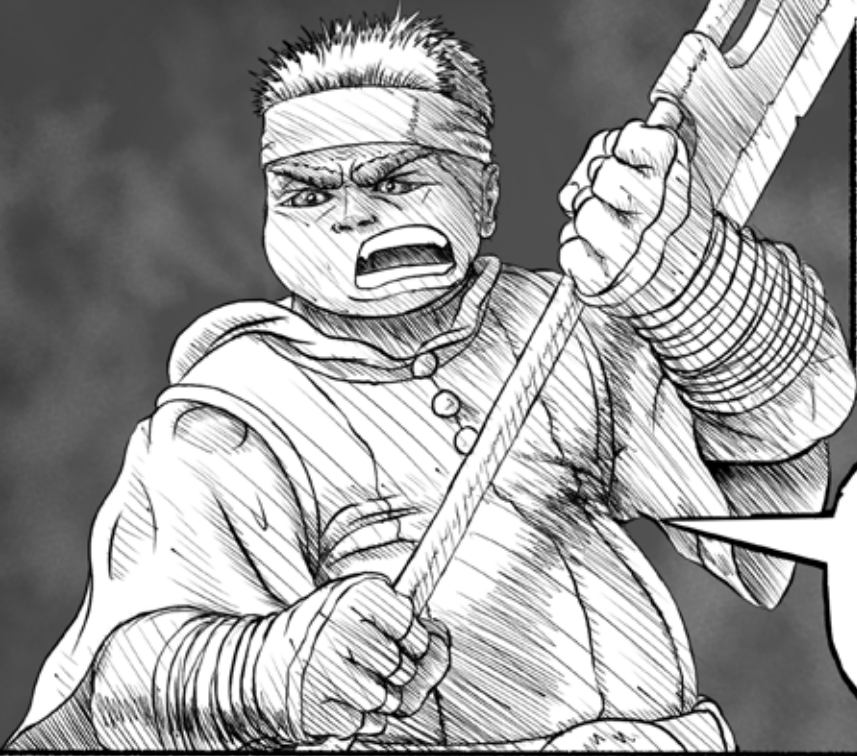
CLANK!!
SMACK!!

CRUNCH!!

SMACK!!



SHING!!

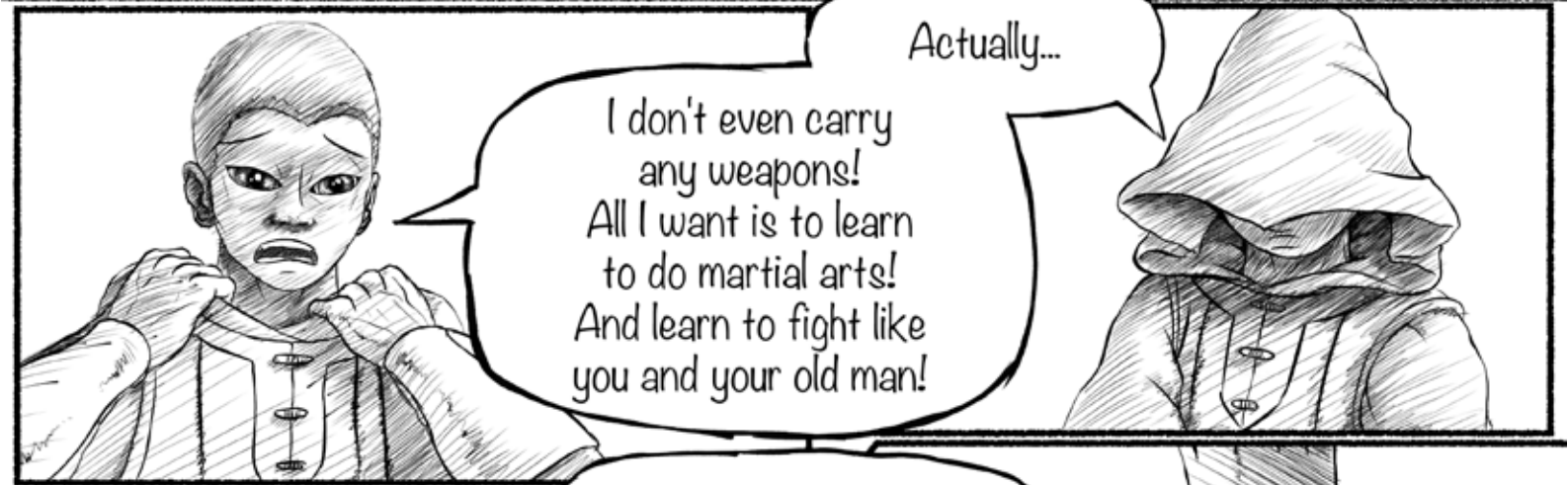


YOU JUST GOT LUCKY THERE AKI! DON'T MAKE ME HAVE TO SLAP YOU WITH THIS-





What?!
You want
some too!?



I don't even carry
any weapons!
All I want is to learn
to do martial arts!
And learn to fight like
you and your old man!

Actually...



What!? Piss off Riyo!
There's no room for thieving
scumbags like you anywhere
in the martial arts!

CLANK!!



That's one of the most
important laws!
"One shalt not steal!"
And that's all you man ever do!
So NO! You can't come into this!
The best thing you could do is
go crawl back up the hole you
came out of!

Hah! Professionals
my ass... All those weekly
pieces from me, after all this
time, and that's all
you can do?



I demand a
refund! How much
you got on you?



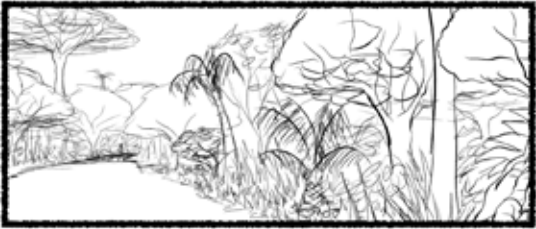
Hmm...Feels
kinda light still...
It's alright though.



Oh...
Here's your
4 pieces...



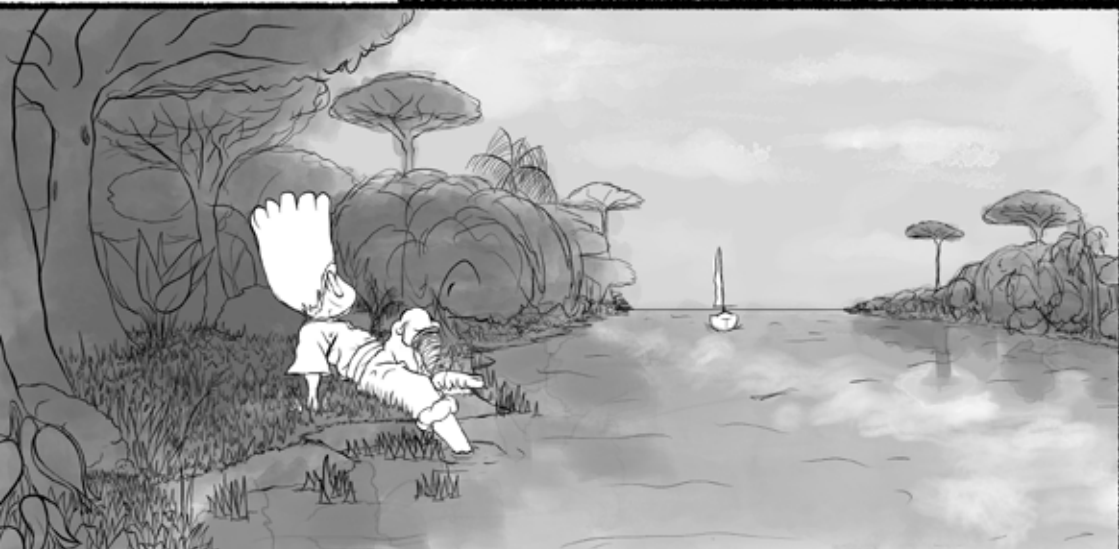
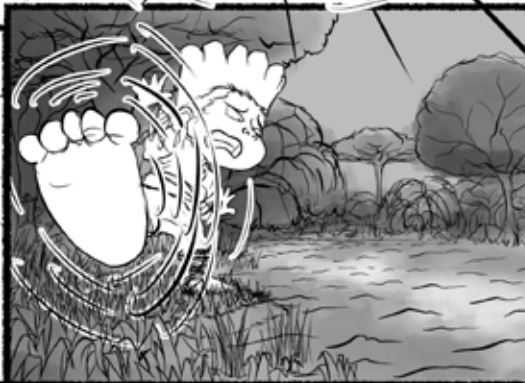
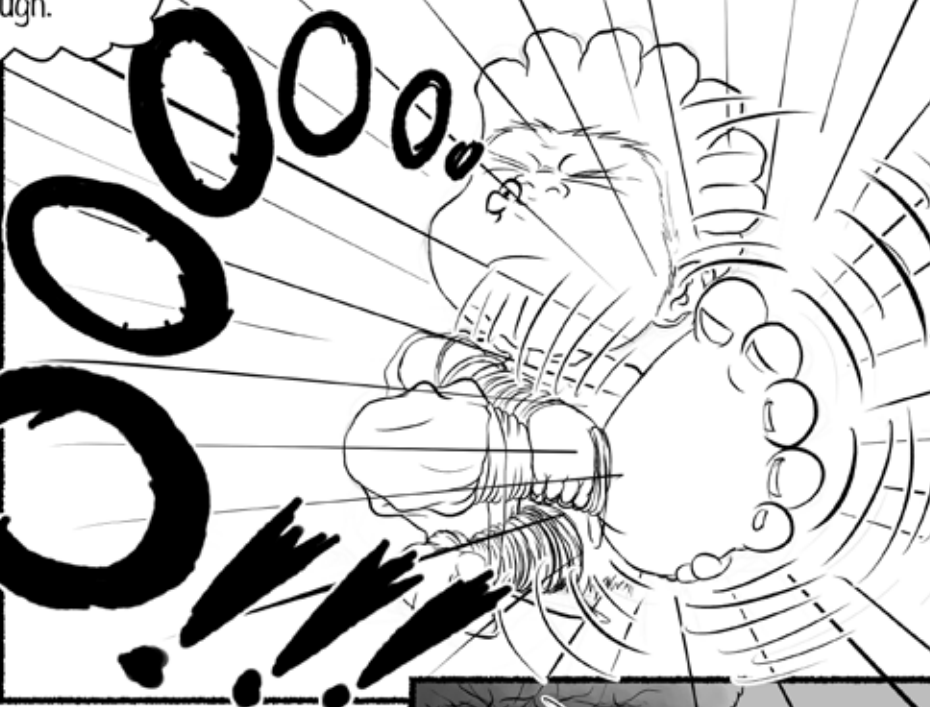
Go buy yourselves
some food, it's on me!



Fff... I think I messed up my foot on that one there! Got to hold it down until they're out of sight!

LIMP LIMP LIMP

Ok that's far enough.





YES BUNTI!

YES AKI!



I'm on my way to town, but I mashed up my foot just now, so i'm here cooling it off. What you saying?



WAHGWAN?

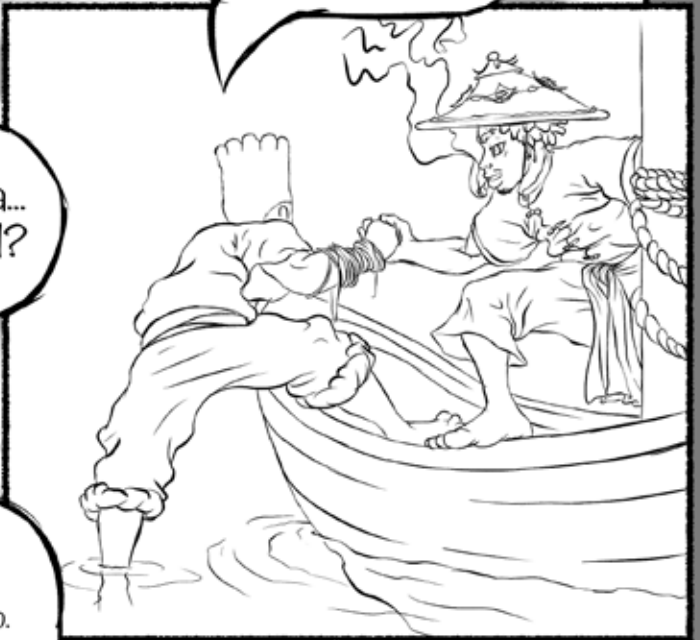


Seen, well I'm going that way now. I'll sail to you. Jump in and I can float you down river..

Yeah safe man! Saved the day.



No worries brudda... So what happened?



Ahaaaa man. So I'm walking to town, minding my own. Obviously Jobe and them were on the road so they come at me with their usual crap. So I go to give them their l piece. Now they're trying to tell man about 3 or 4 pieces or what have you. Now i'm thinking nahh to Be fair I aint havin that. They take the piss already like. So I get to thinking i'm just gonna knock all these boys out... They've taken plenty enough liberties.. Now hear Jobe about 'Ah man are professionals innit.. we need this so we can...

Great!

Now he's on a boat! We should of just bagged him up earlier when I said! We've had enough chances! You're overthinking it Sota! Like you always do...

I swear we're being watched... I can sense something!

Something is definately wrong Kouki... I can sense it. The old Don isn't at his compound, nor is he with his apprentice... So where is he!?

How would I know? Hopefully he's not too far away! I don't want to have to drag the kid too far! I'm getting him next time, and I don't care what you say!

...Idiot!

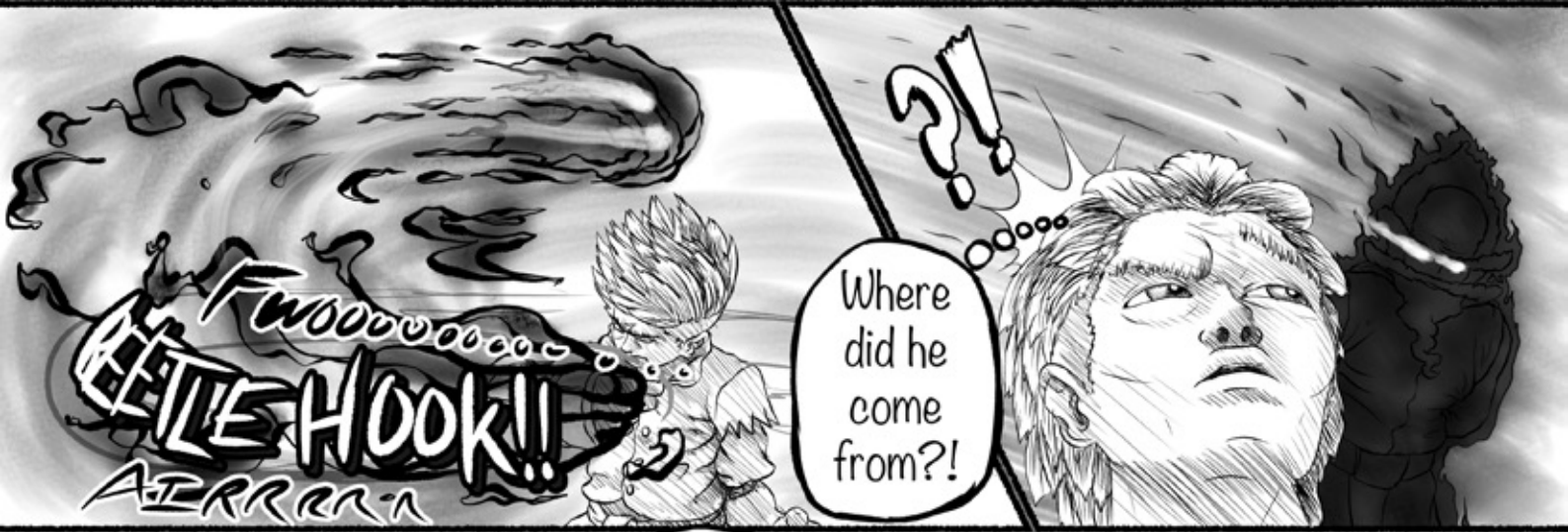
BASH!

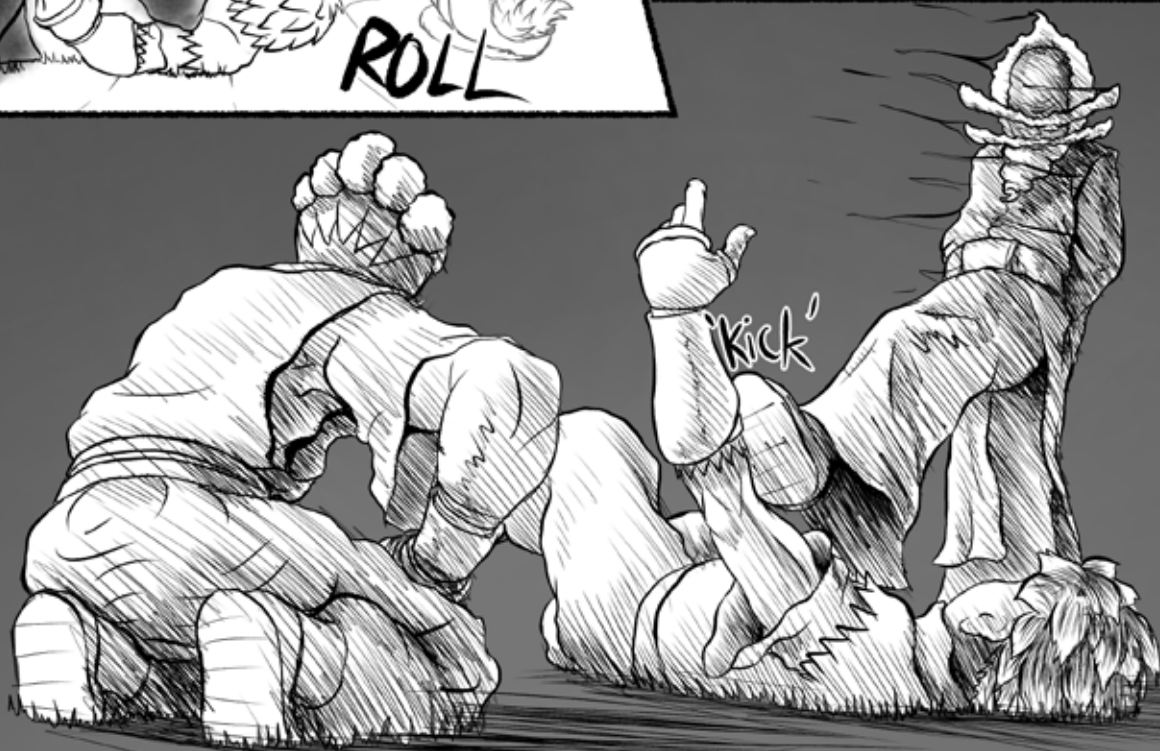
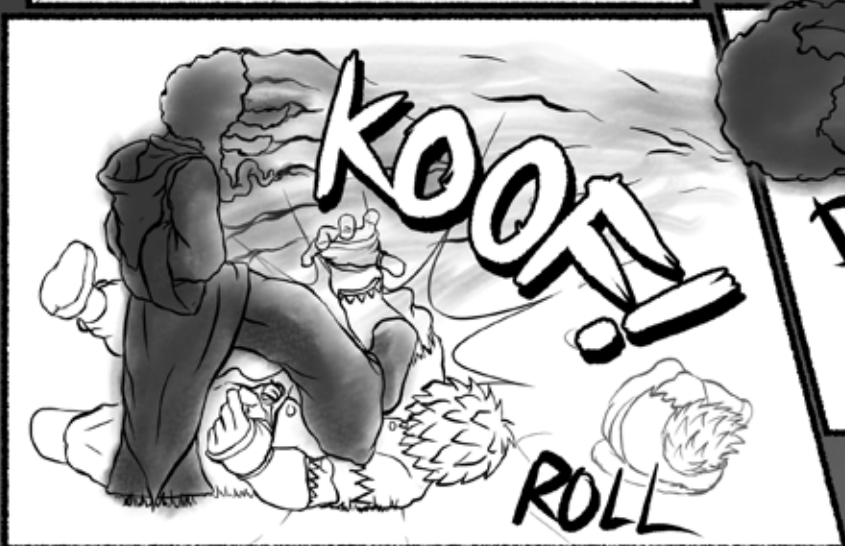
DRAG!

!!

!?









Hm? What gemstone?



Who are you? How did you find me? And what do you want with the gemstone?

DON'T TAKE ME FOR A FOOL! You were just swinging the exact same beetle style that you used yesterday! Now answer my questions or lose your life!



You can't talk to me like that! This valley will be swarming with Hikaru soldiers by sunfall. We know who you are Saruwatari! We've already sent for backup. Give us the gemstone, and we'll spare you and the kid!



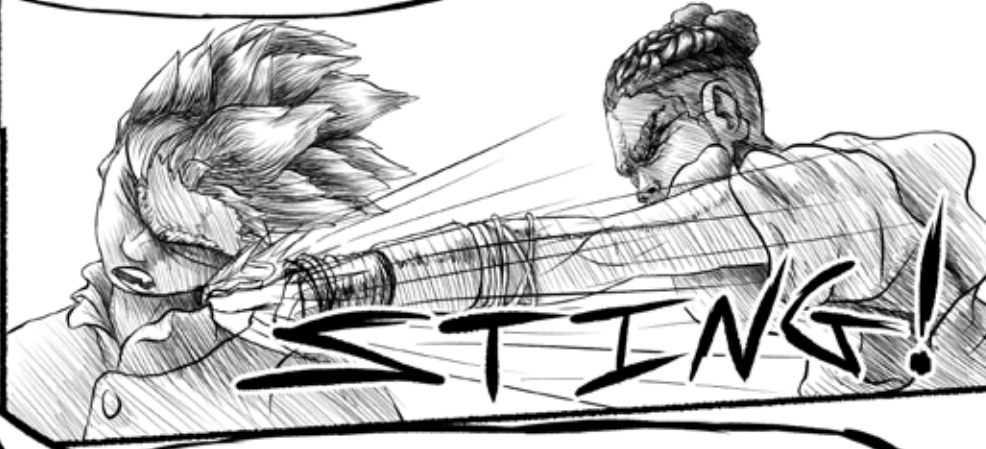
If that's the case then I'll remove both your heads now. Staying one step ahead of Kohdon soldiers is my speciality, you're not very observant.



One step ahead won't be enough as long as you carry that gemstone. But i can help you stay five steps ahead. In fact I never sent any message back to Kinboshi at all...



YOU WHA-!?!



I've been waiting to shut him up for a long time... It's an honour to finally meet the Dragon Don himself. My name is Sota i have a lot to tell you, and i fear, even more to ask.

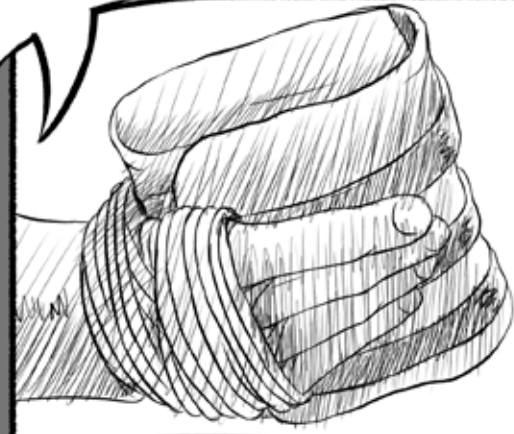
As ridiculous as this may sound... We just chanced upon your compound during a standard border security and recon mission...

Why would I listen to a Hikaru dog? I've seen the likes of you sink much much lower than this just to save their own skin!



It's true, I am but a cog in the Hikaru elites war machine. However I have a spanner that I plan to throw into the works, with your help...

...Intelligence on the Hikaru army along with transcripts from several meetings between Hikaru Lords where your name is mentioned more than once.



Suppose I believe what you have said, what is it you fear to ask of me?

