



SAMURAI
CAT 1

\$2.25

\$2.75 CAN

JUNE 1991

EPIC COMICS®

BOOK
1 OF 3

白虎山阿太 CAT

ACTION!

SUSPENSE!

DRAMA!

BEHEADINGS!



SAMURAI CAT

BOOK ONE

DARE GA SHITSUEN SHITE IMASU KA?
(who are the stars?)

RALPH MACCHIO
writer

FRANK CIROCCO
pencils

JIM HUMMEL
inks

BILL OAKLEY
letters

JOE ROSAS
colors

MARK E. ROGERS
cover painting

SUZANNE DELL'ORTO
assistant editor

NEL YOMTOV
editor

CARL POTTS
executive editor
epic comics

based on the original stories by
Mark E. Rogers

DEDICATED TO PODGE, THE WONDERCAT, WITH LOVE.

SIXTEENTH CENTURY JAPAN.

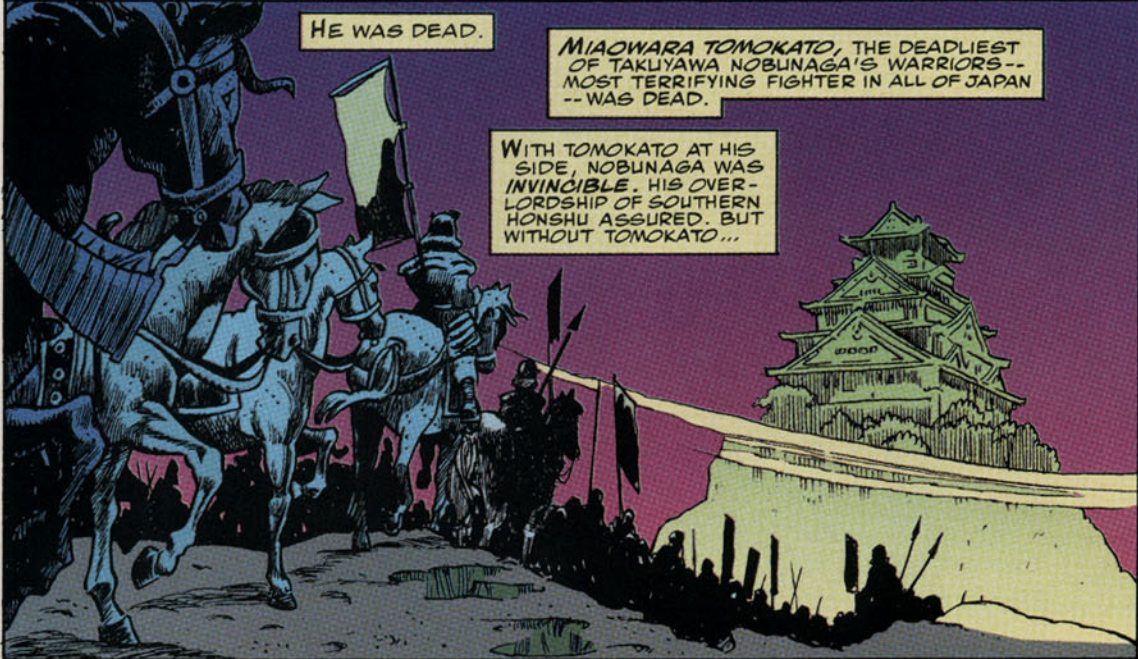
A LAND SUFFERING THROUGH THE LONG NIGHTS OF SENGOKU JIDAI, THE AGE OF BATTLES, A PERIOD OF CONSTANT CIVIL WAR, OF ANARCHY AND TERROR, OF SAVAGERY AND BLOODSHED AND LOTS OF OTHER GOOD STUFF.

THE SOCIAL ORDER WAS SHAKEN TO ITS CORE; CLASS DISTINCTIONS BLURRED AS MILITARY PROWESS BECAME ALL-IMPORTANT.

WITH LUCK, PERHAPS EVEN A PEASANT MIGHT SLASH A PLACE FOR HIMSELF AMONG THE MIGHTY.

PERHAPS EVEN A CAT.






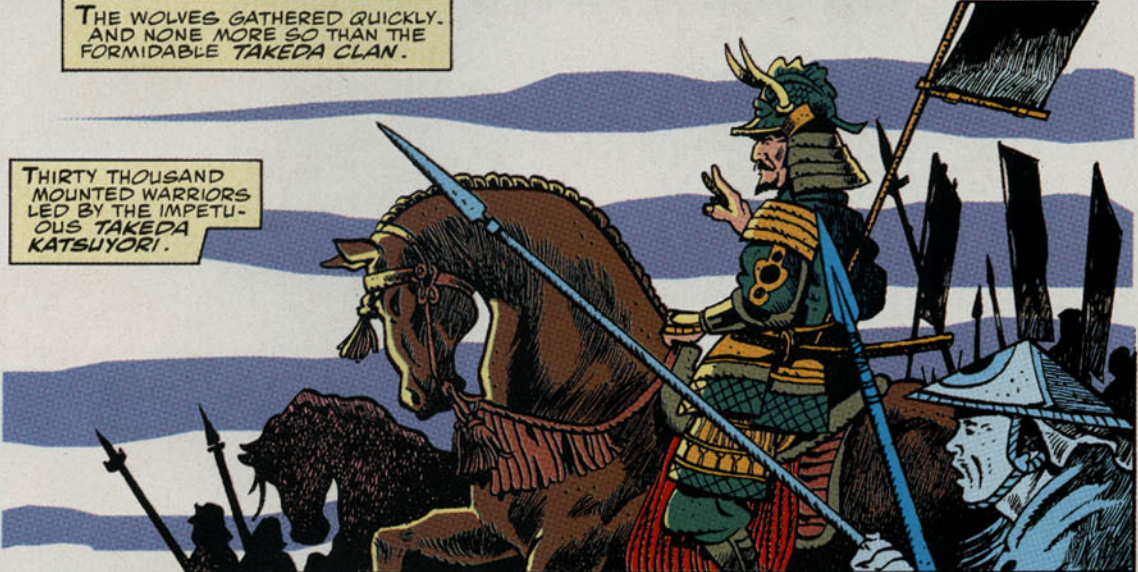
HE WAS DEAD.

MIAOWARA TOMOKATO, THE DEADLIEST OF TAKUYAWA NOBUNAGA'S WARRIORS -- MOST TERRIFYING FIGHTER IN ALL OF JAPAN -- WAS DEAD.

