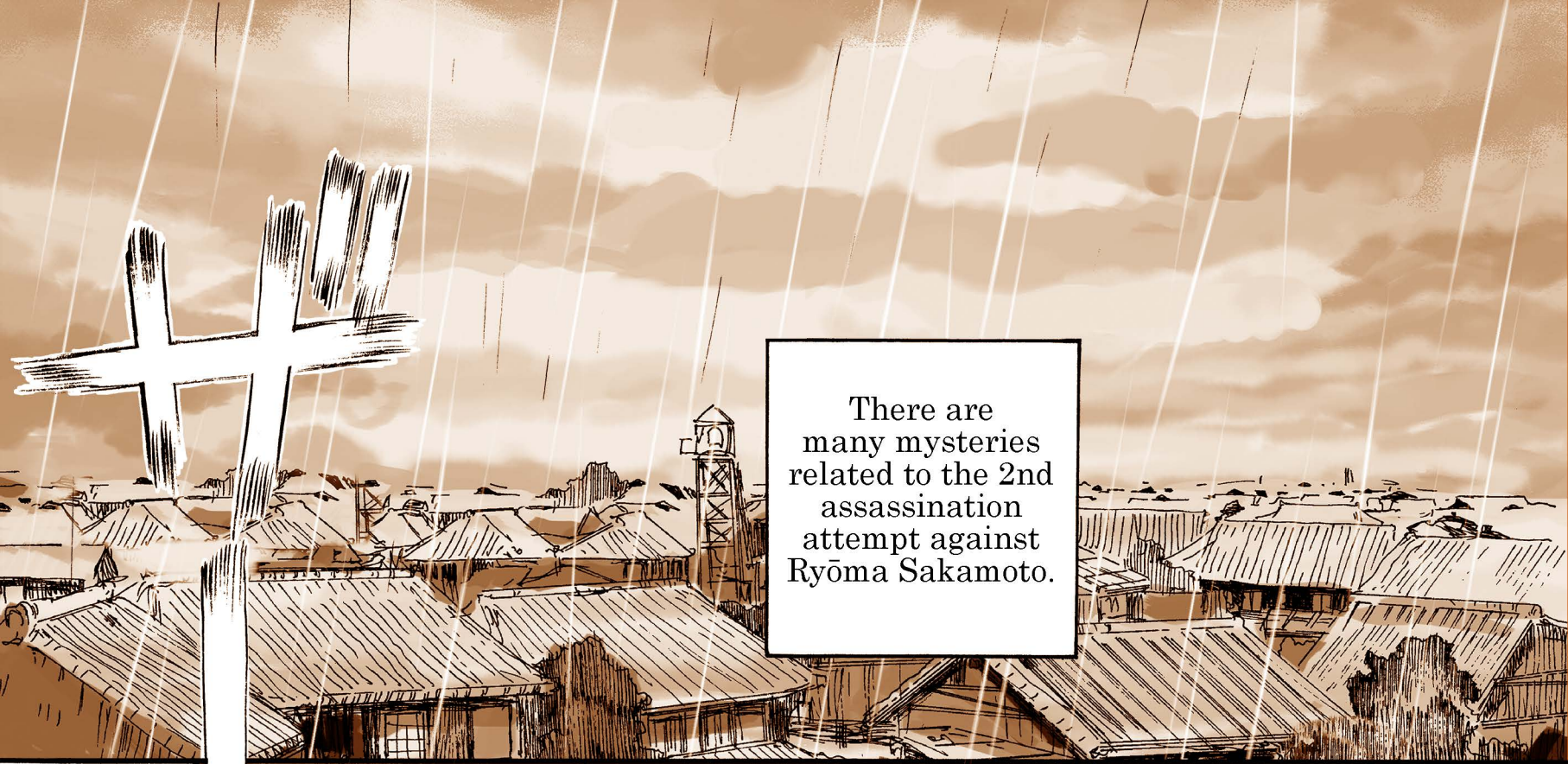


# **The Azure Century Chronicles**

~ The Three Dashing Ladies  
and  
Ryōma Sakamoto ~



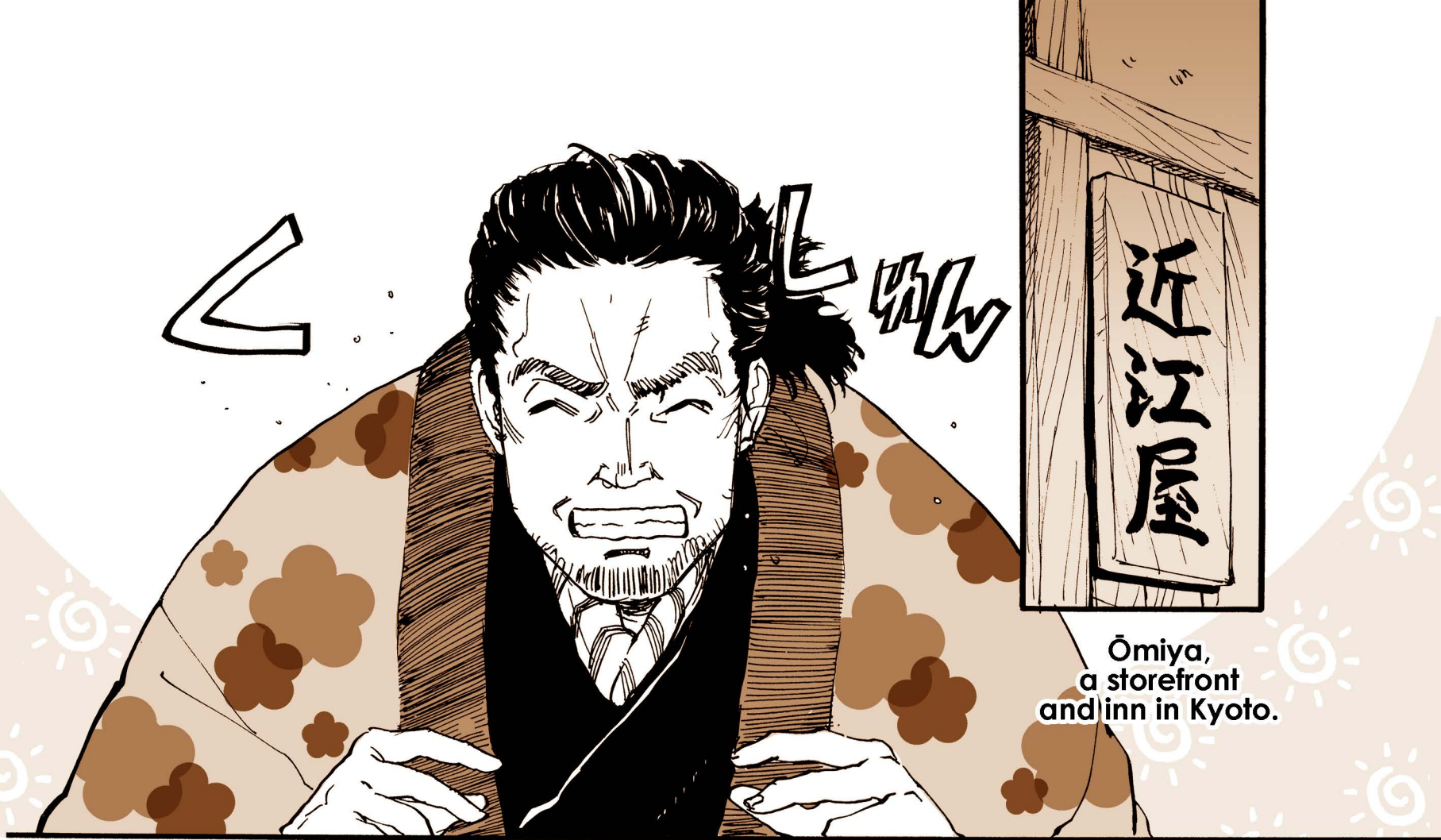


There are many mysteries related to the 2nd assassination attempt against Ryōma Sakamoto.

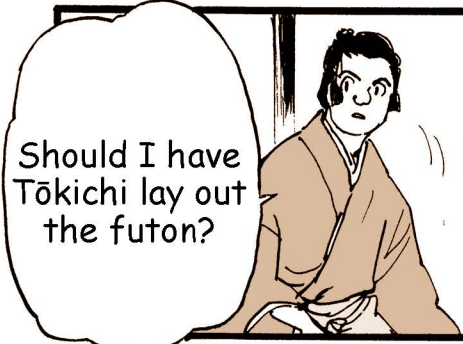


The events depicted in the following narrative were compiled from later testimonies of eyewitnesses and physical evidence available at the scene.

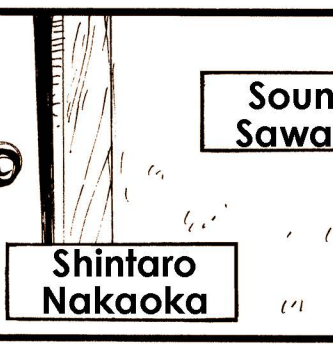
One reason is many of the parties involved continue to refuse talking about the incident.



Ōmiya,  
a storefront  
and inn in Kyoto.

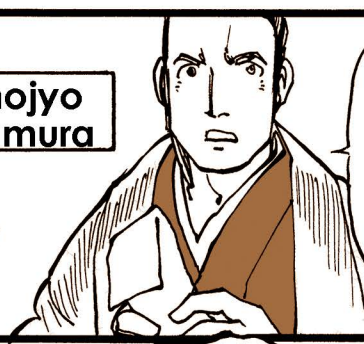


Should I have  
Tōkichi lay out  
the futon?

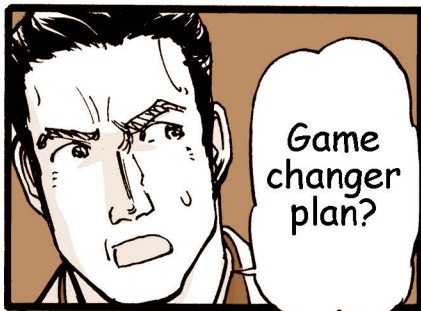


Sounojo  
Sawamura

Shintaro  
Nakaoka



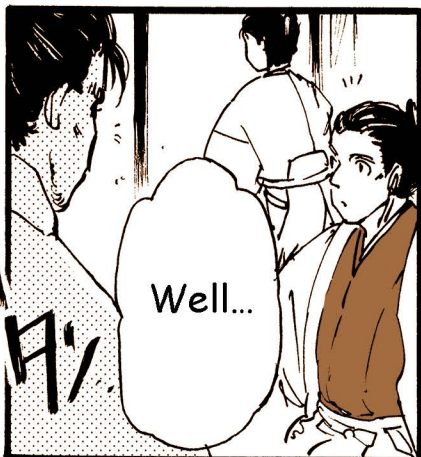
Ryōma,  
you'd better  
get some rest!



Game  
changer  
plan?



No,  
I'm not about to  
rest before I hear  
about Nakaoka's  
game changer plan  
that'll save the lives  
of the ministers  
in the Tokugawa  
Shogunate!



Well...

THAT'S



What Sawamura saw that moment...  
Was the sight of Tōkichi, a former sumo wrestler and Ryoma's attendant, being sliced apart on the 1st floor of the Omiya.

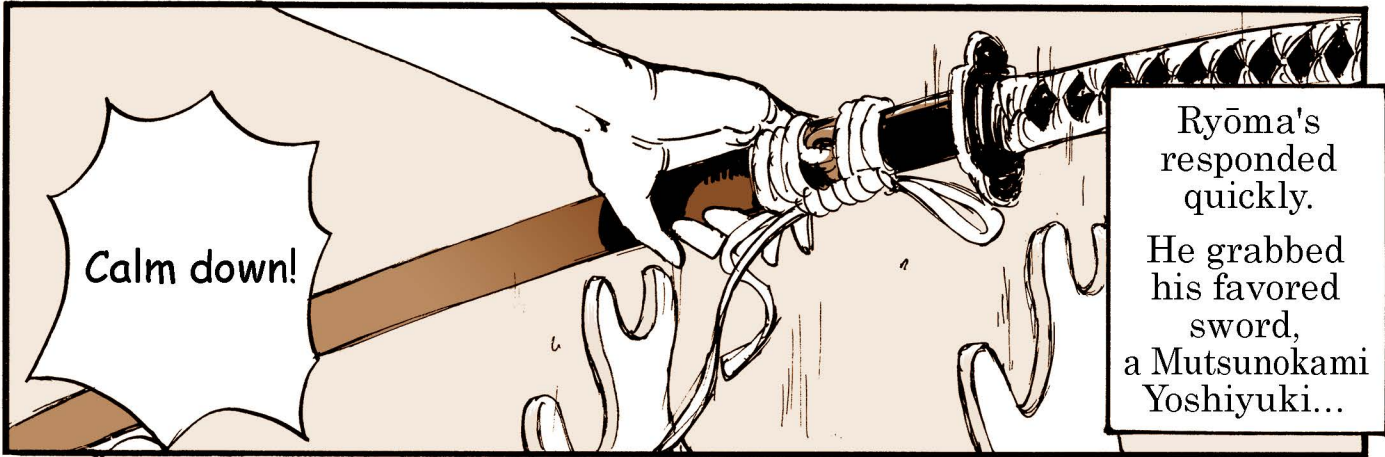


Hyikes!

And the killers now turning and proceeding to climb up the stairs



They're coming...!



Calm down!

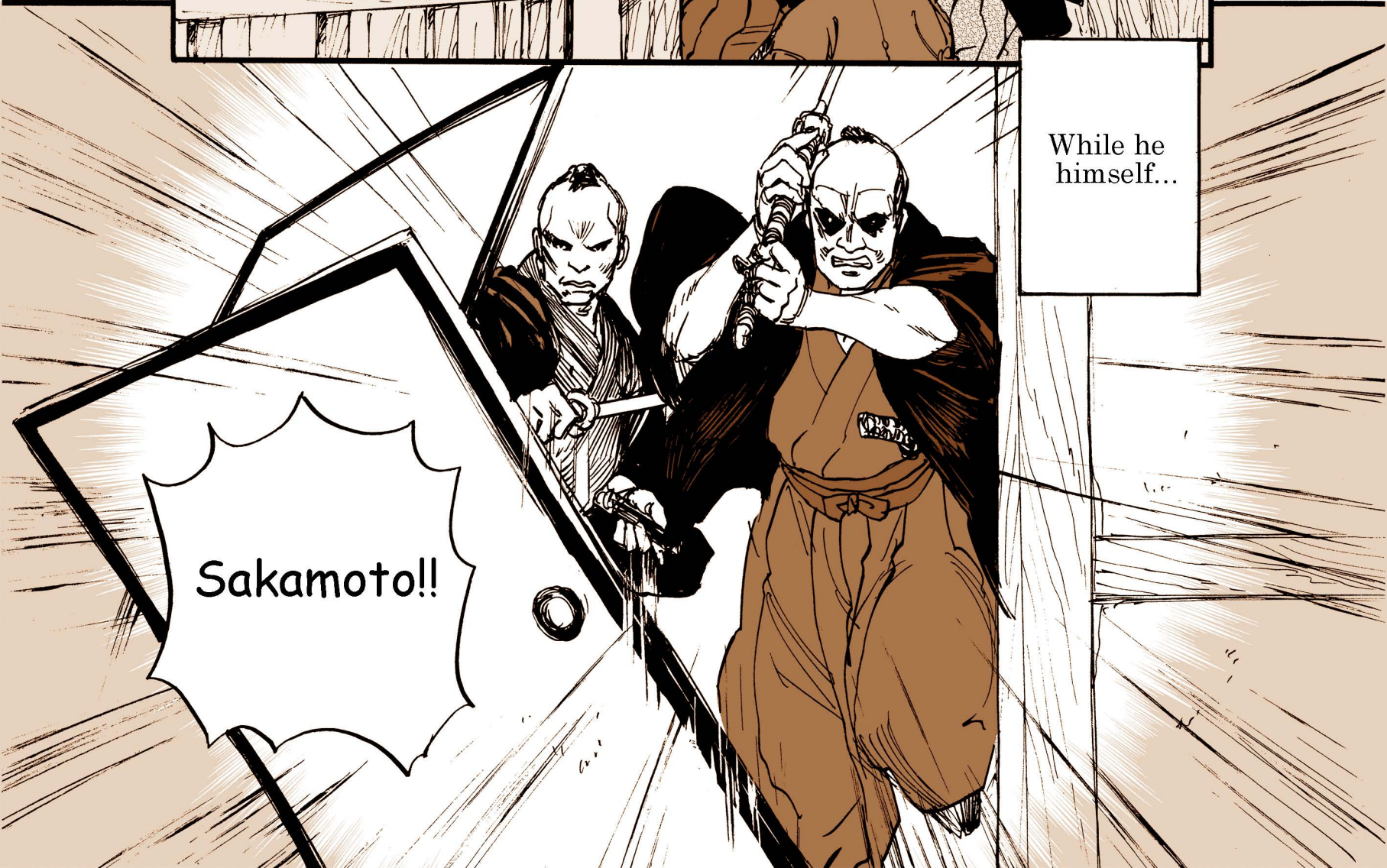
Ryōma's responded quickly. He grabbed his favored sword, a Mutsunokami Yoshiyuki...