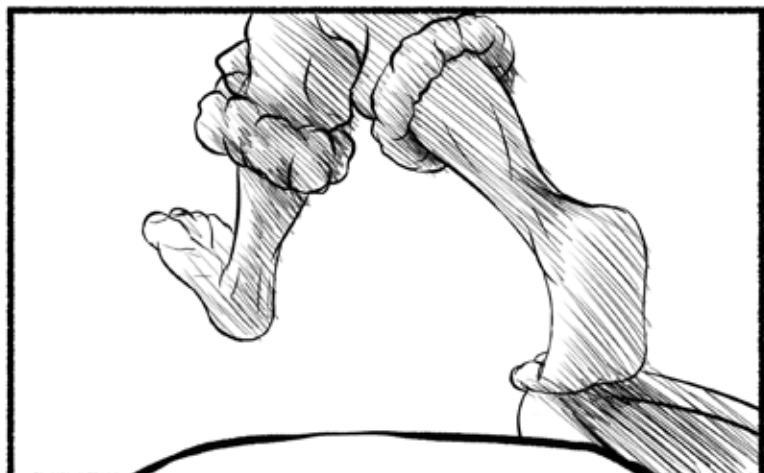
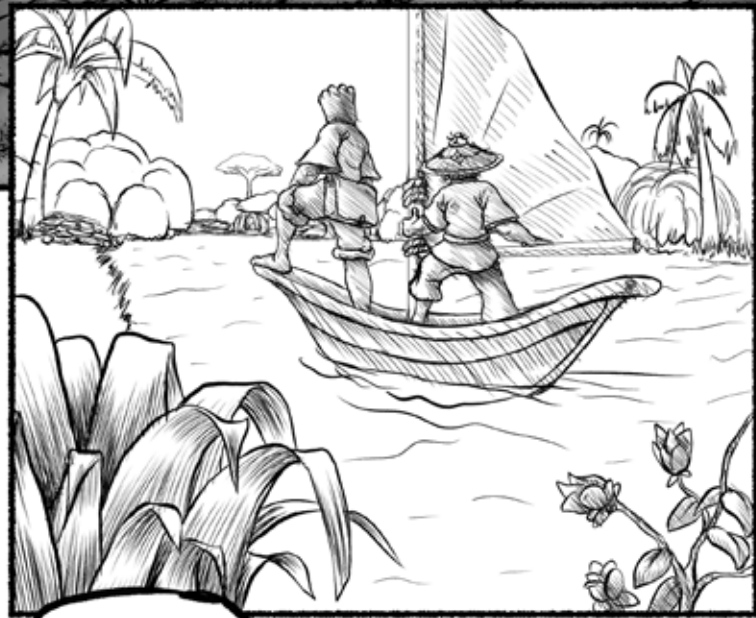
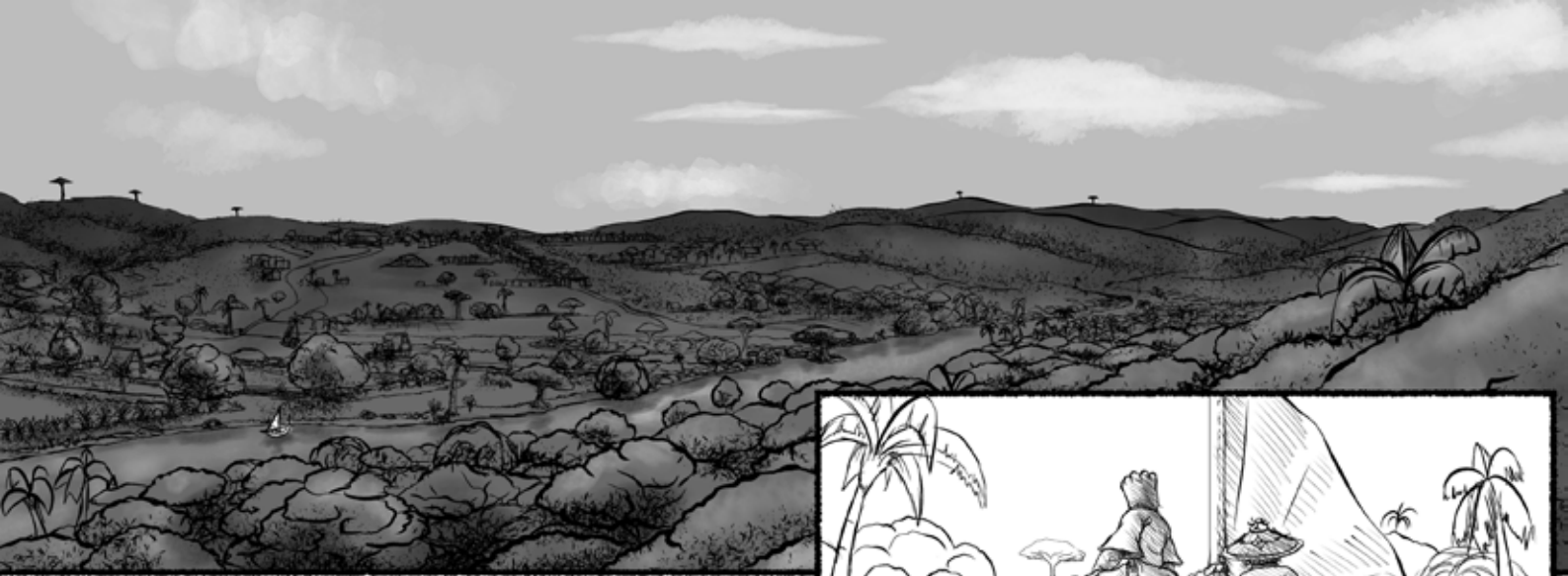
It was never my intention to fight for the Hikaru. I only wanted to take from them as much as I could. It seems they have lead me right to the highest prize in the form of one of Dalos' most legendary martial artists. If I fight for the Hikaru, I will never ever be shown the true ways of the martial arts. So I fear to ask you... To take me on as a second apprentice!



Errghhhh...
Let me see those documents then!

SIGH





Somebody attacked me and Gramps yesterday at our house... He was after the gemstone in this ring.... You 'deal' with a lot, of jewel merchants, so I wondered if you've ever heard anything about any gems like this?

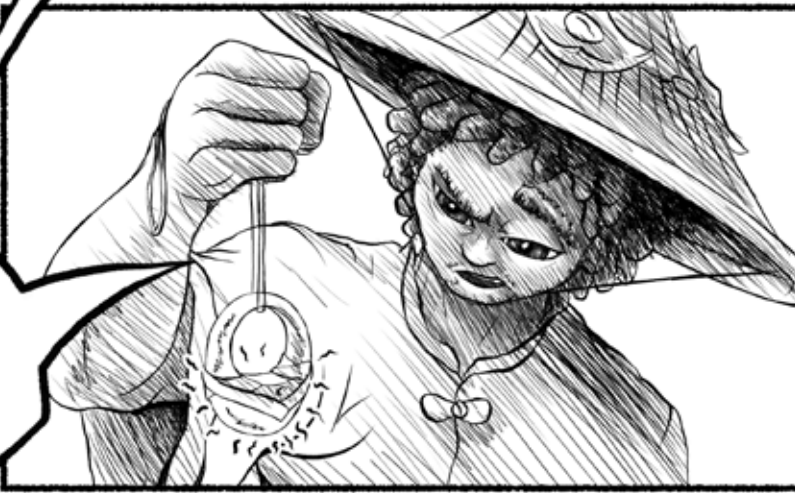



Oh. Before you go, I was gonna ask you about this.



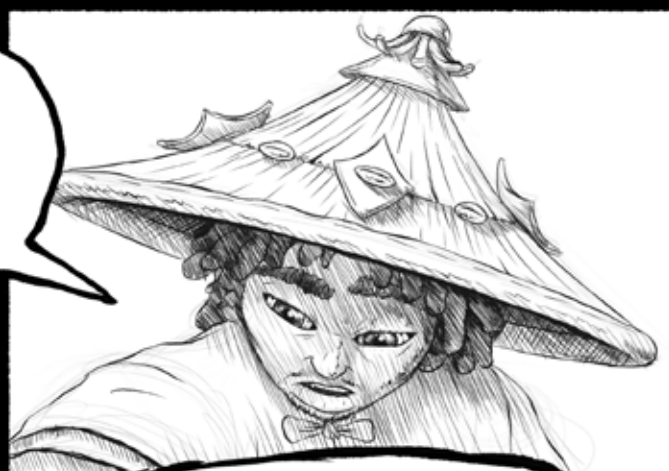
WHAT?! You serious?

Hm... Doesn't even look like any valuable stone... Looks like any polished crystal really... It's only slight, But I swear I can feel some funny vibrations coming off of it... Strange...






Strange.... But nah that's beyond my expertise... What's it for, and what are you doing with it?



I dunno man. Gramps just gave it to me yesterday and told me to bring it to Elder Augustus I was hoping you might have heard something on the job. Alright well don't tell anyone about it obviously.



Alright, say no more man. I'll keep my ear to the ground anyway... See you in town tonight yeah?

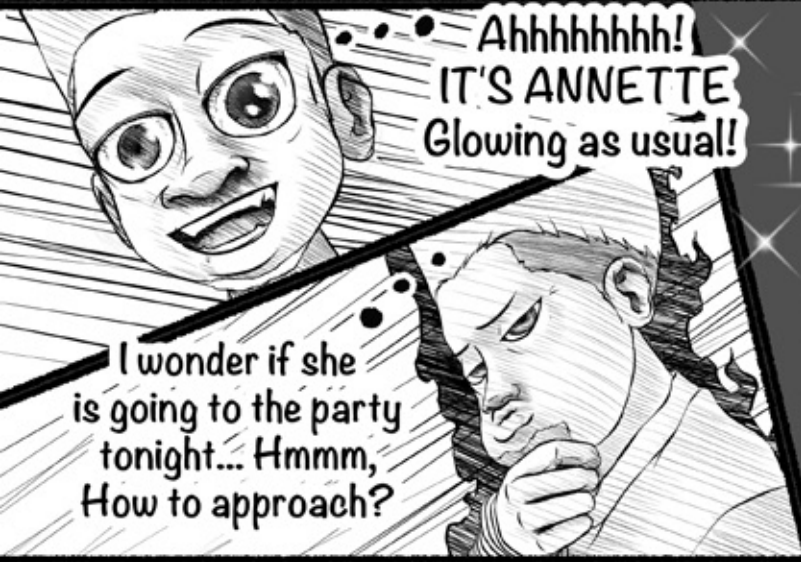


Yeah man no doubt! Bless.



BUMP!

Alright, Safe.



Ahhhhhhhh!
IT'S ANNETTE
Glowing as usual!

I wonder if she
is going to the party
tonight... Hmm,
How to approach?



I'll use the
element of
surprise, and
break the ice!



STEP 1:
SNEAK

STEP 2:
SURPRISE!

STEP 3:
LAUGH!

STEP 4:
GET IN!!!

SOLID
PLAN!

HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!
HA!
you're
so
FUNNY
Aki!

SHAKE
SHAKE
SHAKE

ANN-!

OH MY GOD!
AKI!?

BOOX

Oh sorry Aki!
Yeah I'm going with Paulette
and Suzette, It's going to be fun!

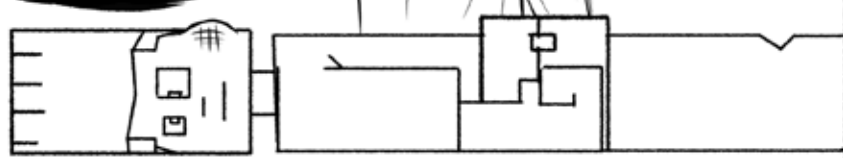
Haha, sorry.
I was going to ask
if you're coming
to the party
tonight?

Why are you
sneaking
around
like that!

RUB RUB RUB

I didn't
hit you that
hard...

Alright get
up Aki.





Hmhmhmm...
Alright Aki,
well I have to
get ready so i'll
see you
tonight then!

I'm just...
Just give
me a minute

WHATY
DO I
SAY?!

Ha! No no
It's not that,
I'm just...



BUT HEY!
She said she will
see me tonight!!!
What a result!
I'll cut my loses there
and get going...
I can redeem myself tonight!



THAT DID NOT
GO AS
PLANNED!

Later that evening...

This must
be
the place...



END OF
Chapter 2

SAFE



CHAPTER 3: ONE STEP AHEAD



Spirit is the energy found above.
It is amassed from consciousness
on an individual level.

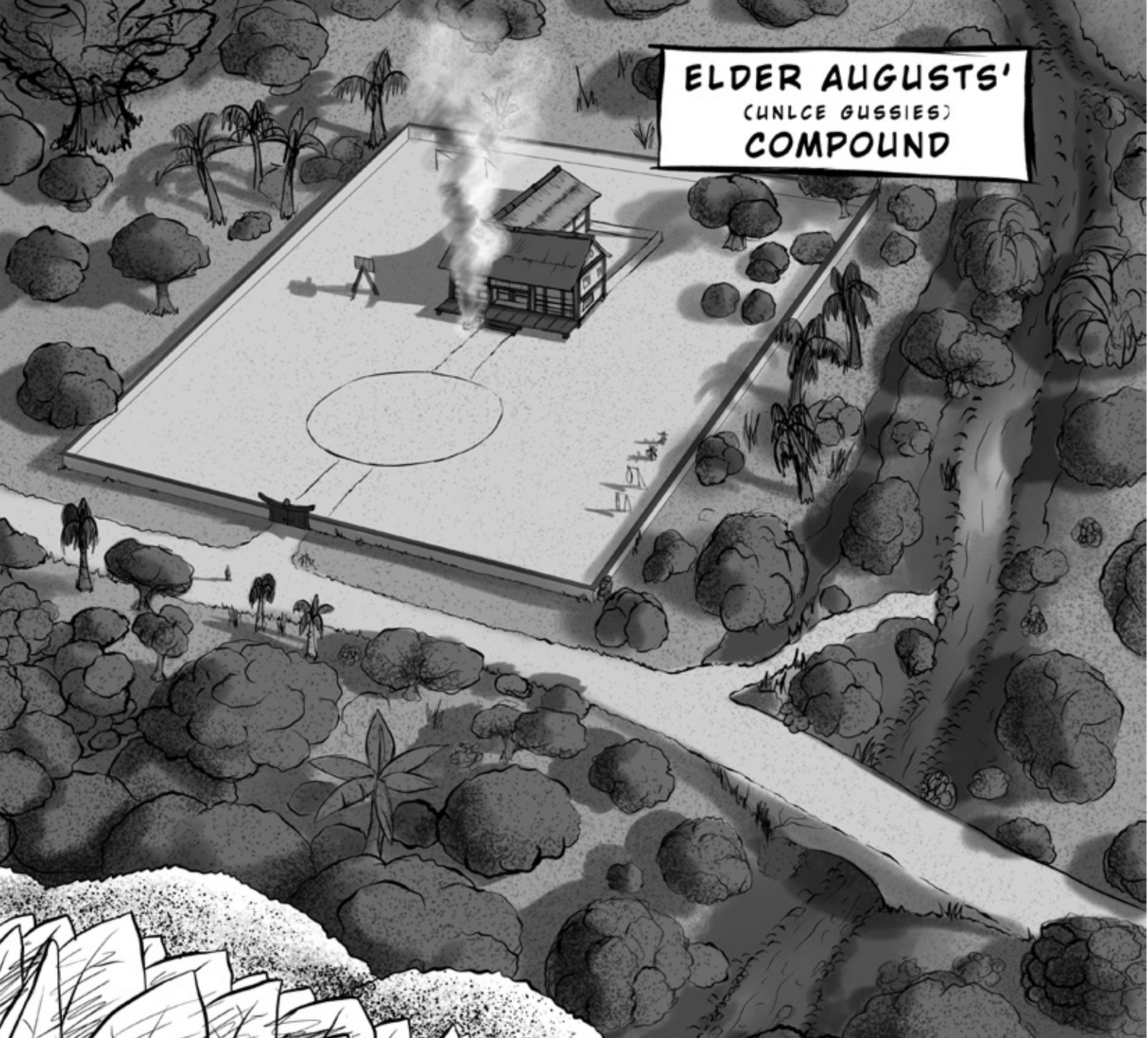
The martial artist will interpret the spirit as an
animal and derive their fighting style from this.



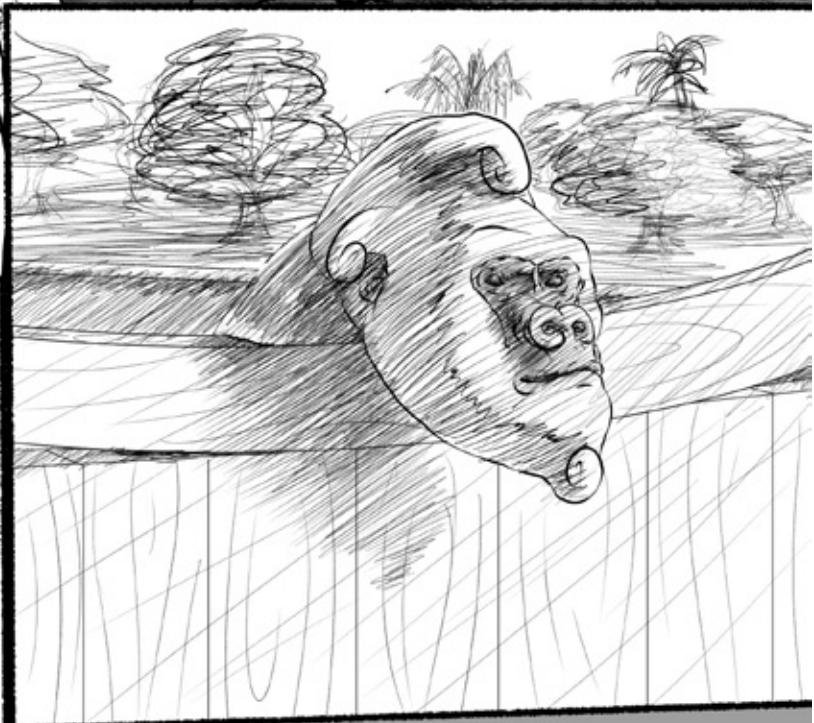
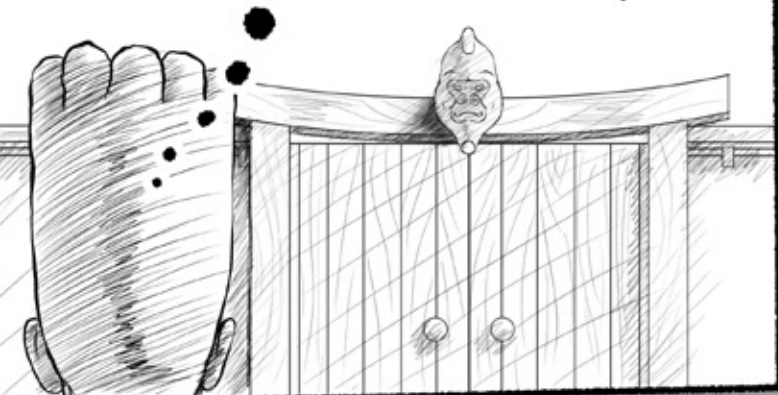
Shadow is the energy found within.
It is amassed from subconsciousness
on a collective level.

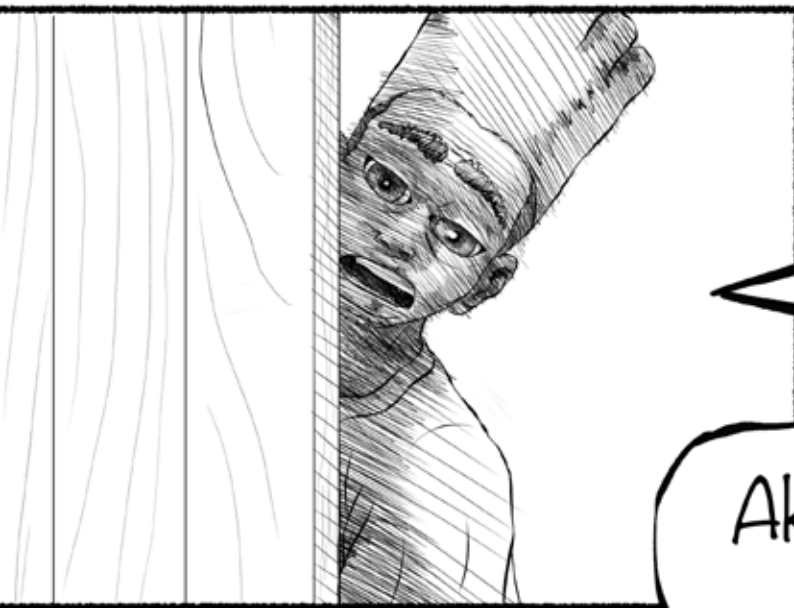
The martial artist will acknowledge their
shadow and channel it's raw strength.

ELDER AUGUSTS'
(CUNLCE GUSSIES)
COMPOUND



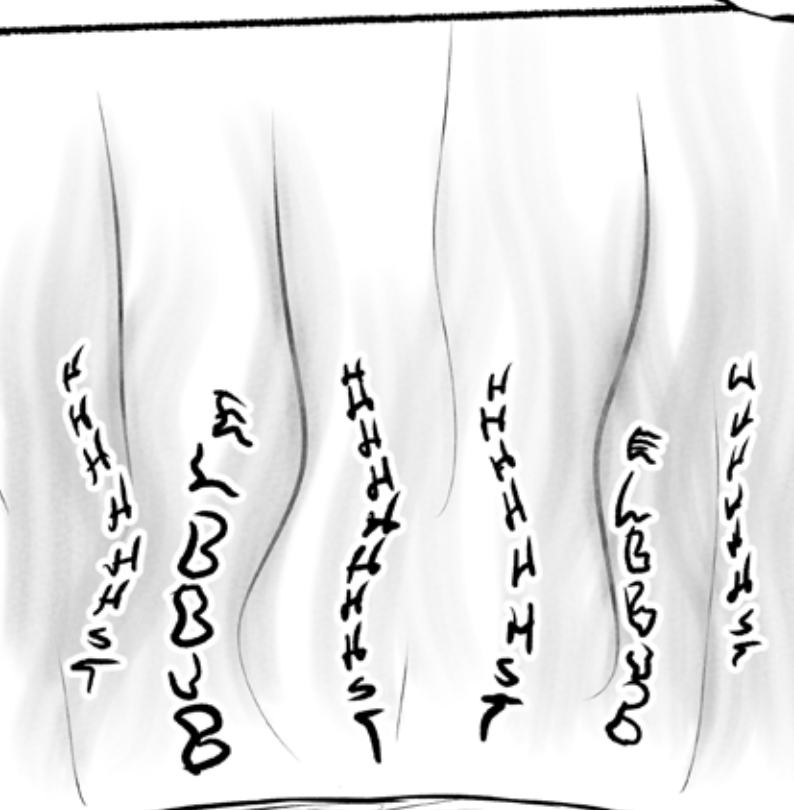
This must be the place





HELLO?!
Uncle Gussie?

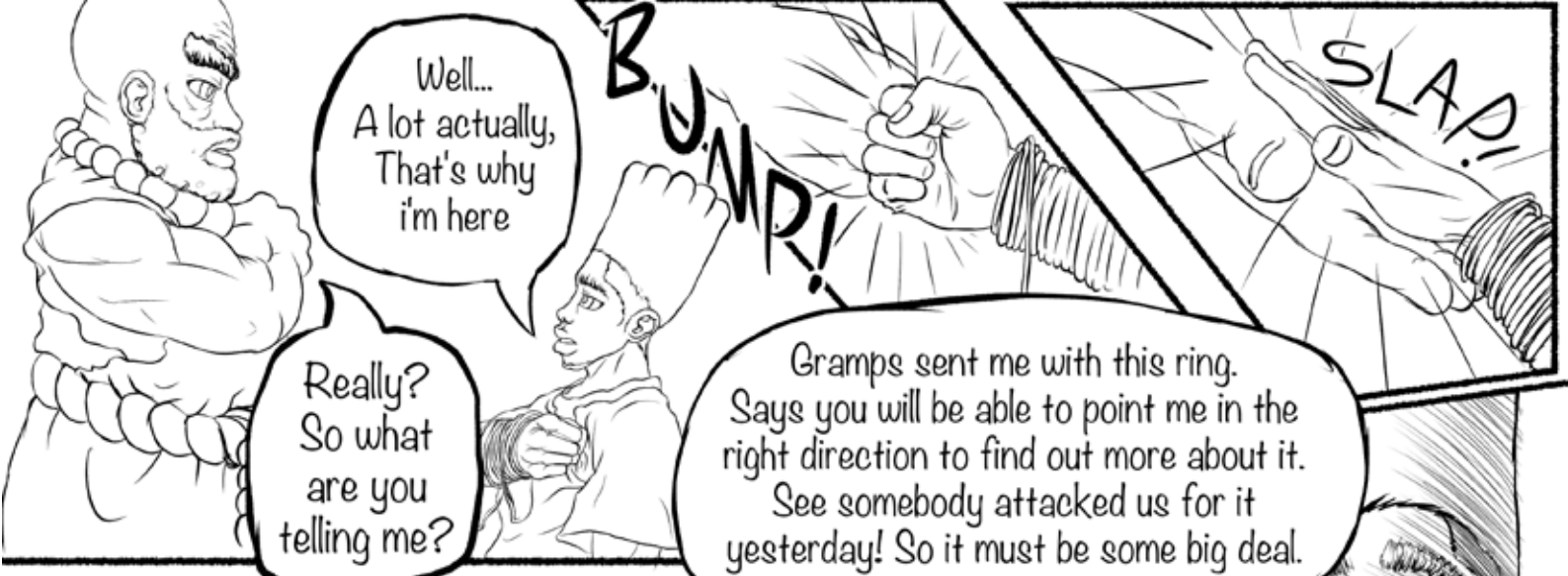
Aki!? Is that You?
Come right in!



Long time
I don't
see you!
What's
happening?

YES!
Uncle Gussie!





Well...
A lot actually,
That's why
i'm here

Really?
So what
are you
telling me?

Gramps sent me with this ring.
Says you will be able to point me in the
right direction to find out more about it.
See somebody attacked us for it
yesterday! So it must be some big deal.



So...
The time Has
Come...

I see...
Well.
I suppose
you must be
hungry after
your journey?



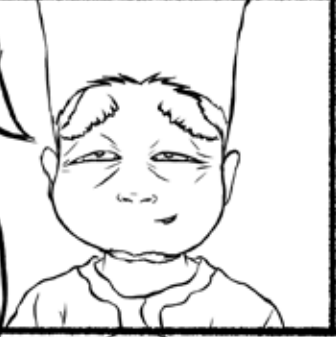
Please!
I'm staaarving.



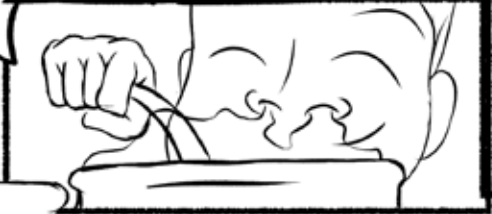
Haha!
Come on
then!

