

NINJAS VS KNIGHTS
ISSUE #1

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PAGE 1

PANEL 1

EXT. POOR WORKING CLASS VILLAGE IN ENGLAND - DEAD OF NIGHT

Homes are damaged and small barns are tightly packed together to show a busy and dense population, even if it's late and no one is out. From one of the homes, we hear the middle of a story being told by one of the villagers to his kids.

STORYTELLING VILLAGER(OS)

...and the dragon ate five more of the king's best men in one bite!

PANEL 2

INT. SHACK/HOME - NIGHT

The shack is run down and shows that this is a poor family. They also have farming tools around the home. Things like rakes and sickles. We see the father telling the story to his frightened, huddling kids and comforting wife. He is an animated storyteller, gesturing a set of monstrous jaws with his hands.

STORYTELLING VILLAGER

The sole surviving knight stared at his own reflection in the fangs of the giant beast...

PANEL 3

The father gets more intense with his story as he raises his arms to mimic a sword.

STORYTELLING VILLAGER (CONT'D)

He raised his sword and rushed towards...

PANEL 4

The father's story is cut off by a loud banging at the door.
(BANG, BANG, BANG)
Everyone jumps back a little in fear, even the parents.

PANEL 5

The adults cautiously answer the door to a legion of knights, troops and other nervous village men. They've come to recruit more men to attack a dragon that was spotted nearby.

STORYTELLING VILLAGER (CONT'D)

Yes?

RANDOM TROOPER

We've cornered the beast that's been ravaging the village.

PANEL 6

We get a reaction shot of the kids, secretly listening to the commotion at the door. Suddenly, their eyes are filled with terror as their father's story comes to life.

RANDOM TROOPER (CONT'D)

We need all able bodied men to...

WIFE OF STORYTELLING VILLAGER

Don't go, there are enough soldiers out there to deal with...

PANEL 7

The Trooper at the door snaps at the wife.

RANDOM TROOPER

It wasn't a request!

PANEL 8

EXT. Poor working class village in England - NIGHT

Similar to the first panel but with the large assembly of knights, troops and villagers slumping off into the night with their new "recruit". The family stands at the door of their shack, sad and missing their patriarch.

PAGE 2

PANEL 1

EXT. JAPANESE VILLAGE - DAY

The village is alive with a huge crowd of people and decorations for a festival. It's the exact opposite of the scene we just left. We hear a Japanese father telling his kids a story.

(meanwhile, in Japan)

JAPANESE FATHER(OS)

The festival honors the return of
the great spirits to our land.

PANEL 2

We cut in closer to the family to find an equally animated father as the last. His kids are also enthralled in his story as he throws his arms into the air.

JAPANESE FATHER

And their arrival marks the
beginning of Spring...

PANEL 3

Reaction shot of the super happy kids.

JAPANESE FATHER (CONT'D)

And the bounty of the year's
harvest...

PANEL 4

The father excitedly points to the sky as he turns his children toward the excitement.

JAPANESE FATHER (CONT'D)

Look! There they are now!

PANEL 5

We look up at the sky where close to a dozen dragons, glide majestically overhead, swooshing and whipping up all the decorations. The villagers are all excited and cheering.

PANEL 6

One of the kids isn't as excited as he asks his father

JAPANESE KID

That's it?

The father answers hesitantly.

JAPANESE FATHER

Maybe...they came in different groups this year?

PANEL 7

The father and son look up into the empty sky. the wind is dying down as the decorations settle back into their proper places. The father is looking up in worry while the son looks up with disappointment.

PAGE 3

PANEL 1

EXT. japanese rice farm - day
(the next day, at a nearby farm)

Several workers are preparing the field. Some are bent over in the mud, some are raking, some are spreading rice and a couple supervisors look over the workers. Sweeping Japanese mountains fill the landscape as a lone horse rider approaches the farm.

PANEL 2

Medium close up on the horse rider, who is a royal messenger. He asks a worker for the owner of the farm. The worker gestures.

ROYAL MESSENGER
I'm looking for the owner.

PANEL 3

Our first establishing shot of the two oldest Maeda brothers, Toshi and Kei, as they notice the messenger. Toshi looks up in frustration as Kei points out that someone is looking for him.

KEI
Brother, someone is looking to
speak with you.