WITH TOMOKATO AT HIS SIDE, NOBUNAGA WAS INVINCIBLE. HIS OVERLORDSHIP OF SOUTHERN HONSHU ASSURED. BUT WITHOUT TOMOKATO...

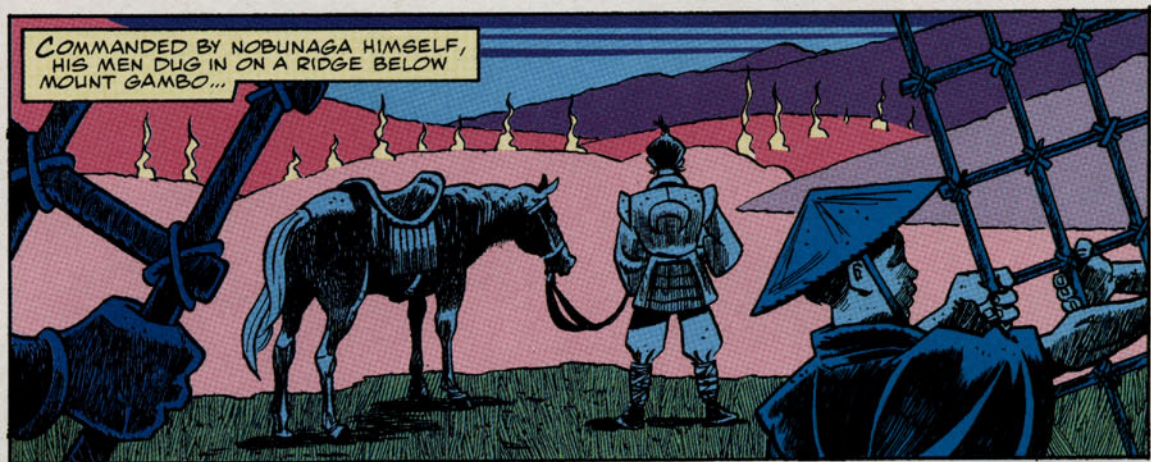
THE WOLVES GATHERED QUICKLY. AND NONE MORE SO THAN THE FORMIDABLE TAKEDA CLAN.

THIRTY THOUSAND MOUNTED WARRIORS LED BY THE IMPETUOUS TAKEDA KATSUYORI.



QUICKLY HIS TROOPS THREW AN IRON RING AROUND NAGASHINO CASTLE, HELD BY ONE OF NOBUNAGA'S VASSALS.

COMMANDED BY NOBUNAGA HIMSELF,
HIS MEN DUG IN ON A RIDGE BELOW
MOUNT GAMBO...



... ERECTING BAMBOO SCREENS
TO SERVE AS FIRING PLATFORMS
FOR THEIR MATCHLOCKS.



YOU KNOW, LOR-
REI, WHEN A BATTLE LOOKS
THIS HOPELESS, OUR GREAT
LEADER HAS NO CHOICE. HE
MUST USE HIS BOOMING
VOICE TO RALLY OUR
TROOPS TO THE
CAUSE.

I KNOW. BUT I STILL
HAVE TROUBLE TAKING SOME-
ONE SERIOUSLY WHOSE HEAD
COMES TO A POINT...
ALMOST.

LATER, IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, NOBUNAGA
ADDRESSED HIS MEN...



TAKE
HEART! THOUGH
WE ARE VASTLY
OUTNUMBERED
-- WE WILL
PREVAIL!

OH,
SURE...



THE SKY LIGHTENED AND
THE TAKEDA CLAN CAME
IN-- ADVANCING LIKE A
SLOW DUST STORM.







MIAOWARA
TOMOKATO!

**SAMURAI
CAT!**



AYE.
SUCH AN
IGNOBLE
END.

BETTER
I SHOULD
HAVE LOPPED
THEIR HEADS
OFF ONE BY
ONE.

WAIT!



AH. KATSUYORI
HAS SURVIVED
THE SHOCK OF MY
PRESENCE.

THE
COWARD
FLEES.

QUICKLY!
HAND ME A
BOW AND ONE
ARROW!

HE WHO FIGHTS
AND RUNS AWAY
SHALL LIVE TO
FIGHT ANOTHER
DAY!

IN OTHER
WORDS--SCREW
YOU, CAT!

SPRONG

SSSSHUCK!

FUDGE!
FOOLED
AGAIN!

YOUR PLAN WORKED WELL, MY LORD.

DID YOU HAVE ANY DOUBT IT WOULD?

A SAMURAI DOES NOT DOUBT HIS LORD.

A PERFECT SAMURAI DOES NOT.

NOW WE MUST BE OFF AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. ALSO, MESSENGERS MUST BE SENT TO THE CLANS STILL ADVANCING ON MY TERRITORY. I WANT THEM TO HEAR WHAT HAPPENED TODAY.

IN ALL OUR HISTORY, NO CLAN HAS EVER SUFFERED SUCH A DEFEAT. MY FAME AS A GENERAL WILL LIVE FOREVER.

BUT EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE TAKEDA CLAN WILL BE NO THREAT TO OUR HEIRS WHEN WE ARE GONE.

THE OTHER CLANS WERE UNWILLING TO ATTACK, THUS, THE ARMY DISBANDED.

NOBUNAGA AND HIS CLOSEST ADVISERS WITHDREW TO AZUCHI CASTLE, HIS GREAT STRONGHOLD OUTSIDE KYOTO.

THE SUMMER WAS SPENT PURSUING REFINED AND CIVILIZED PLEASURES.

AS AUTUMN DREW NIGH, TOMOKATO SOUGHT OUT NOBUNAGA ON THE TATAMI IN THE CASTLE'S GREAT AUDIENCE HALL.