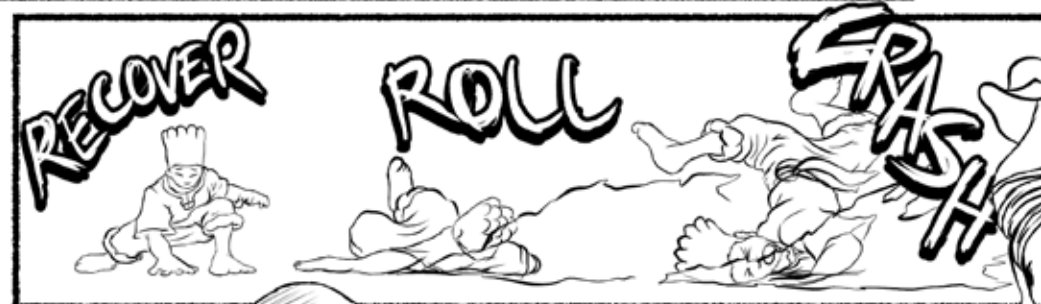
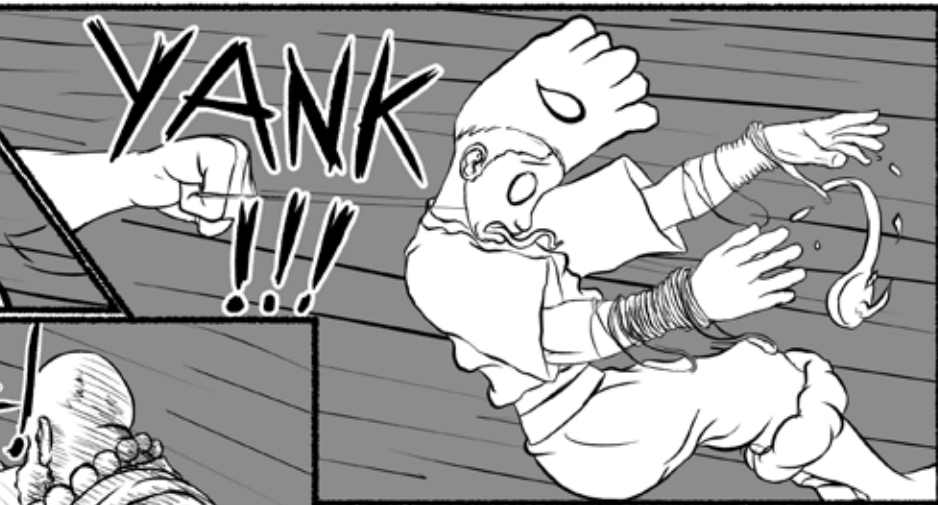


Well you'll have
to defeat me
in combat if
you want food.



SMELLS GOOD MAN!





Wha?!
What's all
that about?!



It seems like you have lost the
sacred stone already young man!

Now...
If you want to eat. If you want this
stone back, you have to put your life
on the line!

CHARGE!!!



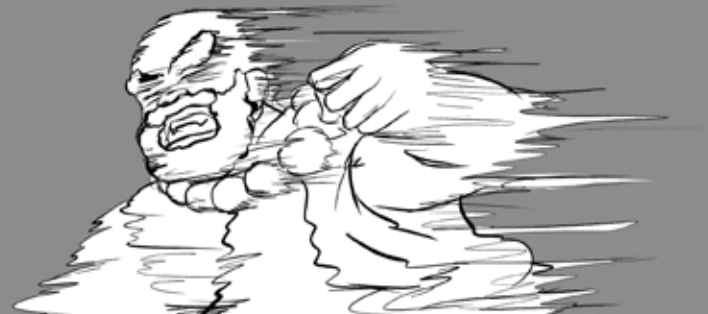
Prepare
yourself
Akio!



YO-AKI... 3x6
WHO HE IS.
TAKE HIM OUT!



UNCLE
GUSTIE
????



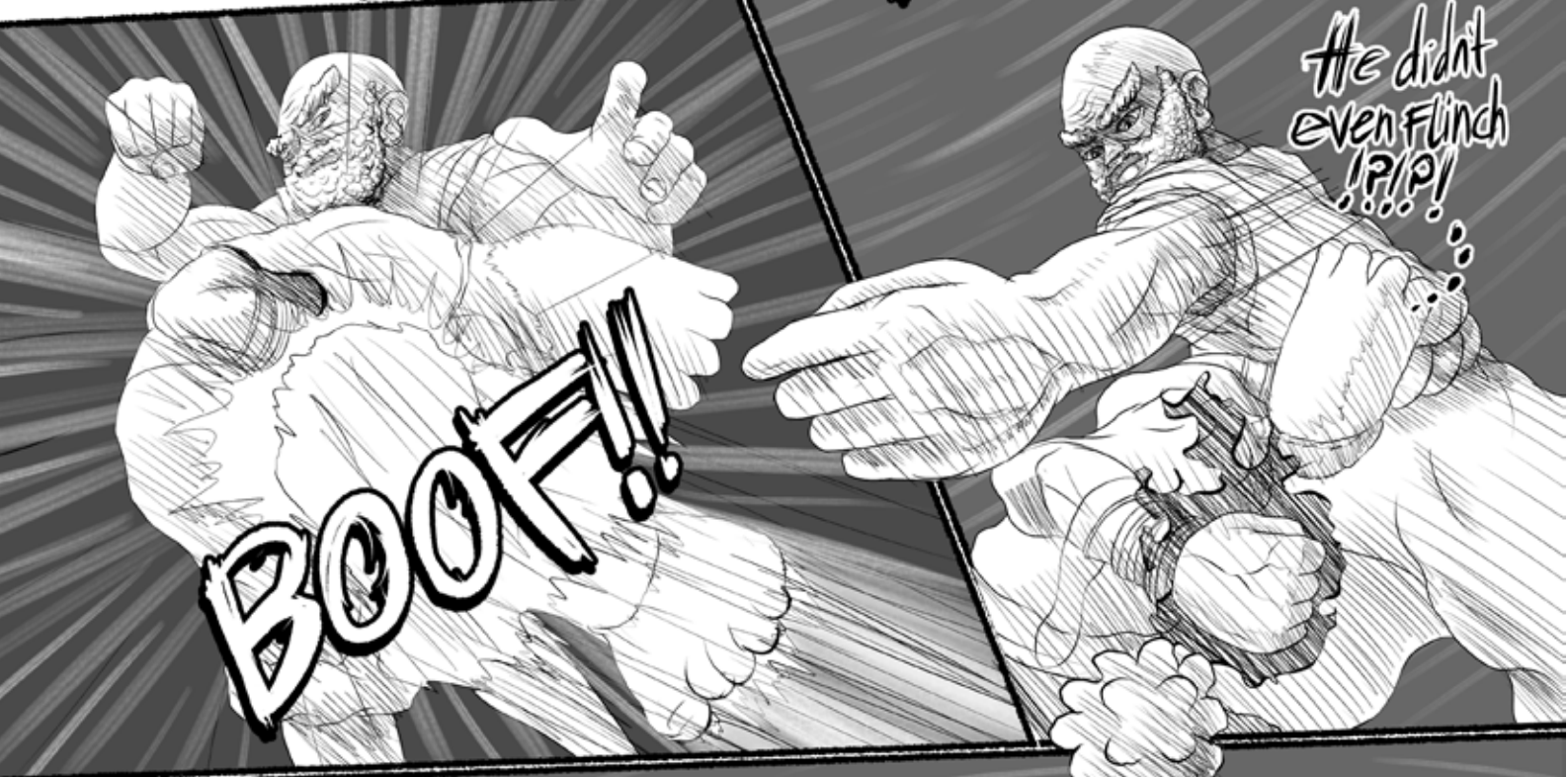


DOOF!!

WOOSH!!

KOOO!!

I actually felt that!
He's a lot
stronger and
faster...



BOOF!!

He didn't
even flinch
!?!?!?



But he's already blacked
out with shade... I better
put an end to this fast.

Alright i've
had it now!!



DASH!!

DASH!!



Sorry Akio!
I was just testing your
abilities! I had to make
it seem at least half
real in order to see
your full strength.

ワカチヤ



UUUughh...
How did I get
down here?
...

Let that be your first lesson in survival for the quest you will soon undertake. Never let your guard down around anybody who knows you are carrying that stone!

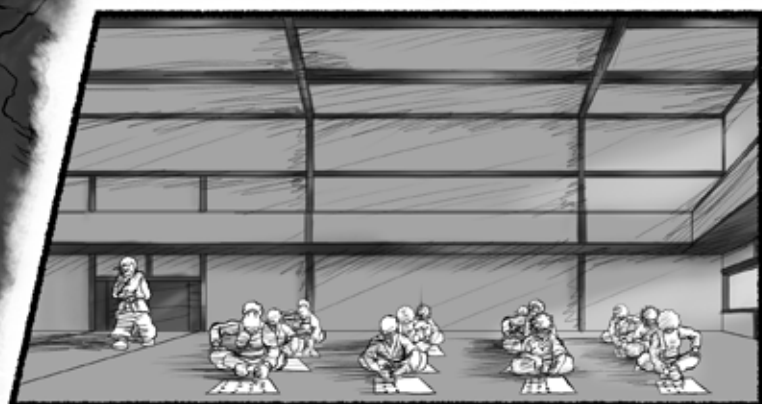
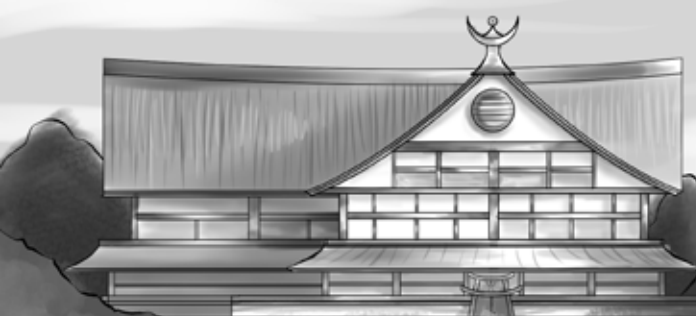


Countless lives have been lost over this one and others like it. It is important that you understand that carrying this stone marks you for death. So you must be careful who you reveal this ring to! Regardless of who they may say they are. Until you have good reason to, trust no one! Even family and so-called friends.



Let me tell you what I know about the ring. Hopefully that will shed some light on the real weight of this stone! ...It was over fifteen years ago now... When your father told me to take this damned ring...

15 YEARS AGO...
GRAND
LIBRARY
OF YOSAI





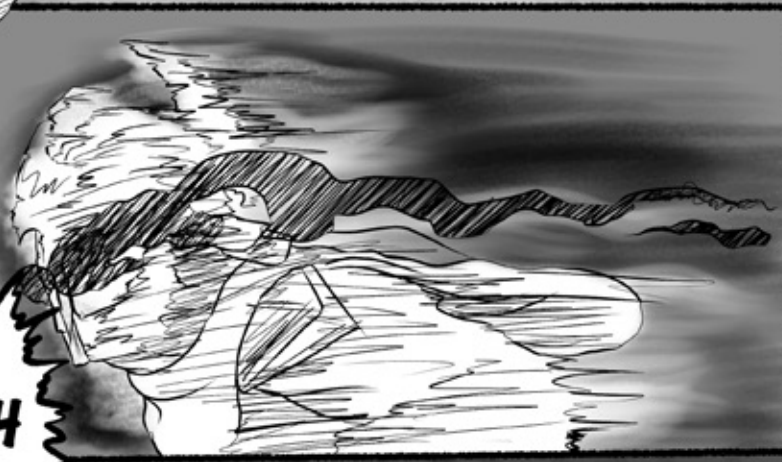
Take the gemstones
off the statue and get
out of here now!
I'll hold them off!

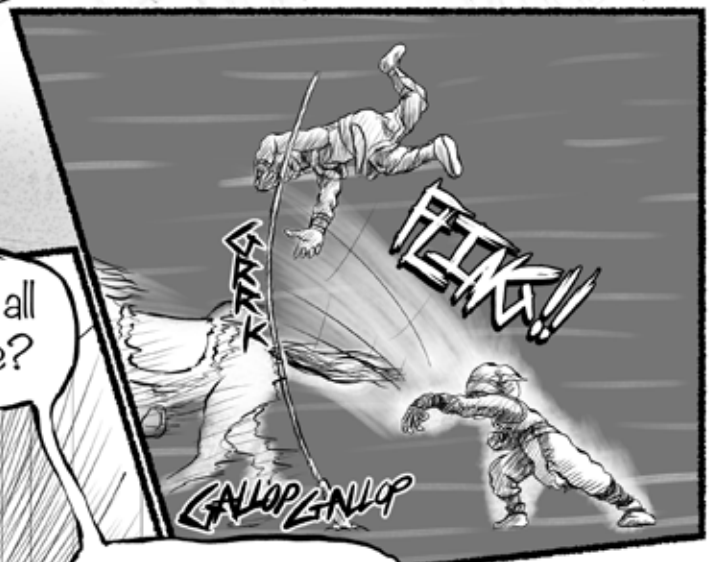
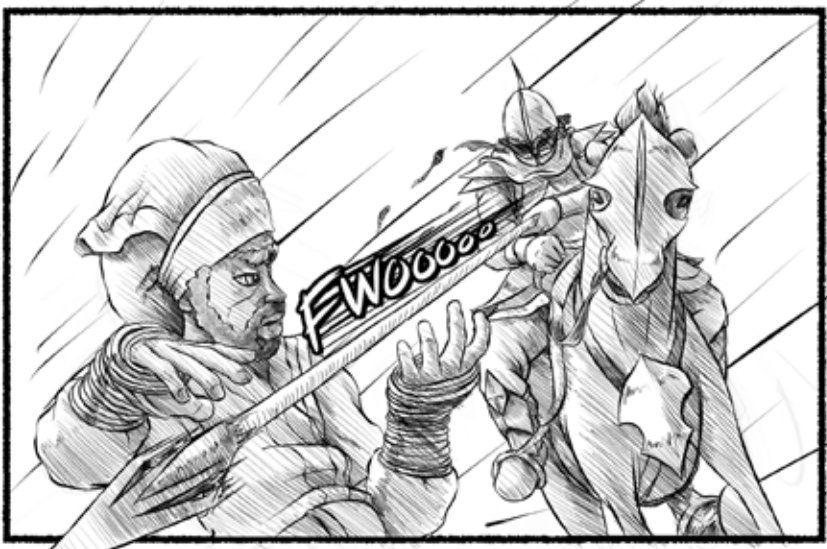


Hold who off? What's happening?



'Kichi
WATCH
OUT!!!





What are you all doing out here?

Get out of here NOW!
Save yourselves!
That's an ORDER!



Who sent them?
And WHY?

Yosian Cavalry,
filled with
shade energy?)

DASH

RUMBLE!!

RUMBLE!!

GALLOP!

GALLOP!

SHO

SHO

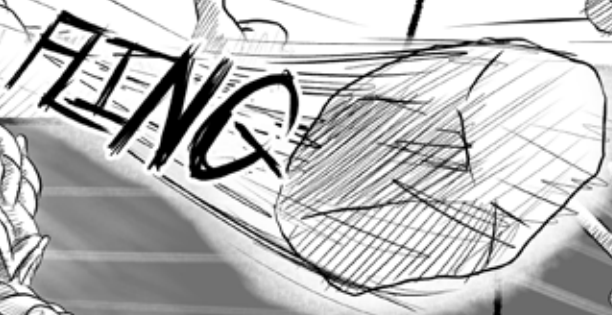
W

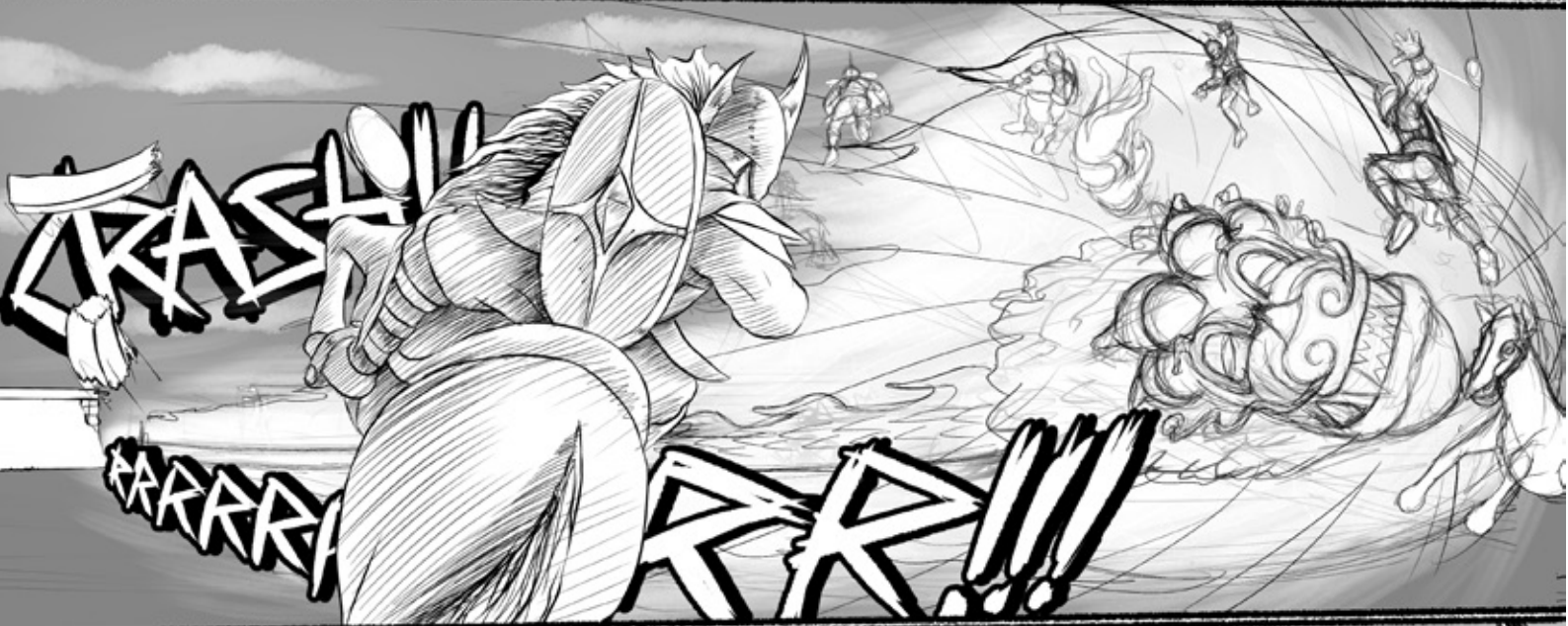
DASH



KICHI
WATCH YOUR
BACK!!!

They use the shade energy
like masters... They move fast!
These are no usual cavalry...
What's happening here?







Looks like I'm here too late... This will probably be our last fight...



Aye... Probably...



LET'S GO!!!



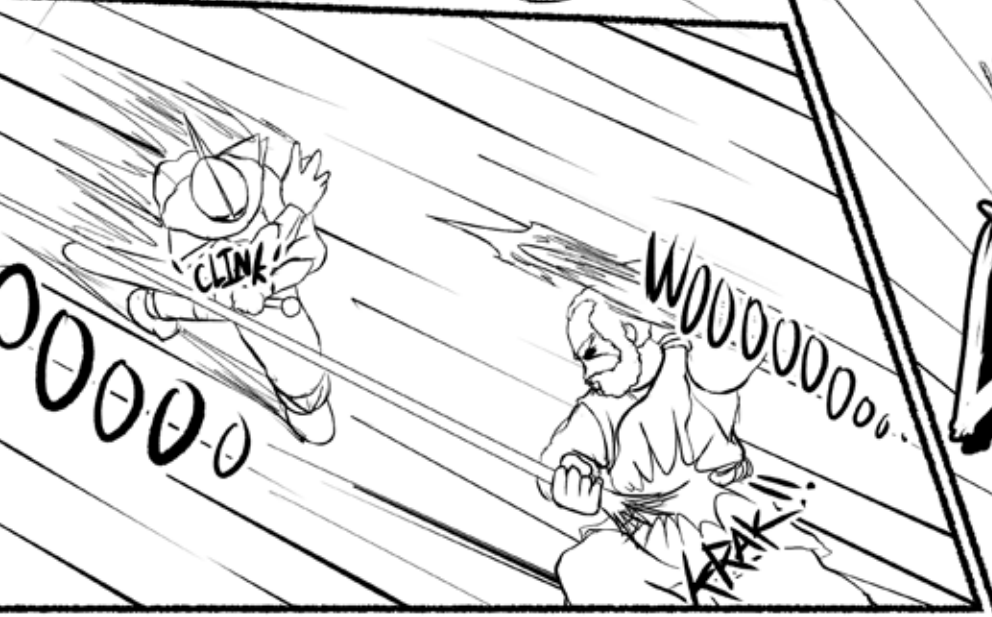
Well... What are we waiting for?



NO!!! SAVE YOURSELVES! GET OUT OF HERE, NOW!



ZHOOOM



CLINK
OOOOO

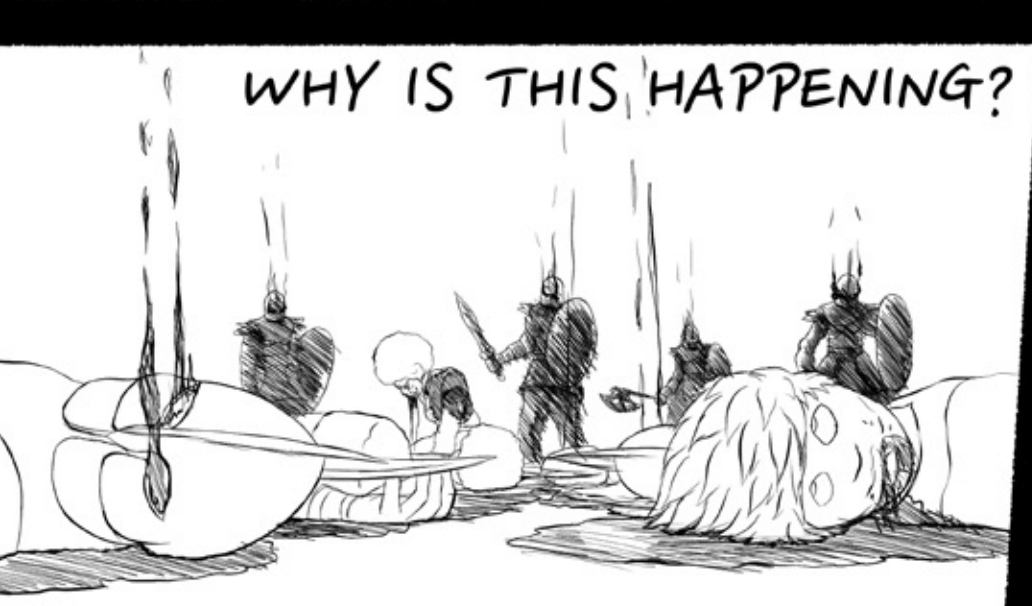
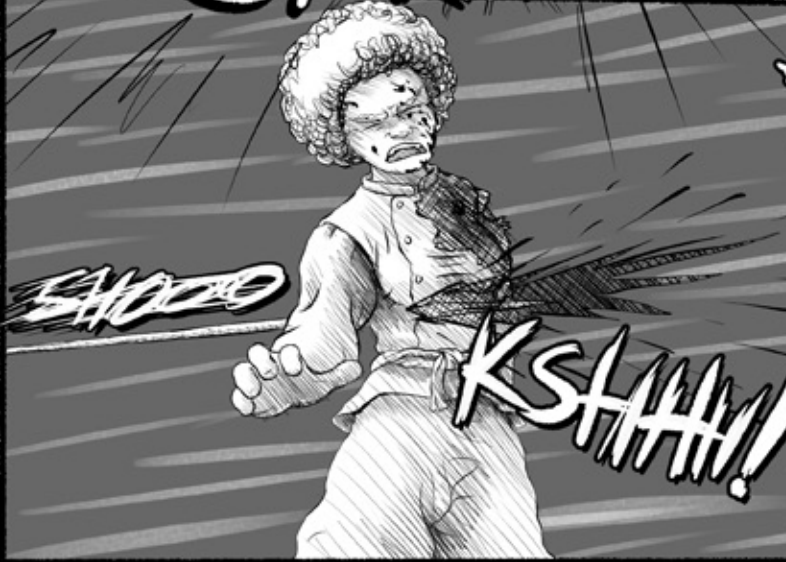
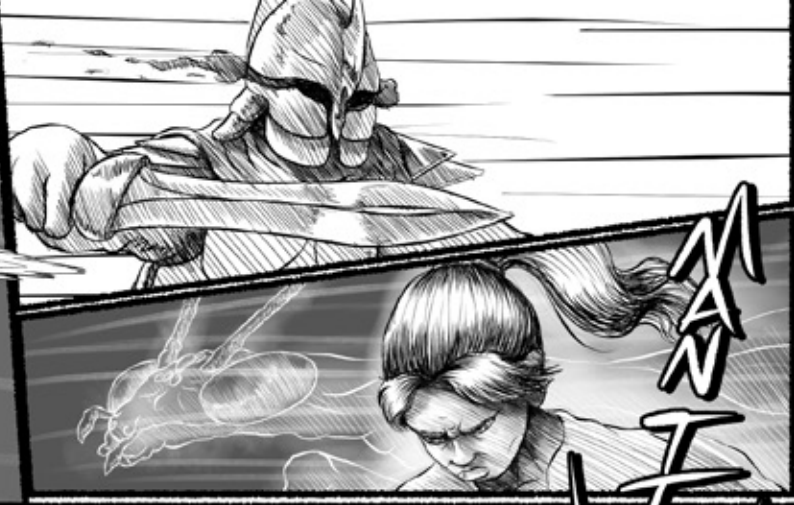
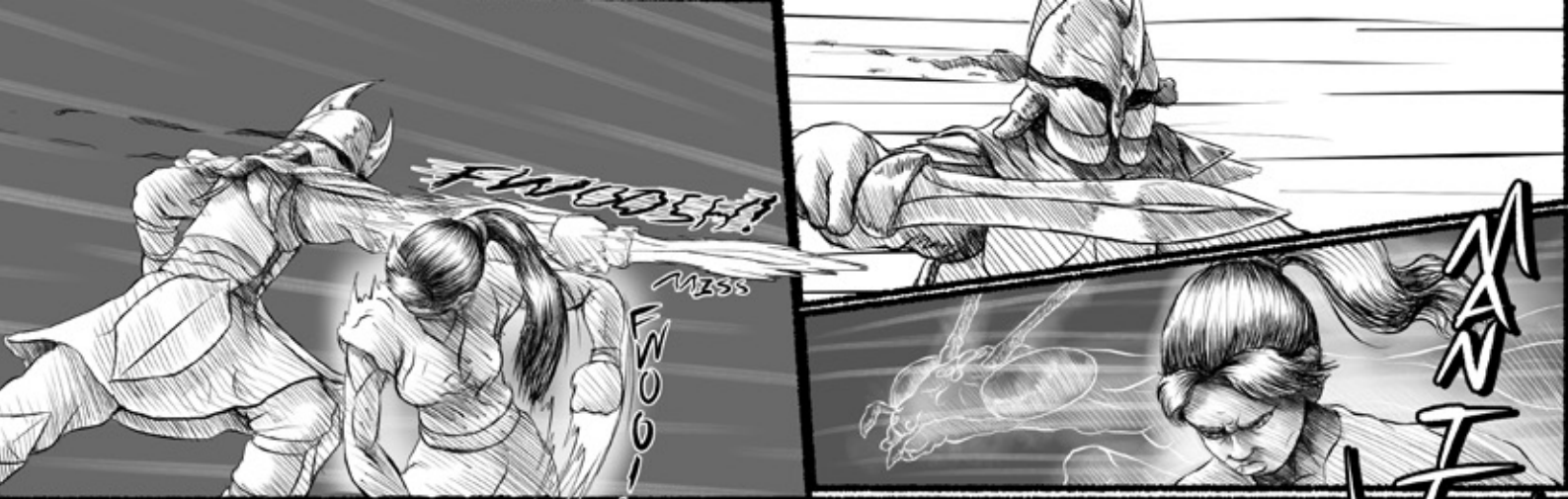
WOOOOOOOO
KRAK!!!