PANEL 4

Toshi and Kei meet with the messenger.

TOSHI
I'm the owner of these fields. How
can I help you?

PANEL 5

Still mounted, the messenger answers.

ROYAL MESSENGER
His Highness has requested an
audience with the Maeda brothers.

PANEL 6

Toshi and Kei give each other a side eyed glance of confusion and curiosity.

PANEL 7

Same shot as panel 6. The two brothers slightly bow to the messenger and answer.

TOSHI
Of course.

PANEL 8

The messenger rides off quickly as he kicks up a little dust, leaving the brothers to hear his last words.

ROYAL MESSENGER

Excellent. His Highness awaits your arrival.

PAGE 4

PANEL 1

EXT. JAPANESE MOUNTAINS - DAY

The Maeda brothers are en route to the palace. They have a large caravan of horse drawn wagons, workers and large gifts for the emperor. The focus of the panel should be on the main wagon, where we see a couple more of the Maeda brothers, Daisuke and Kazuo, steering the wagon.

KAZUO

I wonder what his Highness wants with us.

DAISUKE

Whatever it is, remember to remain calm in front of his excellence.

PANEL 2

Establishing shot of the palace as the caravan arrives after a long journey. The large palace sits atop a hill with lush greenery all around. There is a long fence and trees along the perimeter of the palace.

(AFTER A LONG JOURNEY)

PANEL 3

Medium shot of the palace steps, where two advisors await the Maedas' arrival. One is the royal messenger and the other is Takako, both have an anxious look on their faces. Behind them are some more servants and the large palace gates, which are closed.

ROYAL MESSENGER

They have arrived!

TAKAKO

And you are certain, they hold the key to our survival?

ROYAL MESSENGER

If not, then we are all doomed.

PANEL 4

The royal messenger throws his arms into the air in a welcoming manner as the caravan begins to unpack and unload.

ROYAL MESSENGER (CONT'D)
Welcome, Maeda clan, welcome!

PANEL 5

The brothers and royal advisors bow to each other while the Maeda servants unload large bundles from the caravan.

TOSHI
My brothers and I are honored to be called before his Highness. We come bearing gifts.

ROYAL MESSENGER
It is we who are honored. And may your stay be rewarding for all parties.

PANEL 6

The royal messenger ushers the Maedas towards a gate in the fence.

ROYAL MESSENGER (CONT'D)
His Highness awaits you in the garden. Your servants will be taken care of while we continue.

PANEL 7

Close up on the five Maeda brothers. Toshi gives another side eyed, disapproving look to his second in command brother, Kei. Daisuke is calm poker faced while the two youngest brothers look at the palace in awe.

PANEL 8

The Maedas and advisors enter the gates, disappearing into the large amount of shrubbery beyond the fence.

PAGE 5

PANEL 1

EXT. ROYAL GARDENS - DAY

The Maedas and the two advisors stroll through the lush garden. It's gorgeously decorated with small ponds, bonsai, mini bridges, etc.

ROYAL MESSENGER

His Highness will be pleased that all five of you made the journey.

TOSHI

And why have we been summoned?

ROYAL MESSENGER

All in due time, please. His Highness is right this way.

PANEL 2

From the POV of the Maedas, we see the emperor standing in the middle of the garden. Behind him, a little further away, is a large, oversized barn. Without gesturing, he calls out to the brothers.

JAPANESE EMPEROR

Welcome Maeda clan. I hope your journey was short and uneventful?

KAZUO

His Highness!

PANEL 3

The group are bowing in front of the emperor now, who hasn't moved from in front of the barn. He continues with apparent small talk.

JAPANESE EMPEROR

How did you enjoy this year's Spring festival?

PANEL 4

Same shot, the brothers are still bowing as Toshi looks up in frustration, slightly raising his voice.

TOSHI

Why have we been summoned?

PANEL 5

Close up on the emperor, who is unfazed by the disobedience of Toshi.

JAPANESE EMPEROR
...How was the festival?

PANEL 6

Similar shot to panels 4 and 5, the youngest two brothers glance at each other in confusion while they all start to get up from their bow. Toshi has a frustrated look on his face, while Kei looks nervous and Daisuke remains poker faced.

JAPANESE EMPEROR (CONT'D)
...The festival?