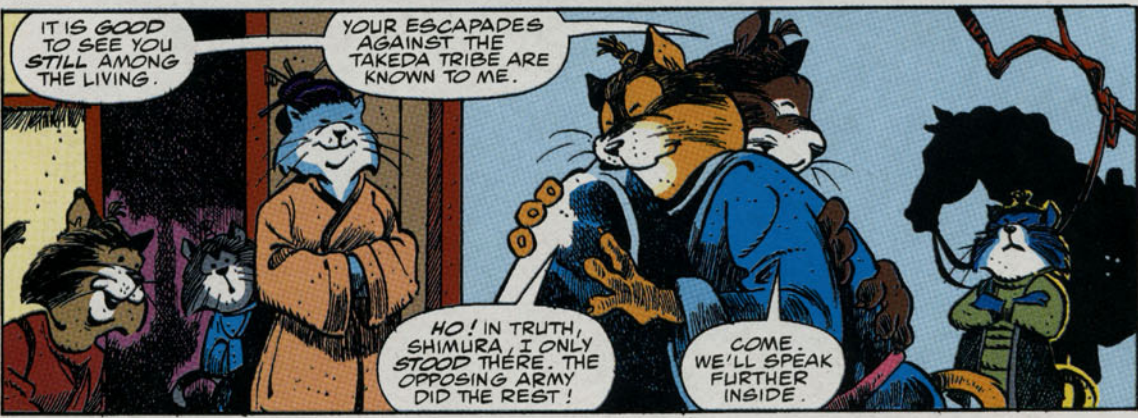
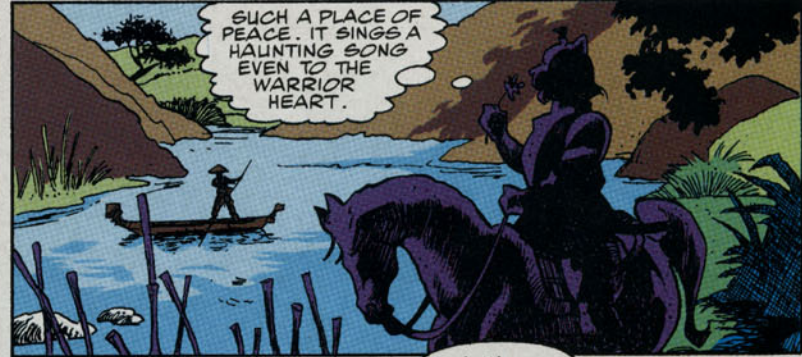
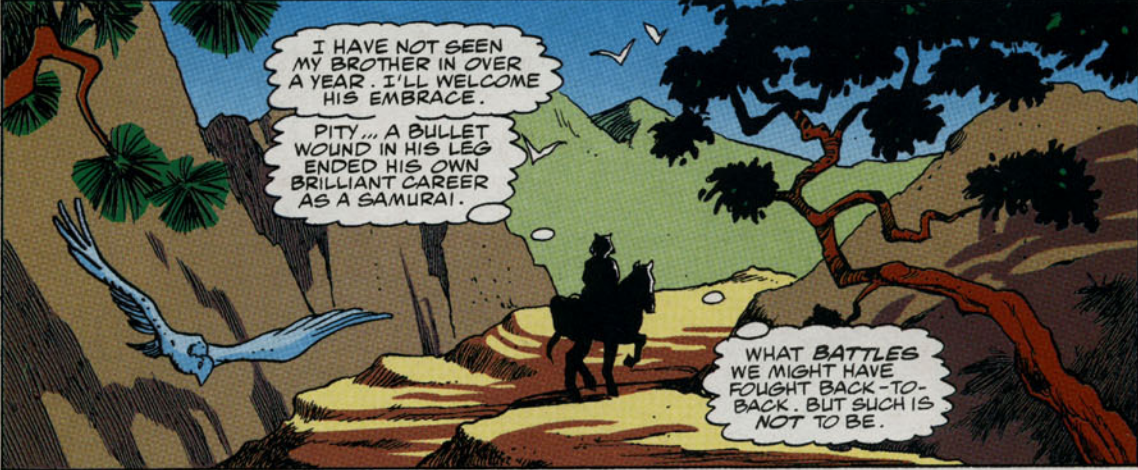
I WOULD LIKE TO ASK A FAVOR OF YOU, MY LORD.

NAME IT.

WITH THE LAND AT PEACE, I THOUGHT I MIGHT VISIT MY BROTHER SHIMURA FOR A DAY OR TWO.

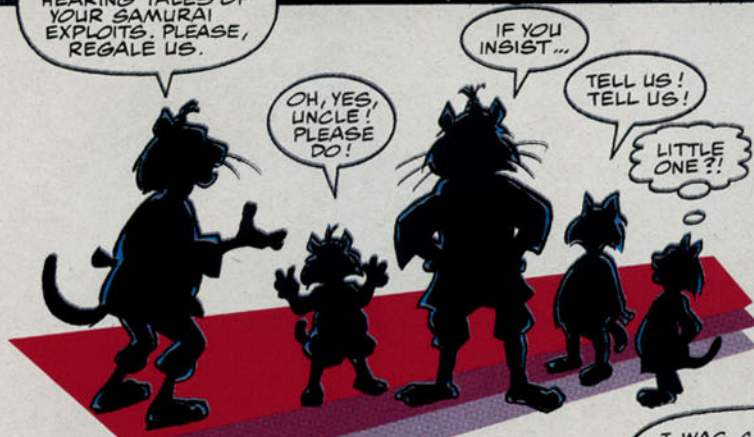
PERMISSION GRANTED.

THANK YOU, MY LORD. I WILL RETURN WITHIN THE WEEK.



LATER...





I, MYSELF, SLEW OVER A HUNDRED OF THE ENEMY THAT DAY -- INCLUDING THEIR SIDE'S FINEST WARRIOR -- TASHA YURA.

WASN'T HE SUPPOSED TO BE OVER SEVEN FEET TALL, UNCLE?

AT LEAST. HE WAS A GIANT WITH LEGS LIKE TREE TRUNKS AND A KILLING SWORDSTROKE THAT NONE EVER SURVIVED.

I WAS DETERMINED TO BE THE FIRST.

WHEN WE MET, IT WAS AS IF TIME ITSELF HAD STOPPED. RATHER THAN GREET HIS SWORD THRUST WITH MY OWN, I DUCKED UNDERNEATH IT.

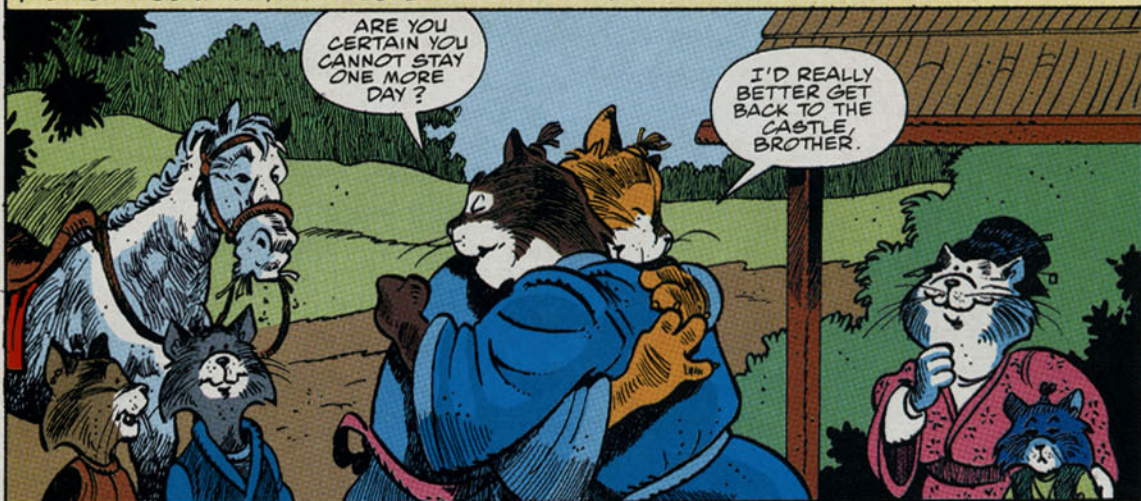
AND THEN I READIED MY OWN OFFENSE.