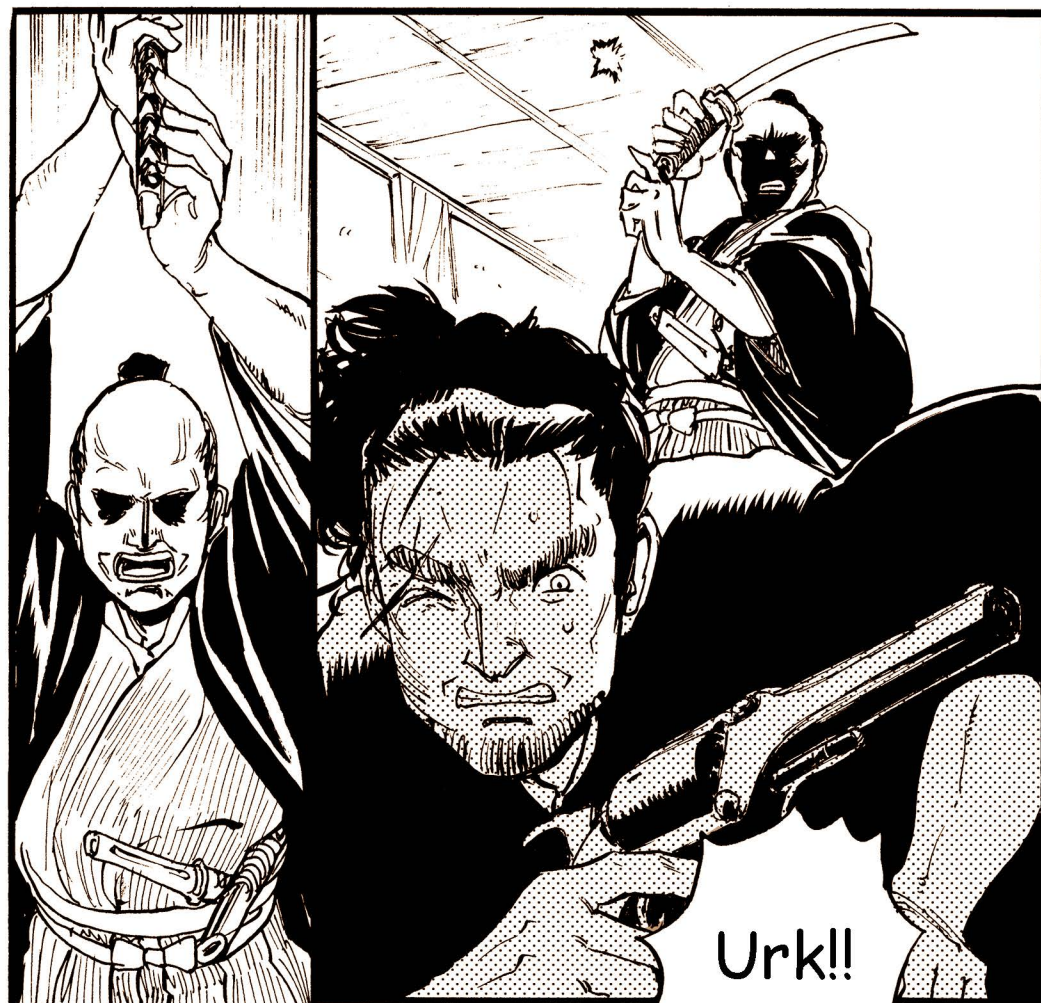
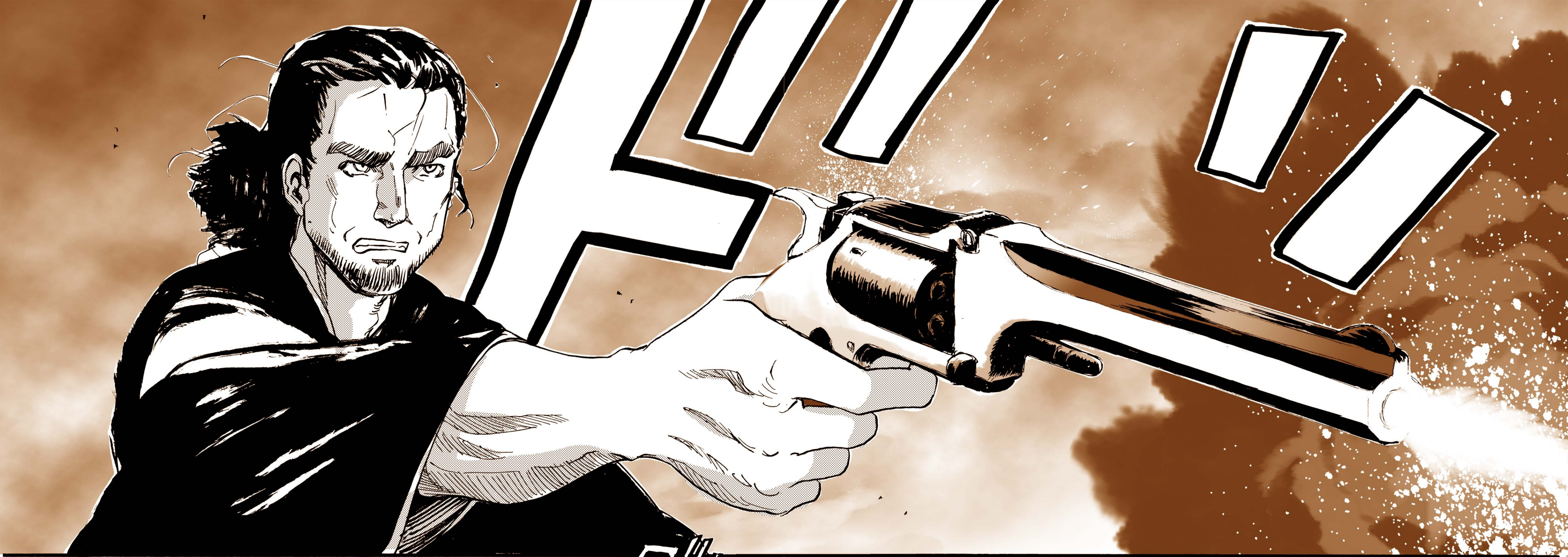
And threw it to Nakaoka who was only armed with his wakizashi (backup sword)...



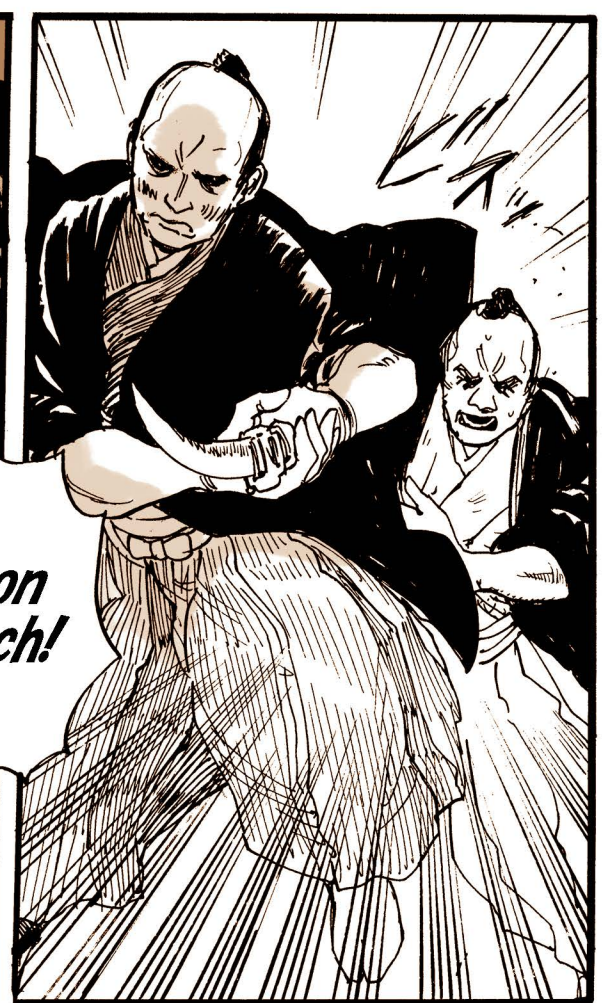
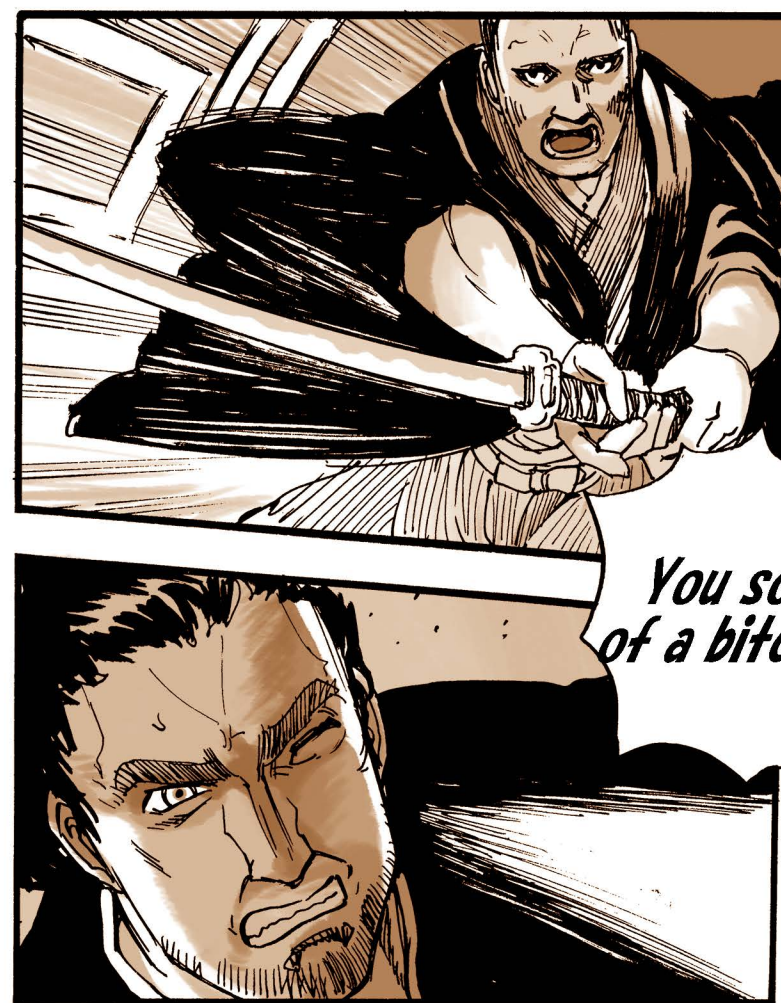
While he himself...



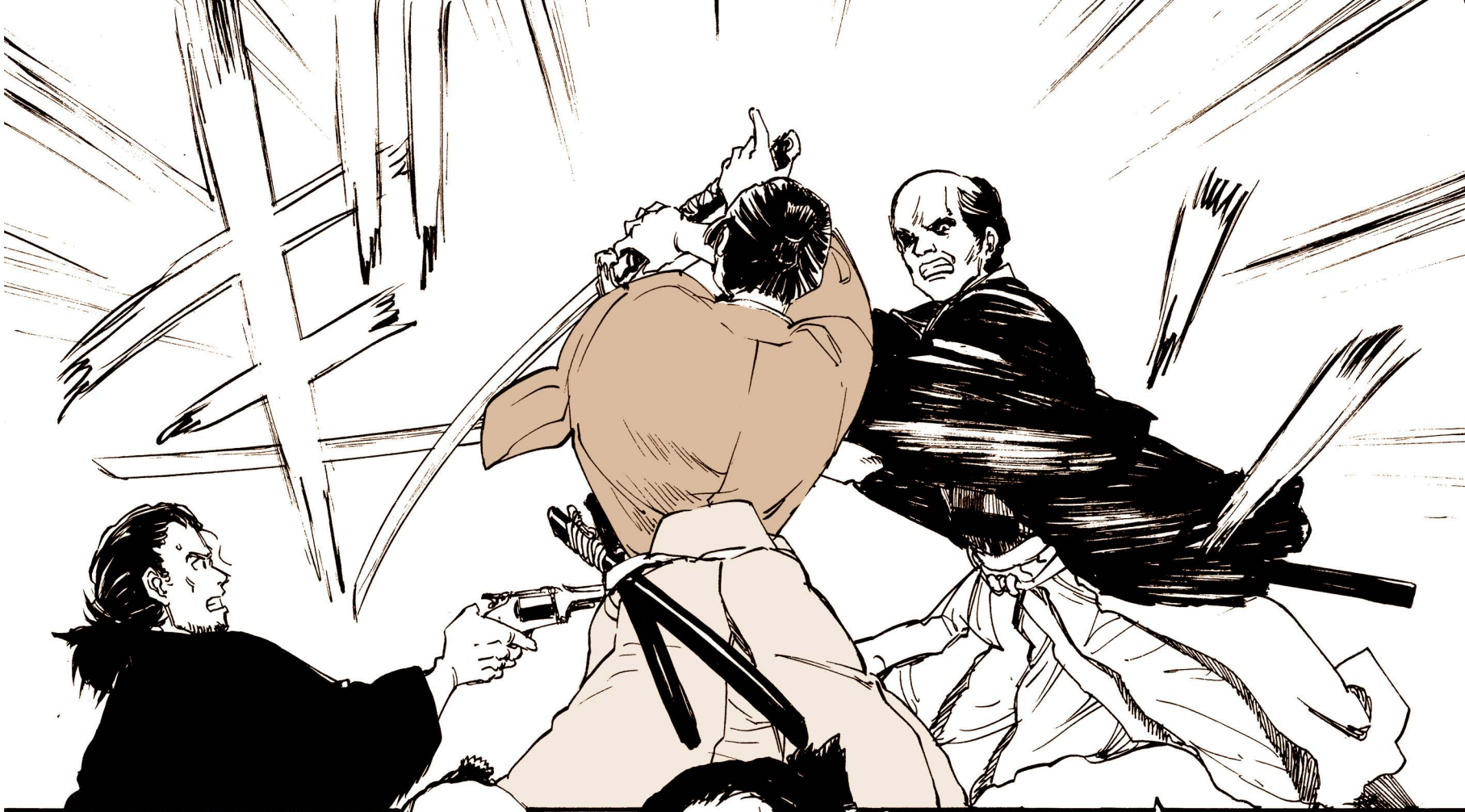
Sakamoto!!



Urk!!



*You son  
of a bitch!*



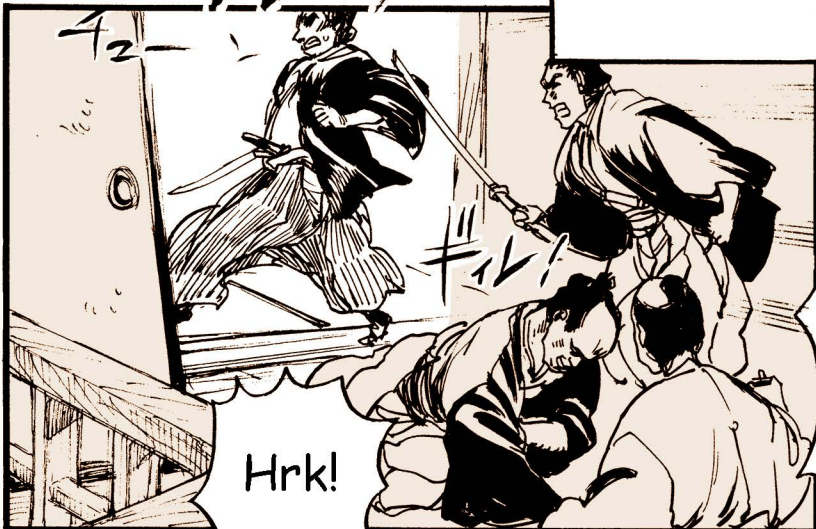
Mr. Sakamoto,  
please shoot  
him!



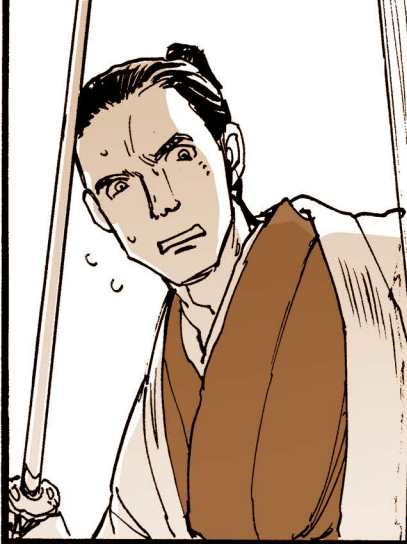
The assassins  
lost their  
window of  
opportunity.



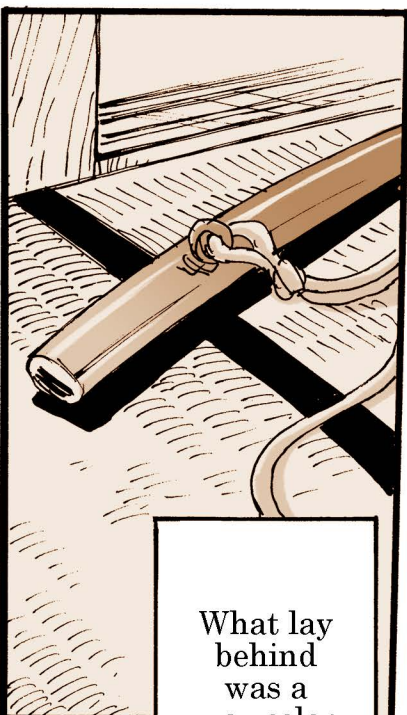
Who sent  
you  
bastards!?



Hrk!



Retreat!



