

PAGE 1

Skan, great to be working with you on this book. I've checked out your work and think you'll really help bring this book something unique. This issue was originally written before you came on board, but the revision you're now working from is adjusted once you signed up. Hopefully by the second issue I'll have a better idea of exactly how you interpret certain things and I can really tailor the book to your strengths.

My approach to this series is to extend the east-meets-west nature of the story to the visuals and pacing. It's probably a little more panel heavy than it needs to be at the moment, but I like the idea of using some pages with more action laid out in smaller panels similar to some manga action sequences as well as using widescreen panels for impact to bring a bit of American flavor in. If you find something better while doing the layouts, feel free to pursue that direction. And if you need to cut down the panel count (or add panels), that's something I'll leave up to you as well. If you have any questions about anything, feel free to e-mail me any time.

6 panels

PANEL 1: Widescreen. Night. On a 9 year-old boy, KICHIRO, (but before he had that name) on the deck of a British ship (but we can't really tell that yet), staring wide eyed. He has a thin chain around his neck, but it's tucked into his shirt so all we can see is a hint of it.

Super Title: Pacific Ocean, 1663

Kichiro Cap: I remember rain...

PANEL 2: Widescreen. Bigger. DEEP FOCUS ON CHAOS. THREE VAMPIRES run amok, killing anything that moves -- and have already killed several deck hands who we see lying on the ground, bleeding profusely from gaping neck wounds.

VAMP #1 is grabbing a WOMAN, presumably Kichiro's mother, by her long hair and yanking her backward, his FANGS waiting at the ready.

VAMP #2 RIPS A CHUNK OF FLESH loose from a BURLY SAILOR who looks terrified and in serious pain.

VAMP #3 is stalking toward KICHIRO'S DAD, who FIRES A FLINTLOCK PISTOL.

[Note: While Vampires in this story can drink and not kill, often we want to show their primal nature and they will savage their human prey rather than just drinking with their fangs.]

Cap: ...but I don't remember much of my old life.

Cap: Just how it ended.

PANEL 3: The bullet strikes Vamp #3 in the chest where his heart is and he SMILES, baring BLOODY FANGS.

SFX (small, by the impact): thup

PANEL 4: Vamp #3 grabs Dad violently. Dad struggles, calling out to his son.

Dad: Run, boy!

PANEL 5: Kichiro, more terrified than he was in panel 1, backs up against the taffrail of the ship. He has nowhere to run.

Vamp #1 (off): Don't worry...

PANEL 6: Widescreen. High angle. Kichiro faces us in the foreground, standing on the ship's taffrail, uncertain of whether the sea he might leap into or the animals behind are more dangerous. One thing is certain, though: HE IS AFRAID.

Behind Kichiro the three vamps descend. Vamp #3 feasts on Dad on the left, Vamp #2 in the center, bloodier than the others, heads straight toward Kichiro, and Vamp #1 drops Mom, lifeless at his feet on the right.

Vamp #1: ...we'll take great care of the boy.

Cap: I remember water...

PAGE 2

6 panels

PANEL 1: Day. Extreme close up. Kichiro's fingers dig into the WET SAND OF A BEACH, almost like he's clawing at it for dear life.

Kichiro Cap: ...and sand.

[Troy, this cap can move into panel 2 if it's easier.]

PANEL 2: Bird's eye view. The harsh light of mid-day sun beats down. Kichiro's body lies face down in the sand of a Japanese beach. Debris from the ship all around him. VULTURES circle overhead.

Cap: My life was broken. Much like the ship that carried me -- somehow -- to my new one.

PANEL 3: On ISAMU, 8 years younger than we'll see him the rest of the issue, mounted on a horse in traditional garb (but no armor). He's flanked by two more SAMURAI on horseback. They see something in the distance, the one that speaks shielding his eyes from the sun.