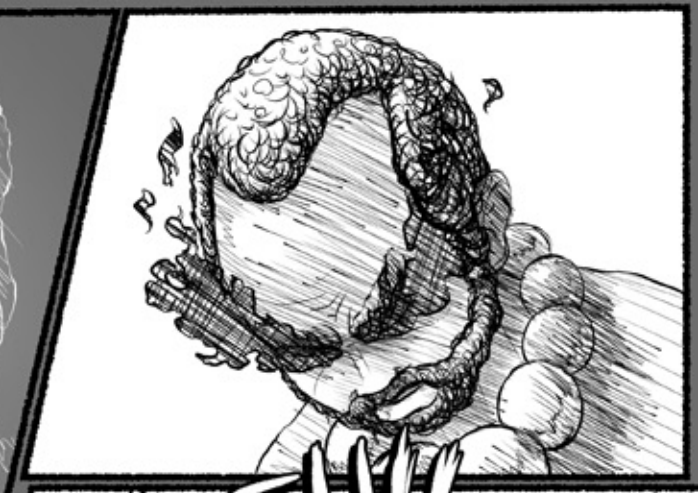
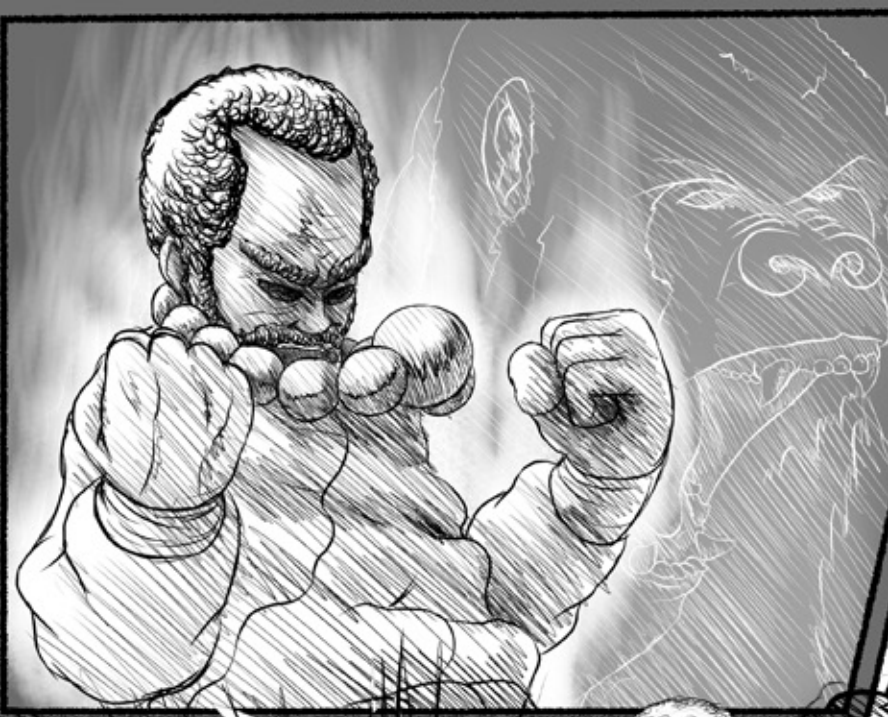


SNAP!!!



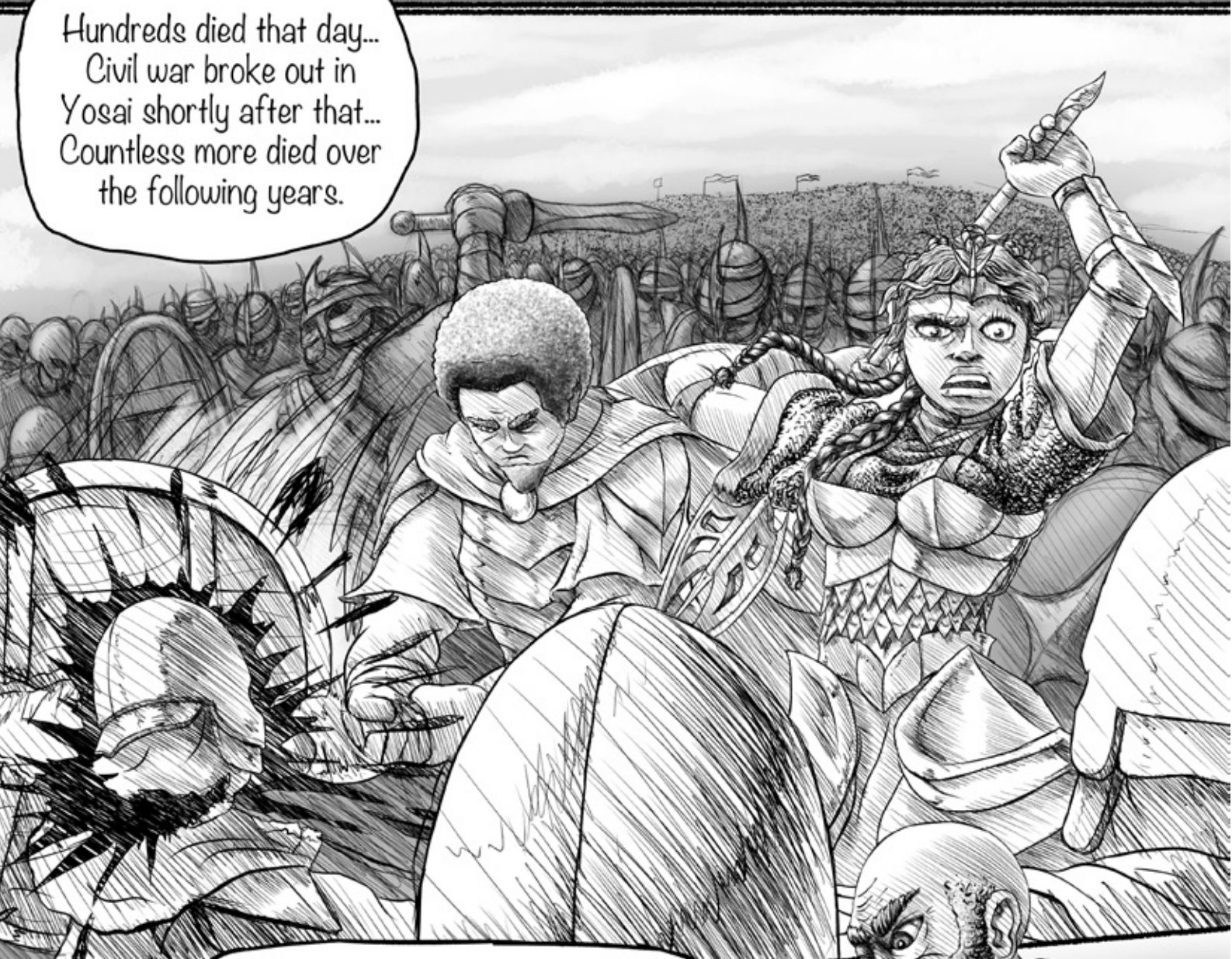








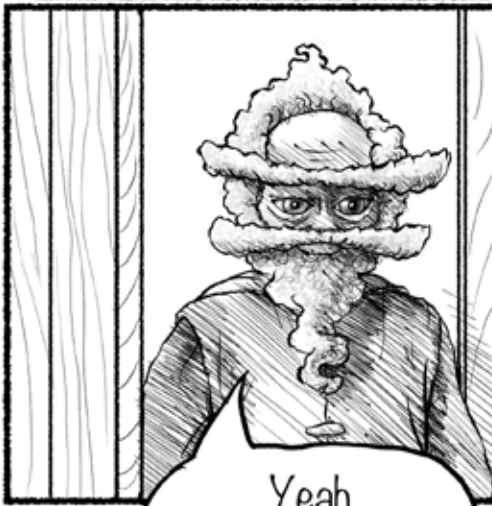
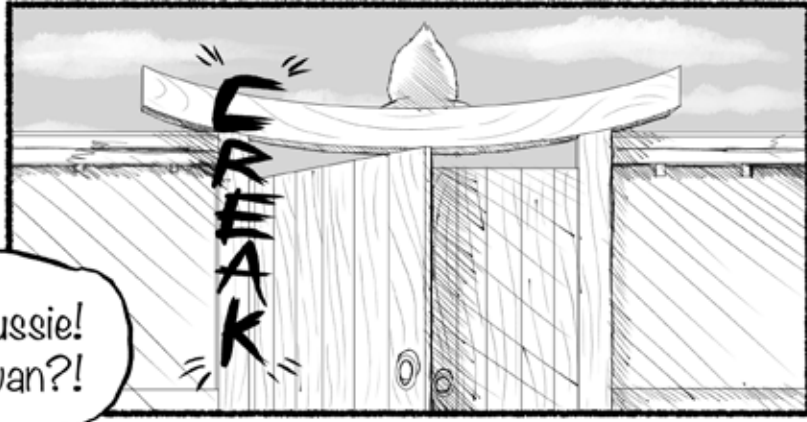
Hundreds died that day...
Civil war broke out in
Yosai shortly after that...
Countless more died over
the following years.



Since you will be carrying this around
your neck. It's best you understand
it's real weight.

Your life, and perhaps the course of history,
depends on this stone. Keep it safe and
out of site at all times.





Hail Gussie!
Wahgwan?!

Hail Saru!
I was just giving
Akio his first
training session!...
He's got ways
to go aye?



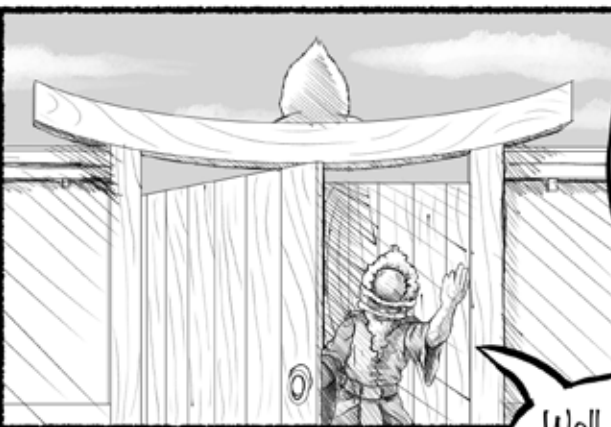
Yeah,
tell me about it.

You were talking like
you weren't coming
gramps?

That was
training??
Ways to go!?

I wanted to see if you could
watch your own back,
knowing that you and the
gemstone are being hunted.

I tracked the idiot who tried us
for the ring before you left.
I found him with another one following
you. At times they were so close i'm
surprised you couldn't smell them!
They were about to have you as well,
you were lucky Bunti showed up!



Good yout that Bunti is.
Still I don't understand.
How do they know where
you stay!? Are there any
more of them?

Well... If you both come with
me I'll show you.



Fufufuu... Well... They are working for the Hikaru so... I finished off that one. I didn't like his energy... But four eyes here is still alive. I dosed him with **forgotten night**. He will come round in a few hours.

Let me guess... You didn't ask any questions before you killed them both? ...Typical Saru.

Forgotten night? What's that for?

A herb that puts you to sleep and fades your recent memory. The higher the dose, the longer you sleep and the further into the past you will forget.

Hikaru hounds?! You should have just finished them both!

Fufufuuuu.... That was my first thought... However, four eyes claims he can help us gather top secret Hikaru intel from the inside. I have a plan to see if he's telling the truth. He'll be coming around soon.

He's Waking up.

Alright, here we go...





... He's dead...
That kid
killed him?



Alright, he won't remember what he told me earlier. Let's see if his story holds up...

He's dropped
the sacred
stone!?



Yo! Wait!

You forgot this!



He's not my friend...
Infact, I was seiously
considering killing him myself...
So you've done me a favour!
I don't know what you did. But
the last thing I remember
is trying to talk him out of jumping
you, after you finished with those
bandits who tried you...
That was a wicked heel kick
counter by the way! Did you
hit me with that too?
is that why I can't remember
what just happened?

You're just handing this back to
me? After I killed your friend..
And tried to kill you?



Ha! Well... Not exactly. See what happ-

It doesn't even matter right now...
I beleive that your sensei is the
Don Dragon! Infamous for **not**
taking on students, yet you are his student.
I don't know or care about that gemstone
I want to study under him too.
Can you make it happen?



Erghhh...



You see these documents?
They are copies of
top secret intel I made.
The Don's name Saruwatari
Doragon comes up... a lot.
I want to see the Don
and offer my help, in
exchange for his help.
Will you take me to him?



What is he
talking about?



Haha! How about that?!
two apprentices! Both brimming
with shade they can't control!
Hahaaa!!!
Hey don't look so down Saru!
It should be a nice change of pace!

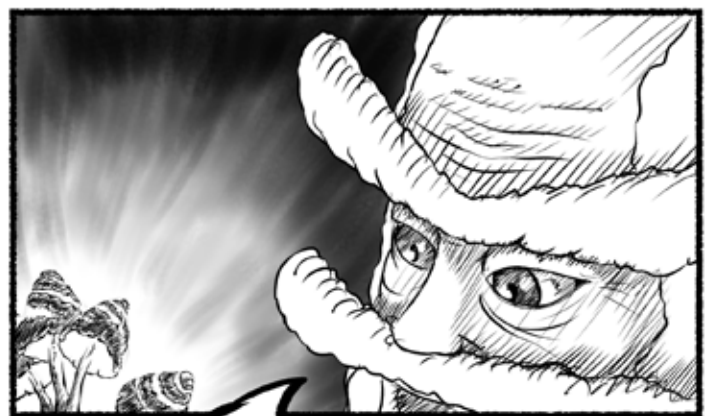




Hmph... well, speaking of their shadow energy problems... Look what I found, whilst foraging for the forgotten night!



SPIRIT CAPS!
Proper big fresh ones!
These will make em' see for sure!



Alright, lets get rid of that body, and head back! Tonights festival could be the last Suigin Valley party we see for a long time.

Yeah... I didn't want to resort to this but... We need something to help open their eyes to the soul.



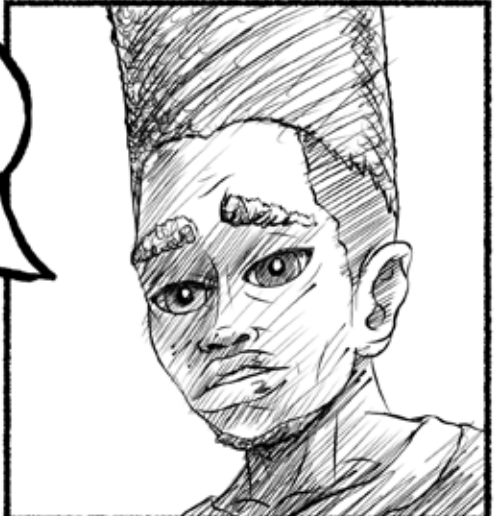
Wait!
That's him!
Isn't it?
What are they doing lurking in the bushes like that?

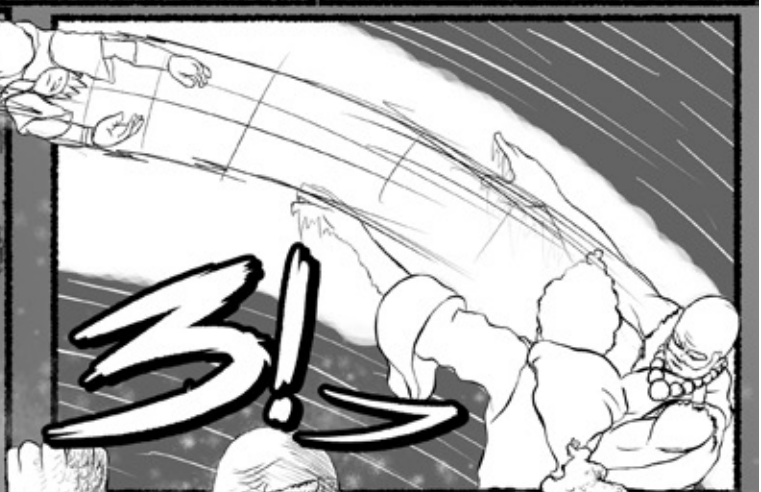
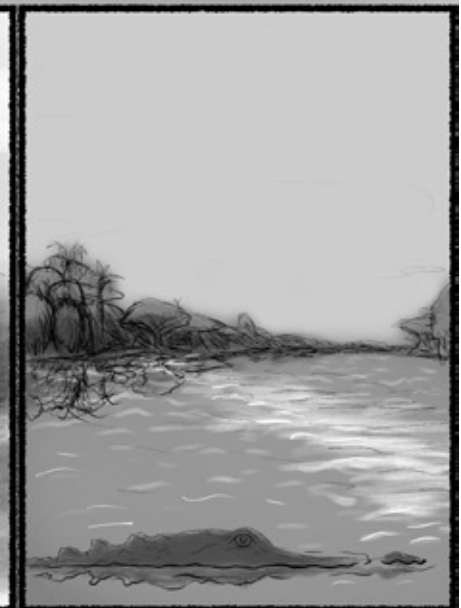
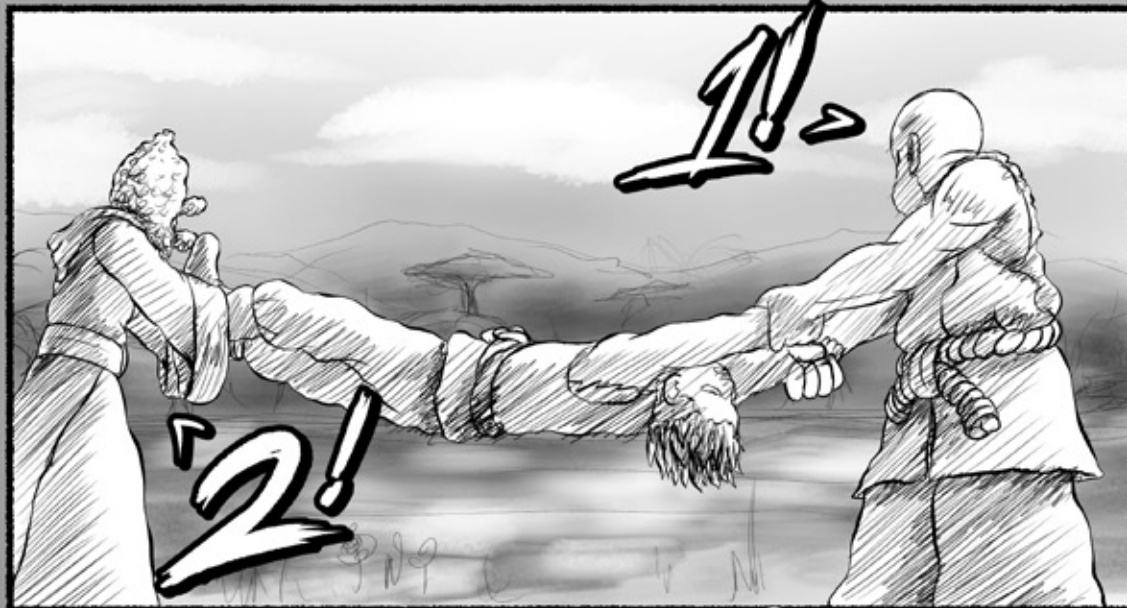


Let's go then boys!



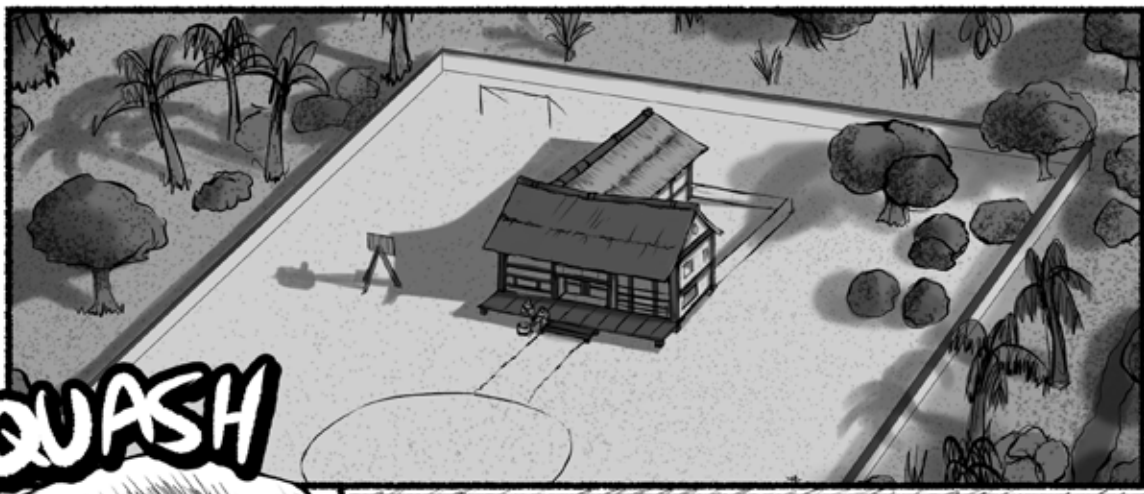
Well that's my granddad... He can explain everything





Wow... Anyway,
it's getting late.
Let's get back
and eat!



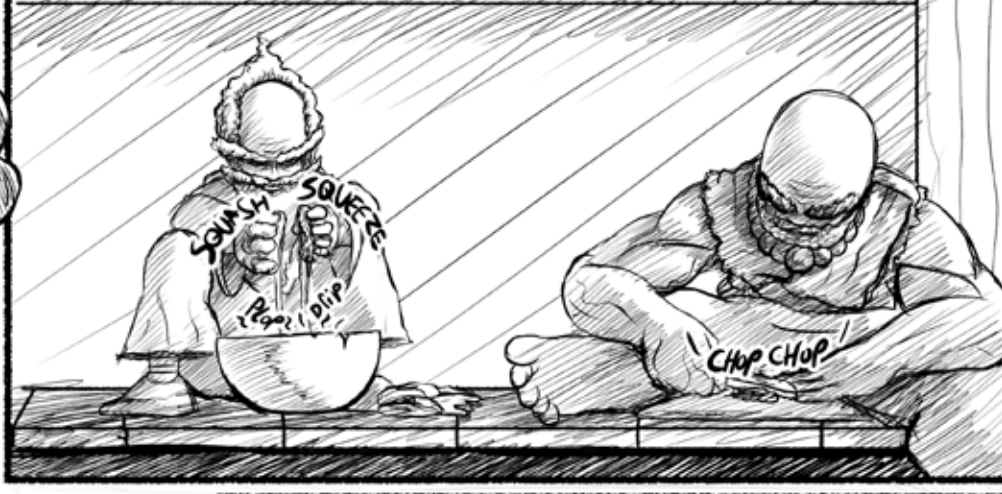


SQUASH



DRIP

DRIP



Whoa! Whoa!
That's plenty!