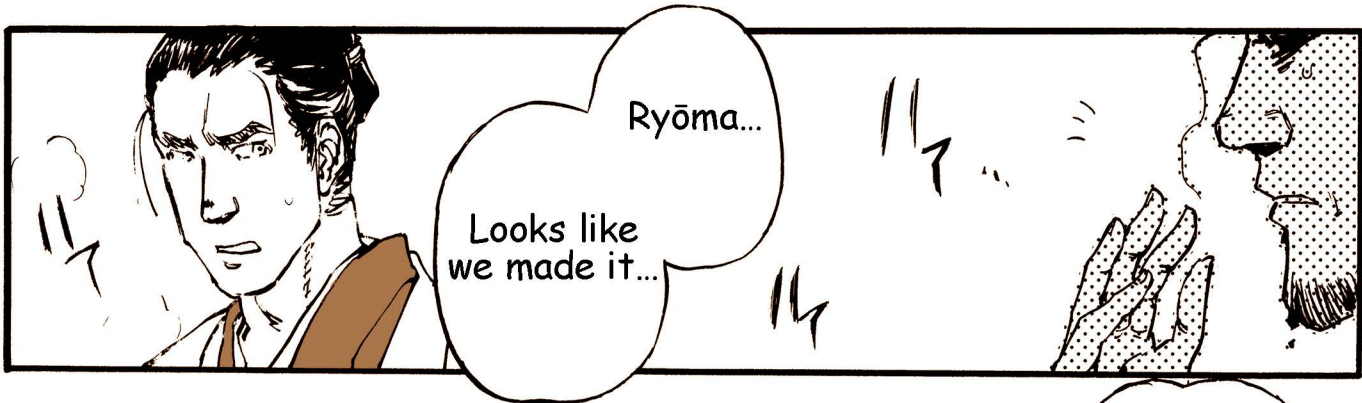
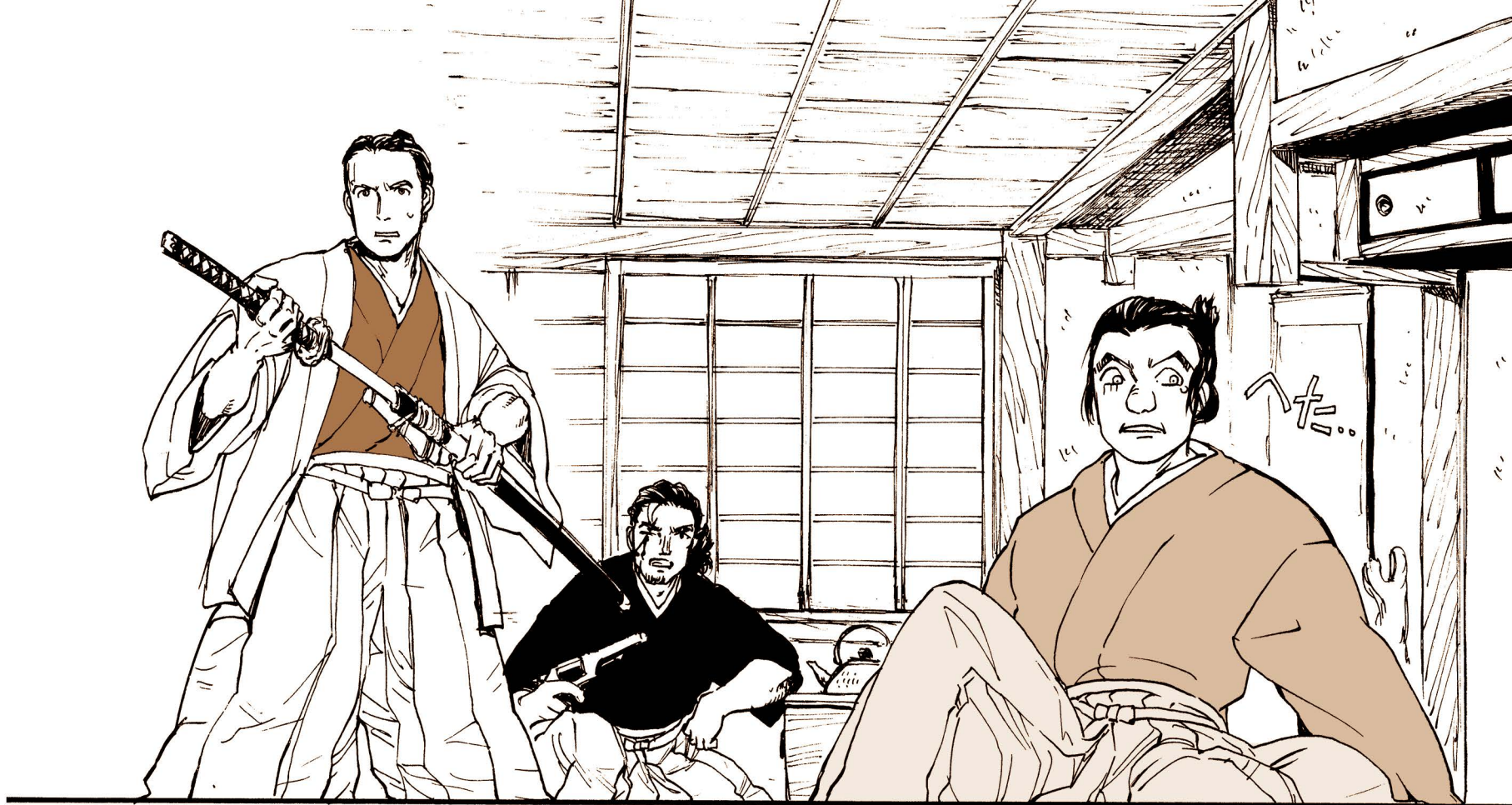
What lay behind  
was a  
wax color  
sheath...

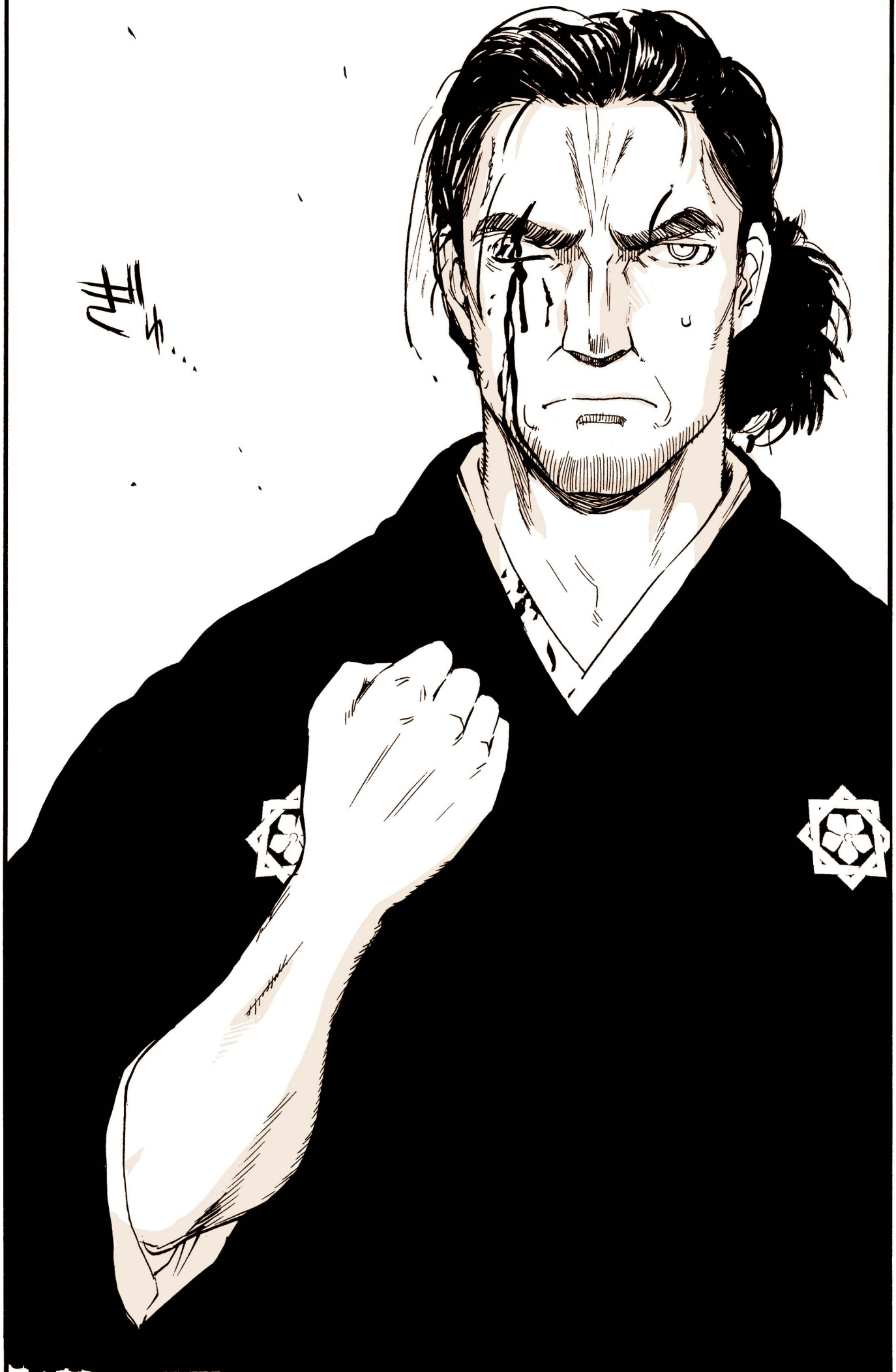
And one geta  
wood sandal  
sold by  
Hisago-tei  
in the  
Ponto-cho  
district.

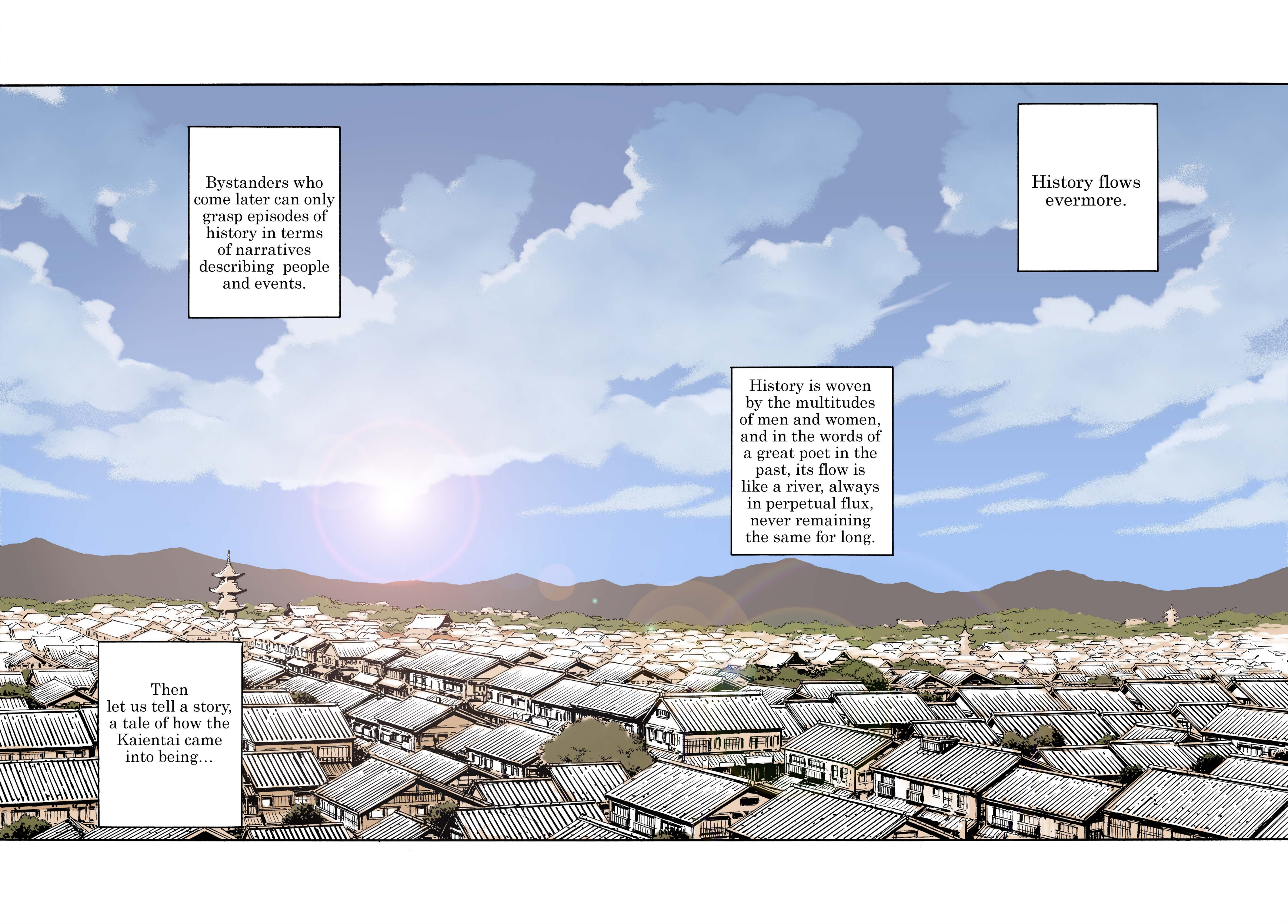


That concludes  
the tale of the  
attempted  
assassination  
attempt against  
Ryōma Sakamoto,  
also known as the  
Ōmiya Incident.









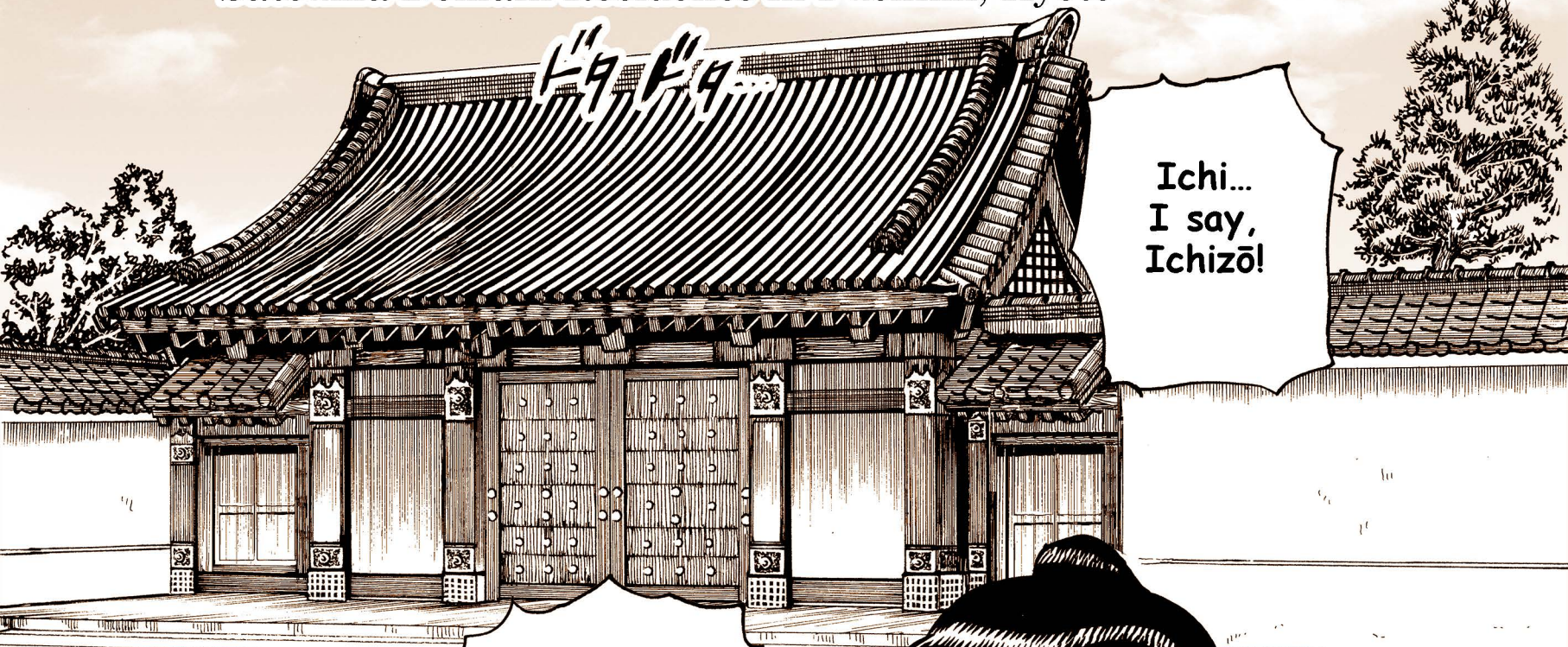
Bystanders who  
come later can only  
grasp episodes of  
history in terms  
of narratives  
describing people  
and events.

History flows  
evermore.

History is woven  
by the multitudes  
of men and women,  
and in the words of  
a great poet in the  
past, its flow is  
like a river, always  
in perpetual flux,  
never remaining  
the same for long.

Then  
let us tell a story,  
a tale of how the  
Kaientai came  
into being...

—Satsuma Domain Residence in Fushimi, Kyoto



Ichi...  
I say,  
Ichizō!

Is it true  
our good man  
Sakamoto was  
attacked!?

Kichinosuke  
(Takamori)  
Saigō



However  
...

Yes,  
it seems  
the Kyoto  
Mimawarigumi  
went  
after him.