PANEL 7

Close up on Daisuke, who breaks rank to answer the question with a stern / somber look on his face. He knows where the emperor's line of questioning is going and he doesn't like it.

DAISUKE
It...seemed shorter than usual.

PANEL 8

POV of the emperor looking at the group in front of him. They all turn their attention to Daisuke. Some are sad / somber, realizing where the conversation is going.

JAPANESE EMPEROR
That is correct. It was shorter because there were less dragons this year.

PAGE 6

Overall, the first three panels are the emperor giving a speech while walking with the group from the center of the garden to the barn. You can draw variations of the same panel with them getting closer and closer to the barn. Like a medium shot, followed by a long shot, etc.

PANEL 1

The emperor turns and leads the entire group of 7 towards the barn, which is still a little further away.

JAPANESE EMPEROR (CONT'D)
There have been less and less dragons visiting our lands each year.

PANEL 2

JAPANESE EMPEROR

Which also means less harvest, or worse, no rain and maybe even death for the Japanese people.

PANEL 3

JAPANESE EMPEROR (CONT'D)

I have called upon the Maeda clan to help find what is causing the death of our great spirits and what we can do to stop and reverse it.

PANEL 4

Reaction shot of the brothers. They are all shocked at what is being asked of them.

JAPANESE EMPEROR (CONT'D)

Don't look so surprised. Your family has served the Japanese people, from the shadows, for generations. Now, is no different.

PANEL 5

Similar to last panel, Toshi bows.

TOSHI

With all due respect, I am needed at home for the beginning of the season, the most important time.

PANEL 6

Toshi begins to walk away from the group. The royal messenger calls out to him.

ROYAL MESSENGER

You may not have a harvest to return home to!

PANEL 7

Toshi stops but doesn't look back. All eyes are on Toshi, except for the emperor, who turns towards the barn as he calls out to Toshi.

JAPANESE EMPEROR

Please, I insist you see one more thing before you go.

PAGE 7

PANEL 1

POV from inside the darkened barn looking at the emperor, who opens the door with the group standing behind him, except for Toshi.

JAPANESE EMPEROR

Our spirits are dying. Our way of
life is dying. The people of these
lands need your help.

PANEL 2

Medium close up reaction shot of the Maeda brothers (minus Toshi) and advisors. Takako is almost in tears, Daisuke and Kazuo are in extreme shock with their eyes wide and the rest of the group falls somewhere between that and Takako's reaction. There is a collective gasp from the group, maybe one of them covering their mouth with their hand. Kei is looking back for his brother.

KEI

Toshi!

PANEL 3

POV of the group, looking at the source of their shock, the emperor stands, petting a large Asian style dragon that is extremely hurt and lying on the floor of the barn. It looks up at the group, somewhat afraid and showing pain. There are scars and bruises on the dragon.

JAPANESE EMPEROR

We have been keeping a record of
the great spirits, for generations.
Their numbers are shrinking to the
point that they might be completely
gone within three years.

PANEL 4

Similar shot to panel 2, Toshi rejoins the group with a frustrated look on his face as he looks into the barn.

JAPANESE EMPEROR (CONT'D)(OS)

No matter what you feel about the
great spirits ability to bring us
food and fortune, they also keep
boundaries secure between warlords
and savages.

(MORE)

JAPANESE EMPEROR(OS) (CONT'D)
Without them, our lands would fall
to never ending wars.

PANEL 5

Medium shot of Toshi who is frustrated, raising his voice with the emperor.

TOSHI
What could we even do to help?

PANEL 6

Medium shot of the emperor, standing in front of the dragon.

JAPANESE EMPEROR
I want you to follow the great
spirits back to wherever they come
from, find what is killing them,
stop and reverse it.

PANEL 7

Group reaction shot. The brothers are slack jawed with shock at the request.

PAGE 8

PANEL 1

Medium shot of Toshi, clearly frustrated.

TOSHI
We are simple farmers. What do we
know of dragons?

PANEL 2

The emperor calmly gestures towards Takako, who quickly becomes reserved and embarrassed by the attention as she looks toward the ground.

JAPANESE EMPEROR
Takako is the foremost expert on
the great spirits. She will
accompany you on your journey.