Random Samurai: <What is that?>

PANEL 4: Isamu rolls Kichiro over. Kichiro's EYES START TO OPEN.

Isamu: <A survivor.>

PANEL 5: Kichiro's POV from the ground, looking up at Isamu. Maybe Isamu is upside down (as if he's standing above Kichiro's shoulders).

Isamu: <You were very lucky.>

Kichiro: I-- I do not understand.

Isamu: You will.

PANEL 6: Widescreen. Hero shot of Isamu and Kichiro on his horse, galloping away (into the future). For the first time, Kichiro looks calm.

Cap: My father, Isamu, called me Kichiro. It means "Lucky One."

Cap: I would come to find out it was a misnomer.

PAGE 3

Skane, this page is all yours! Let's do a massive montage, followed by a widescreen panel across the bottom. I'll figure out the final text once I see the art, so don't worry too much about leaving space for it.

This is going to be a sparring/training montage. Isamu, a little older than the previous scene, should be somewhere in the center, the calm teacher watching everything happening. He's in the center, but not the focus of the image.

The focus is on the scenes in the rest of the image. Kichiro and his brother, Orochi, sparring and training [Note that they do not have traditional samurai hair cuts at this point]. Some suggested images are:

- OROCHI, 9 years-old, delivers a two-handed strike with his wooden KATANA toward camera.
- Orochi, getting the best of Kichiro in a fight (still with the Katanas or hand-to-hand, your call)
- 14-15 year-old versions of Orochi and Kichiro stand side-by-side FIRING ARROWS FROM BOWS.
- The boys stand by their respective kasumi mato targets [<http://www.kyudo.com/kyudo-e6.html>]. Kichiro grabs his arrow, a perfect BULLSEYE, and looks pleased. Orochi looks at his target, the arrow in the 2nd ring outside of the bullseye, displeased with his performance.
- Orochi and Kichiro, now grown but still with the same hair. Sparring with actual katanas.
- Orochi delivers a "crimson leaves strike," knocking Orochi's blade loose and bringing his sword back to readiness. [If it's better, have him hold the sword somewhere dangerous like Kichiro's belly or neck, but stopping short.]

Kichiro Cap: Isamu raised me as his own, training me in *bushido*, the way of the samurai alongside his own blood.

Cap: My brother Orochi was always the more gifted pupil, but father never wanted my birth to hold me back and gave me additional private instruction.

Cap: He wanted only that I follow Orochi's path and become Samurai, but I knew the extra attention made my brother resent me.

WIDESCREEN PANEL: Widescreen. Three-shot of Orochi, Isamu and Kichiro facing the reader. Isamu puts his arms around both of his sons, smiling.

Isamu: My sons. You have each made me proud to be your teacher, and **honored** to be you father.

PAGE 4

6 panels.

PANEL 1: Establishing shot. Afternoon. The IMPERIAL PALACE in Edo.

Super Title: Imperial Palace

Super Title: Edo, Japan

PANEL 2: Interior establishing. A large banquet/events hall housing the Genpuku ceremony. On one side is the Shogun's elevated throne area. In front of him a LINE OF BOYS aged 17-18 in traditional samurai clothes (but no armor) and hair cuts. They sit on the ground, waiting expectantly. Across from them, matching members of the IMPERIAL GUARD (one guard for each boy). The guards hold SAMURAI SWORDS (Katanas) in their scabbards, waiting to present them to the boys. [Note: I don't want you to kill yourself with details, so if the line is only 5-6 boys, that's cool.]

We also see a hint of crowd somewhere away from the main ceremony composed of the Daimyo (lords), wives, smaller children, and... I don't know who else would be there.

Cap: It had been my desire to participate in the *genpuku* ceremony since my father introduced me to his world.

Cap: I wanted nothing more than to call myself Samurai.

Cap: But my dreams and the dreams of my father meant nothing in the face of tradition. *Gaijin* could never become Samurai.