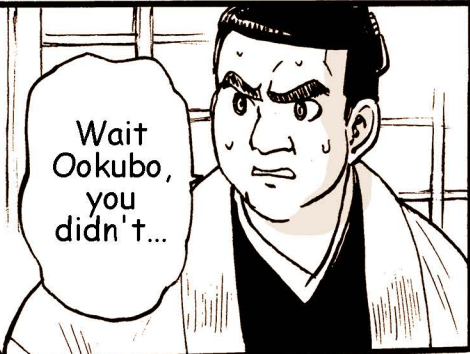
It appears our friend Sakamoto managed to survive by the skin of his neck.

He's blessed with the luck of the devil!

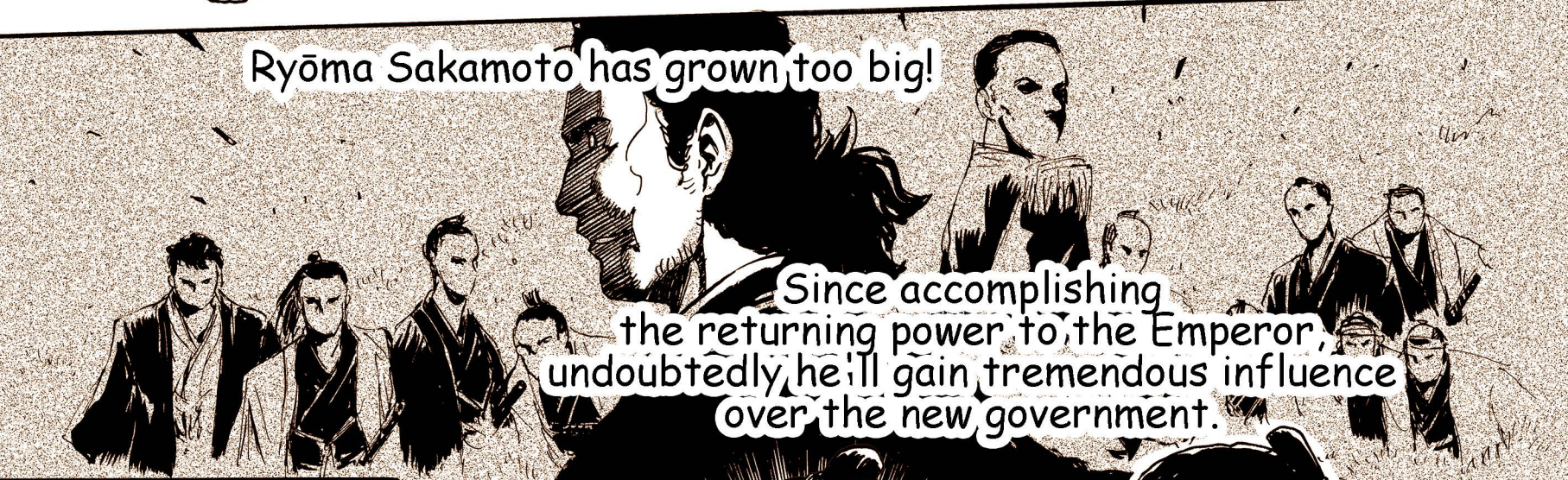
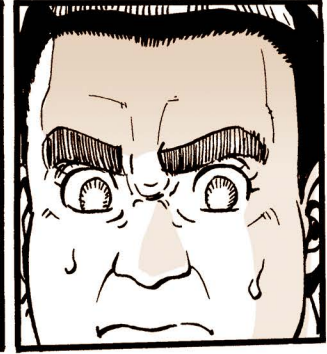
Ichizō (Toshimichi) Ookubo.  
One of the principle players in the founding of the Meiji Government.



And what if I did?



Wait Ookubo, you didn't...

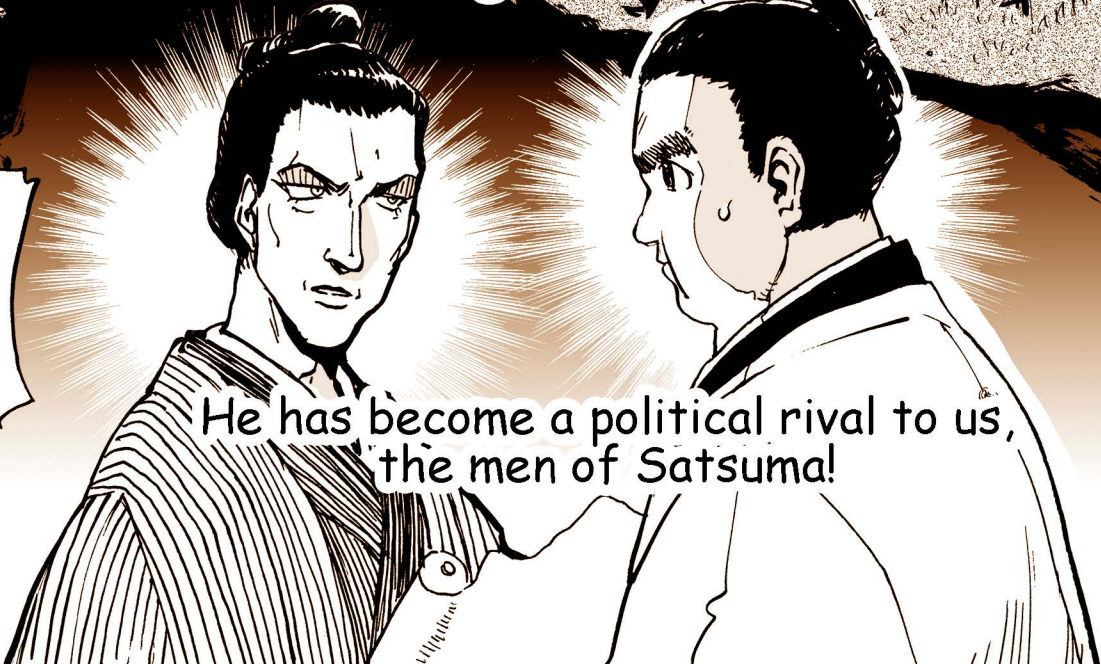


Ryōma Sakamoto has grown too big!

Since accomplishing the returning power to the Emperor, undoubtedly he'll gain tremendous influence over the new government.



Sir... Mr. Saigō! You got a guest, sir!

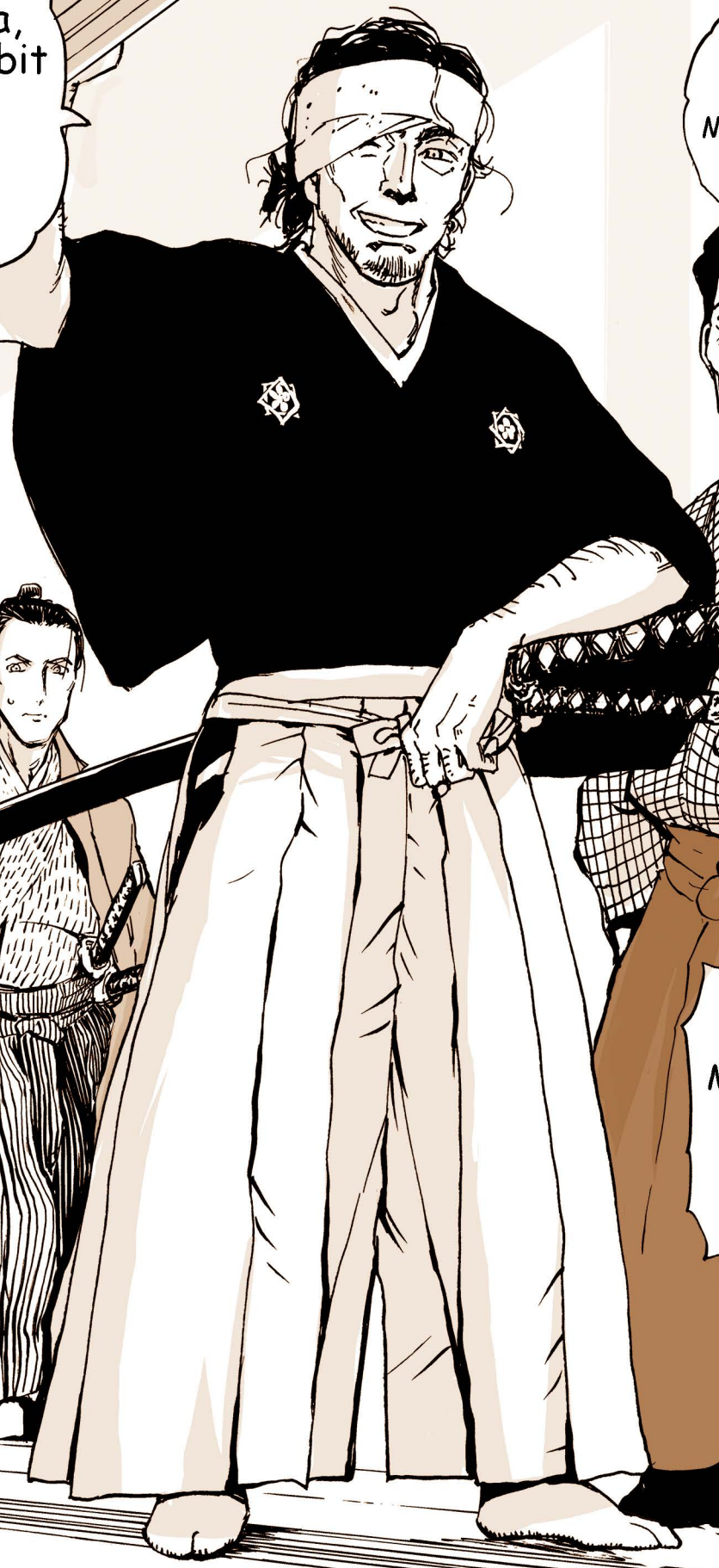


He has become a political rival to us, the men of Satsuma!

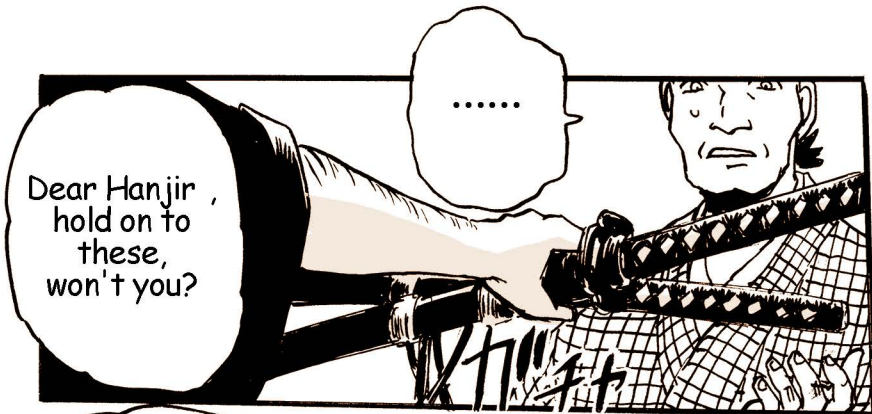
We'll Itellya,  
its was whee bit  
too close.

Hanjirō  
Nakamura

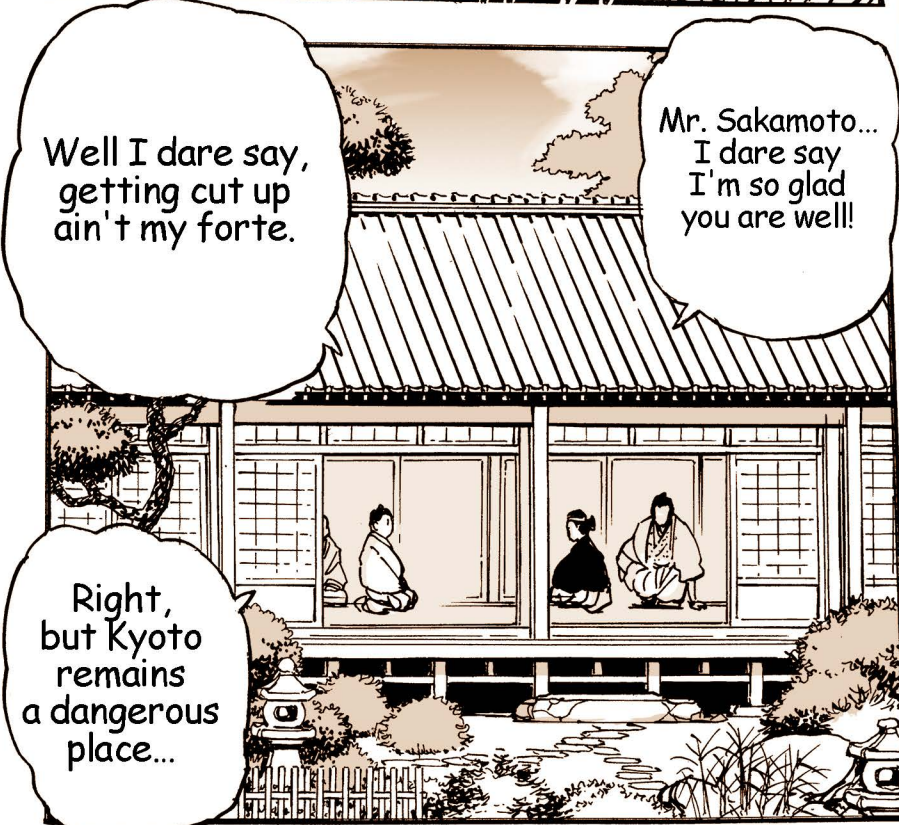
Its  
Mr. Sakamoto!



Mr. Sakamoto,  
I'm so glad  
you're safe!



Dear Hanjir, hold on to these, won't you?



Well I dare say, getting cut up ain't my forte.

Mr. Sakamoto... I dare say I'm so glad you are well!

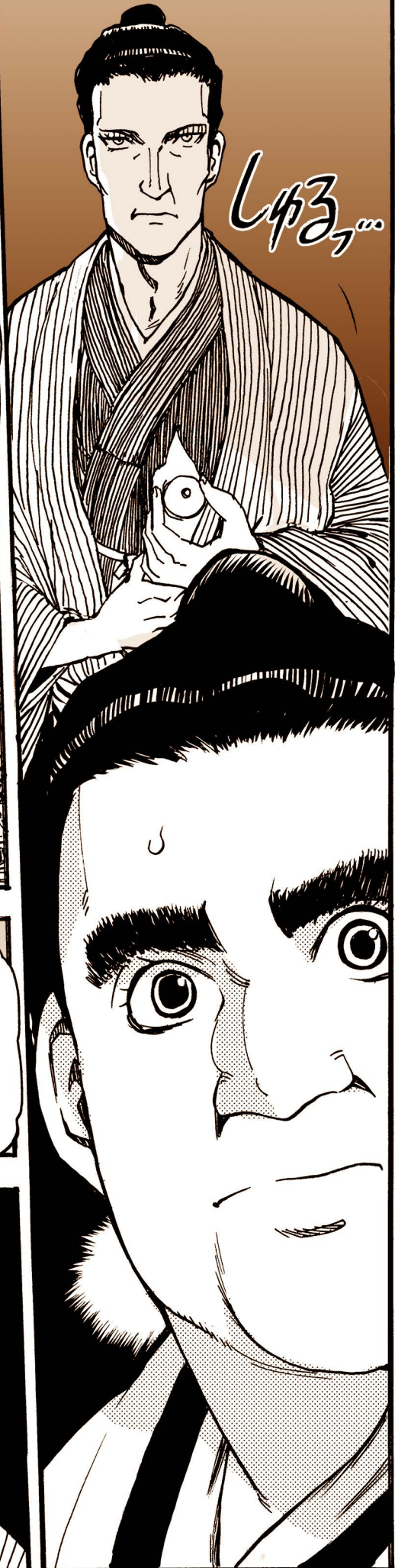
Right, but Kyoto remains a dangerous place...



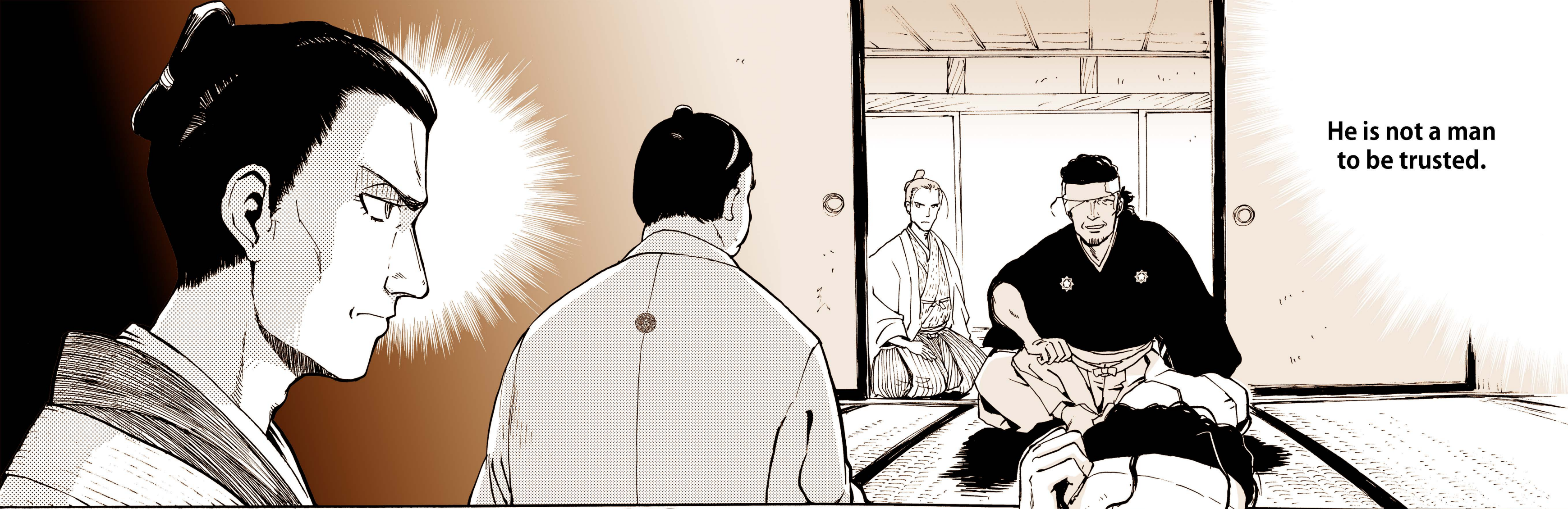
What do you intend to do, dear sir!?