PANEL 3

That bit of information didn't really help to calm Toshi down much as he fires back with more questions.

TOSHI

How would we even follow the flying spirits? And what of our land and our crops?

PANEL 4

Back to the calm Emperor now gesturing towards the dragon.

JAPANESE EMPEROR

The farming season has just begun. You are free to go home until the harvest is done and the great spirits are about to leave our lands for the winter. When they do leave, you will ride with this mighty spirit to it's final destination.

PANEL 5

A much calmer Toshi, who's given up on getting out of this mission.

TOSHI

...Why us? Why the Maeda clan?

PANEL 6

The royal messenger, bowing in respect, hands the emperor an object the size of a yard stick, wrapped in silk.

JAPANESE EMPEROR

The Maeda clan has served these lands for generations...

PANEL 7

The emperor begins to unwrap whatever was just handed to him.

JAPANESE EMPEROR (CONT'D)

You may be farmers by day, but you are also fierce warriors and resourceful...

PANEL 8

The emperor, finished unwrapping, holds up a broken, English, 13th century broad sword.

JAPANESE EMPEROR (CONT'D)

And I am afraid that your specific talents are needed now, more than ever.

PAGE 9

PANEL 1

EXT. JAPANESE HILLS - NIGHT
(LATER THAT NIGHT)

The brothers are headed back home and make camp for the night, along the Japanese hillside. A full moon lights their wagons, which are stopped near a large fire that the brothers sit around. It's dark and we can't really see which brother asks:

MAEDA BROTHER
What are we going to do?

PANEL 2

Medium CU of Daisuke, lit by the fire.

DAISUKE
We have to help the spirits. What choice do we have?

PANEL 3

Medium CU of Kazuo, on the other side of the fire.

KAZUO
What of our duties here, our livelihood? If we all go, what is to become of our bloodline?

PANEL 4

Medium shot of a somber Kei, poking the fire with a stick.

KEI
It doesn't sound like we were given much of a choice.

PANEL 5

Medium CU of Toshi, frustrated.

TOSHI
Our duty is to the people. We will go on this quest.

PANEL 6

Same shot as panel 1 but maybe the camera is focused more on the moon, somehow. The camp has gone quiet as the brothers take in the gravity of the situation.

PAGE 10

PANEL 1

EXT. ENGLISH FOREST - NIGHT

The moon should match the same as the last panel in page 9 as we truck back down to an English forest with the army from the opening of our story, just outside the trees, waiting to go in on the command of a mounted, female knight. Leashed hunting dogs also bark and try to get away from their masters, into the forest.

LADY EDITH
Lieutenant Aaron, report.

PANEL 2

Medium shot, closer in on Lt. Aaron, standing, reporting to Lady Edith, mounted on a gorgeous, armored horse.

LT. AARON
We have the beast trapped in the dense woods, my Lady.

PANEL 3

Medium shot of Lady Edith pointing with authority towards the forest.

LADY EDITH
Good, then send in all the troops.

PANEL 4

Focus back on Lt. Aaron who is trying to talk Lady Edith out of her rash decision.

LT. AARON
My Lady, it would be a waste of men. The archers can...

PANEL 5

Lady Edith snaps back at her second in command.

LADY EDITH
I said, "Send them all in"!

PANEL 6

CU of a somber Lt. Aaron.

LT. AARON
Yes, my Lady.

PAGE 11

PANEL 1

Medium shot of an authoritative Lt. Aaron as he yells to the camera.

LT. AARON (CONT'D)
Forward!

PANEL 2

Large panel of the army coming towards the camera with the hunting dogs leading the charge. Some men are screaming as they raise their swords and make shift weapons. Lt. Aaron and Lady Edith are not among the men, they stay back, along with a few more mounted knights.

PANEL 3

The army starts to disappear into the forest.

PANEL 4

Same shot as the last panel, but now the army is completely out of site, gone into the forest.

PAGE 12

PANEL 1

We pull back on the scene to see the remaining troops, Lady Edith and Lt. Aaron waiting as the forest goes quiet.

PANEL 2

Same shot, but the forest shakes with noise and the remaining troops cover their ears from the loud screeches of the dragon. The horses go wild as their riders try to reign them in.

PANEL 3

A large fireball emerges from the forest, lighting the night sky.