PANEL 3: Angle on the boys AKA the soon-to-be samurai. A mixture of stoicism and happy excitement. Among them is OROCHI, now with traditional samurai hair cut, smirking. Kichiro is NOT among them.

Shogun (floating): This is not a job. This is a way of life. Samurai must commit completely, forsaking all else in life. You exist to serve. Your country. Your master.

Shogun (floating): One encounter. One chance. We are permitted only one life. Live it well.

[Troy, once I see the art, these may work better as dialogue captions than floating balloons, but I'll let you know.]

PANEL 4: Angle on the SHOGUN. He stands upon an altar/large throne area. He's dressed head-to-toe in CEREMONIAL SAMURAI ATTIRE, minus a helmet/face mask so we can clearly see him.

Behind him to one side stands his obedient and beautiful daughter, MITSUKO. She has her hair up in a traditional bun.

Shogun: This morning, you awoke as boys. You will sleep as more than men. Tonight, you are **Samurai**.

PANEL 5: Looking down the line of boys and Imperial Guards (roughly from the Shogun's POV), the guards in the foreground begin to present swords in the foreground, one after another. At the end of the line, against the far wall, we can make out KICHIRO. He's dressed in normal clothes, not like the boys preparing to become samurai. If we can see his expression, it's a mixture of discomfort and sadness.

Shogun (floating): Your **katana** is more than a weapon. More than a symbol.

PANEL 6: Push in as Orochi receives his KATANA from ISAMU, in the same clothes as the other Guards, but somehow denoted as the leader. Beyond them, Kichiro hangs his head in shame. [I honestly don't know if he'd be part of the crowd or permitted to watch more closely given his relationship with Isamu, so do whatever works for framing and seems to make sense logically in your head.]

Shogun (floating): As samurai, it is your **soul**.

PAGE 5

6 panels.

PANEL 1: On the Shogun and Mitsuko as he beckons Orochi to join him, gesturing with his hand.

Shogun: Before we end the *genpuku* I have one additional announcement.

Shogun: Orochi, please approach.

PANEL 2: Orochi joins the Shogun (center) and Mitsuko on the throne/altar.

Shogun: Orochi, son of Isamu, I have watched you for many years. Your skill is unparalleled, your mind strong, and your heart pure.

Shogun: I will not live forever. I can only hope an honorable death awaits me, as I hope the same for you -- but no time soon.

Shogun: I was not gifted with a son. The *kami* saw fit only to bless me with my daughter, Mitsuko.

PANEL 3: Tighter. The Shogun places Orochi's hands onto Mitsuko's.

Shogun: Orochi, honor me by marrying my daughter and one day succeeding me as Shogun of Nippon.

PANEL 4: CLOSE ON KICHIRO. He looks like he just got his heart ripped out.

Orochi dialogue cap: "It would be my greatest honor, Shogun."

PANEL 5: The crowd erupts in cheers. [Note: if we can find a way to put him at the front of the crowd (as mentioned on the last page), we can combine 4 and 5, so he's the stoic/upset one at the front of the crowd.]

Kichiro Cap: I should have been happy for my brother, but his success meant my despair.

Cap: For the first time I understood envy.

PANEL 6: On Isamu, putting his arm around Kichiro, who's trying to keep it together.

Isamu: You may not yet be samurai, but you are a warrior.

Isamu: A warrior must only take care that his spirit is never broken.

PAGE 6

6 panels. 3 panels on a tier across the top, the rest however you want to lay out.

PANEL 1: Early evening. We're behind MITSUKO in her chambers. She sits, looking into a mirror and letting down/brushing her long, flowing hair. Give a sense of her naked, exposed NECK here. I don't find necks all that sexy myself, but this *is* a vampire book... In the mirror we see A FIGURE LURKING behind her.