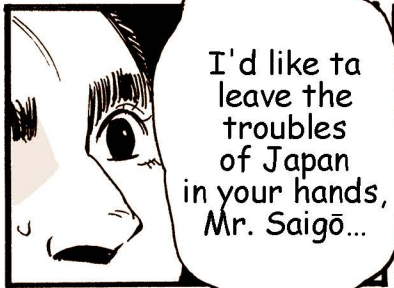
Ryōma Sakamoto...



しやう...



He is not a man to be trusted.



I'd like to leave the troubles of Japan in your hands, Mr. Saigō...



For I've found one heck of a playground for myself.



What?



You, Sakamoto...

Do not belong in 'Japan any longer!

You see...

Whoever vanquishes the Shogunate will rule supreme over Japan!



And Satsuma must achieve this! And thus...



I'll 'ave a go at somethin' I've always wanted to do!

Well, I figure...

He'll trick, trap, and flatter people without hesitation when necessary.



No revolution can come about without blood being spilt!



That's fool's speak!

While Sakamoto insists on a peaceful resolution with the Tokugawa Shogunate...

This country won't have a future unless the former rulers of Edo are put down with brute force!

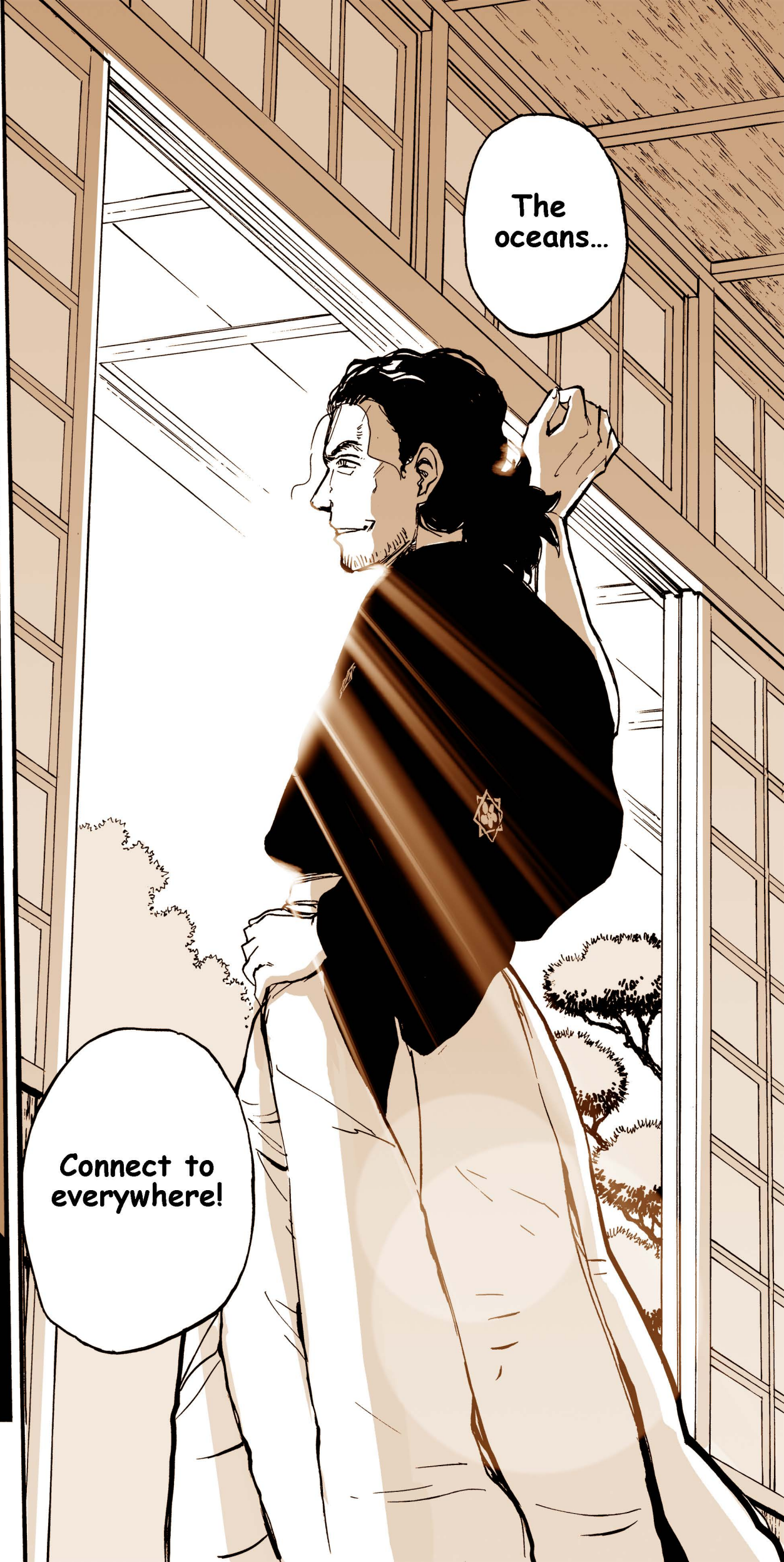




**So that's  
your plan!**



**Connect to  
everywhere!**



**The  
oceans...**

So you listen to me!

The only way you can cast aside this match and stay alive...

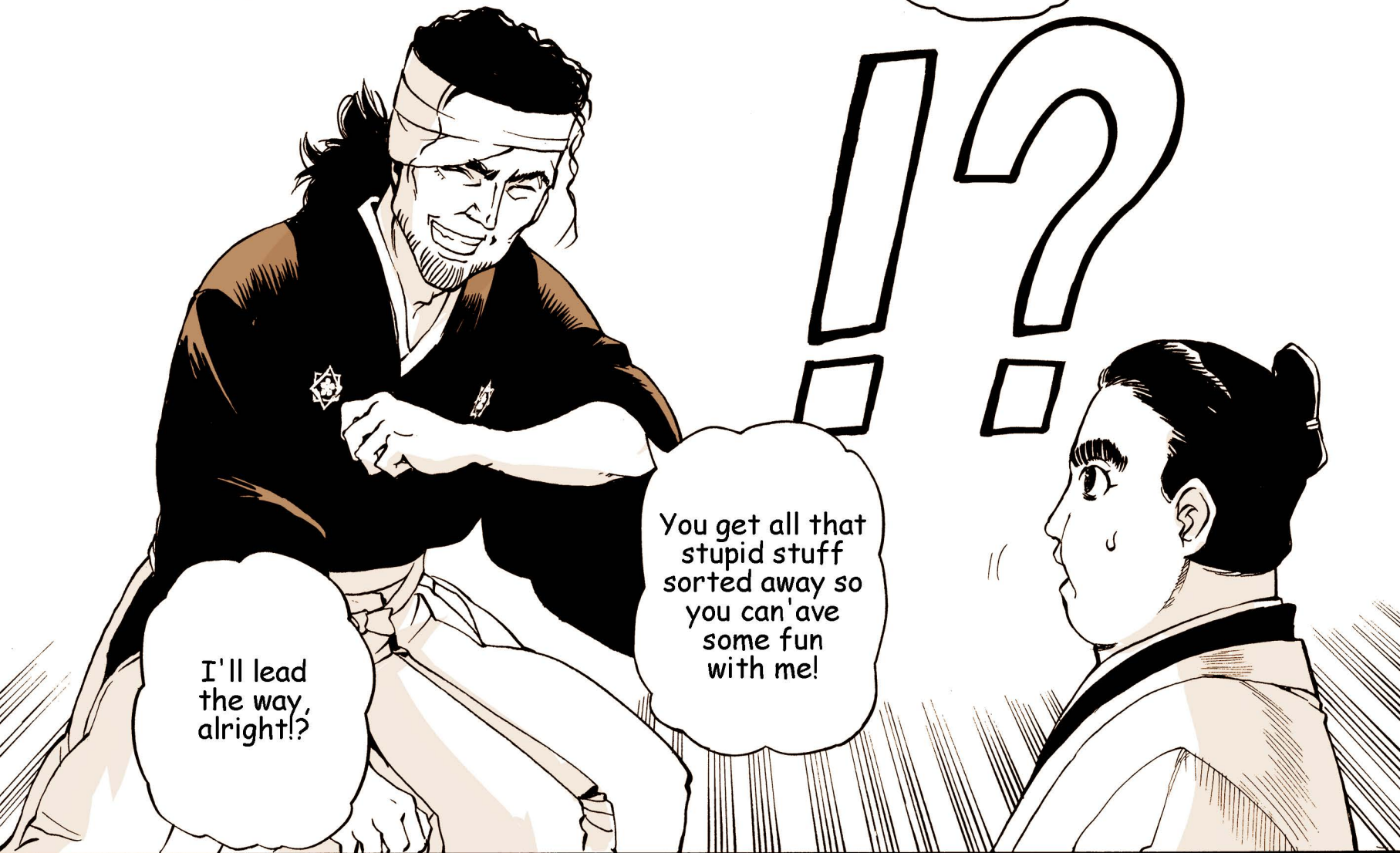


That'd be the only path left your.

Exile to overseas.

The oceans connect this nation to everywhere. I'll go ahead an' take a look around...

This nation isn't separated by the seas from other nations...



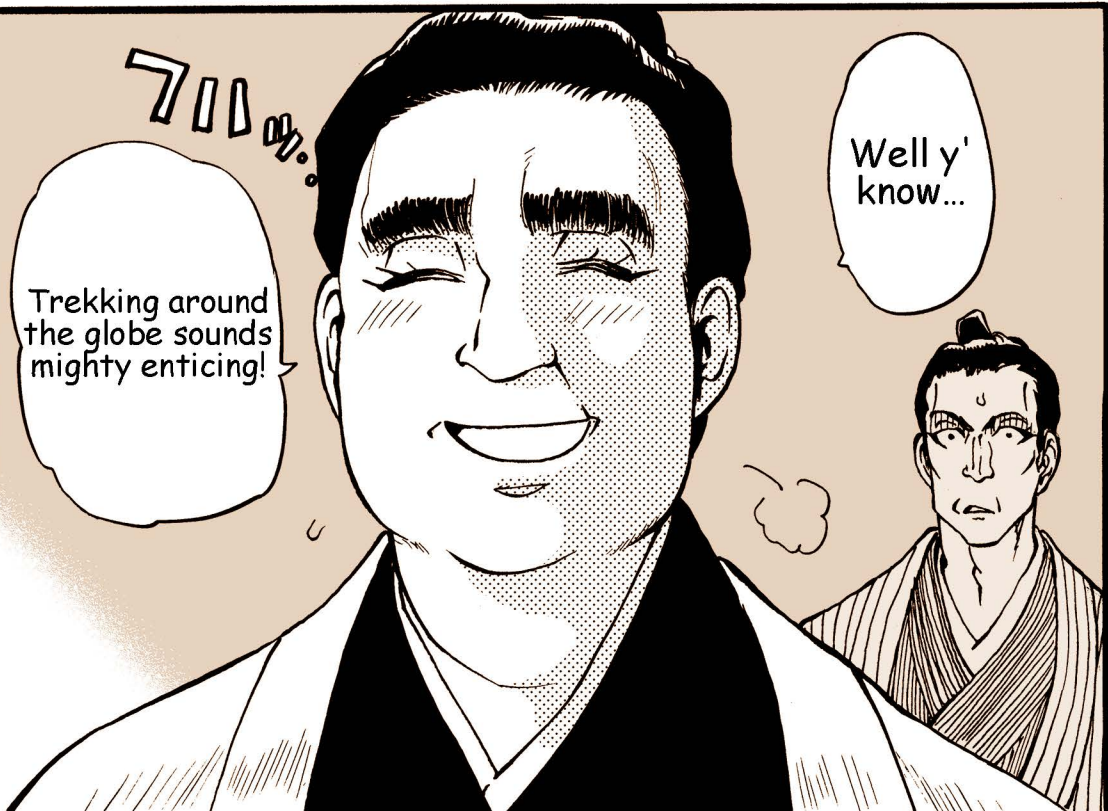
I'll lead the way, alright!?

You get all that stupid stuff sorted away so you can've some fun with me!

This offer Sakamoto made to Saigō would later end up saving his life.

Trekking around the globe sounds mighty enticing!

Well y' know...

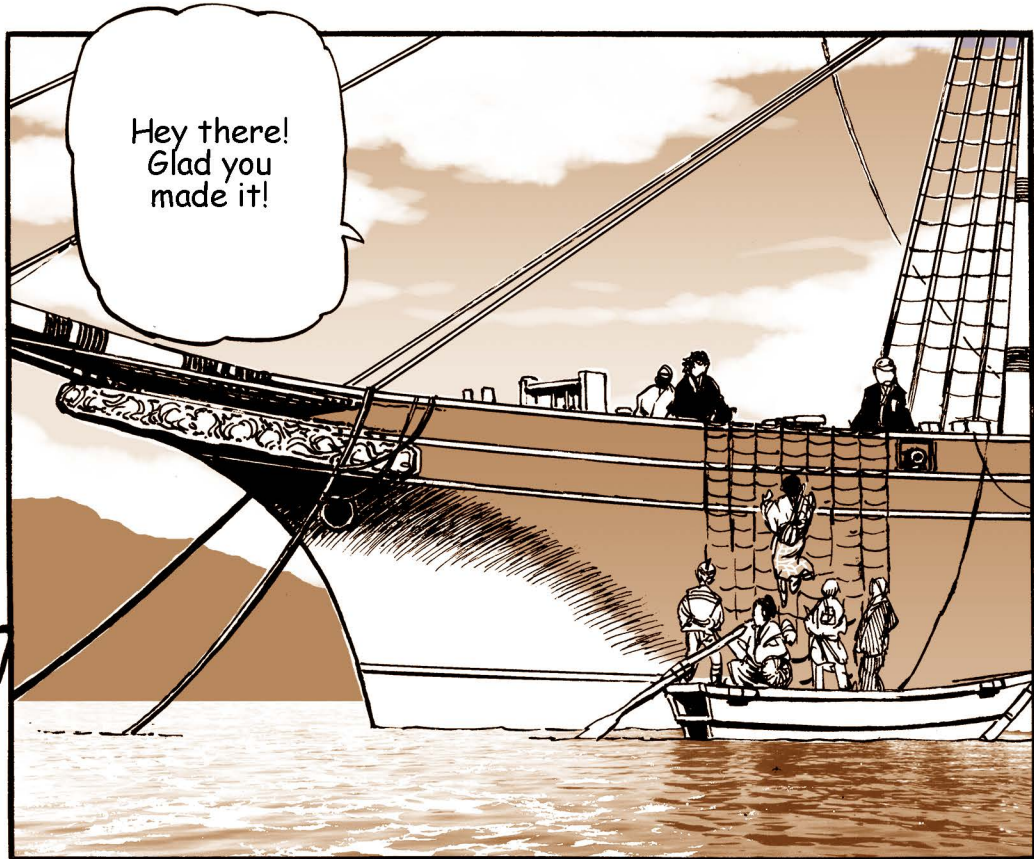
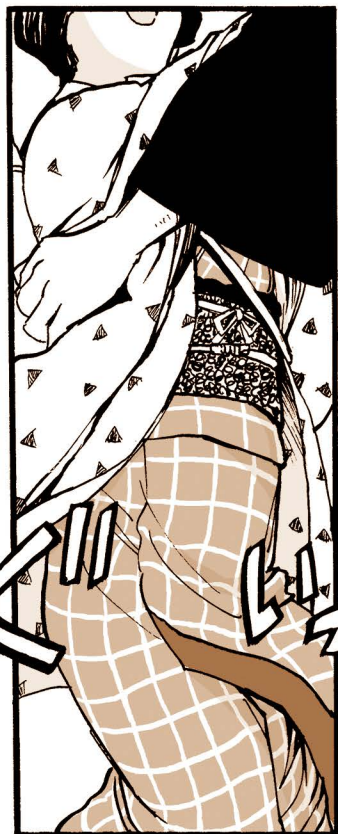
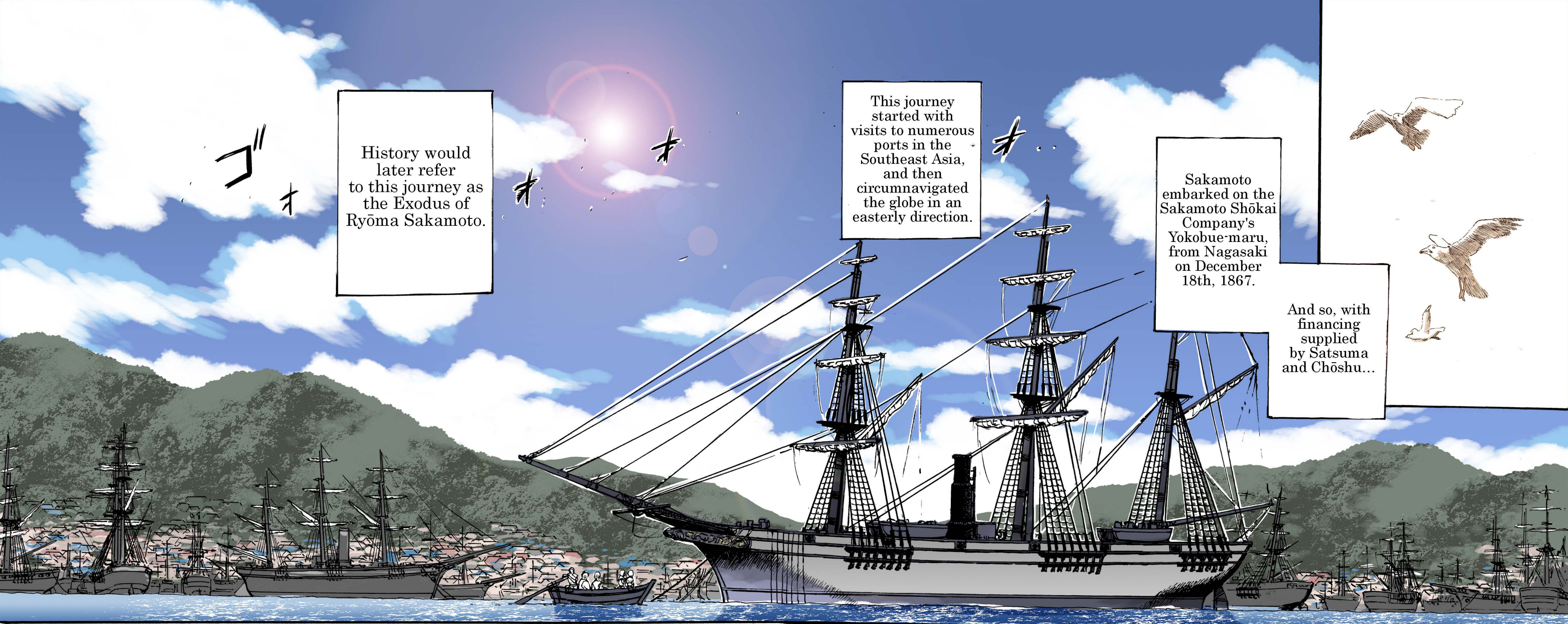


History would later refer to this journey as the Exodus of Ryōma Sakamoto.