I STEPPED IN QUICKLY UNDER HIS DOWNWARD SWING AND THRUST AT HIS LEGS!

FLIK



TWO MORNINGS LATER, A REFRESHED TOMOKATO PREPARES TO EMBARK ON HIS RETURN JOURNEY.



TOMOKATO WAS AT PEACE WITH HIMSELF. HIS VISIT WITH SHIMURA HAD LEFT HIM FEELING WARM AND CONTENT INSIDE.

A FEELING MOST UNCOMMON TO A SAMURAI.

BEFORE LONG, SAMURAI CAT COMES WITHIN SIGHT OF SOMETHING THAT MAKES HIS BLOOD RUN COLD...

SMOKE!
IT BILLOWS
OVER THAT
HILL THAT
STANDS
BETWEEN
ME AND
AZUCHI
CASTLE!

NO!
CASTLE
AZUCHI
AFLAME!

WHO COULD
BE RESPONSIBLE
FOR THIS?

THE TAKEDA
CLAN IS STILL
IN RUINS--
THERE MUST
BE ANOTHER
FOE!

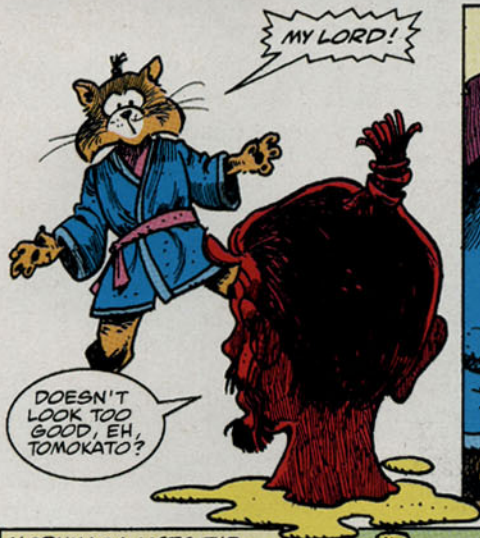
THE DEVASTATION
SEEMS TOTAL...





QUIT
BEING SO
DRAMATIC, MY
SAMURAI!

YOU'RE
SCREAMING
LOUD ENOUGH
TO WAKE THE
DEAD!



MY LORD!

DOESN'T
LOOK TOO
GOOD, EH,
TOMOKATO?



IF ANY OF THE
BUTCHERS SURVIVED,
MY LORD, I PRAY, I
BEG THE GODS
DELIVER THEM
TO ME!

LEAVE
THE GODS OUT
OF THIS,
TOMOKATO!

I'LL TELL
YOU WHO YOU
WANT AND WHERE
TO LOOK.

NOBUNAGA LISTS THE
CULPRITS RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE CARNAGE AT
AZUCHI CASTLE. THEN...



AND LAST BUT
NOT LEAST IN TODAY'S
TOP TEN HITS... FUGU
OTOKO!

OTOKO! THE
BLOWFISH WHO NEVER
SMILES! I HAVE
FOUGHT HIM BEFORE--
AT THE BATTLE OF
ANEGAWA!



TOMOKATO,
MY NOSE
ITCHES...

... WOULD
YOU BE SO
KIND... ?

LAST I HEARD, HE WAS LIVING
IN EXILE, IN CATZAD-DUM. HE
HAS MOST LIKELY RETURNED
THERE. THAT IS WHERE I
SHALL FOLLOW HIM!



SCRITCH
SCRITCH

MY
LORD?

AAAH.
BLESS
YOU.

WHAT OF THOSE WARRIORS, NOBUNAGA?
I NEVER THOUGHT TO FIND THEM HERE--
SLAIN. SO MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN
ABOUT THEM, OF LATE.

NICE
GUYS--TALK
A LITTLE
FUNNY,
THOUGH.

THEY FELL
QUICKLY... MERE
SHELLS OF
THEIR FORMER
SELVES.

IF ONLY
I'D BEEN
HERE!

OTOKO KNEW
YOU'D BE GONE. HE
TOLD ME THEY HAD
WIZARDS AND
DIVINERS AMONG
THEM.

HOW HE
GLOATED!

GRRRR!

UHH-- IXNAY ON THE
PAWPRINTS, TOMOKATO!
I MAY BE DONE FOR, BUT
I'D RATHER NOT GO OUT
LIKE A SQUASHED
TOMATO-SAN!

NOW, ARE YOU
GONNA AVENGE ME
AND ALL THAT JAZZ--
OR DO WE HANG
AROUND ALL DAY
GABBING?

I SHALL
AVENGE YOU,
MY LORD.

YEAH--
AVENGE
ME,
FAITHFUL
ONE.

JUST REMEMBER,
AFTER TALKING TO ME,
YOU'RE PREPARED...

... ONE MIGHT SAY,
IF ONE WERE SO
INCLINED...

...YOU'VE
GOT A
HEAD-
START!

HAPPY
TRAILS,
PILGRIM!

¡ACK!¡

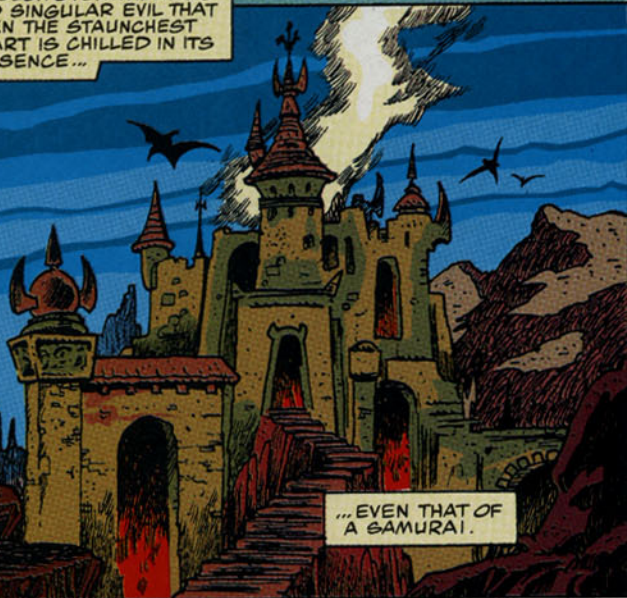
ON THE
OTHER HAND,
AS THE MONK
MITSUBISHI
ONCE PUT
IT...