PANEL 2: Reverse angle looking at Mitsuko from the front. TWO CLOSED FISTS reach out from behind Mitsuko on each side of her neck. We can't see who they belong to in the shadows behind Mitsuko. At first glance it looks like they intend to do her harm, but upon closer inspection they hold a SMALL ST. CHRISTOPHER MEDALLION ON A THIN CHAIN. Mitsuko is startled nonetheless.

[Yes, this *is* the thin chain from the opening image.]

Mitsuko: *gasp*

PANEL 3: Same shot, only now we can see the hands belong to a smiling KICHIRO, and he rests them on her shoulders after putting the medallion around her neck. Mitsuko relaxes, smiling as she looks into the mirror (at camera).

Mitsuko: Kichiro! How did you get in here?

Kichiro: I have my ways.

PANEL 4: Kichiro and Mitsuko kiss in a RAPTUROUS EMBRACE.

PANEL 5: Mitsuko stops, puts a hand on Kichiro's chest.

Mitsuko: I have money. We could run aw--

Kichiro: I cannot dishonor my brother any more than you can disobey your father.

Mitsuko: I love you, Kichiro. I know it in my head. I feel it in my heart. Living a lie will not change that.

PANEL 6: Kichiro takes her hand in his, pulling Mitsuko in almost close enough. His face looks heavy and burdened. Her eyebrows arch, expectant, wondering what he's going to say and yet still hopeful it won't crush her.

Kichiro: You have no idea why I've come tonight...

Kichiro: I wanted to say goodbye.

PAGE 7

6 panels.

PANEL 1: Mitsuko turns from him, hurt, clutching the pendant. Kichiro stands behind her, unwavering.

Mitsuko: Have you no reason to stay?

Kichiro: This isn't about what *I* want, Mitsuko. This is how it must be.

PANEL 2: ON KICHIRO, hardening, facing a truth he's always known but never admitted to himself.

Kichiro: It doesn't matter how I was raised -- or by whom -- I wasn't born into this. My path is... something else.

Kichiro: I will never be samurai.

PANEL 3: Mitsuko sits back down. She looks utterly destroyed.

Mitsuko: What about me? What about *us*?

PANEL 4: Kichiro kneels beside the seated Mitsuko, doing his best to comfort her, even if she doesn't hear what he has to say.

Kichiro: Orochi will make an excellent Shogun...

Kichiro: ...and an even better husband to you.

Mitsuko: Even if you leave, I won't simply forget how I feel.

Kichiro: You will. The same way I've forgotten my parents.

PANEL 5: Closer on the two of them, still some room for dialogue.

Kichiro: They gave me that medallion. Before we boarded the ship. It's one of the few things I haven't lost.

Kichiro: It was supposed to keep me safe. It will do the same for you.

Kichiro: My father and Orochi will know how to find me.

PANEL 6: Widescreen. In the left foreground Mitsuko cries. The main focus of the panel is on Kichiro, sitting in Mitsuko's open window, one foot out, the other resting on her floor.

Kichiro: I do love you, Mitsuko.

Kichiro: Goodbye.

PAGE 8

5 panels.

PANEL 1: Elsewhere. The sun has finished going down. Kichiro in his quarters, packing some clothes into some sort of bag or sack. Near the bag we see a *wakizashi* (smaller sword, but similar in style to a katana).

Orochi (off): Going somewhere, Kichiro?

PANEL 2: Kichiro, bag slung over his shoulder, short sword at his hip, makes his way to the door, but Orochi stands in the doorway. His arm extended and blocking whatever his body doesn't. [Please note: Orochi wears both a katana and a wakizashi.]

Kichiro: Brother, I was just coming to see you.

Orochi: Is that right?

Kichiro: Yes. Why are you acting strangely?

PANEL 3: Closer on Orochi, his expression twisting into something angry, his nostrils starting to flare. He moves one hand to the handle of one of his swords.

Orochi: I saw **you**, "*brother.*"

Orochi: With Mitsuko. You put your hands on her. You put your hands...