This journey started with visits to numerous ports in the Southeast Asia, and then circumnavigated the globe in an easterly direction.

Sakamoto embarked on the Sakamoto Shōkai Company's Yokobue-maru, from Nagasaki on December 18th, 1867.

And so, with financing supplied by Satsuma and Chōshū...

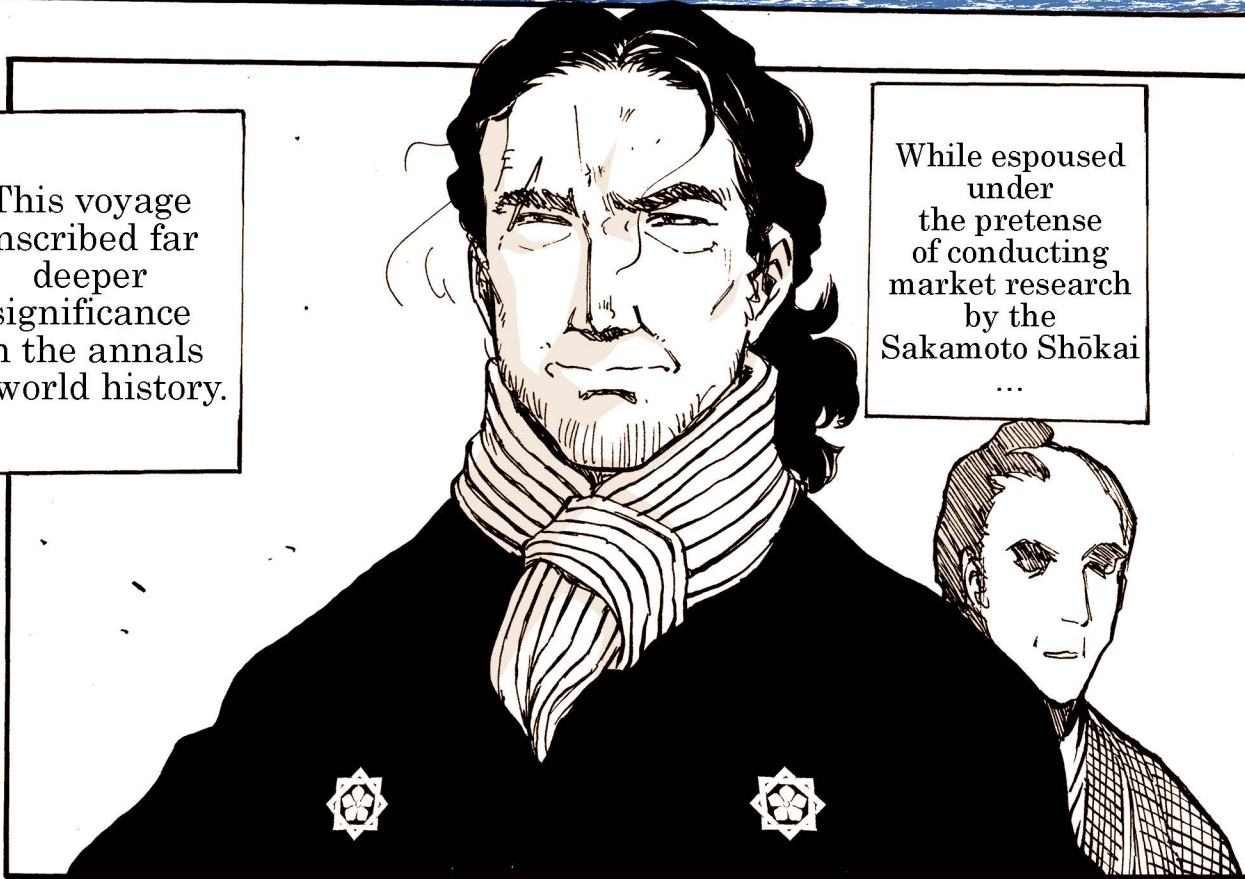


Hey there! Glad you made it!



Hey-a! There she is!

This voyage inscribed far deeper significance in the annals of world history.



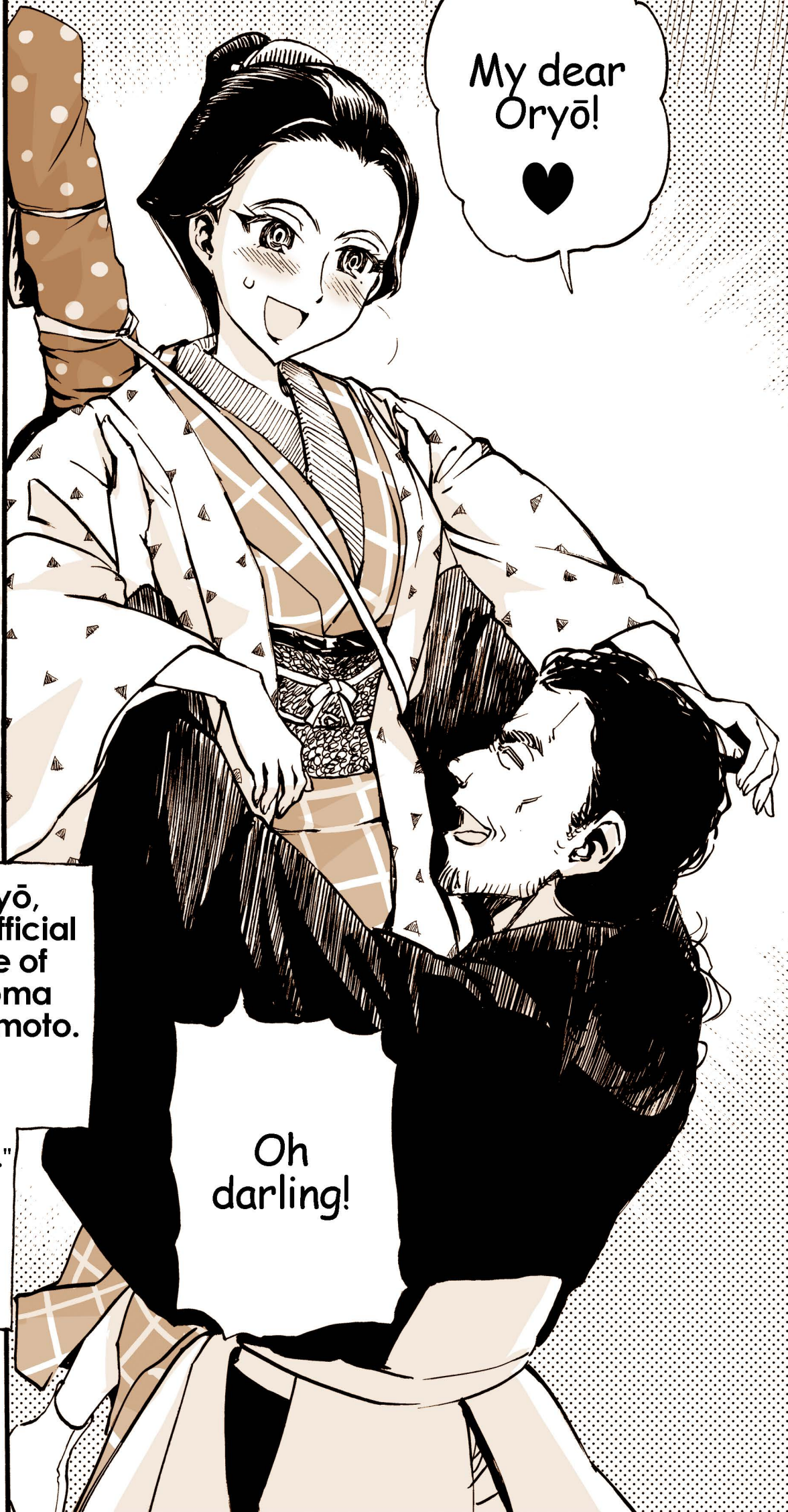
While espoused under the pretense of conducting market research by the Sakamoto Shōkai ...



I am so happy  
you weren't  
lost from us...!

Oryō,  
the official  
wife of  
Ryōma  
Sakamoto.

An accomplished  
gekkin player and  
celebrated by  
Sakamoto as being  
"an interesting woman."  
This dashing lady  
would later play an  
important part in the  
creation of the  
Nadeshiko Units  
of the Kaientai.



My dear  
Oryō!



Oh  
darling!

We're all headin' overseas. Gotta get used to all this fancy talk.

I dare say... That's how wives call their husbands in the West, I gather.

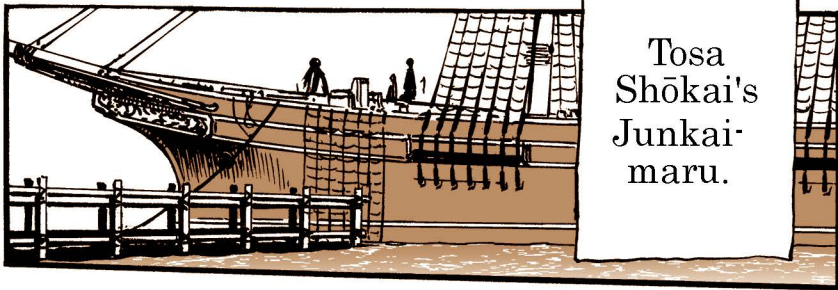
Dar-li-ng?

Something bold?

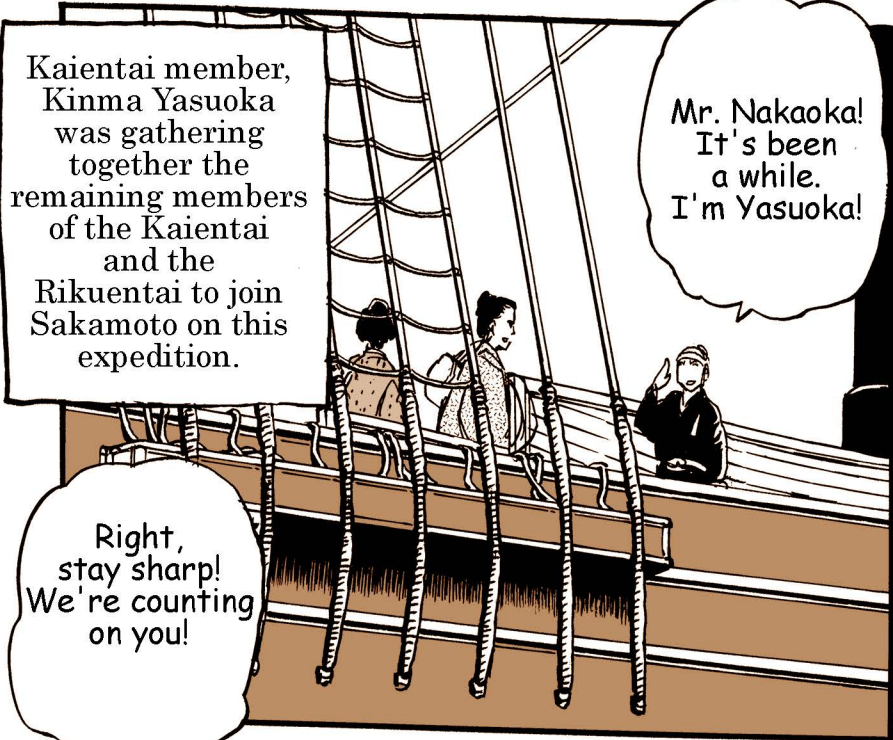
I know! Oryō, play a tune on your gekkin! This call for something bold!

That's right! We're about to set sail, my dear!

Certainly, my darling!



Tosa  
Shōkai's  
Junkai-  
maru.



Kaientai member,  
Kinma Yasuoka  
was gathering  
together the  
remaining members  
of the Kaientai  
and the  
Rikuentai to join  
Sakamoto on this  
expedition.

Mr. Nakaoka!  
It's been  
a while.  
I'm Yasuoka!

Right,  
stay sharp!  
We're counting  
on you!

At same  
moment  
in Kobe.

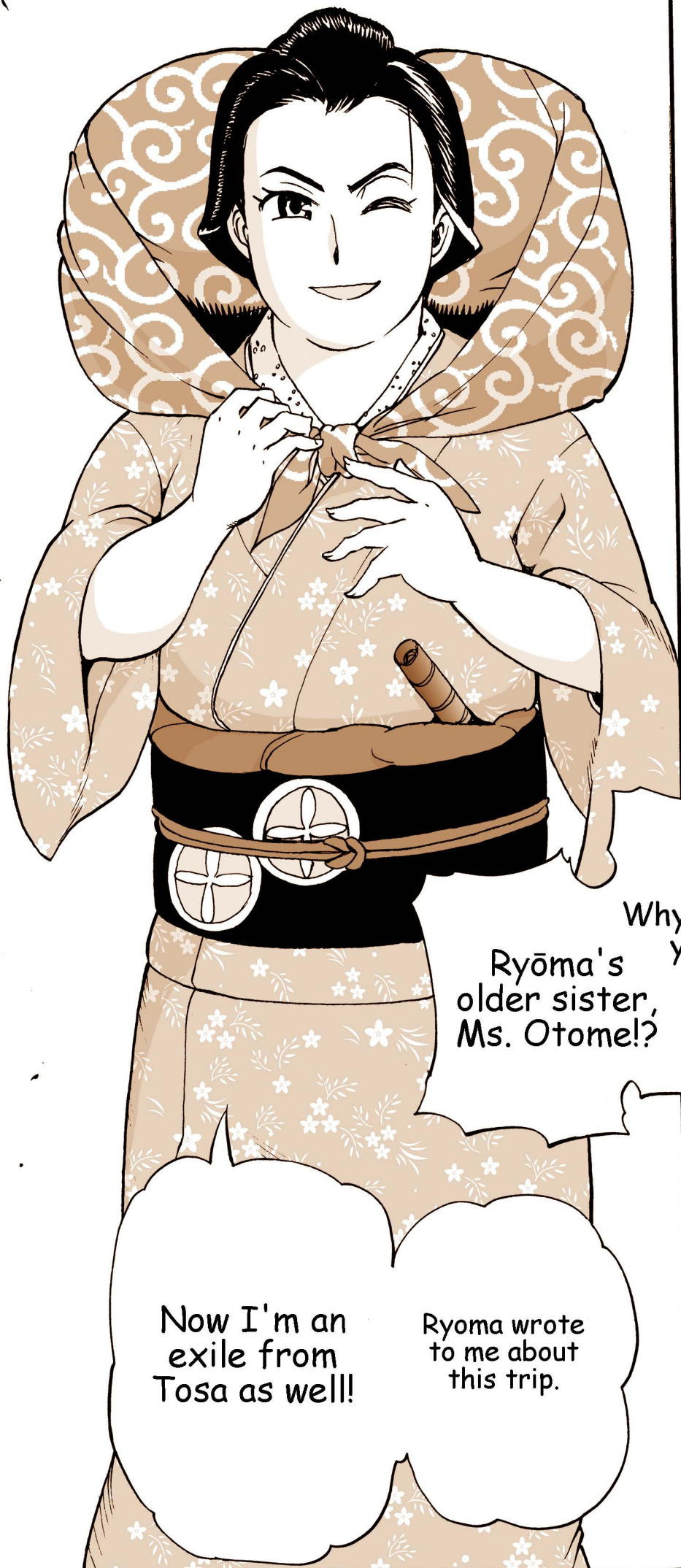


Hey there,  
Shintaro!