SQUASH SQUEEZE



CHOP

CHOP

CHOP

Ay? Come on Saru! You want them to see or not? That will barely make a dent I'm putting it all in!

SIGH...



SHHHHHH

SCRAPE

Pop Pop Pop Pop Pop Pop



SFX!!!



About time!

GROWL! RUMBLE!



Foods' ready!

GROWL RUMBLE

GROWL RUMBLE

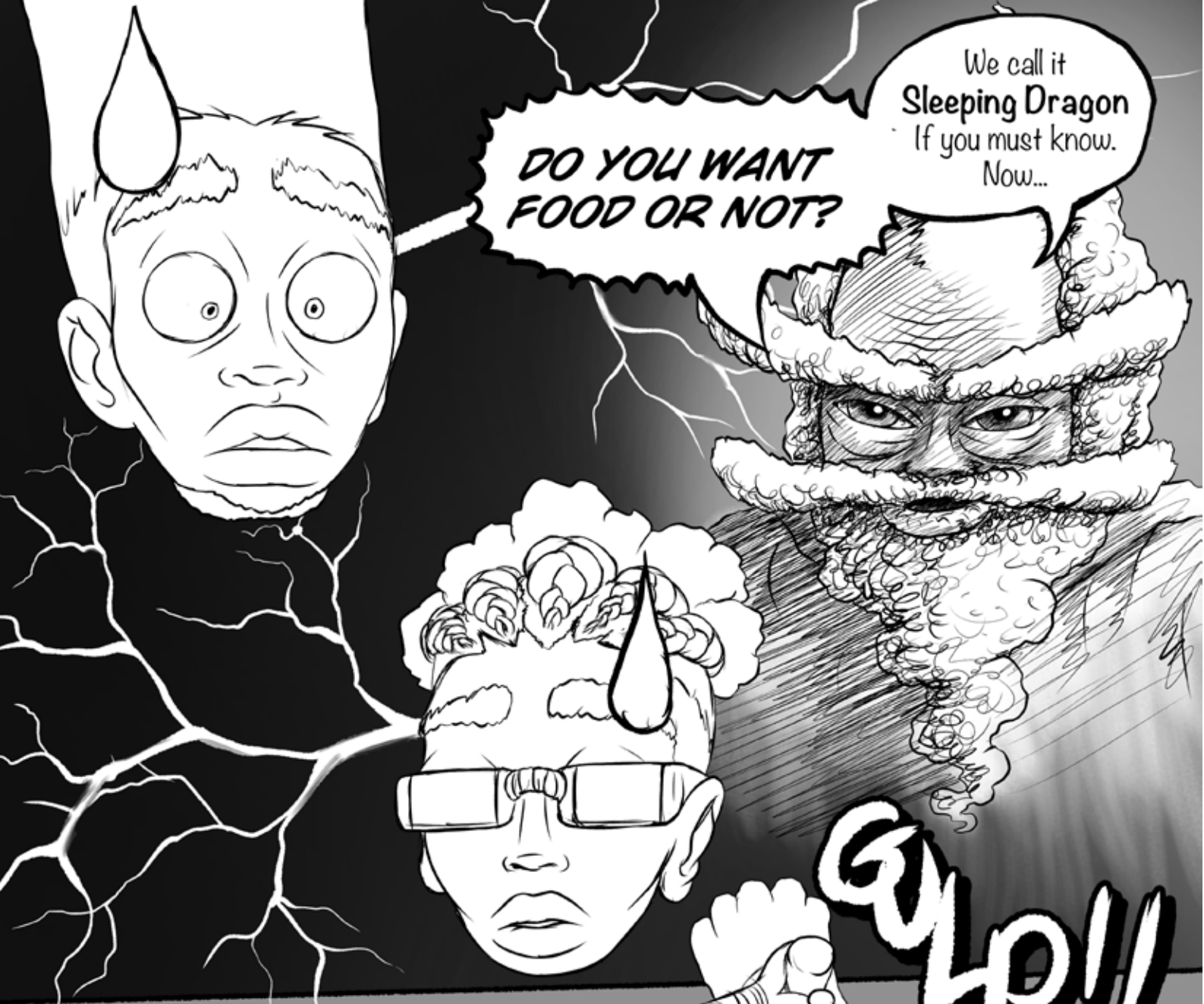
Straight down the hatch!

Before you eat... You have to drink these.



Aww c'mon! What is this? Is this another test Uncle Gussie? You said I could eat after the last one... I'm starving!





**DO YOU WANT
FOOD OR NOT?**

We call it
Sleeping Dragon
If you must know.
Now...

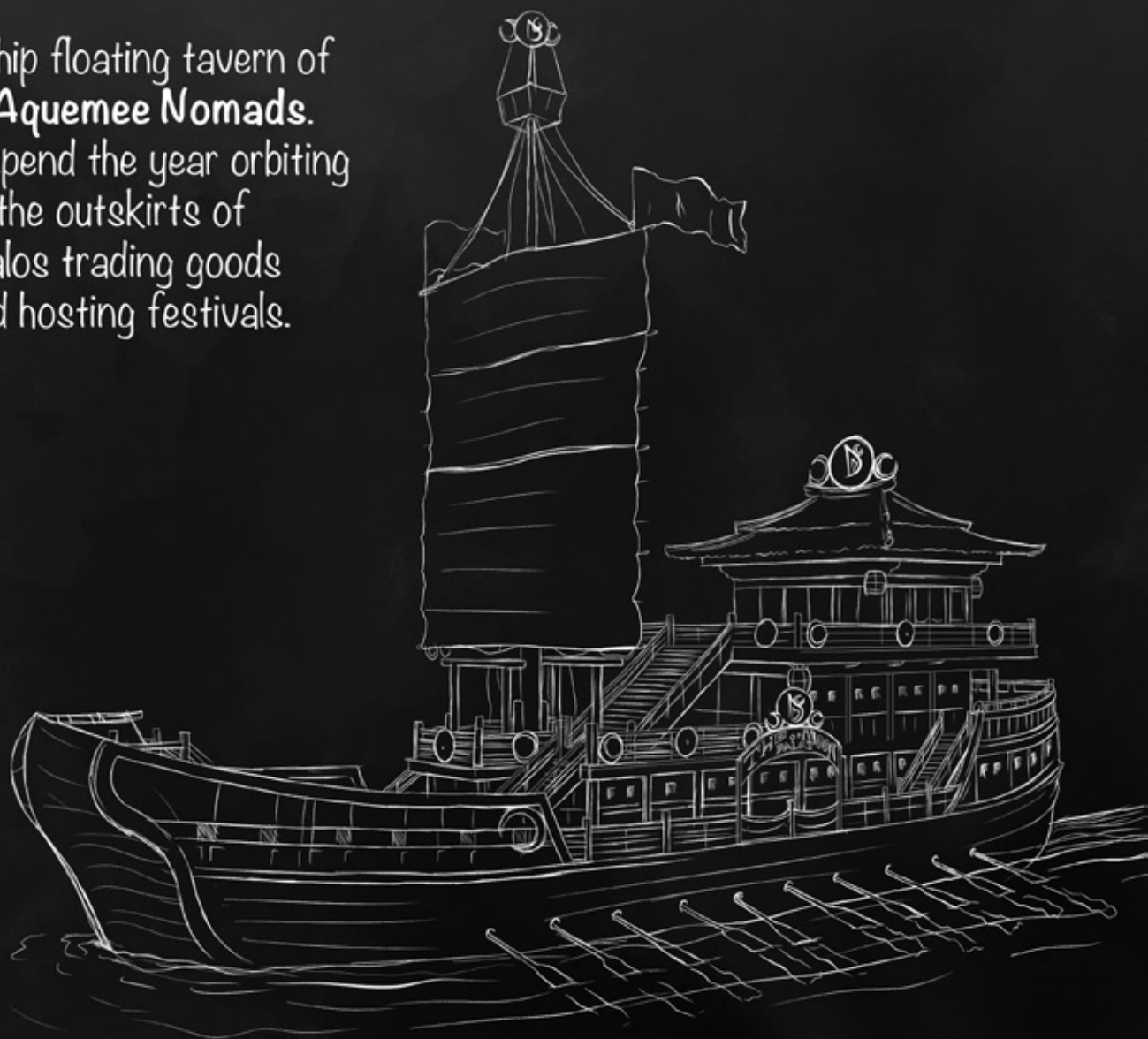
Gulp!!



**END OF
CHAPTER 3**

THE DALOS MOON

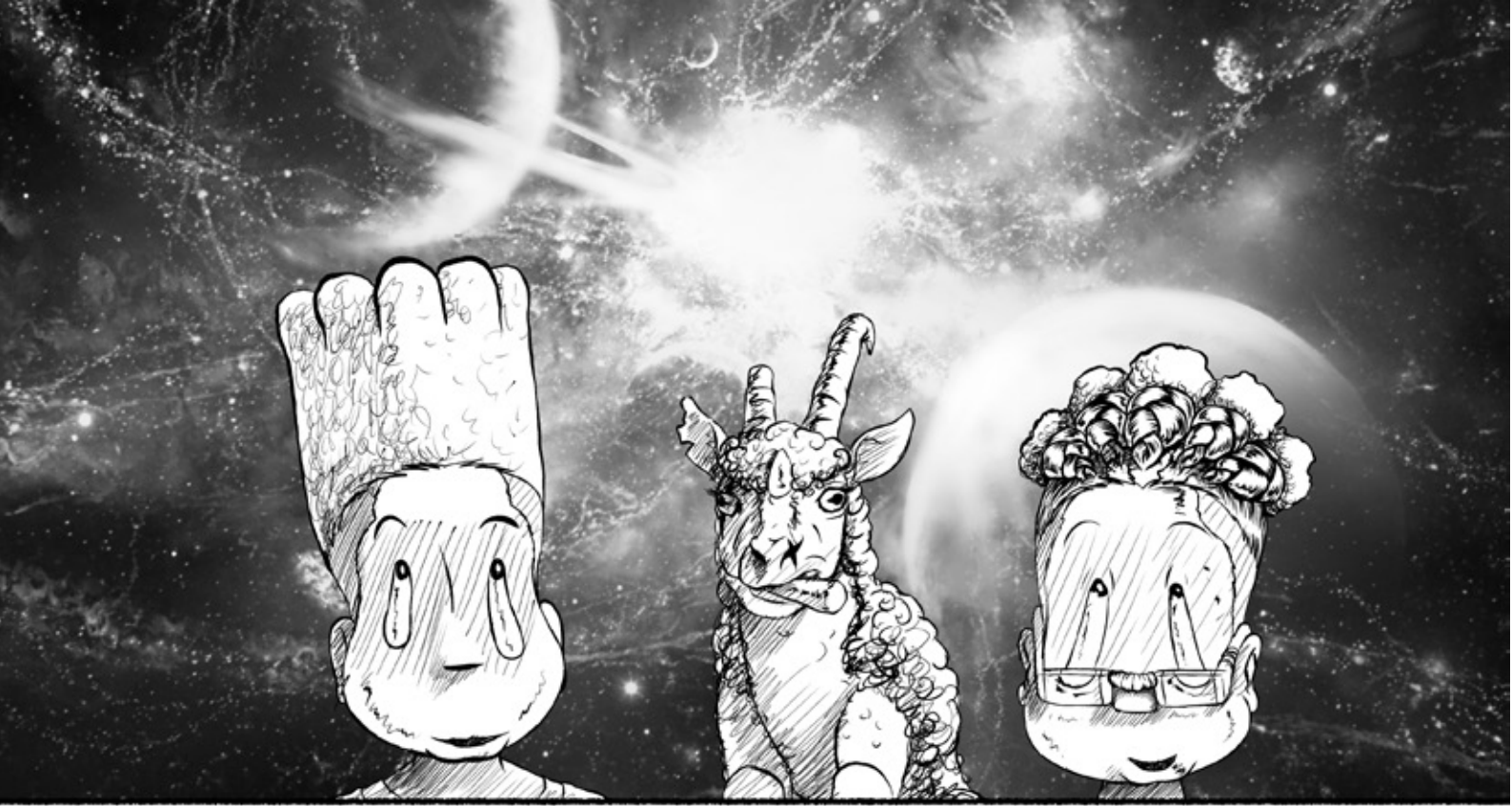
Flagship floating tavern of
the **Aquemee Nomads**.
They spend the year orbiting
the outskirts of
Dalos trading goods
and hosting festivals.



CHAPTER 4: TWO STEPS INSIDE

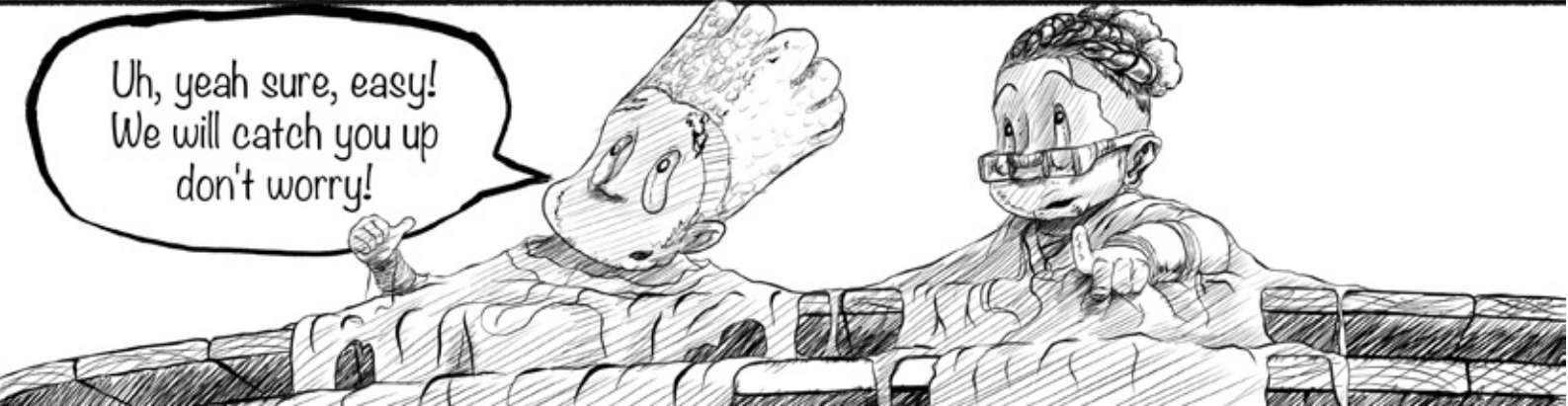
Certain concoctions and medicines
can have an enhancing or
diminishing effect on the
mind's ability to interact with
the soul.





That was a strong
Sleeping Dragon Brew
Dont fight it,
embrace the experience
and bask in the soul!
When you're ready
come meet us in the
Dalos Moon.

Uh, yeah sure, easy!
We will catch you up
don't worry!



HA!
HA!
HA!



See!
I told you that
was way too
much for them!
They're having
a meltdown!

Nonsense! It's the perfect amount!
Can't you see? They will be masters of
the spirit before you know it!

Whats done is done.
After tonight we likely
won't have another chance
to relax in some time.
It's been too long Saru!

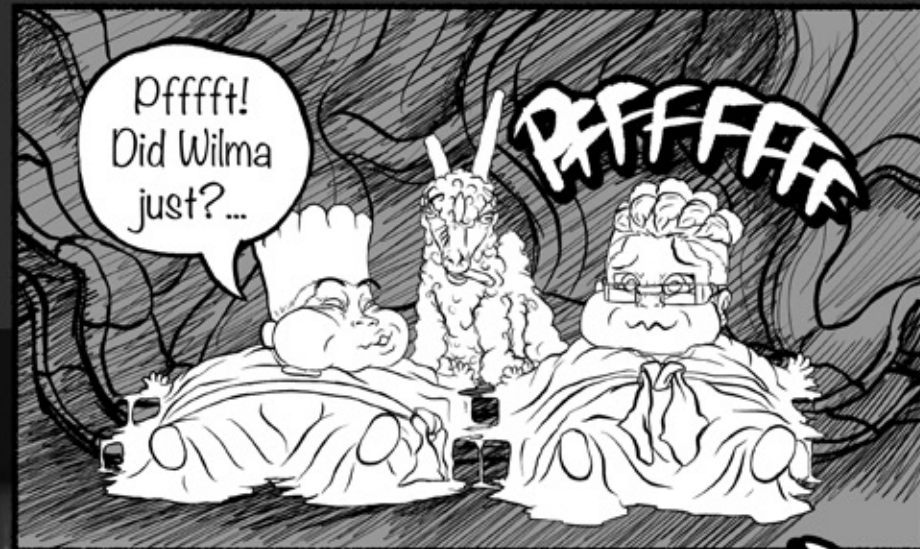


The ways of the dragon clan
are as mysterious and as
powerful as the stories
say they are!
Within a few hours of
being in the Don's presence,
I can **see** the **unseen**.
clear as crystal!

Don't get it mixed up!
I've been with him all my life
and this is a first for me!

I think they
just spiked us
my freind...
He's got you twice
in one day!





HA HA HA HA!



HAHAHAHAHA!

HUHUU
HUUUU



HUUUUU
HUUUUU



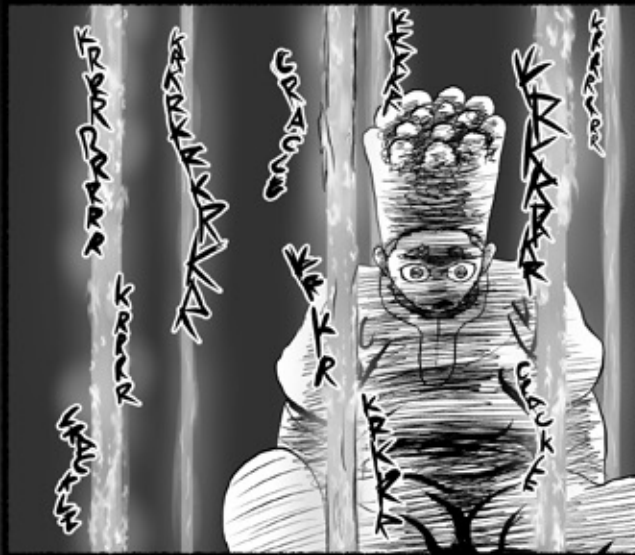
HUU
HUUGH

Sota??



Akio??





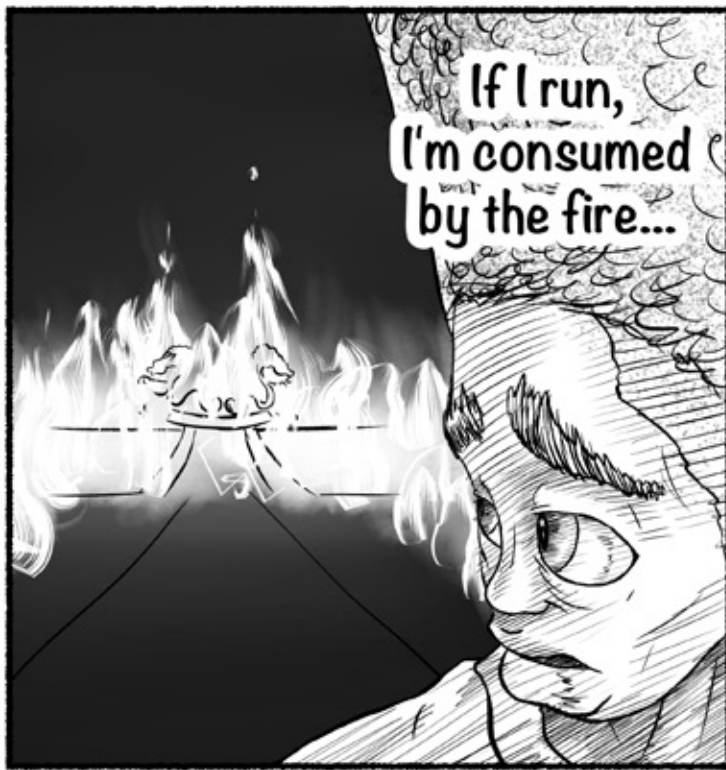
NOT THIS AGAIN!!



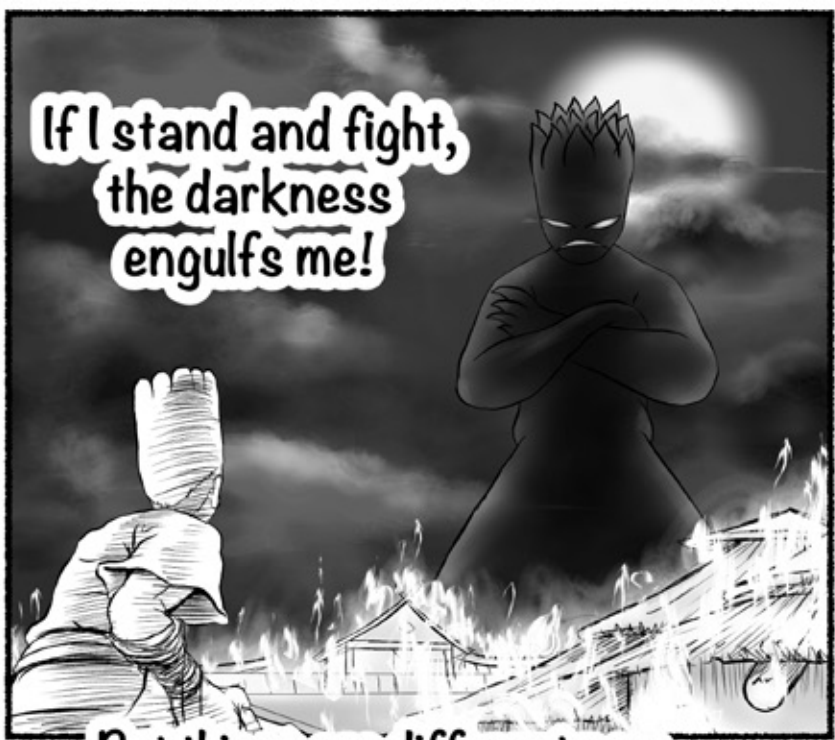
How many times must i witness our clans demise?



If I run,
I'm consumed
by the fire...



If I stand and fight,
the darkness
engulfs me!



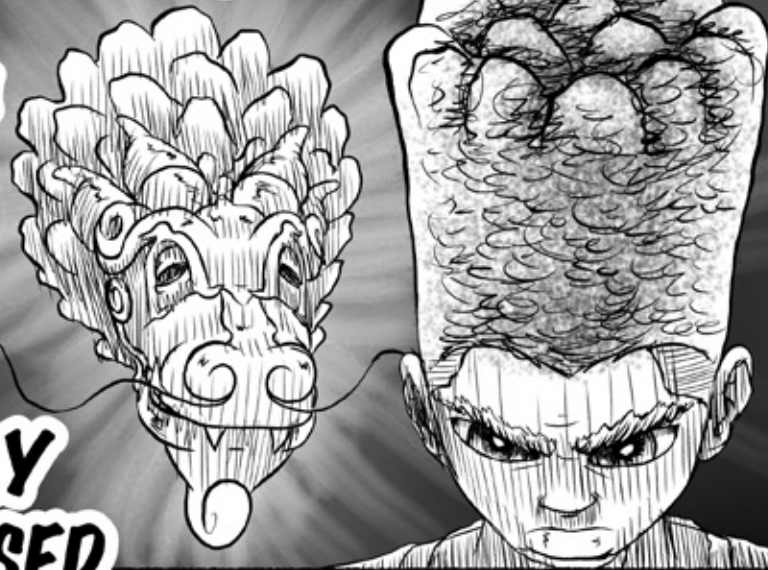
But things are different now...
Now you see the light!

Use the light of your soul!
Illuminate the darkness
and extinguish the flames!



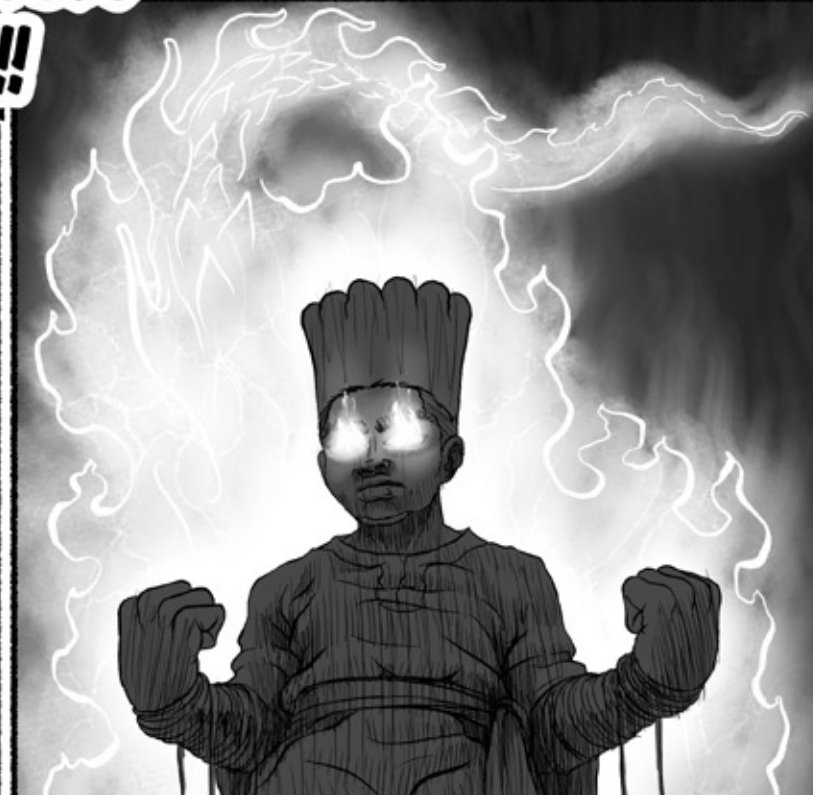
**STAY
FOCUSED**

!!!