Orochi: ...on my **wife!**

PANEL 4: Kichiro tries to defuse the situation. He drops his bag, places his palms together in front of his chest, fingers pointed out (let me know if you need ref) and speaks carefully to his brother.

Kichiro: I am leaving Edo tonight. I was saying goodbye to her, just as I was about to do to you.

Kichiro: I won't deny Mitsuko and I have history, but the Shogun has promised her to you.

Kichiro: Orochi... brother... I would never dishonor you.

PANEL 5: Orochi, still angry, points a finger in Kichiro's chest.

Orochi: But the rules do not apply to you. Because you are not really my brother, you can do whatever you want, is that it?

Orochi: Eight years I have tolerated you. Watched idly while **my** father gave you special training, knowing you would never be samurai.

Orochi: I was the better student. I was the **real son!** And you... you were common, just like the trash he found you in.

PAGE 9

6 panels.

PANEL 1: Kichiro picks up his bag.

Kichiro: I'm sorry you are offended, brother. Now please, allow me to pass.

PANEL 2: Orochi signals with his hand it's clear for Kichiro to pass.

PANEL 3: As Kichiro walks through, he's **SHOVED BY OROCHI**.

SFX: *fwap*

PANEL 4: Widescreen. Worm's eye view. Kichiro hits the dirt and loses his bag in the foreground. Behind him, Orochi skins his wakizashi.

Orochi (small): Unngh

PANEL 5: Orochi pins his brother with one hand, brandishes the short sword with the other.

Orochi: Give me one good reason not to kill you.

Kichiro: Just one? I'm leaving. **Tonight.**

Kichiro: We're family, Orochi. **Brothers.** I would protect your honor with my life and I offer it to you freely if you feel my death is justified.

PANEL 6: Orochi sheathes his short sword.

Orochi: Leave. Now. Do not say a word to my father.

Orochi: Do not return to Edo. Ever.

PAGE 10

5 panels.

PANEL 1: Establishing shot. Later that night. A Japanese port town. One massive trade ship should be visible. Fill out the rest how you see fit.

Dockmaster cap: “Next ship to where?”

Kichiro cap: “Wherever. I just need to get there.”

PANEL 2: Two-shot. A frustrated Kichiro talks to the DOCKMASTER, a big guy with massive forearms. I’m seeing him as the gentle, not evil version of Bluto from “Popeye,” but as a Japanese dude. Ultimately up to you, he just needs to look like a big sailor who can hold his own.

Dockmaster: You look Dutch. Are you Dutch?

Kichiro: No.

Dockmaster: No matter. Next ship leaves at dawn. Come. We’ll enjoy beers.

PANEL 3: Inside a BEER HALL. (No idea how this would look, I just know the Dutch established breweries starting around this time in Japan). Kichiro and the Dockmaster each have a beer. Kichiro looks angry.

Dockmaster: Why?

Kichiro: “*Why?*”

Dockmaster: Your face. Why does it look like that?

PANEL 4: Kichiro rubs his temple with one hand.

Dockmaster (off): You don’t seem to understand how this works. Beer should make talking easier.

PANEL 5: Dockmaster chugs his beer.

Dockmaster: Observe.

PAGE 11

4 panels.

PANEL 1: Kichiro can't help but smile as the Dockmaster puts down his beer and gesticulates in an overly animated way. In the background, THREE DARK SILHOUETTES move through the beer hall.

Dockmaster: Then you tell a hilarious story and everyone laughs. Understand?

Dockmaster: Now you try.

PANEL 2: On Kichiro, trying to chug his beer. He's never done this, and some of the beer spills out over his mouth and chin. Dockmaster is cracking up, clutching his sides while he laughs.

Dockmaster: Hahaha! You have no idea how foolish you look.

Dockmaster: Quick, someone fetch me a mirror for this fool.

PANEL 3: Kichiro wipes his mouth with his sleeve.