UH,
TOMOKATO?

TOMOKATO?



CATZAD-DUM. A PLACE
OF SUCH OVERWHELMING
AND SINGULAR EVIL THAT
EVEN THE STAUNCHEST
HEART IS CHILLED IN ITS
PRESENCE...



...EVEN THAT OF
A SAMURAI.

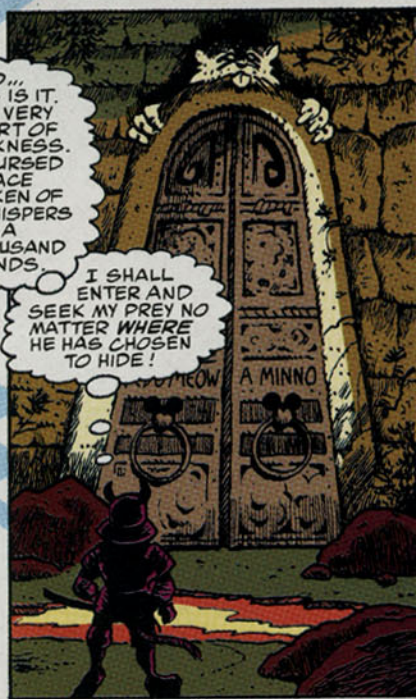


THE INFOR-
MATION I HAVE
SAYS THAT HE
HAS FLED INTO
THE VAST RE-
CESSES OF
CATZAD-DUM.



SO... THIS IS IT.
THE VERY
HEART OF
DARKNESS.
A CURSED
PLACE
SPOKEN OF
IN WHISPERS
IN A
THOUSAND
LANDS.

I SHALL
ENTER AND
SEEK MY PREY NO
MATTER WHERE
HE HAS CHOSEN
TO HIDE!





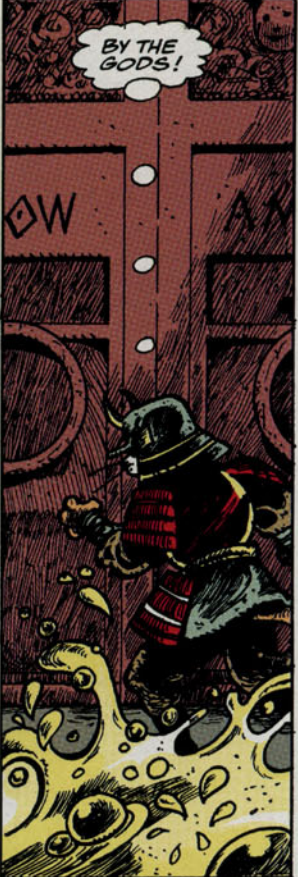
AN INTERESTING
DOOR NO
HANDLES FOR
ENTRY.



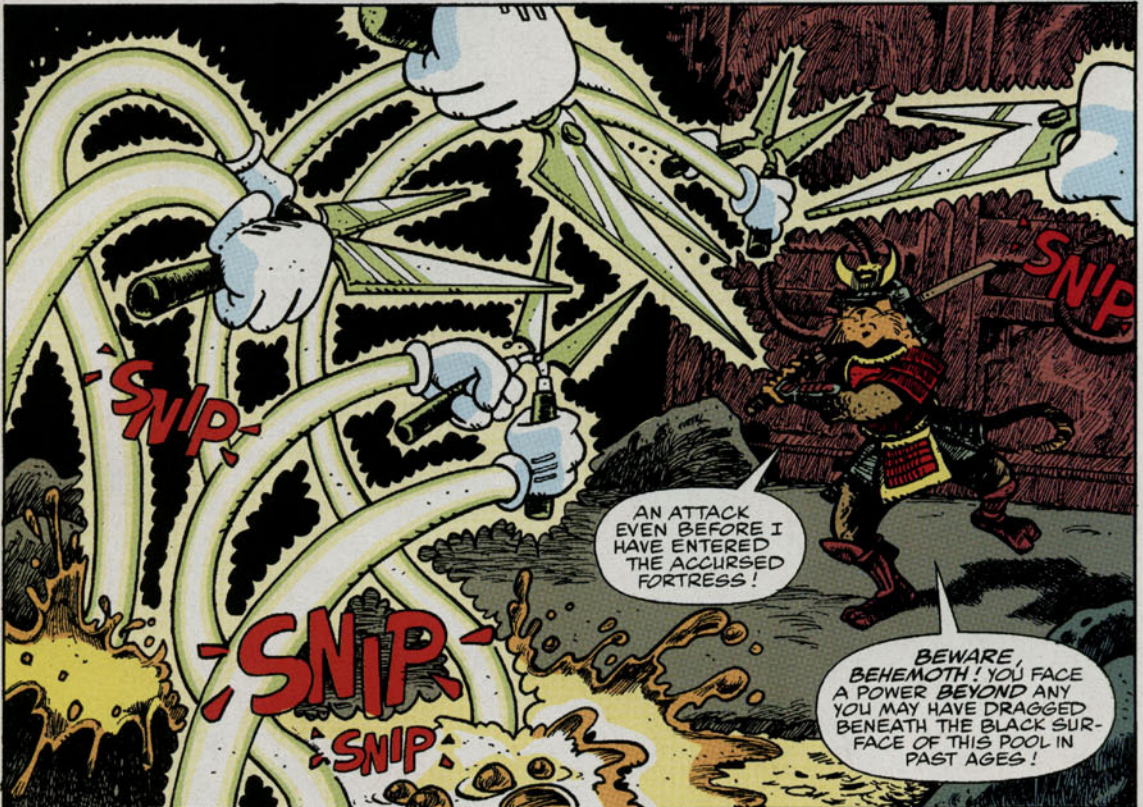
THERE IS AN
INSCRIPTION HERE
AND NOTHING ELSE.
I MUST PONDER
THIS.



THE DARKNESS IS
MAKING IT NEARLY
IMPOSSIBLE TO
READ WHATEVER
THE DOOR MAY SAY...
WAIT-- THAT SOUND
BEHIND ME...
BUBBLING!