Shintaro's wife,  
Kane

Rikuentai  
Commander  
Shintaro Nakaoka

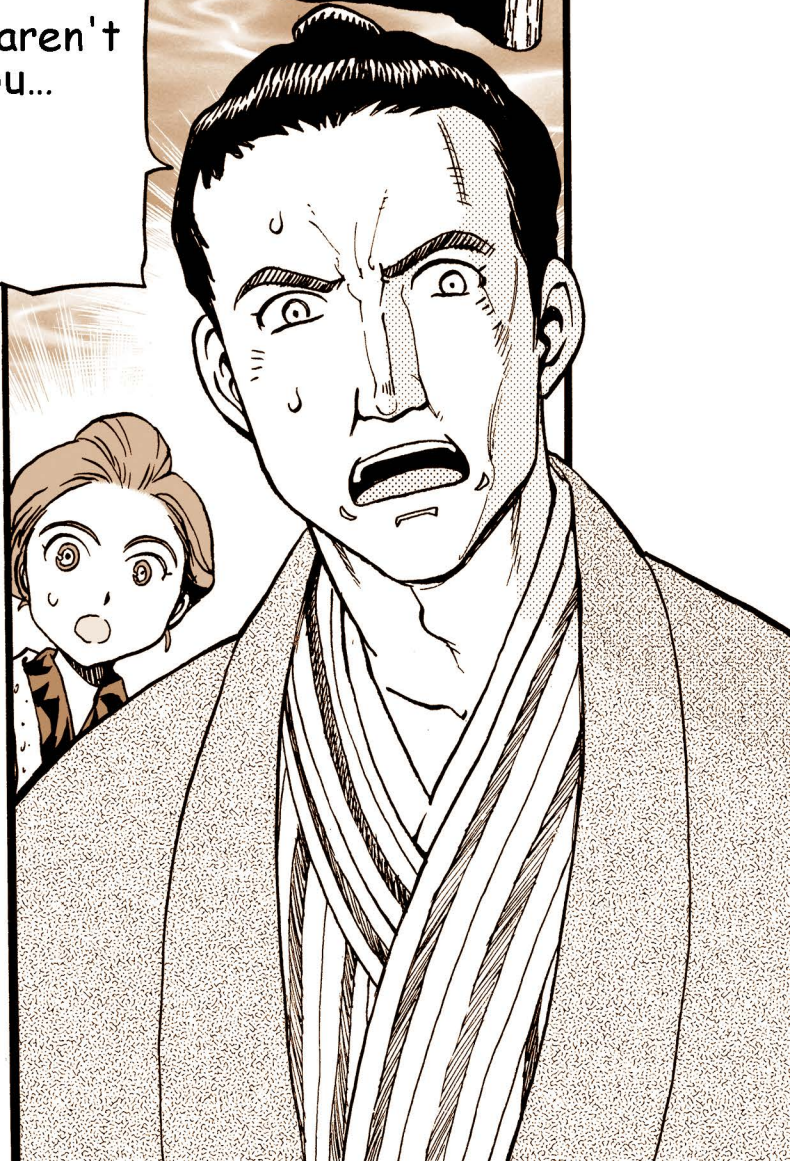
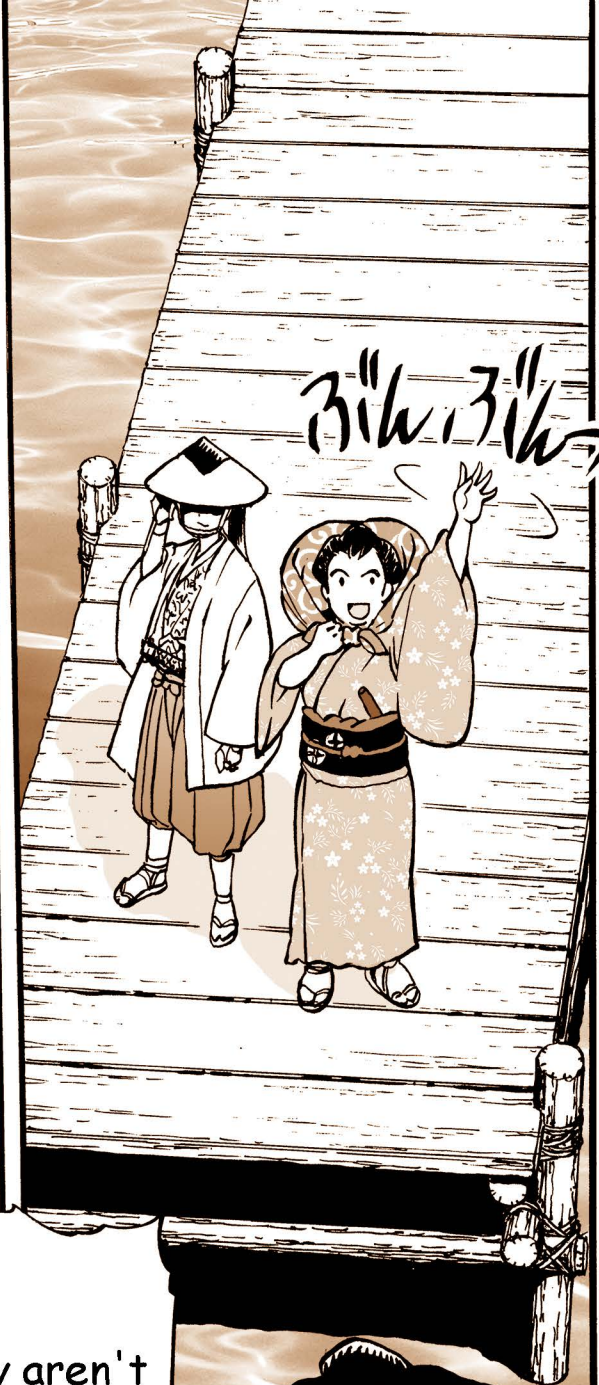




Why aren't you...  
Ryōma's older sister, Ms. Otome!?

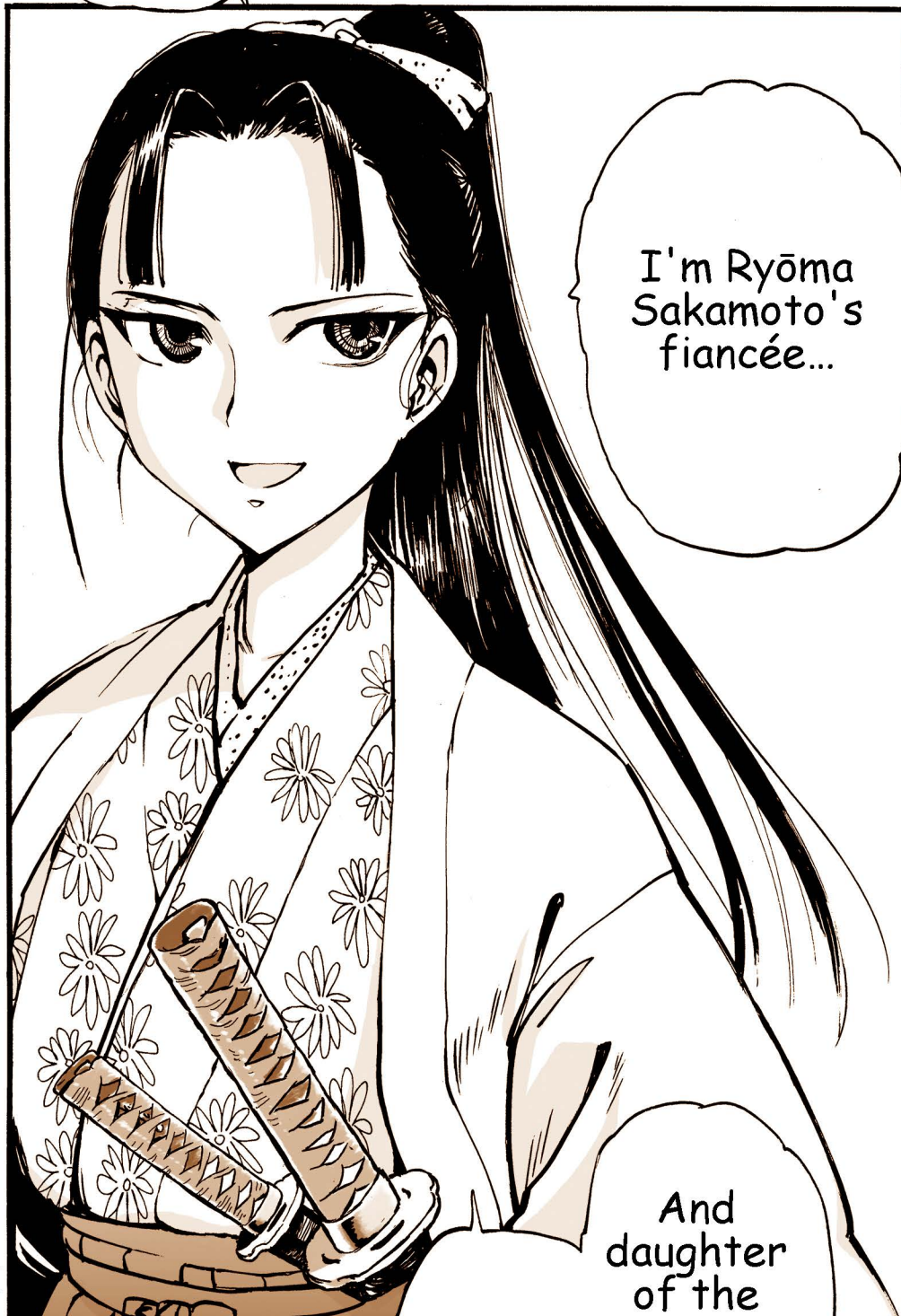
Now I'm an exile from Tosa as well!

Ryoma wrote to me about this trip.





It's been a while, Mr. Nakaoka.



I'm Ryōma Sakamoto's fiancée...

And daughter of the Chiba Dōjo, Sanako!

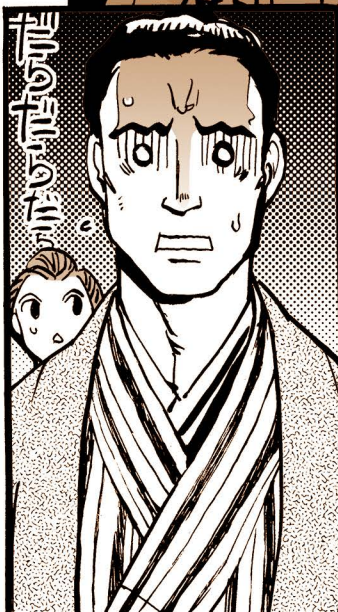
I'm so glad you're safe!



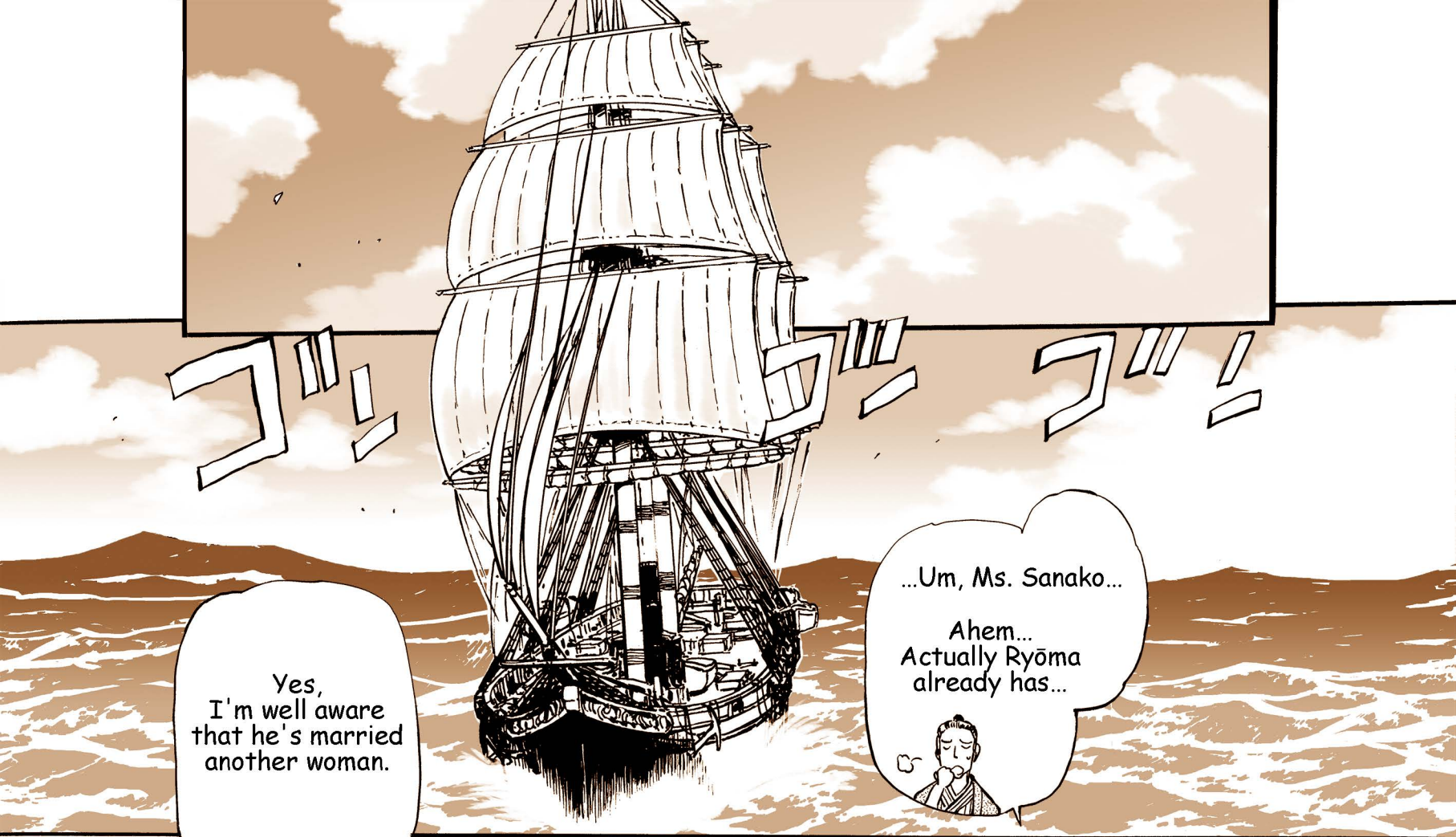
Well, on the way here, I met someone very special who decided to accompany me!

We hit it off very nicely, you see.

COLD SWEAT DRIBBLE DRIBBLE







Yes,  
I'm well aware  
that he's married  
another woman.

...Um, Ms. Sanako...

Ahem...  
Actually Ryōma  
already has...

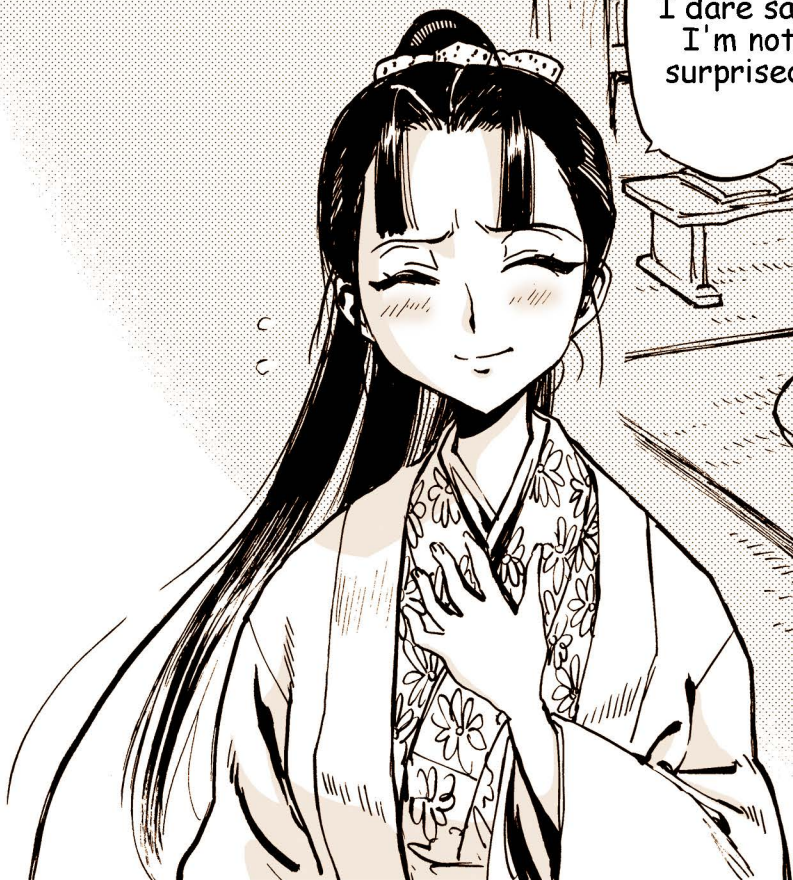


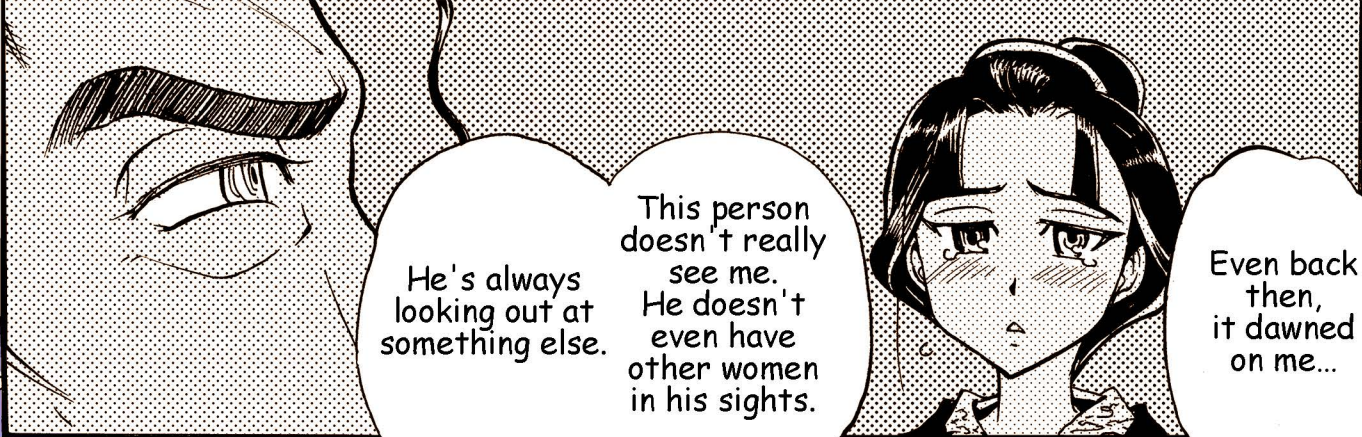
Mr. Sakamoto  
is wed to  
Ms. Oryō,  
isn't he?  
I understand  
she's a  
beautiful  
woman.