PANEL 4

Medium CU of Lt. Aaron and Lady Edith looking up at the fire which illuminates everything around them. Extremely high contrast shot. Lt. Aaron is looking up in awe while Lady Edith keeps her composure.

LADY EDITH

Now.

PANEL 5

Huge shot, similar to panel 2 of last page. This time there are mounted, armored and very confident troops moving in. Lt. Aaron and Lady Edith lead the pack with their swords drawn.

PAGE 13

PANEL 1

Wide shot pulled back with silhouettes of the troops making their way through the dark trees as fires burn bright in the background.

PANEL 2

The final group of troops makes it to the battle sight in the middle of the forest. Lady Edith charges in on her horse with her sword pointed squarely at the dragon. The hurt large English style dragon cowers back as it snaps at the remaining troops. There are bodies all over the forest floor.

PANEL 3

Same or similar panel as the dragon lets out a burst of flame at Lady Edith, who blocks with a shield.

PANEL 4

Troops close in on the dragon and stab at it with swords and weapons.

PANEL 5

Small panel of more hacking and slashing.

PANEL 6

Similar to the last panel with more blood flying through the air.

PANEL 7

CU of the dragon as it screams with pain.

PAGE 14

PANEL 1

The dragon is surrounded by the few men remaining. It's tired, bleeding and barely able to stand.

PANEL 2

Lady Edith leaps up from behind the beast with her sword drawn...

PANEL 3

She lands the death blow on the dragon.

PANEL 4

Lady Edith stands on the dead dragon, victoriously holding her sword in the air as her troops cheer around her.

PAGE 15

PANEL 1

EXT. LADY EDITH'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Establishing shot of the castle. There is a hero's welcome waiting for Lady Edith and her men. People are hanging out the windows, cheering for their heroes.

PANEL 2

INT. CASTLE BALLROOM

Big panel as Lady Edith and her troops burst through the ballroom / Hall doors, smiles and cheers all across... except for Lt. Aaron. His mood is somber.

PANEL 3

Medium CU of Lady Edith smirking at Lt. Aaron in a "I told you so" kind of way.

LADY EDITH
Calm yourself, lieutenant. The day
is won. We are victorious. Enjoy
the revelries.

LT. AARON
But all the men lost...

PANEL 4

CU of Lady Edith with a stern look on her face, staring down Lt. Aaron.

LADY EDITH

The lives lost were but a fraction
of those saved today. We are
victorious.

PANEL 5

Lady Edith walks off to join the rest of the celebration, leaving Lt. Aaron to stand alone near the entry way with the same somber look on his face as before.

PAGE 16

PANEL 1

Lt. Aaron exits the festivities, into the hallway.

PANEL 2

In the hallway, Lt. Aaron catches the arm of a passing servant.

LT. AARON

You, ready my men.

SERVANT

Yes, m'lord.

PANEL 3

EXT. LADY EDITH'S CASTLE - NIGHT

In the court yard, we see a small group of knights on horses with saddle bags, taking command from Lt. Aaron, who is not on a horse. He's pacing back and forth, giving his commands.

LT. AARON

We lost several brothers in arms
this night. We have avenged them,
but now we must also pay their due.

PANEL 4

Closer in on Lt. Aaron as he continues his speech.

LT. AARON (CONT'D)

You have a long night ahead of you,
paying the families of those who
were slain. May God watch over you.

PANEL 5

The Knights ride off in all different directions into the open countryside.

PANEL 6

CU of Lt. Aaron looking out into the distance, more somber and pensive than ever.

LT. AARON (CONT'D)
And may he watch over us all in
these trying times.

PAGE 17

PANEL 1

EXT. POOR WORKING CLASS VILLAGE IN ENGLAND - NIGHT

One of the couriers is at the door of the house we saw in the first page. He has a small pouch of coins.

WIFE OF STORYTELLING VILLAGER

What is it? Where's my husband?

COURIER

Sorry to disturb you at this hour,
madam.

PANEL 2

Closer on the courier and wife, both standing outside the door. The woman is starting to get loud and frustrated.

WIFE OF STORYTELLING VILLAGER

Where is my husband?!

PANEL 3

CU of the somber courier as he presents the small bag of coins to the wife of the fallen soldier.