Kichiro: Are you satisfied?

PANEL 4: Medium. The three silhouettes from earlier have reached the bar and belong to VAMPIRE MOUTH and TWO VAMP FRIENDS -- all European looking. The friends are hanging back, surveying. Vampire Mouth's fangs are visible as he speaks.

[Unless otherwise noted, all Vampires are of some European descent and not Japanese.]

Vamp Mouth: Do you serve beer or sake here?

Vamp Mouth: On second thought...

PAGE 12

3 panels.

PANEL 1: Widescreen. Biggest panel on the page. Vamp mouth grabs the bartender (or waitress) by the shirt as Vamp Friends #1 & #2 **KNOCK OVER TABLES** (or other furniture) and **FEED ON RANDOM PATRONS**. This is just the start of chaos.

Vamp Mouth: ...I don't think either will sate us.

PANEL 2: Vamp Friend #1 unclenches from his first victim, his **BLOODY FANGS AND TONGUE SNARLING ON DISPLAY**. The dead body drops, **ARTERIAL SPRAY STILL SHOOTING**.

Kichiro Cap: These men behaved like animals.

Kichiro Cap: But they were far more than men.

PANEL 3: Kichiro and the Dockmaster stand, concerned. Kichiro skins his wakizashi.

Dockmaster: Those men... their *kami* is... **wrong**.

PAGE 13

7 panels.

[Note: Feel free to have more chaos in the background with the other two vamps as it fits, since we'll focus on just one on this page.]

PANEL 1: Dockmaster, imposing, stares down at Vamp Friend #2, blood running down his chin and chest.

Dockmaster: You just killed a friend.

Vamp #2: And...? We plan to kill many, many more.

PANEL 2: Dockmaster throws a punch that Vamp #2 effortlessly CATCHES. If we see his expression, Dockmaster is stunned.

Kichiro Cap: They were strong.

PANEL 3: Seemingly out of nowhere, Kichiro strikes, bringing his wakizashi upward from a low position and SEVERING Vamp #2's arm (the one that caught the punch and still holds Dockmaster's hand).

[Note: I want the vamps to bleed when attacked, but *very little* blood. They still have some coursing through their veins, but not a lot. And it should be darker, almost black on the page.]

PANEL 4: On Vamp #2, turning to see Kichiro. His arm has been severed just above the elbow, and while anyone else would be in agonizing pain, this guy looks more PISSED than anything. He grits his fanged teeth.

Kichiro Cap: They felt no pain.

PANEL 5: Kichiro swings his sword at the oncoming vamp who ducks the strike and reaches with his one remaining hand for Kichiro's robe--

PANEL 6: --and FLINGS HIM INTO A WALL/PILLAR.

PANEL 7: On KICHIRO, clearly in pain, trying to pick himself up off the ground.

Kichiro Cap: They acted without remorse.

PAGE 14

8 panels. Panels 4-7 are on a tier below the wide panels 3 and 8.

PANEL 1: Canted angle. Kichiro's POV. The one-armed Vamp #2 and Vamp #1 FEED ON DOCKMASTER, sucking the massive sailor dry.

Kichiro (off, weak): Stop.

PANEL 2: The vamps drop Dockmaster to the ground like a lifeless husk.

Vamp #1: You wouldn't know it to look at them, but I like Japanese. Tasty.

Vamp #2: Get used to it.

Vamp #2: If Raven succeeds the Shogun will be dead by dawn and you'll have the whole island to feast on.

PANEL 3: Widescreen. All three vamp attackers stalk toward Kichiro. This shot should be *very* similar to Page 1, panel 6.

Mouth Vamp: You dress like them. You act like them. You even fight like them. But you're **not** one of them.

Mouth Vamp: Do you want to **die** the same way they did?

PANEL 4: Small panel. Close on Kichiro (back on his feet). His EYES NARROW. Maybe he's remembering something in his past, maybe he's just honing in on his target.