BY THE
GODS!



AN ATTACK
EVEN BEFORE I
HAVE ENTERED
THE ACCURSED
FORTRESS!

BEWARE,
BEHEMOTH! YOU FACE
A POWER BEYOND ANY
YOU MAY HAVE DRAGGED
BENEATH THE BLACK SUR-
FACE OF THIS POOL IN
PAST AGES!

ONE HAND
OR A THOUSAND
-- I SHALL SLAY
YOU !

PREPARE
TO MEET YOUR
BLASPHEMOUS
MAKER, YOU--YOU
--YOU MICKEY
MOUSE MON-
STROSITY !

SNIP!
SNIP
SNIP
SNIP
SNIP

INOSHIRO
HONDA !
SESSUE
HAYAKAWA !

SLICE

HAH ! I KNEW
THE SCARLET
TAPEWORM STROKE
WOULD CATCH YOU
UNAWARES !

SLARPPP!

A FEW FINAL
SWORDSTROKES
SHOULD PUT AN
END TO YOU ...

... TEACH
YOU THE
ERROR OF
YOUR
WAYS !

SLUCE

FWUP
SLUCK

BACK TO YOUR
COLD AND CHEERLESS
LAIR ! KNOW IT WAS
TOMOKATO THE SAMURAI
WHO DEFEATED YOU !

GLOK!

SLUG!

GURGLE!

THUS YOU ARE
FOREWARNED SHOULD
I EVER PASS THIS
WAY AGAIN.

IF NOT
FOUR-
ARMED.



... A SOUND UNBECOMING A CAT STEEPED IN BUSHIDO, THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR.





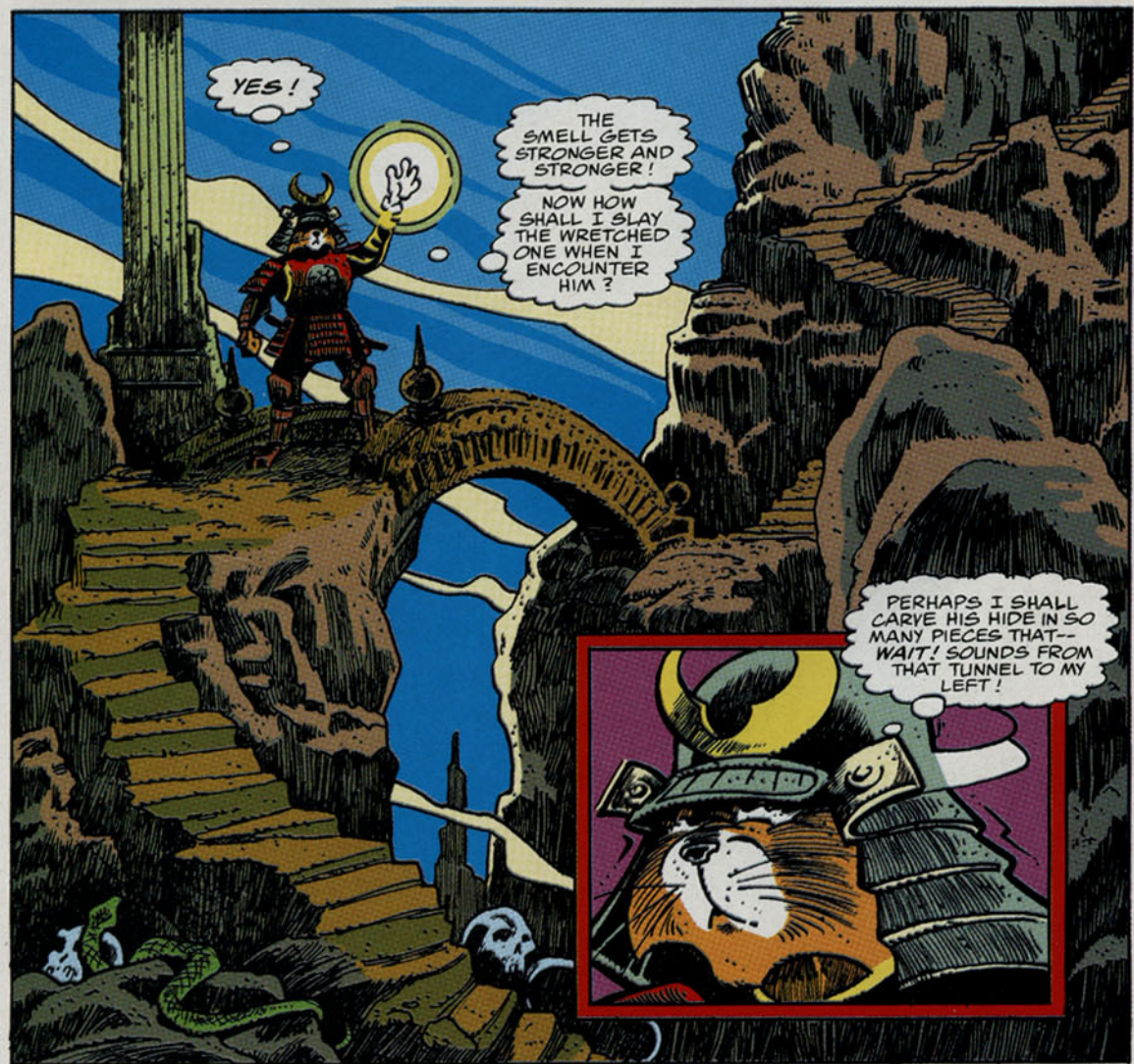
PREPARE YE
NOW, FUGU
OTOKO—
MURDERER!
YOUR TIME IS
ALMOST AT
HAND!



AHH, FAINT BUT
PUNGENT. THERE ARE
PORKS IN CATZAD-
DUM! THIS PUTS A
NEW TWIST ON THE
TAIL!



MY PREY
WILL BE WITH
THEM. I MUST
FOLLOW THE
SCENT.



YES!

THE
SMELL GETS
STRONGER AND
STRONGER!

NOW HOW
SHALL I SLAY
THE WRETCHED
ONE WHEN I
ENCOUNTER
HIM?

PERHAPS I SHALL
CARVE HIS HIDE IN SO
MANY PIECES THAT—
WAIT! SOUNDS FROM
THAT TUNNEL TO MY
LEFT!



PORKS! ON SOME MISSION--OR RETURNING FROM ONE. THEIR STENCH--ALMOST OVERPOWERING!