Pheheh...  
Oh,  
I dare say,  
I'm not  
surprised.

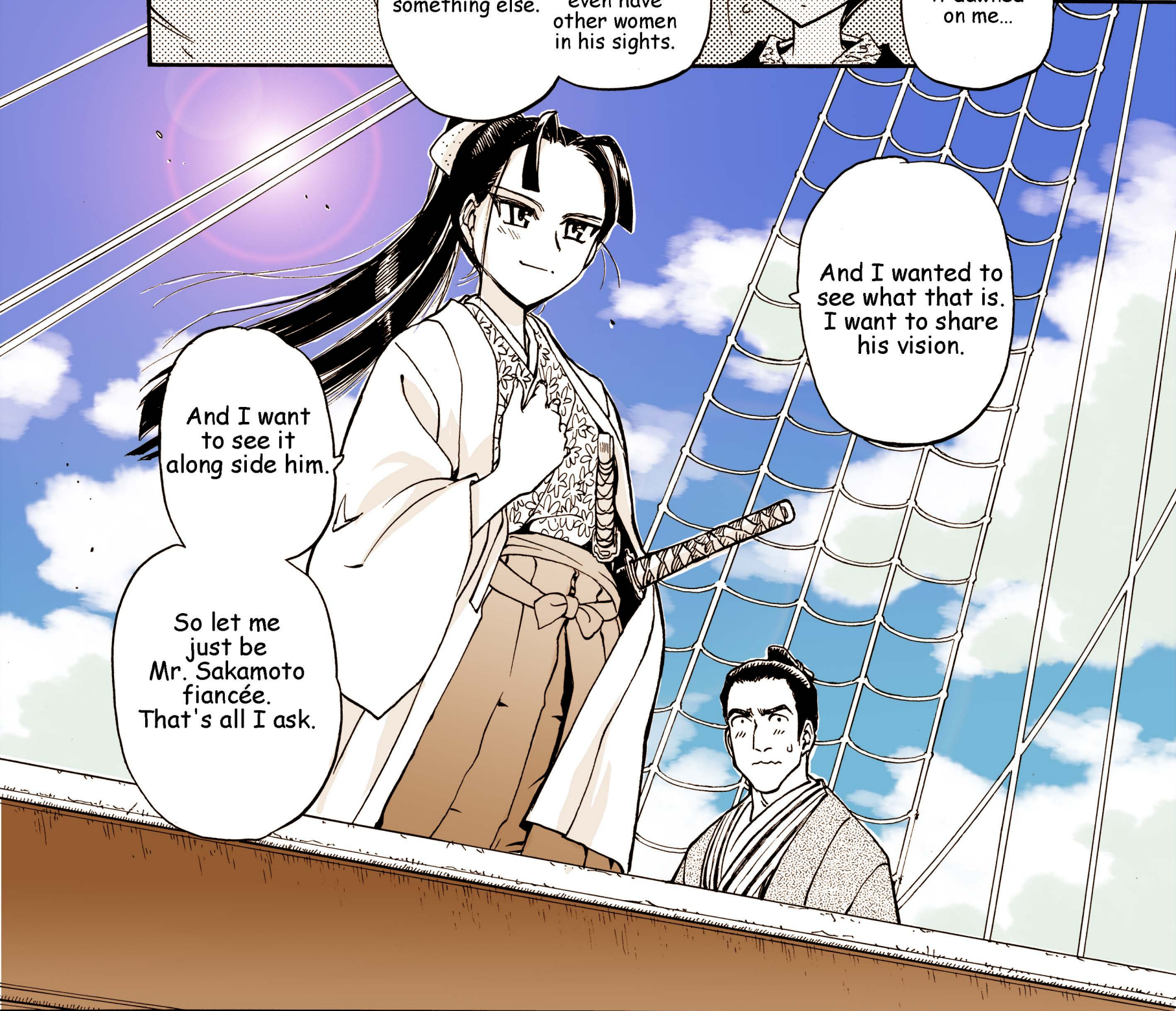
"Ms. Sanako...  
Please take this  
and think of it as me..."





He's always looking out at something else.  
This person doesn't really see me. He doesn't even have other women in his sights.

Even back then, it dawned on me...

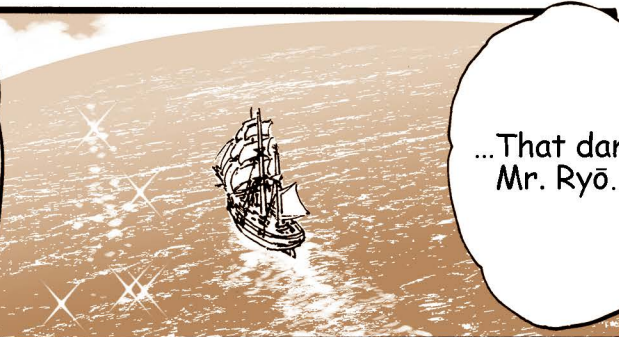


And I want to see it along side him.

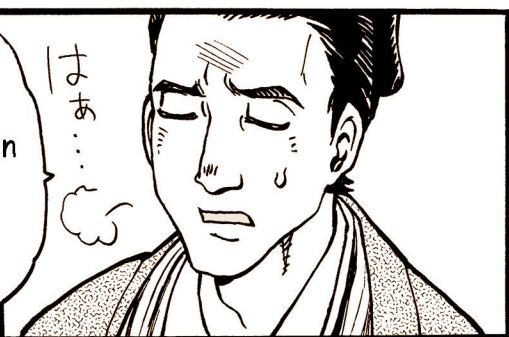
And I wanted to see what that is. I want to share his vision.

So let me just be Mr. Sakamoto fiancée. That's all I ask.

How many hearts is that man going to break!?



...That damn Mr. Ryō...



Nevertheless political tension between the new government dominated by Satsuma and Chôshu versus the former Tokugawa Shogunate elements grew more volatile.

Bold proclamations marked the resumption of imperial rule on January 3rd, 1868.

On January 15th, Ryôma Sakamoto's convoy set sail from Japan.

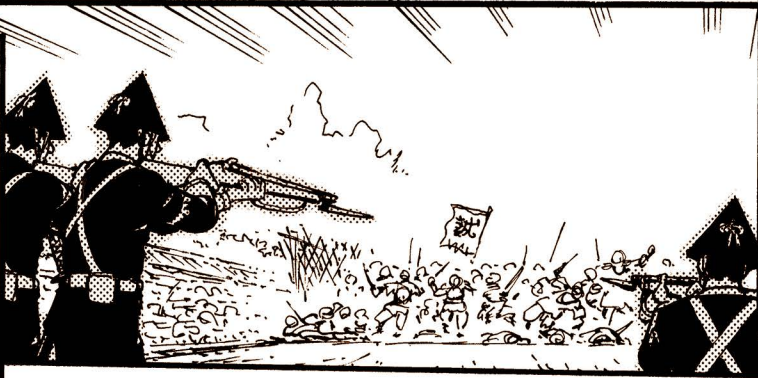
We'll first head to Shanghai, then to Singapore to conduct market research regarding tradable goods in Southeast Asia, and then head to...

Hawaii...

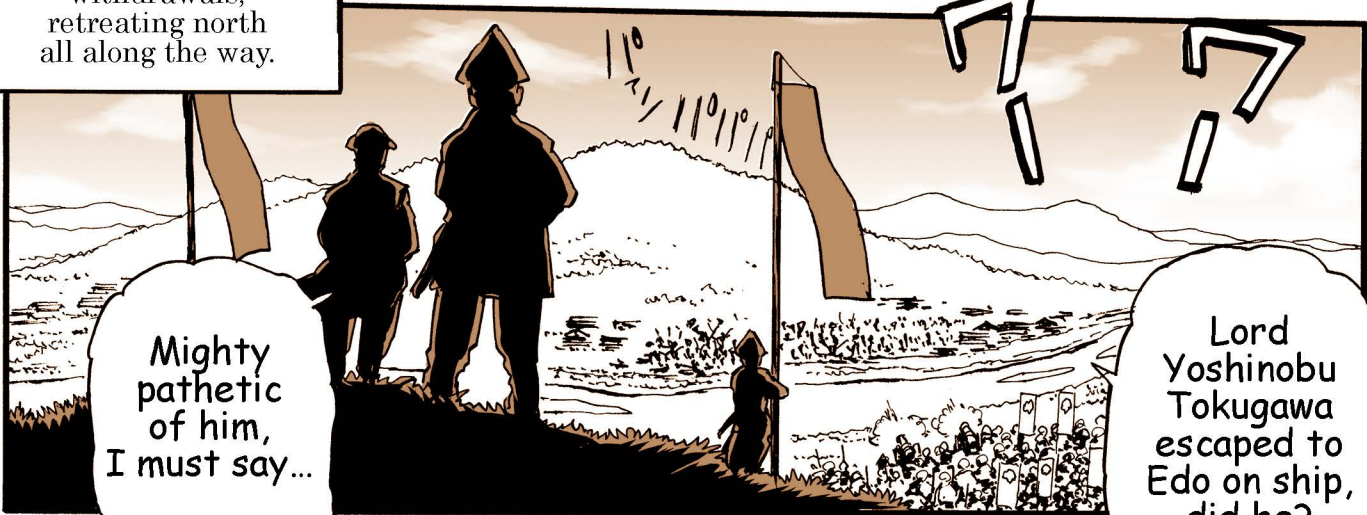


And then go from there to America!

Having become an enemy of the imperial throne, the Tokugawa Shogunate forces lost legitimacy. Following the flight of their supreme commander, Yoshinobu Tokugawa, to Edo Castle, their forces began a series of fighting withdrawals, retreating north all along the way.

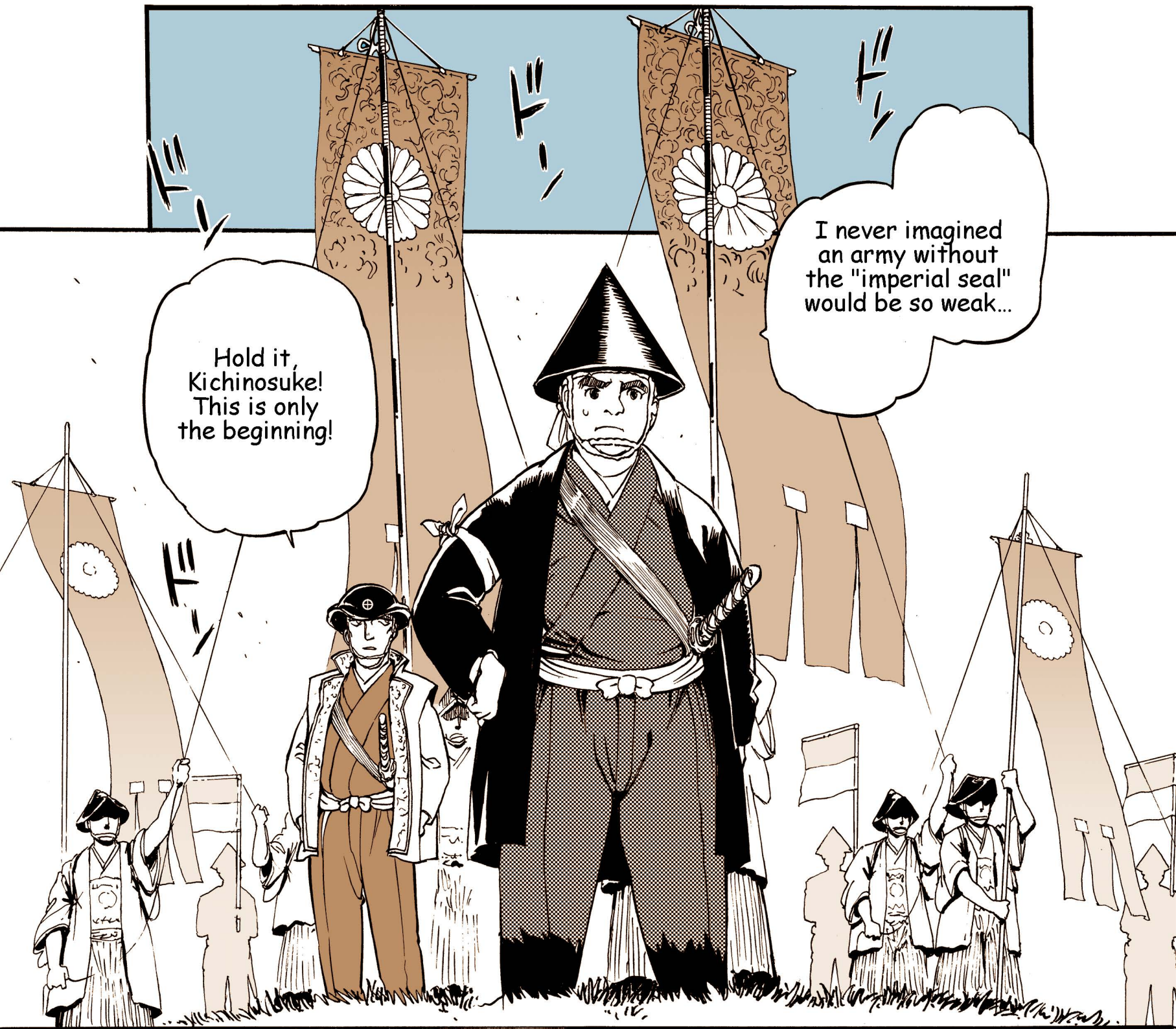


On January 27th, the Battle of Toba-Fushimi erupts.



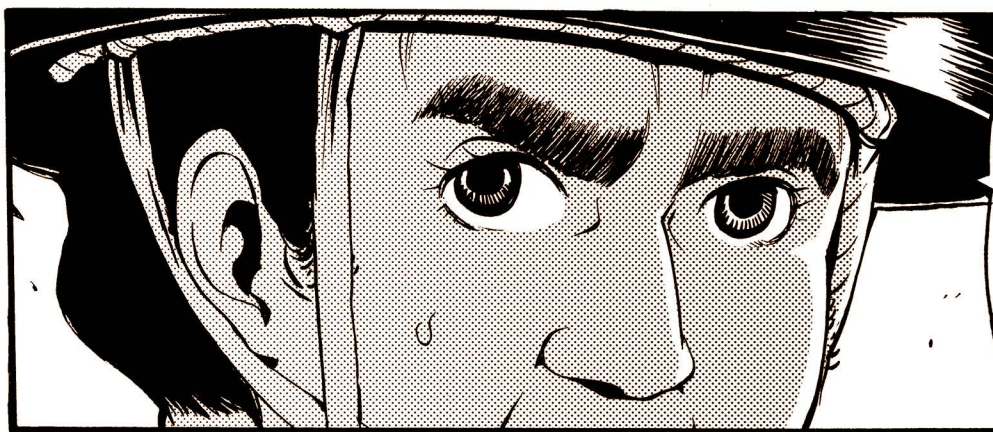
Mighty pathetic of him, I must say...

Lord Yoshinobu Tokugawa escaped to Edo on ship, did he?



Hold it,  
Kichinosuke!  
This is only  
the beginning!

I never imagined  
an army without  
the "imperial seal"  
would be so weak...



I kwon,  
Mr. Ichizō.  
Things'll get  
mighty messy  
from here on in...!

Many men and women that would later have profound impact on course of world events were aboard the ships in this convoy.



January 25th, the Junkai-maru joins Sakamoto's convoy at Shanghai.

And furthermore, Oryō, Sanako, and Otome...

Three dashing ladies that surrounded Ryōma...

Would lay the foundation of a naval force unprecedented in history-- a female dominated naval force-- the Kaientai.