Kichiro: A good death brings no dishonor.

PANEL 5: Hero shot. Kichiro charges, wakizashi held with two hands over his shoulder. He's out of control and angry, not practicing the samurai principles or sword techniques Isamu taught him. [Feel free to use manga-style blur lines here if it fits your style.]

Kichiro: Aaaaaaahhh!

PANEL 6: Kichiro's blade DECAPITATES MOUTH VAMP in a single blow.

PANEL 7: Mouth Vamp's head falls toward the ground as his body TURNS TO DUST. To each (or either) side we see hints of Vamp #1 and #2 as framing devices.

[Skan, let me clarify the “dust” for you. The idea here is that the vamps bodies turn almost petrified upon death. So when we lose the hand on the previous page, it's like anyone losing a hand, but with less blood since vampires have less blood in them. But when they die, almost instantly, their bodies turn brittle. In this case, the body might fall with less impact, so maybe only the knees and part of an arm turns to dust while the rest remains in a petrified, frozen state. The head, however, falling from the highest point, would instantly turn to dust upon making contact with the ground. Now, if you have a better idea for vampire dusts, or think the dust just won't work for you visually, we're open to something else, but that's where we're coming from right now.]

Cap: The monsters from my oldest memory had returned, seeking to destroy what little remained of my new life.

PANEL 8: Widescreen. Kichiro in a BADASS SAMURAI POSE with his sword. Something like this [<http://d2riyf9w9i1hd0.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/urban-ninja-1.jpg>] or this [<http://www.thedrawingclub.com/blog/pics/Samurai-photo-001.jpg>].

Cap: Samurai or not, I would spend every remaining breath defending my home from them.

PAGE 15

5 panels.

PANEL 1: Later. Elsewhere in the village. KICHIRO, the vampire conquering hero, his robes soiled with DUST and spotted with the BLACK BLOOD OF THE VAMPS, walks toward us. It's clear he's been through the shit and did what he had to do, but he's not happy about it.

Kichiro Cap: There was little time to contemplate the lives I had just taken. The Shogun's safety was all that mattered.

Kichiro: I need your horse. Please.

PANEL 2: Reverse angle. Outside of a small shack of a house, a PEASANT FATHER and his teenage SON have just finished putting up their horse for the night. They laugh as they make fun of Kichiro.

Son: Hehe. Look at this *gaijin*. He thinks he's samurai.

Father: Hahahaha.

PANEL 3: Kichiro DELIVERS A PUNISHING PALM HEEL STRIKE to the father's chin.

Cap: My reaction may have been excessive, but time was of the essence and nothing would deter me.

PANEL 4: The father is out cold on the ground as the son stares, slackjawed at Kichiro. Kichiro grabs the horse's reins.

Kichiro: I am not a samurai.

PANEL 5: Widescreen. Kichiro on horseback, galloping swiftly, purpose in his eyes.

Cap: My mind was unclear -- caught between a fading past and a dangerous future.

Cap: But I had no idea then just how bad things would become.

PAGE 16

5 panels.

PANEL 1: Night. On RAVEN, half-Dutch, half Japanese with sharp, sexy features, her focus on something in the distance. She looks and carries herself like nothing we've seen in this book so far.

PANEL 2: The IMPERIAL PALACE stands in the distance. Closer, Raven LEAPS through the air, jumping from tree to house to house to tree (or whatever works) in *progressive motion*, showing off her athletic prowess.

PANEL 3: Raven TIPTOES GRACEFULLY along the edge of a palace wall as UNSUSPECTING GUARDS stare ahead, unaware of her presence.

PANEL 4: Raven lands on the ground in a deadly crouch usually reserved for ninjas and video game characters. (Not for any reason than it looks cool.) If you want, go ahead and include progressive motion behind her of her on something high (another wall deeper in the palace, a building, etc.), then mid-flip/roll, then landing in the foreground.