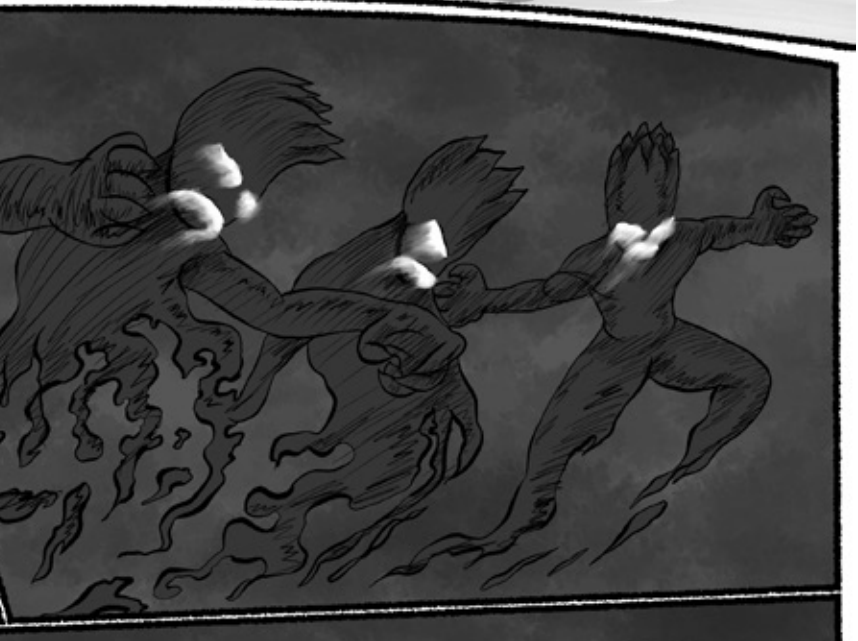
WOOSH!!!

GAHHH

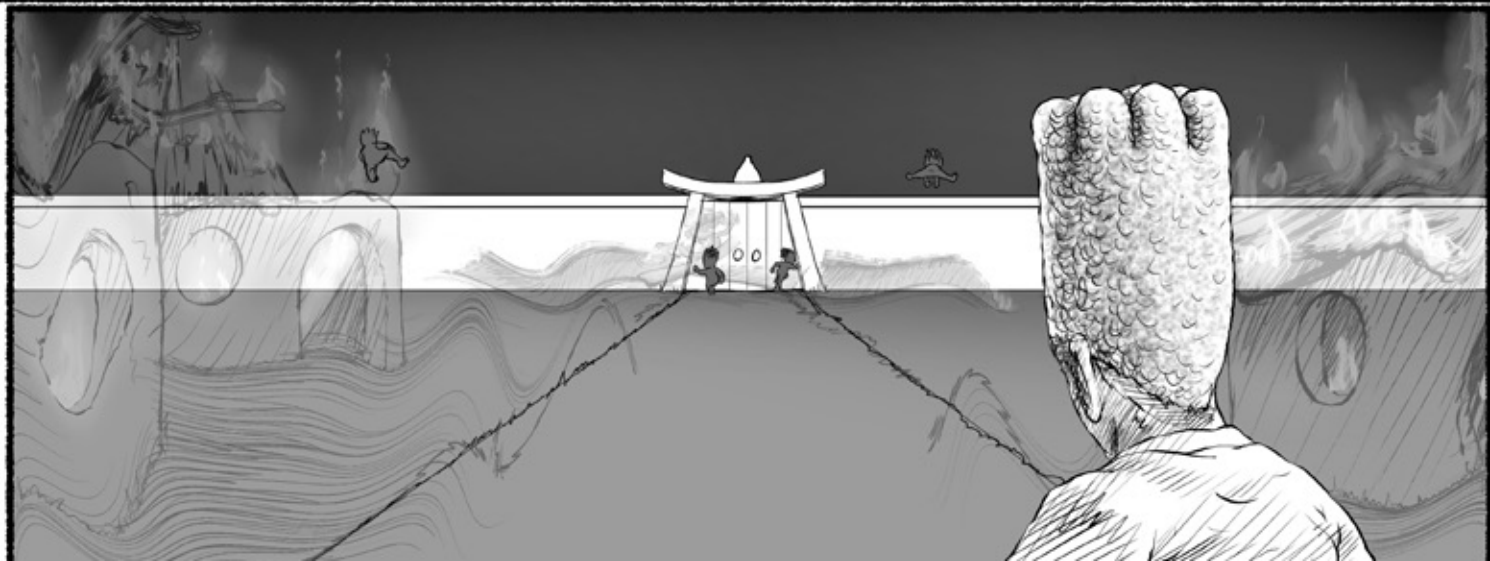
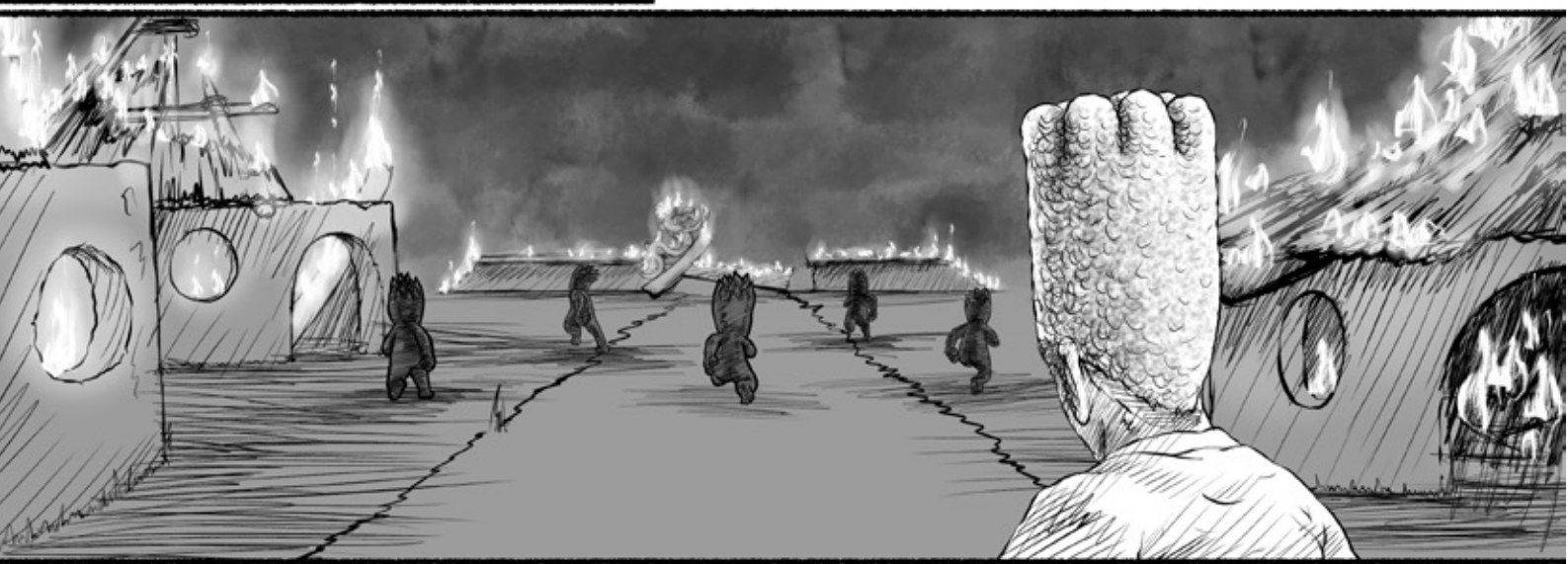
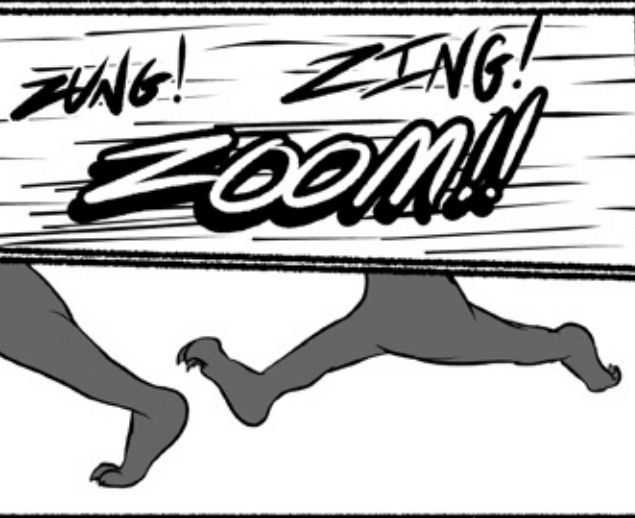
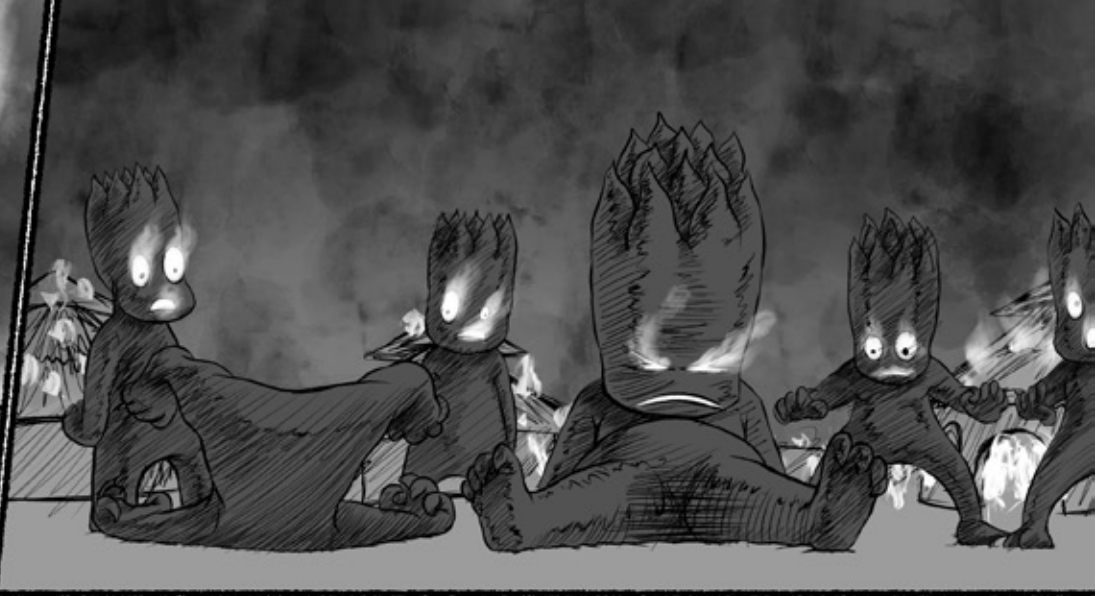


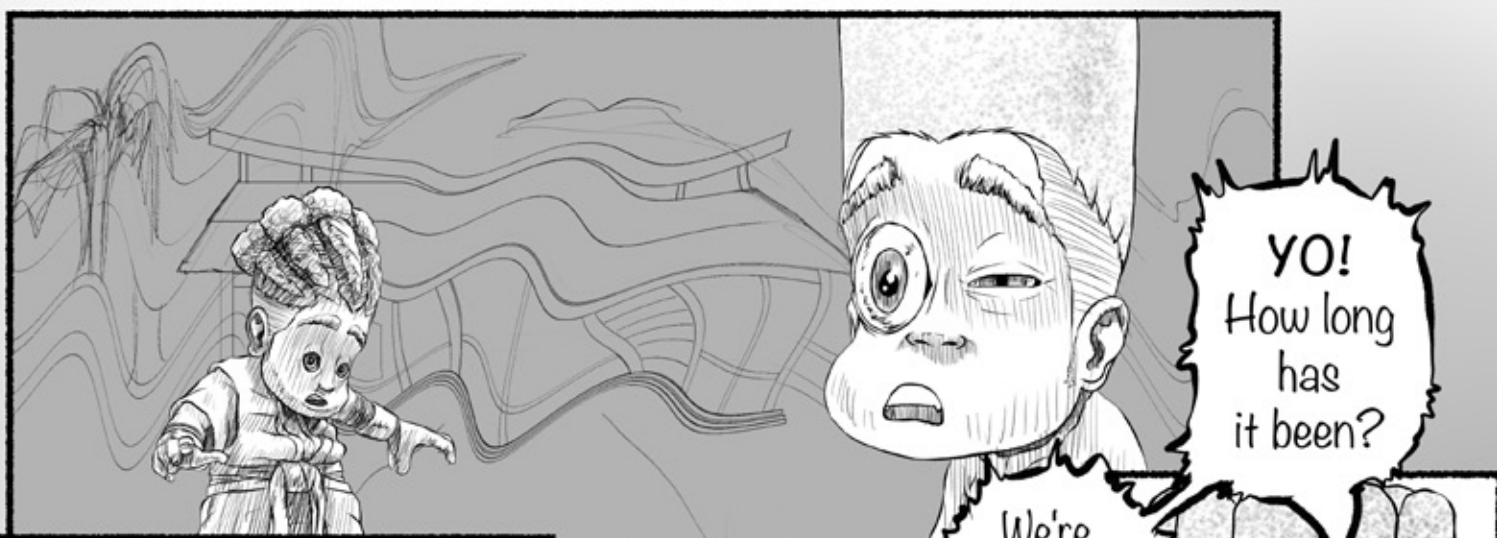


KAHHAHAHA









YO!
How long
has
it
been?

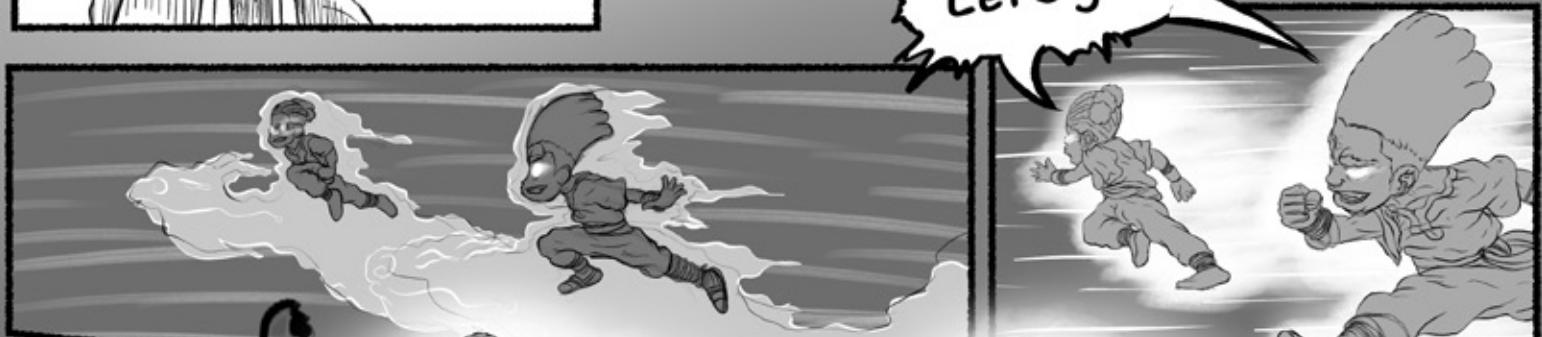


No worries
man, come
we fly
over there
we'll reach
in no time!



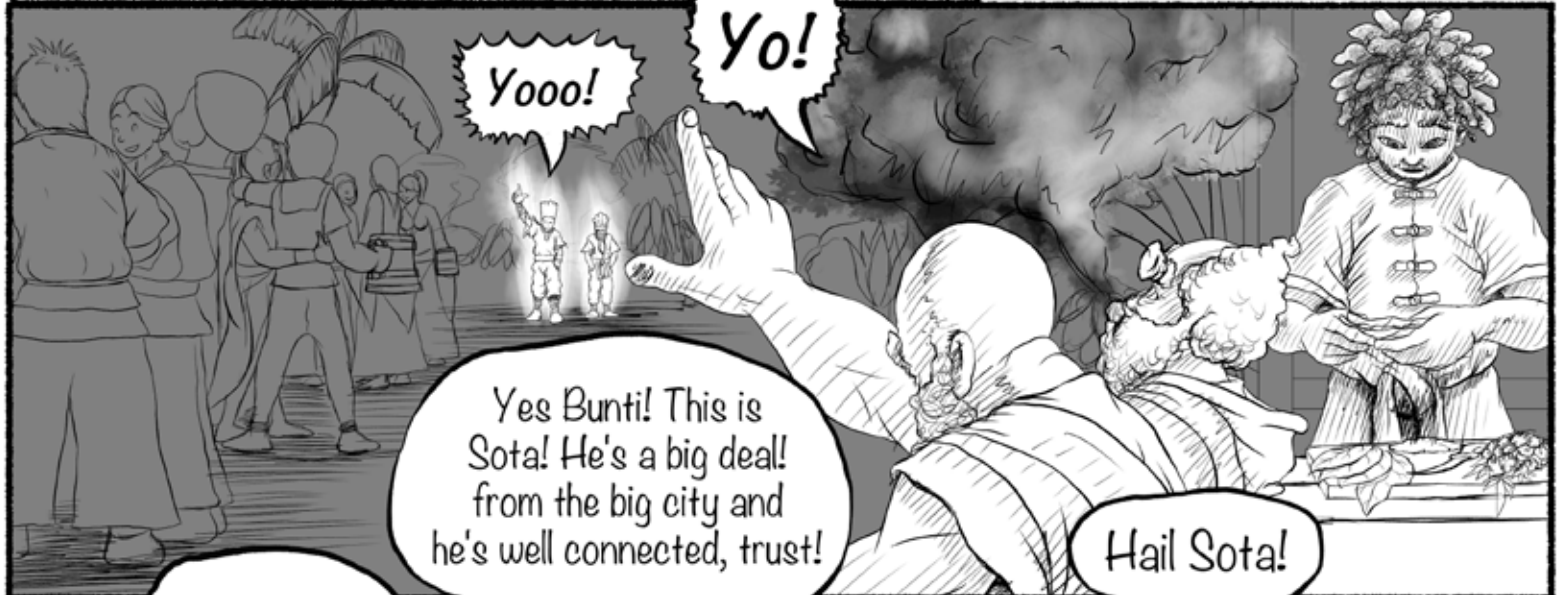
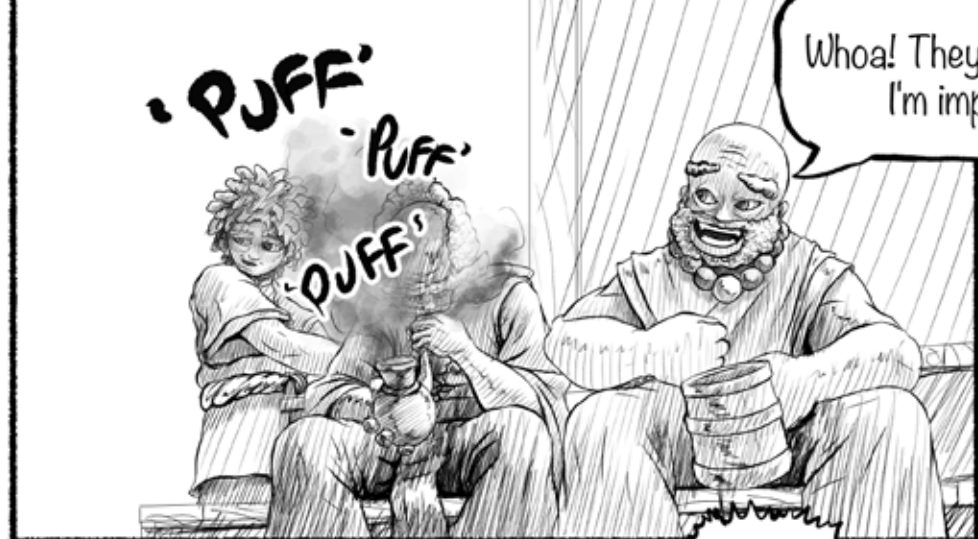
We're
gonna miss
the girls!
Let's get
going!

Let's go!



• PUFF' PUFF' PUFF'

Whoa! They made it Saru!
I'm impressed!



Yooo!

Yo!

Yes Bunti! This is Sota! He's a big deal!
from the big city and he's well connected, trust!

Hail Sota!



You got here pretty quick...
You sure you're alright?



Hail Bunti!

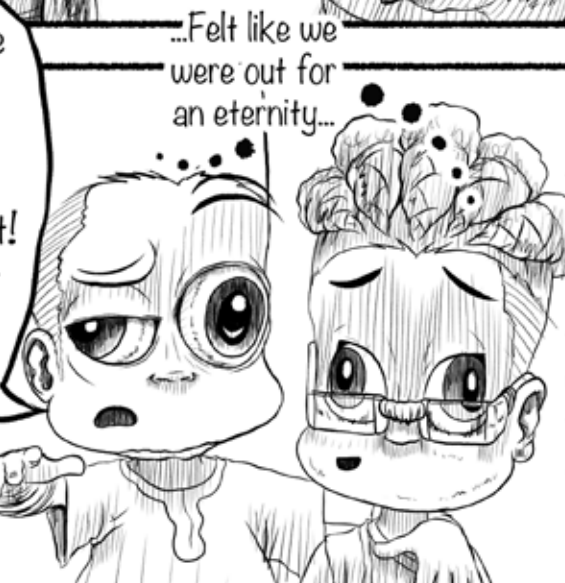


Hahahaha!
That's the spirit!
Something to drink then boys?

Noooooo!
It's on me Uncle Gussie!
I'll get them in!



Hey! We.. we're jus' fine Gramps!
We can- We can handle it!
Yoo, You just worry about yourself alright?..



...Felt like we were out for an eternity...



Guess she's not here yet...

One barrel please!



Sure babe!



Hold on!

Oi, Akio just walked in on his own...

Annette could be here at any moment! If she sees me chatting up the barmaid, then all my hard work will have been for nothing.

Stay Focused!



He's only gone and bought a whole barrel with our money!

Just hold tight... It's too early to get him now...



STEP STEP

YES AKI!!!

A BARREL OF FUN!

SIGH.....

CHEERS!

PUFF PUFF

GULP GULP

CLINK!

ROLL

POUR

GUNK!

BOYS!
HEADS UP!!

ROLL

GLOG

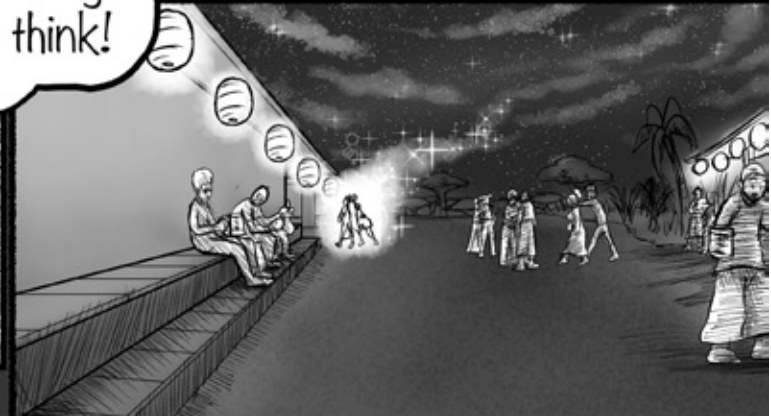
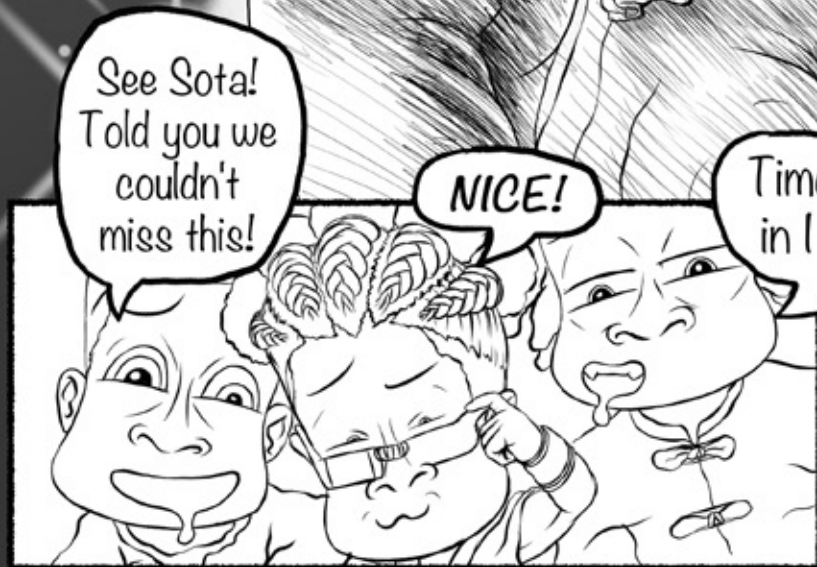
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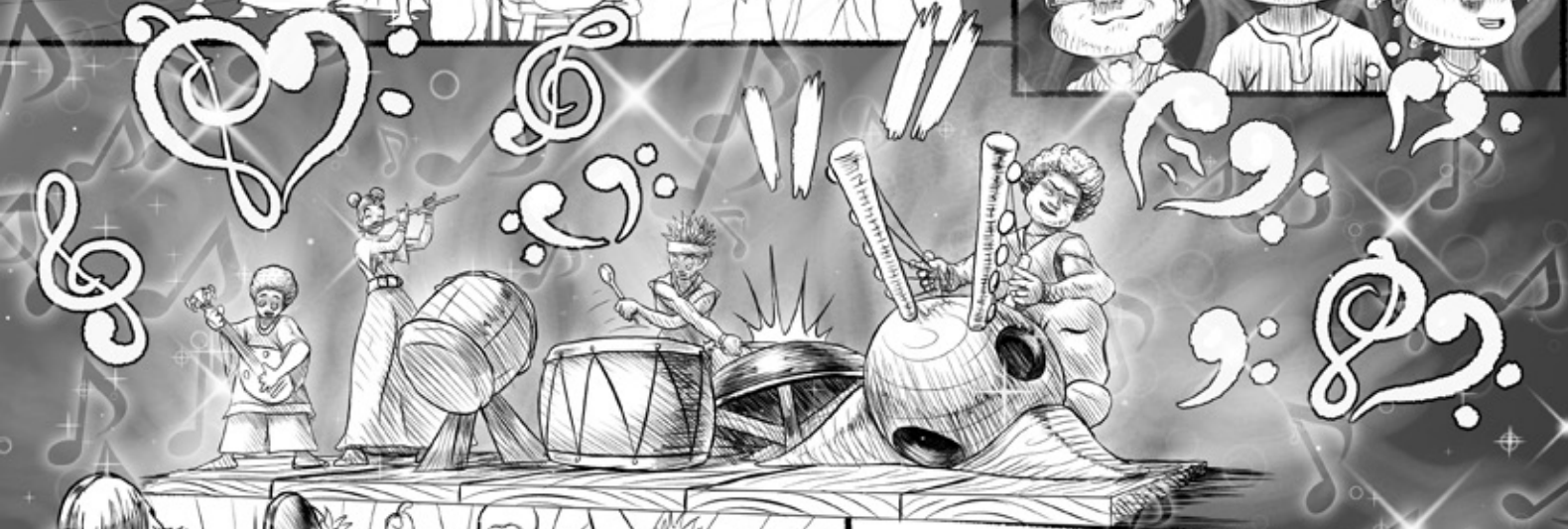
TS
HA
HA
H
S
T
E
A
M

TS
HA
HA

S
T
E
A
M







WAIT!... Wait...