STILL--I MUST FOLLOW THEM. IF ONLY THERE WERE A CONVENIENT CLOTHESPIN.

ohh-ree-oh-oooh-oh

oh-ree-oh

LET NONE PASS BEYOND THE THRESHOLD ONCE WE HAVE ENTERED.

AS YOU COMMAND, GENERAL. WE HAVE NEVER FAILED.

SOON...

HAI! PREPARE TO BE GROUND INTO PORK RINDS AND SHIPPED TO THE WHITE HOUSE!

JOKES, EH? WELL, HERE'S ONE FOR YOU, KITTY!

PREPARE TO BE GROUND INTO KITTY LITTER AND PUT IN A BOX FOR SHIPPING TO PET STORES! HAW HAW!

HOW ABOUT A FLEA COLLAR FOR LITTLE KITTY?! HAW HAW HAW!

HA! HA! HA!

LET YOUR LAUGHTER RING FOREVER THROUGH-OUT THE HALLS OF WHAT-EVER HELL YOU LIVE IN.

PIGS.

HERE--AT LAST--I HAVE COME UPON HIM! THE CREATURE AT THE HEART OF MY DAYS LONG SEARCH!

SNIF



THE ROOM RUMBLES... AND BEGINS TO DESCEND SEEMINGLY INTO THE FIERY DEPTHS OF HADES ITSELF!



GOING DOWN! WE'VE GOT SOME HOT SALES IN THE BARGAIN BASEMENT!

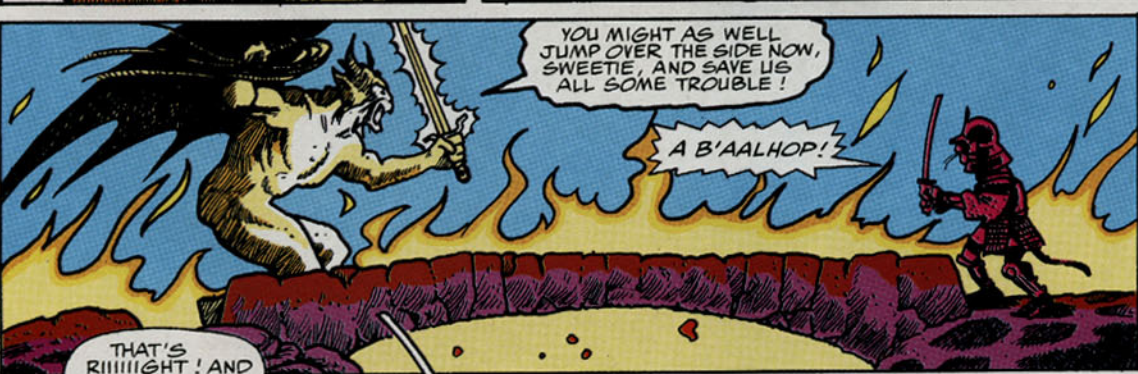
BOO HA HA HA

IF ONLY WE DIDN'T HAVE TO FIGHT EACH OTHER, I COULD BE FRIENDS WITH A CAT LIKE THIS.

DEFINITELY A STUPID... YUMMY!



...GETTING HOT IN HERE...



YOU MIGHT AS WELL JUMP OVER THE SIDE NOW, SWEETIE, AND SAVE US ALL SOME TROUBLE!

A B'AALHOP!

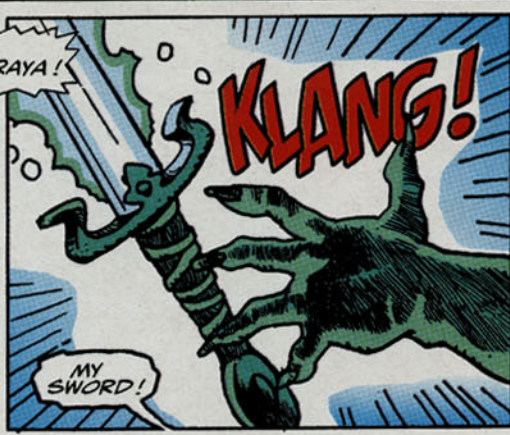
THAT'S RIGHT! AND HE'S LOOKING FOR HIS TIP!



BOO HA HA HA HA



EIJI TSUBURAYA!



KLANG!

MY SWORD!

I'LL JUST HAVE TO WHIP UP A LITTLE COOPERATION OUT OF YOU...

IF YOU THINK SO, WINGED ONE...

...BUT THEN YOU B'AALHOPS ARE SUCH NOTORIOUSLY SLOW STARTERS. IT BEGINS IN GRADE SCHOOL, I UNDERSTAND.

NOW-- TASTE THE BUSHIDO BUZZ SAW BLADE ATTACK!

BZZZZZZ

OOOPS! I HOPE THEY'VE STILL GOT THESE ON SALE AT K-MART!

I HATE YOU!
I HATE YOU!
I HATE YOU!

LEAD WITH YOUR GUT, B'AALHOP...

...AND LOSE IT!

WACT!

AAAAEEEEEE

AS IT IS SAID, "FALL INTO THE GAP!"

NO!

YOU'RE NOT QUITE YET THE VICTOR, HAIRY ONE!

IN ANOTHER MOMENT, YOU'LL BE NOTHING MORE THAN... KITTY LITTER!

?!?

EAT HOT LEAD, FUR BALL!

BLAM

BLAM

BOO HA HA

EIGHTBALL IN THE SLIME POCKET!

ZIP!

I-I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!

SLUG!

PTANG

DON'T THINK IT HASN'T BEEN FUN. STILL, I'D RATHER HAVE TRACKED YOU TO THE BAHAMAS.

A SHORT TIME LATER...

MY THIRST FOR VENGEANCE IS ONLY IN PART QUENCHED!

THERE ARE OTHERS WHO MUST YET PAY FOR THE BEHEADING OF NOBUNAGA.

BUT THE WORST PART OF THE WHOLE AFFAIR IS GOING TO BE CLEANING UP THE MESS BACK AT THE CASTLE...

THE END

THE STARS



Ralph Macchio Adapting and writing this series of Epic titles, Ralph is no stranger-san to the astute comic book fan. His career at Marvel began in 1976 where he made a name for himself handling black and white titles such as *Deadly Hands of Kung Fu*, *Planet of the Apes* and *Doc Savage*. His impressive list of editorial credits include *Doctor Strange*, *Captain America*, *Thor* and *Daredevil*. As writer he's handled film adaptations like *Meteor*, *House II*, *Dune*, *Transformers: The Movie* and *Darkman*.