PANEL 5: Raven looks up at the heart of the Palace, the massive building (tower?) in the center that houses the Emperor's chambers. It's a BIG building.

PAGE 17

5 panels.

PANEL 1: Outside the walls, Kichiro, hurrying, SKIDS his horse to a stop a few yards from the palace guards from 16/3.

Kichiro: They're coming! We must warn the Shogun.

Guard: Who?

Kichiro: NOW!

PANEL 2: Raven, using her vampire agility, scales the wall of the tower. She's free-climbing and moving swiftly.

PANEL 3: Closer on Raven. An ARROW STRIKES RAVEN'S SIDE, sending her plummeting toward the earth.

PANEL 4: ISAMU HOLDS A BOW, his fingers still posed like he just let an arrow fly but not holding the string, deadly fucking serious.

Isamu: Your mission ends in failure, assassin.

PANEL 5: Widescreen. In a puff of dirt and dust, Raven collides with the ground as Isamu skins his KATANA, holding it in two hands, prepared for battle.

Cap: A man with regret thinks often of the words "if only."

Cap: If only I had gotten there a few moments sooner...

PAGE 18

6 panels.

PANEL 1: Raven ATTACKS WITH TWO DEADLY DAGGERS as Isamu remains in a defensive position, parrying her attacks. [Note: The arrow remains stuck in her side.]

Cap: ...perhaps I could have helped him.

PANEL 2: Isamu strikes back, but Raven DODGES.

PANEL 3: With stunning quickness, before Isamu has even recovered from his failed strike, Raven gets in close and BURIES A DAGGER IN ISAMU'S RIGHT SHOULDER.

PANEL 4: Isamu's right arm is done, but he lifts his Katana with his left arm, barely able to hold it above his knees.

Raven (off): That's what I love about you samurai...

PANEL 5: Raven and Isamu in a two-shot, posed and ready for the final phase of their skirmish.

Raven: ...fighters until the bitter end.

PANEL 6: Isamu, moves forward, striking with one arm, somehow still in control. Raven's other DAGGER BREAKS as she blocks his blow but--

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5 panels.

PANEL 1 (smaller or inset): Raven's free hand GRIPS Isamu's left (sword) hand (sword hand) and begins to turn it.

PANEL 2: Widescreen. Biggest panel on the page. Raven DRIVES ISAMU'S OWN KATANA THROUGH HIS CHEST. Deep focus in the distance, a wide-eyed Kichiro sees this.

Kichiro Cap: But I didn't arrive sooner. I saw only death...

PANEL 3: ON RAVEN, who turns to see the oncoming Kichiro. She BARES HER FANGS, hissing.

Kichiro Cap: ...and its messenger.

Raven: *hissssss*

PANEL 4: Raven flees, leaping away as Kichiro rushes to his dying father's side.

Kichiro: Father!

PANEL 5: CLOSE. Kichiro takes his father in his arms, one hand resting on the handle of the katana. He's crying, but Isamu remains somewhat zen as he delivers his final words.

Isamu (shaky): ...protect him...kichiro

Isamu (shaky, smaller): ...protect him...

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PANEL 1 (inset): OROCHI, flanked by a guard or two, aghast at what he sees.

Kichiro Cap: There was nothing I could say that Orochi would listen to.

Kichiro Cap: There was nothing I could do that would bring my father back.

Orochi: Kichiro...?

Orochi: What have you done?

PANEL 2 (SPLASH): Orochi, stronger and composed, and the IMPERIAL GUARD surround a weeping Kichiro, on his knees supporting the lifeless body of Isamu in one arm, his other hand still gripping the braided handle of the katana stuck inside Isamu's chest in the other. The guards all have their swords at the ready.

Kichiro: I--

Orochi: You have murdered MY father, Isamu.

Orochi: Commit *seppuku* and spare yourself any further shame.

End Cap: To be continued!