IT'S TOO LOUD IN
HERE FOR THAT
ANYWAY!

ACCUP!

LET'S NOT WALK
OVER THERE, THEN
REALISE THAT WE
HAVE NOTHING
INTERESTING
TO SAY!

SO WOT THEN?!
THEY'RE THE ONLY
REASON WE'RE HERE!!

AHAAA!
IS THERE ANYONE
THAT CAN OAF ME
IN HERE!?!

Just back
me up!

I'LL GO NEXT...

SLAM!!

BAM!

HAHA! GO ON
KID!! HA HA HA!
HA!

C'mon now kid! You're clearly no big oaf!
Nor a small oaf, nor any kind of oaf! I don't
think you can afford to lose all of that!
Put it away huh? We'll have a friendly!

GO ON KID!
YOU CAN
TAKE HIM!
GO ON!
R HAHA!

My Money's on the kid!

Don't worry... I can afford it...

The question is...

...Can you!?

OOOOO!!!
OOOOO!!!
OOOOO!!!

HA! Alright then!
If you're sure.

GET
READY!

Alright that's it! We got
to go and get back that
bag before they lose it all!

GO ON!
LAD!
X-IL-DIA
3 ON
THE
FKID!



What is this energy I can feel!?

GO!!

Something feels wrong!

ARRRP!!

WOOSH!!

AAAAAAH!!

FLING!!

?!!?!!?!

The little guy is actually pretty strong too!

ZITTING!!

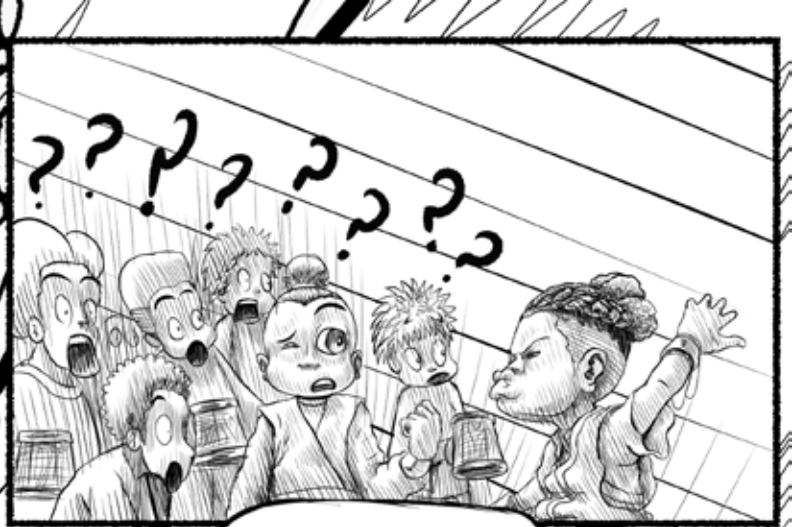
Hmph. You definitely used too much..

WOOOOOSH!!
AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!

Haha! Nonsense! Come I want to see what's happening!

Hahaaaaa! It's definitely working!

ROAR!
WHOA!
YES!
GO ON!
WHAY!



YES SOTA!



HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!



WOIOOI!
SOUNDS LIKE MONEY!
DRINKS ALL ROUND!



Your sister and them are looking impressed Jobe!





It's now or never Aki!

SHIKP!



We've never successfully pulled off the finishing move before!



SONY!

As I told you before... Things are different now! Focus!



WOAH!

WOW!

WOW!



SHOOP

FLEEK



AMAZING!

YES BOYS!



FNOOOOO



FNOOOOO

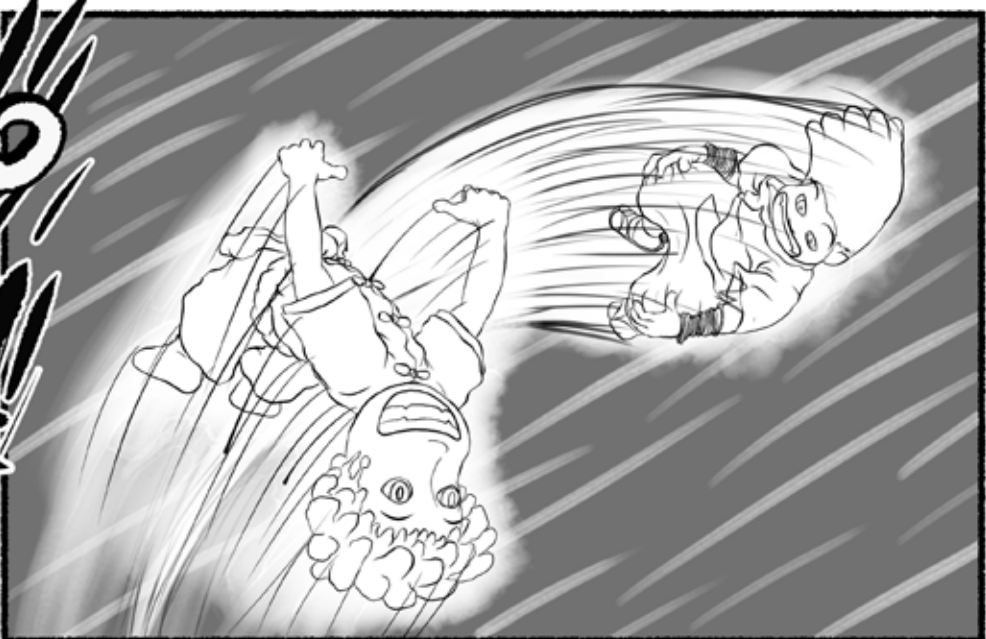


WOW!



Let's finish this in style!

OMG!
GASP! WON?



PERFECT!



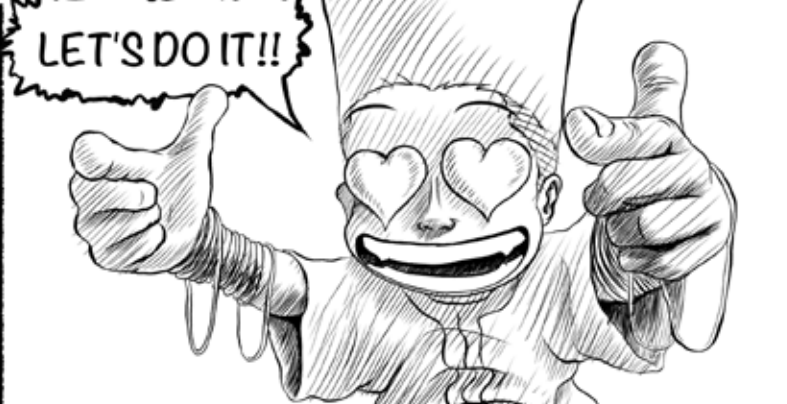
FINISH!
FWIP!
YES!



Now... Now we make our move

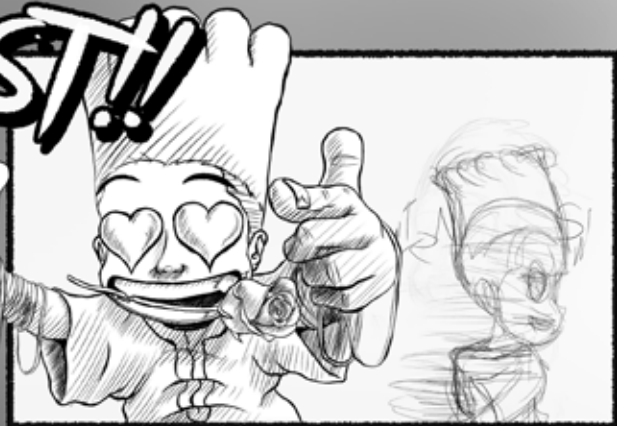


Akio's drooling over your sister again Jobe.



LET'S DO IT!!

HIP-THRUST!!



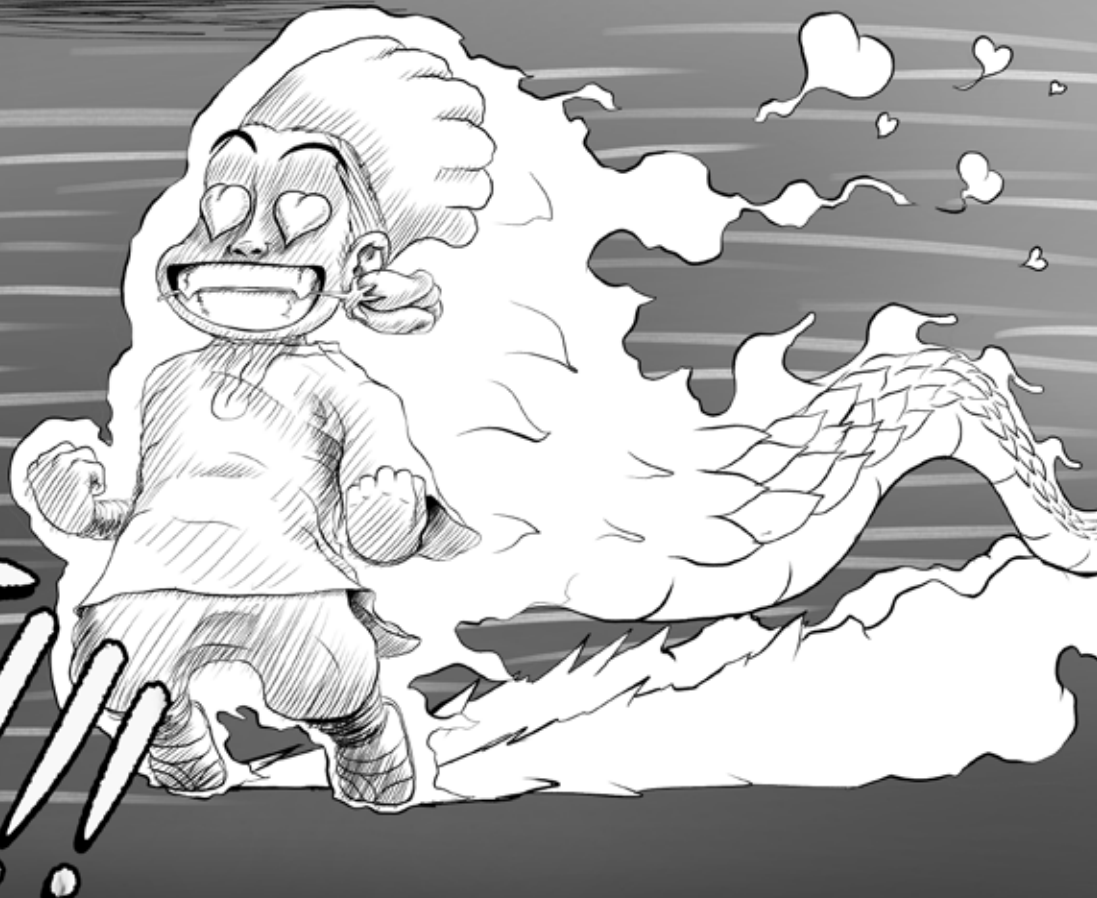
Yo Akio!
You best chill out!
Give back my bag yeah!
You won't get
lucky this time!

SKRRRT! SKRRRT! SKRRRT!

DRAGON HIP THRUST!!!



Hah! I was going easy
on you earlier! I'm about
to unleash the full force
of my **STYLE!** YOU
best step out of
my way!





You got no **STYLE!!**



You can't stop me!



ONE OF YOU STOP HIM!



AI!!



MENACING MENACING MENACING



GO ON!! KID!!



GO ON ANI!



HAHAHA!!



All of you together can't stop the power of love!

Fufufuuu!
What on earth is
going on!?

Looks like
he has created
a new move for the
dragon style!
He's definitely
going to become
martial arts master!

HaHa! Come to Momma!

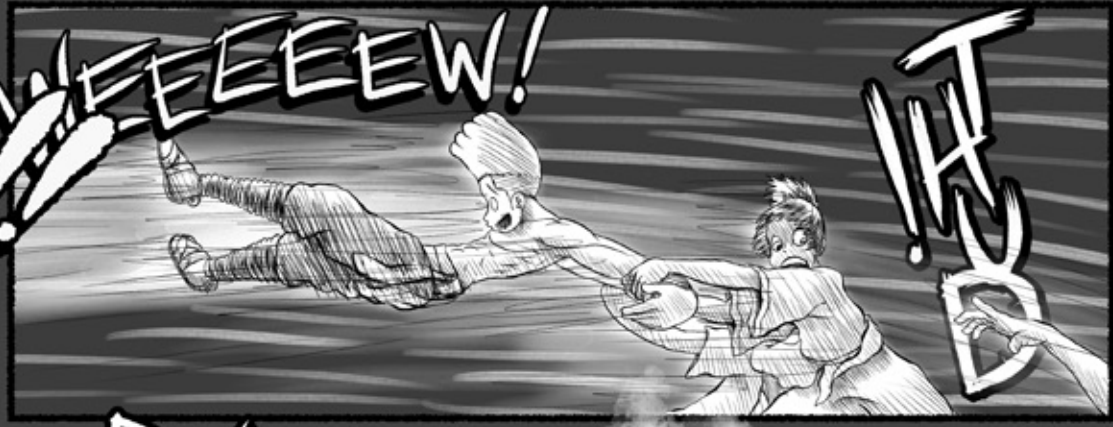
Eww... Ok I didn't think
he'd get nearly this close!

Dont
you take
that
rose
Ani!!!

Go
on
Aki!

OR
WHAT!?

CRASH!



EEEEEW!

IT

YOU'VE LOST ALL MY MONEY AKI!!!

PUNT!!

DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO...



STOMP!!



OI!!!

CRACK!

BIEF!

POW!

WHAN



The martial artist needs to bridge the realms during the formation of their fighting stance, drawing the energies from above and within.



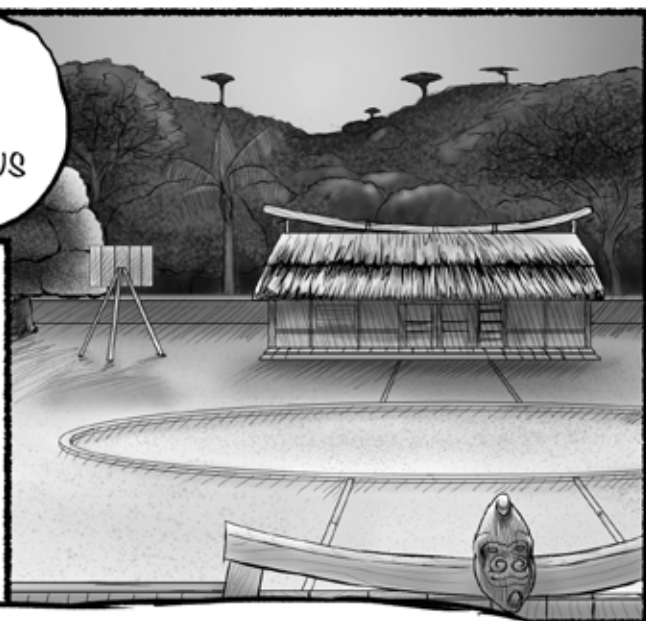
Expanding the mind's thought pathways, builds the bridge between the realms of existence. This can be achieved through meditation.



CHAPTER 5: KINDLING IN KINBOSHI.

Understanding the nature of the universe, the soul, above and within, allows the martial artist to attain supernatural abilities. The martial artist will train hard, a vigorous physical regime coupled with mental focus, in order to build and maintain **THE BRIDGE.**

Well based on this 'Intel', and what Sota has told us already, I think we will travel to **Kinboshi** from here. We'll capture the **Lord Souma**, and hear what he knows about the gemstone.



That's a bold first move isn't it?
It's basically a declaration of war on the Hikaru!
Still I like the idea of it! Just like old times!
Ay Saru?

Fufufu... Yeah well, I have no problem warring with the Hikaru... However, it's dragging my grandson into this I am conflicted about... I often think that I should have taken him as far away from Dalos as possible. That I should have taken the opportunity to leave all this nonsense behind and be free of it once and for all...

...This never ending war, it only seems to get more and more atrocious the more we fight. In the old days our clans knocked off monarchy after monarchy across every kingdom in Dalos.... Yet there was always another, ready and waiting to replace them... And each time around it only gets sicker and sicker... What's it all really about?

Well... I suppose that's what we're fighting for isn't it?
To find out what it's all about...

Hmm... I hope you're right Gussie...
So what are you going to do?
Are you coming with us?



You know.. I have taken in five apprentices since we last met. I think i'll be staying here for at least a little while... Until I feel they can fend for themselves. After that... I plan to head back to Yosai, you know... finish what I started.



Wow! has it really been that long? Well alright then.



Mhmm... Look at you,
you boys are an absolute mess!
You can't even hold your heads
above your shoulders...
Akio! Imagine you were
attacked for the stone
again! In the state you're in
you'll lose the stone,
and likely be killed!

As I have told you already...
While you are carrying
this stone, you cannot afford
to be incapacitated
by partying, drink and smoke.
You must stay vigilant at all times,
for we can never know
when someone will try us for it again.

Errgh...
Don't worry
Gramps...
I'm never
drinking again...

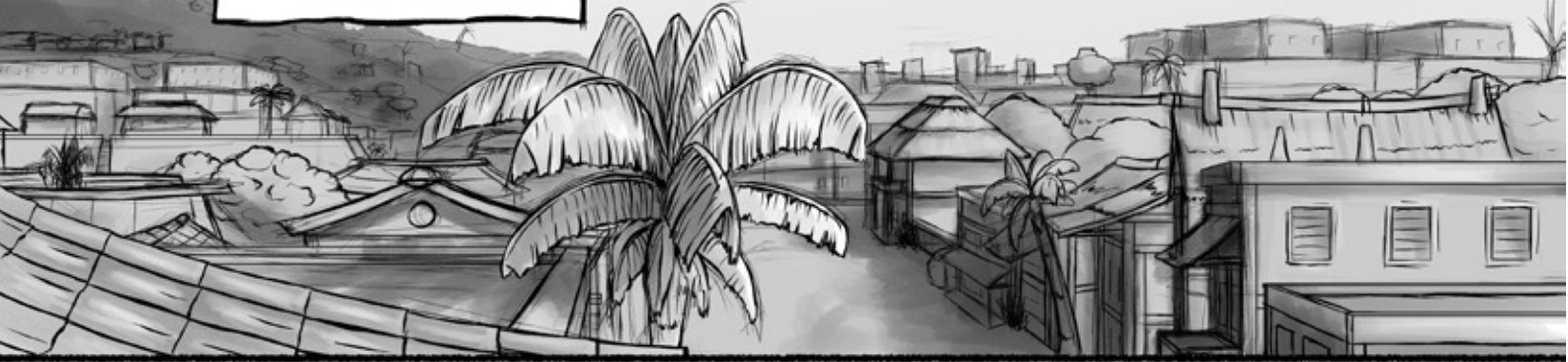
Fufufuu... Those famous old words...
We'll see about that. We'll be leaving
for **Kinboshi** soon. As you are in such
a state today, we will have to begin
training tomorrow.

Before we leave Suigin,
you must be able to see and use the power
of the soul you were using last night.
But without the influence of external
potions and medicines. Now you have seen
the power of the soul with your own eyes,
there should be no shadow or confusion
in your mind about my teachings...



NORTH-WEST
KINBOSHI
"THE JUNGLE"

MEANWHILE...



Sandy?!
What are you up
to now!?

MAYA!



Just hold onto these for us!

Don't worry,
Maya.



We'll meet
you at yours
later!





They're always up to no good!

Mix with trouble and you'll make a mess Maya!



Get back here!



What? I've been slaving away with you all day!

...I wasn't mixing with them! Stupid old fart!



Dammit! Tricky little bastards!



There's nothing we can do let's go!



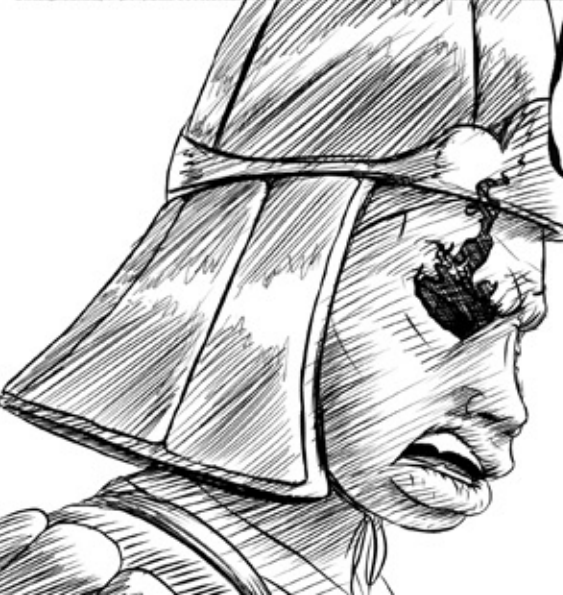


I'm gonna mess these little pricks up!

Wait...



WHERE ARE THE BAGS!!



HEY! There's nothing to see here! These kids are thieving scum! Now go on and mind your own business!

Beating up the kids now are they?

Animals!