Frank Ciocco Deluxe penciler hails from the Eastern Honshu province of Elmwood Park, NJ. Since that time his artistic exploits have been heralded throughout the New World. New York City marked the formative years of his artistic growth, honing his skills at Continuity Associates. He traveled west to San Jose, CA where he developed his renowned *Way of the Deadline* philosophy. With the speed of a deadly ninja, he has produced works as diverse as portfolios, comic books and limited edition prints among a bevy of commercial assignments. A master-san of the one-man gallery show, he lives in tranquility and contentment with his wife, Vicki, and son, Joseph.



Jim Hummel Inker extraordinaire, came out of the eastern province of Pennsylvania to travel the world. Working for *The Yomiuri Shinbun*, *The Bangkok Post*, *The Saigon Post* and *Stars and Stripes*, he headed to New York City to take up employ with The Associated Press. Still longing for travel and adventure, he landed in San Jose, CA laboring for The Copley News Service and teaching at San Jose State. Married and with daughter, he longs no more for travel and adventure.



Mark E. Rogers Samurai Cat creator, was born Adolph Menjou in South Amboy, NJ in 1952. After making his movie debut in Kubrick's *Paths of Glory* in 1957, he suffered a nervous breakdown and changed his name, recuperating first in Pt. Pleasant Beach, NJ, then the University of Delaware. He lives in total obscurity with his wife, Kate, and their children, Patrick, Jeannette and Sophia, who are even more ashamed of him than he is of himself.



LIEUTENANT BLUEBERRY™

THE IRON HORSE™

STEEL FINGERS™

THE TRAIL OF THE SIOUX™

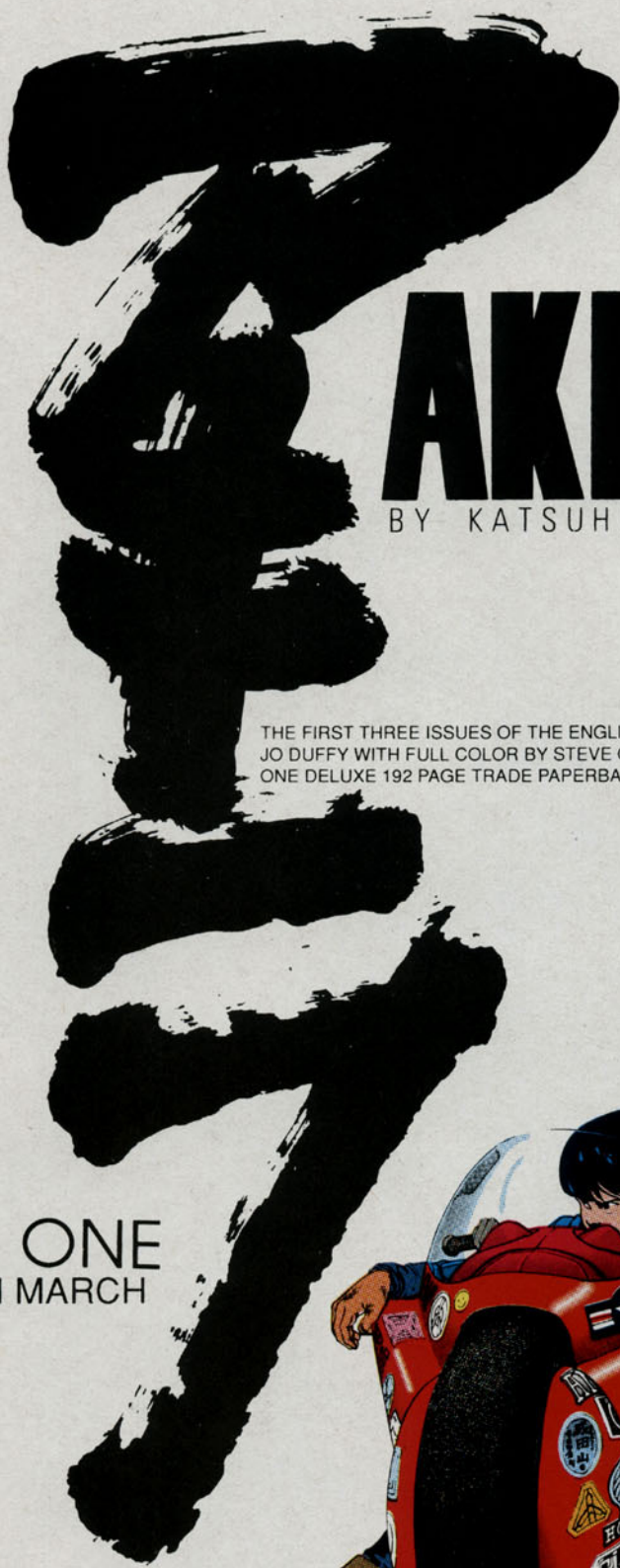
GENERAL GOLDEN MANE™

MARSHAL BLUEBERRY™

THE LOST
DUTCHMAN'S MINE™

THE GHOST WITH
GOLDEN BULLETS™



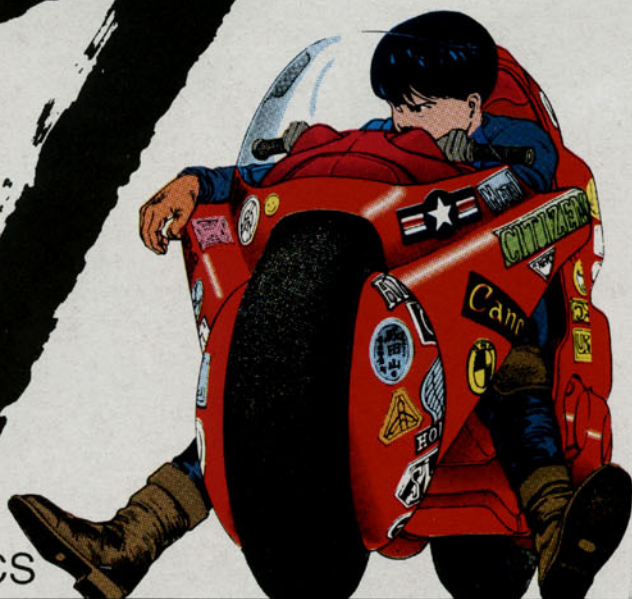


AKIRA[™]

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

THE FIRST THREE ISSUES OF THE ENGLISH EDITION, BY WRITER
JO DUFFY WITH FULL COLOR BY STEVE OLIFF, COLLECTED IN
ONE DELUXE 192 PAGE TRADE PAPERBACK.

BOOK ONE
IN MARCH



FROM EPIC[®] COMICS