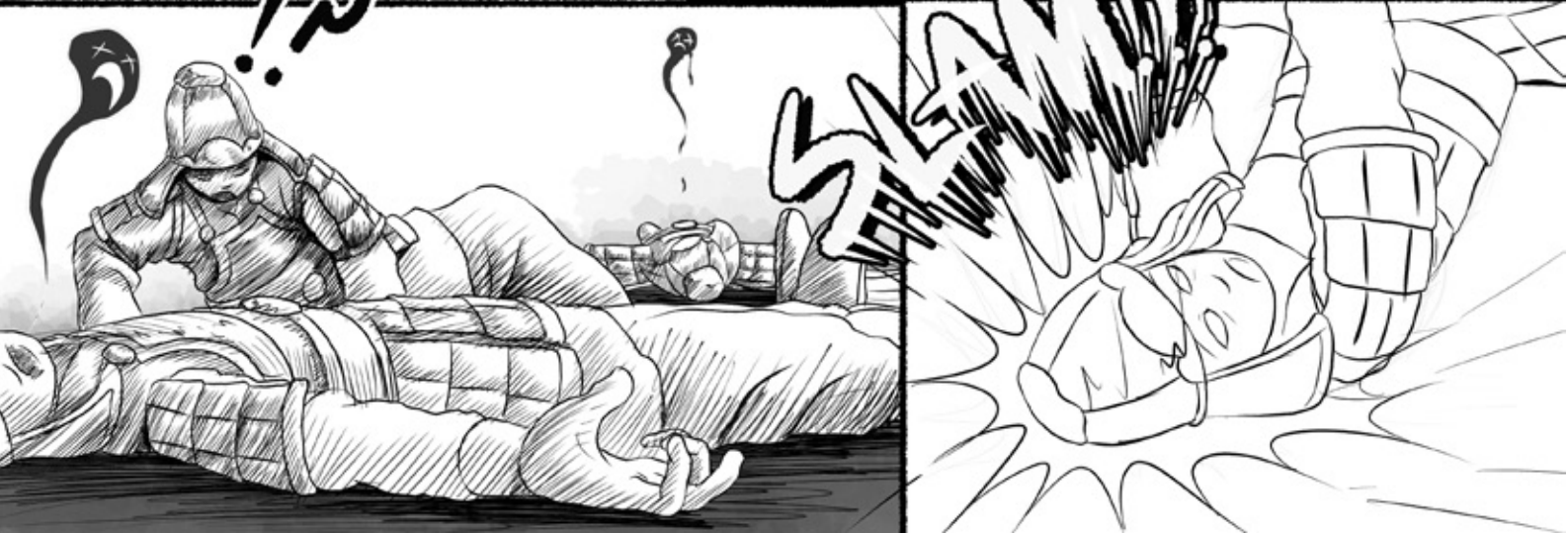
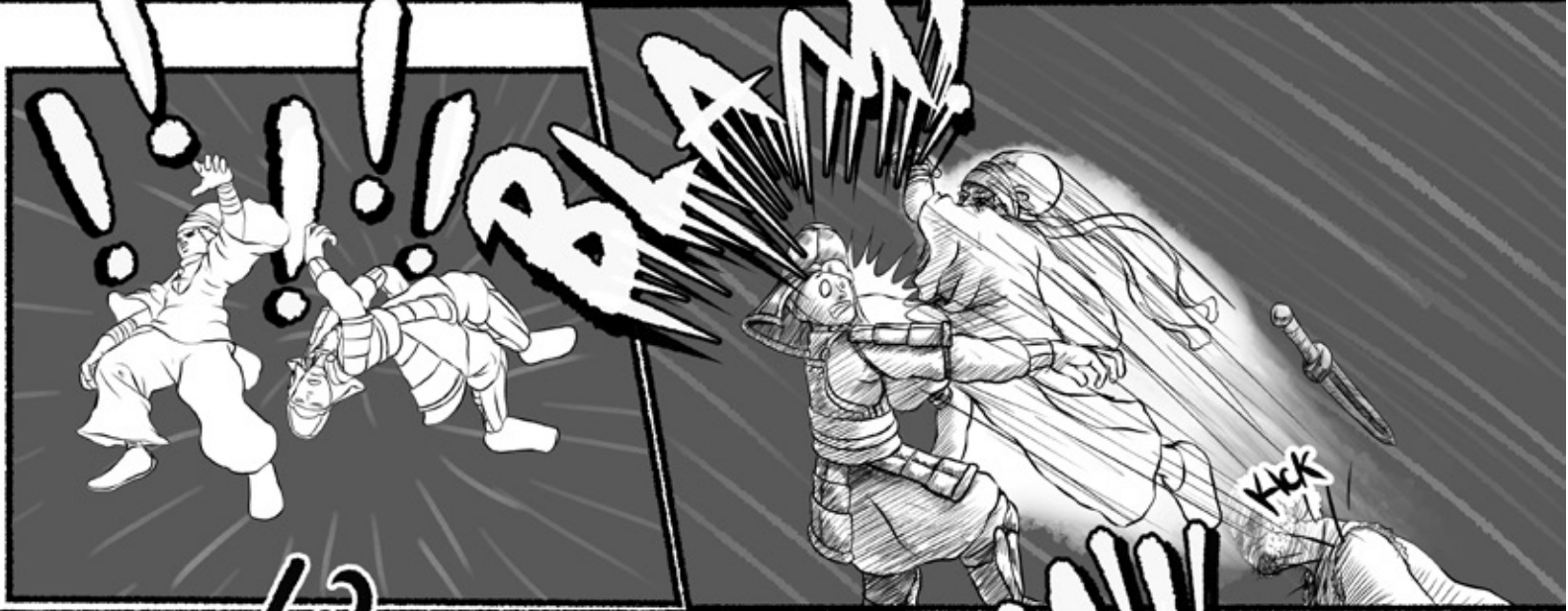
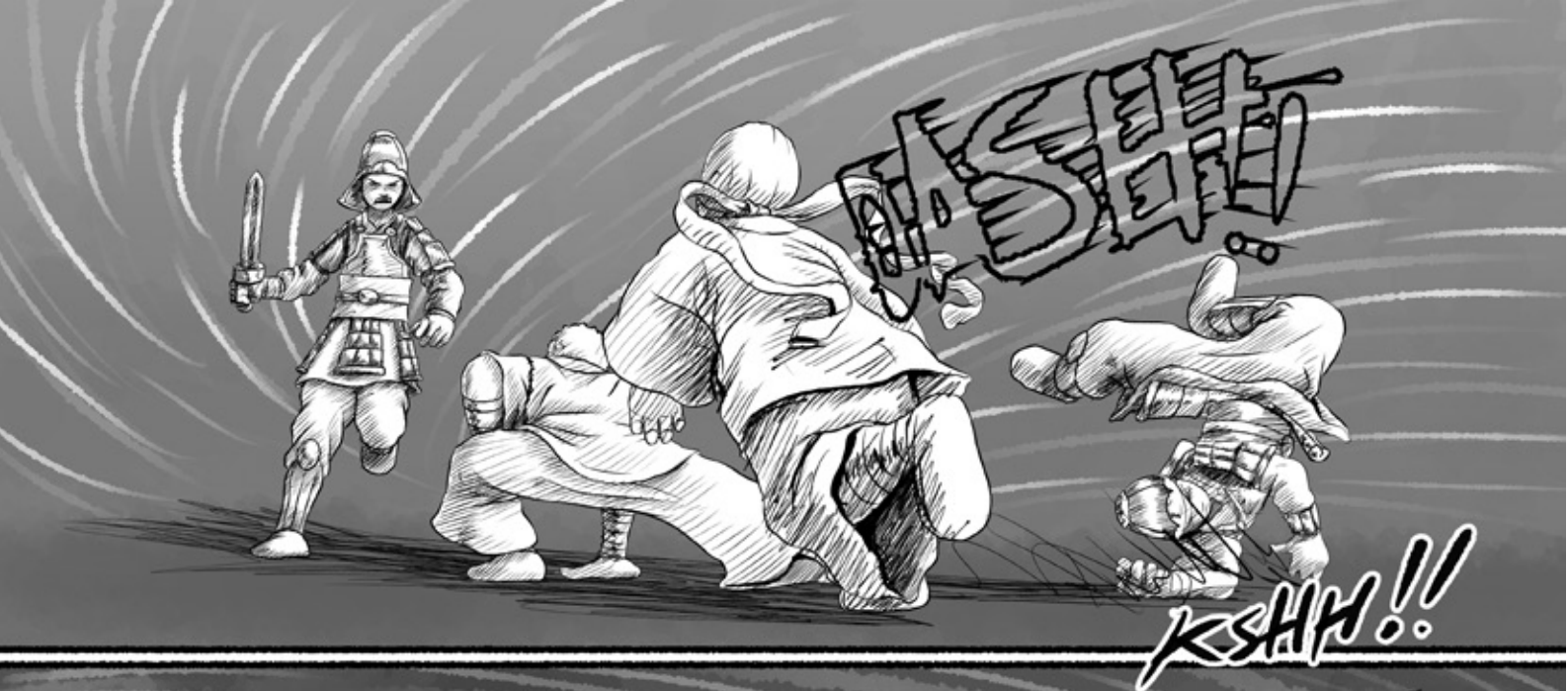
Oh My!

Atrocious!



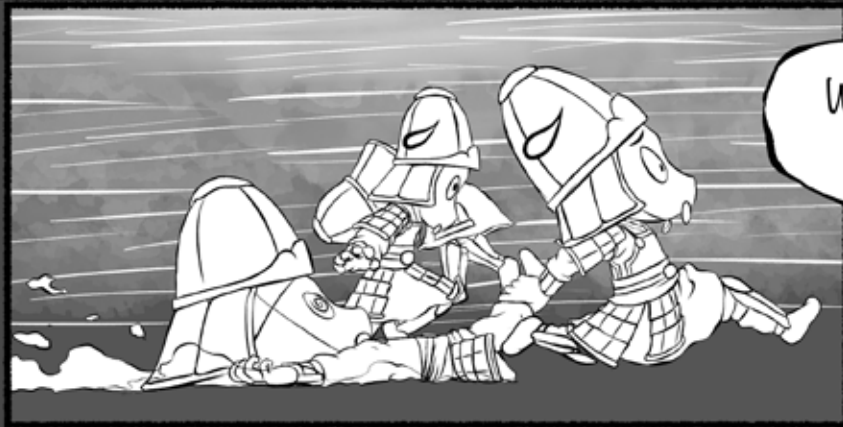




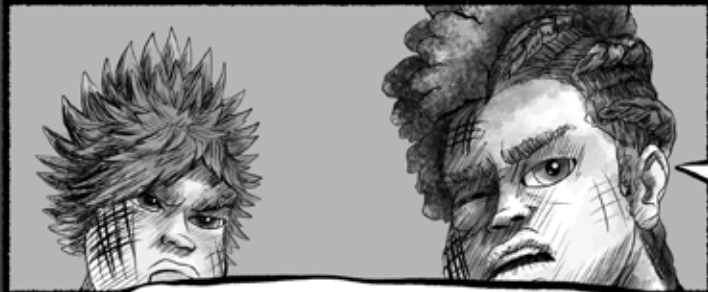




Now F◇%# off and don't let me catch you around here again!



Whoa! They just saw those soldiers off! Unarmed and outnumbered!!



Th-Thank you!.. Yo they took our sister Sandy! We got to get after them!!

Easy now yout man... You don't want to end up in the dungeon with her... Trust me.



There's nothing we can do for her right now... We'll get her back before they move her. Right now we need to leave, this whole area will be crawling with pigs within the hour!



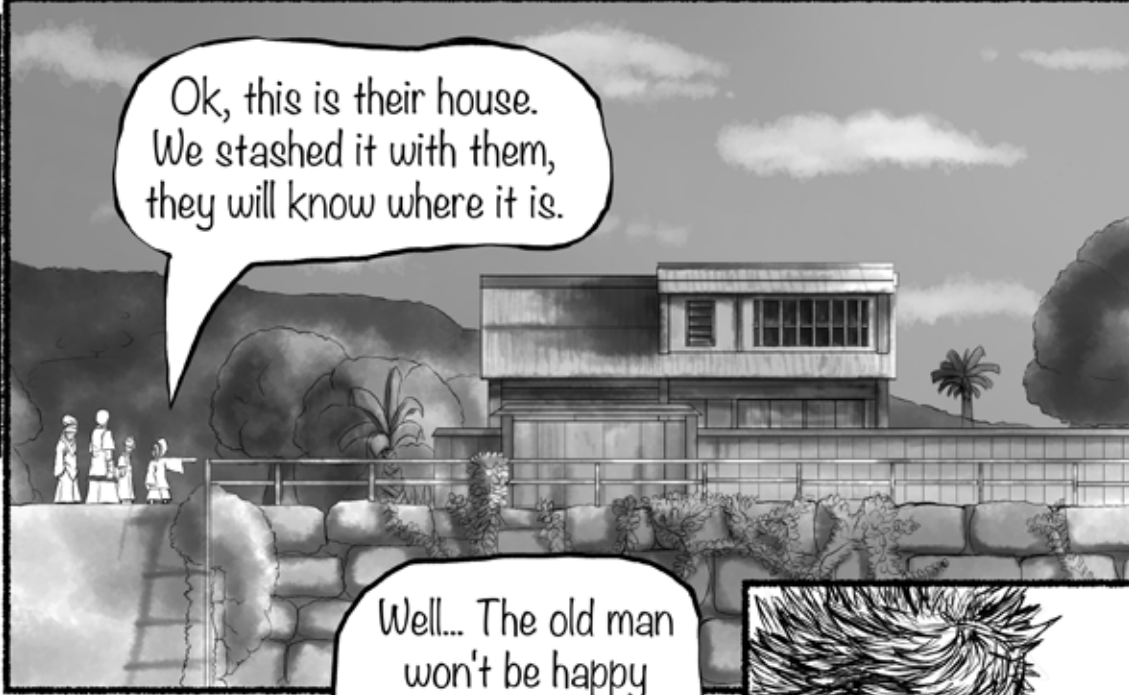
But, first things first... You'll be giving us the loot you just stole...



Or it wont just be the pigs that you will need to be running from, seen?



Ok, this is their house. We stashed it with them, they will know where it is.



Ok... So what are you waiting for? Lead the way...

Well... The old man won't be happy with us at all and he's brutal! We were just going to link up wi-

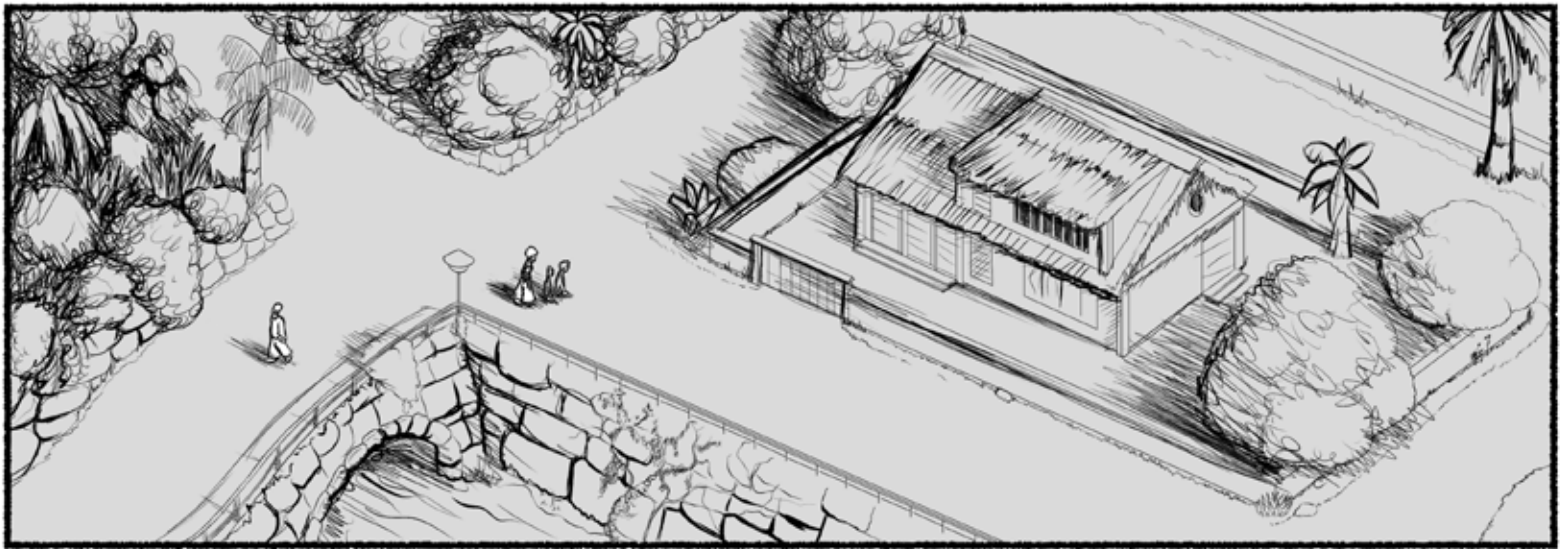


You Wh-? Yo I don't care about all that! We're getting back those bags right now, so go on!



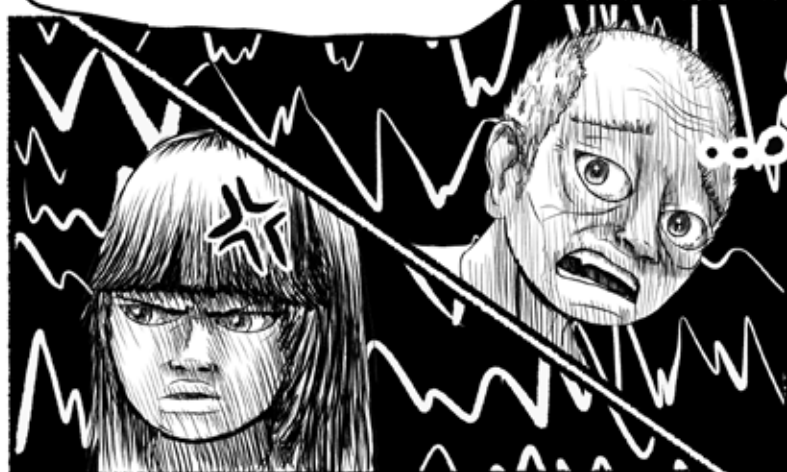
Alright, safe.

I'll get back. Make sure everything's cool.



Oh have mercy!
Big bags of cash and opium?!
Your little friends have really
out-done themselves with
this one!

Maya!
We have to leave
right away! If even one of
your friends got caught
a whole heap of soldiers
will be kicking our door off by
tomorrow! Mark my words!



No way!
Already?!



GO
ON!

Who's there?!

It's us,
Master
Ketill!






HOW MANY TIMES
MUST I SAY IT!?



LEAVE MAYA OUT
OF YOUR
SCHEMES!!!



DO I LOOK FRIGHTENED
TO YOU BIG BOY?!



You know I thought you'd be
happy to see me Master K!



Wha-?
Who's this?
What's he trying?



It's me!
Elezar!



No way!
Is it
really
you?!?!





Of course... You better come inside!

It's a long story and we may not have much time...

What happened to you?

Now look at your faces! And where's the other one? ... Let me guess. She got caught didn't she?

IDIOTS! What were you thinking? In broad daylight?!



NO!! SANDY! ...YOU IDIOTS!



What do you mean, why am I here? To finish what we started of course... As for these two. They stole a big cache from the Hikaru soldiers, that we were going to take. They said it should be here.

I have countless questions for you... But as we're pressed for time, for now I'll just ask; Why are you here? And what are you doing with these two?



After everything that's happened... You still believe the Hikaru can be stopped? And who's *we*?



We're
STRIKE.

We're going to
take over
this city and
make it our
first stronghold.



Sounds just like any
of the other
gangs on these streets...
Squabbling over
cash and drugs.

Ha. Yeah well...
Everyone's got to
start somewhere right?



What about Sandy?
Will Strike try
to help her?

Well...
The quicker we
take control
of this city.
The more chance
we have of saving her...
If you want to help,
come see us tomorrow.



...
What if she's already been taken away?



STEAM

TSHHHH



I'm glad you're so optimistic... But what are you talking about? We'll be lucky to even get into central, much less find out what cell Sandy is in... Our best bet is with that... That strike guy, we will go tomorrow.

Nah we'll get her out!
We'll go tonight and find out where she is... Then we'll make a rescue plan!



What? How can we trust him? He's cold! He didn't even try to rescue Sandy earlier... He only saved us to find out where the bags were it's obvious!

SPLISH SLOSH



SPLISHH

Well if you weren't out thieving all the time, then she would never of been cuaght up would she?!... Why should he care about you? He doesn't know you, to him your just petty thieves... You're lucky you're not both in the cage with Sandy!... Like REALLY lucky!



Now let's get you two cleaned up!

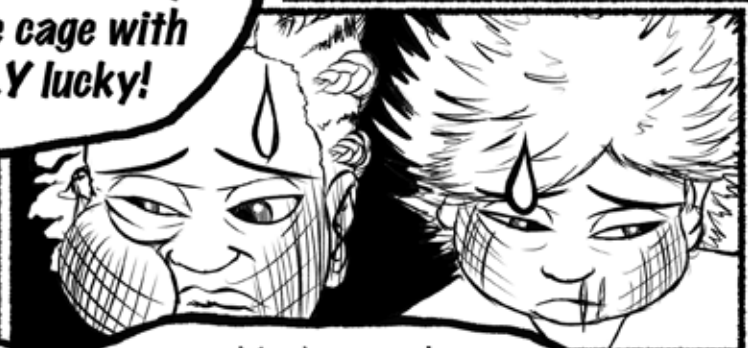
WRING

DRIP

DROP



Yeah exactly... You won't get so lucky next time... So take time... We'll go and find out about this **Strike** team



HmHmHm!!

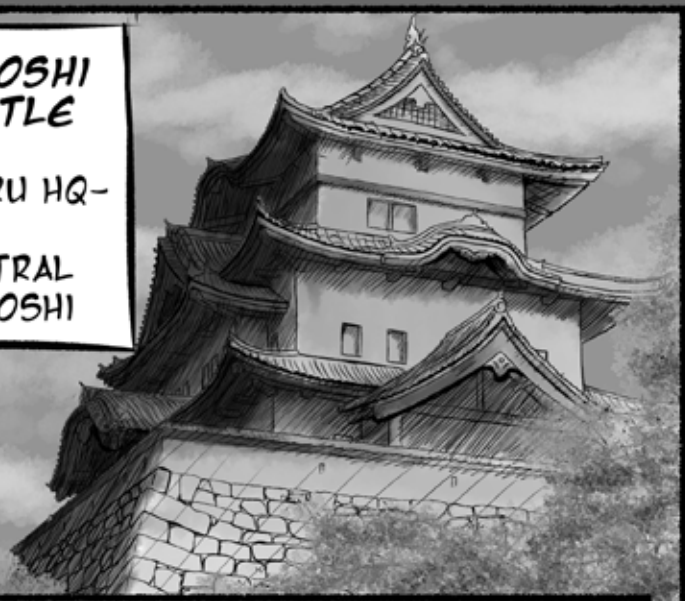
Well... Things are certainly heating up nicely around here! The rabble can't stop killing each other off for us!

Surely, it won't be very long until they start a rebellion right?

KINBOSHI
CASTLE

-HIKARU HQ-

CENTRAL
KINBOSHI



Well it seems like they have already started on our men. A group of our tax collectors got attacked in the Jungle earlier today.

While arresting some thieving kids they were attacked by a big, angry mob who chased them out of the area!

Haha! More and more good news!

HAHA! YES SIR!

Push up those taxes on all business in the area! Somebody has to pay for the extra security right?

Well, there's our excuse to ramp up our numbers in that area!

Aha! Yes indeed! We will bleed those plebs dry! Just look at how many bags full of their cash we have from this month alone! They will leave or starve I don't care... I just need them out!



The thing is.. Our men failed to recover any of the stolen goods and monies... Plus, they only managed to arrest one of the kids... **AND** rumour has it, that the 'Angry mob' who chased them out was actually just two unarmed men...



How embarrassing... That certainly makes us look weak... But, seeing as in we are trying to provoke hostilities with the serfs, this could hurry things along nicely!



Evening gentlemen... May I speak privately to the Lord Souma?



Of course my lord... We'll take our leave.





Well...
Do you have
the reports
from the
recon units?

We have received reports from all units except
for one from the third rangers division...
All of the reports we have received contain
no information on the gemstone's location...



What location was the
missing unit assigned to?



The Suigin Valley lord...
I suspect that they have met
some resistance from the locals there.
They are known to sympathize with
the banished Heathens in that area.

Kinboshi is fast approaching a critical point.
Without the gemstone this chaos will escalate
out of your control. We suggest you pull back your
'disruption and displacement' regime... For now,
focus on obtaining the gemstone, this is how
we will secure the power you have acquired.



Your council is of great value and
your suggestion will be acted on.
However, the chaos has provided many
prisoners that are well suited for
your requirements. Come with me to
the dungeon and allow me to show you...

They are all under sixteen... Many of them aren't even ten yet!

I am certain you will be pleased with this harvest!

CENTRAL KINBOSHI DUNGEONS



Hmph!
You old
farts can't
hold me
too long!

See
for
your-
self.

Hmhmmmm..
Very good...
I will personally
transport them
back to Savon!

END OF
CHAPTER 5

...END OF

BOOK 1

THANKS FOR READING!

check us out At
dreambaked.com

For updates, GAMES &
All things AKIO!

UNTIL NEXT TIME,
LOVE, DREAMBAKED.

SAFE!



AFTERWORD

FROM THE TEAM

It has been around 3 years since we began really working on this 'Akio' project... Finally, after much, much ado, book 1 is here!

We would like to send a **special thank you** to each & every one of our early supporters and the limited edition chapter 1 and artwork buyers who made the production of this book possible.

(In no particular order)

*Sakura Kawahira - Josh Turner - Finn Heal - Jebu Swan - Michael Newton
Jevaughn Reid - Zoe, Kay, & Lewis McGinty - Luis Patrocinio
Jesse Fynn Garbrah - The Creative Fund by BackerKit
D Ngozi - Coloursuper - Beulah Aidoo - Christine Barnett
Molly Coates - Ben Morley - Gill Harrison - Hannes Mazur
Regina Ferguson - Nikita Kolchanov - James Green - Judy Smith
Ashley Bye - Damien Heatley - Auntie Sandra - Rowena Ferguson
Linda & Dan Kirkpatrick - Kareem Drysdale - Brandina Chisambo
Esme stanway - Dan 'Pezzer' Perry - Jamal Douglas - Femi McKenzie
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Johann Rosenow - Farqualar - George Barrett - Iris Swanston
Mike and Gill Hodder - Janice K Clark - Stella Swanston
Fisayo Olukoya - Graham French - Alex J Bye - Wardell Dumas
Bella Jung Hyun Park - Jan Martin Andes - Tashon Wallace Hall
Paul D. Jarma - Eneni - Moni Smith - Jonathan Adams - Ash & Aaron Howell*

Finally we want to thank you all for reading!
We hope you all enjoyed it, and stick with us for **book 2!**
and all the other cool stuff coming out for **AKIO**
We can't thank you all enough for your patience and support!

BLESS FOR READING,
I'LL SEE YOU IN

BOOK 2
YEAH?!