COURIER

I am sorry M'Lady. Your husband
fell in battle, this is his payment
for his services.

PANEL 4

CU of the wife, shell shocked, just staring at the small bag.

PANEL 5

The courier starts to walk back to his horse while the wife is left holding the bag.

COURIER (CONT'D)
I truly am sorry. Your husband
fought valiantly.

PANEL 6

CU of the wife looking into the bag as a rushed look comes to her face.

WIFE OF STORYTELLING VILLAGER
That's all?! This is far less than
what was promised! What am I
supposed to do?

PANEL 7

The courier is now riding off as he yells to the woman.

COURIER
You're a widower now, the village
and church will take pity on you
and yours.

PANEL 8

Similar to the last panel of page 1, we see the wife, standing alone and sadder than ever at the door.

PAGE 18

PANEL 1

EXT. ENGLISH MONASTERY IN MIDDLE OF THE FOREST - DAY

The monastery is tucked away in a quiet clearing with trees all around. Lady Edith's horse is parked at a hitching post.

LADY EDITH(OS)
Thank you for seeing me on such
short notice.

PANEL 2

Establishing shot of the interior of the monastery. It's very ornate with gold almost dripping from every corner of the building. Lady Edith and the head Monk are at the front, near an altar.

HEAD MONK

It is you who is owed a debt of thanks, Lady Edith. That beast has ravaged nearby lands for months. Truly, you do God's work.

PANEL 3

Closer in on the two. Both have smug looks of supremacy on their faces.

LADY EDITH

With the backing of the church, I'll have these lands cleansed before year's end.

PANEL 4

CU of the monk smiling at Lady Edith.

HEAD MONK

Of course, M'Lady. You will and do have the full support of the church.

PANEL 5

CU of Lady Edith, smiling back.

LADY EDITH

Good, because I can use some more able bodied men.

PANEL 6

Medium shot of both of them, sharing a moment as the monk touches Lady Edith's shoulder in a reassuring manner.

HEAD MONK

Do not worry yourself Lady Edith, the Lord finds a way...

PANEL 7

We pull out, back to the outside shot of the monastery.

HEAD MONK (CONT'D)
The Lord finds a way.

PAGE 19

PANEL 1

EXT. JAPANESE RICE FARM - DAY

Establishing shot of Toshi's farm. The fields have water in them with small plants of rice poking out. It's just about spring and time for the brothers to leave. Workers are readying a carriage for the brothers trip as we focus on Toshi and his wife. Toshi is now wearing a ninja outfit without the hood we've come to expect from movies. Loose/baggy dark, head to toe clothing.

TOSHI
Make sure His Majesty keeps his
word in sending help with the
harvest.

PANEL 2

Closer on a worried Toshi and his reassuring wife.

TOSHI'S WIFE
Yes, yes. You have no reason to
worry. The lord is a man of his
words and will do as he has
promised.

PANEL 3

Closer on Toshi's wife who is grinning.

TOSHI'S WIFE (CONT'D)
And I'll be sure to hold him to
that.

PANEL 4

CU of Toshi, staring and smiling at his wife.

PANEL 5

Medium shot of them holding hands while the rest of the brothers (also now dressed in ninja clothing) wait by the carriage, staring. Daisuke breaks the moment as he calls out to his eldest brother.

DAISUKE

The carriage is ready, it's time to go.

PAGE 20

PANEL 1

INT. CARRIAGE - DAY

The brothers are all sitting in the carriage together. We see one side of the carriage, with Daisuke and Kei only. The camera view is head on as if we are sitting across from them. They are both quiet. Kei is pensive, staring out the window. Daisuke is staring directly at the viewer with a sour look on his face.

PANEL 2

We cut to the same shot, but the other side of the carriage, where we see the other 3 brothers. The youngest brothers are somber and pensive as they go to their apparent doom. Toshi is blissfully unaware of Daisuke's cold stare as he thinks about the last moment he just spent with his wife.

PANEL 3

Cut back to Daisuke who cuts the silence with a knife. His sour look continues as he tells Toshi...

DAISUKE

That display back at the field was uncalled for. The workers did not need to see you embrace your wife. You did her no favors of being respected.

PANEL 4

Cut to a shot where we can see both sides of the carriage. Toshi and Daisuke have leaned in to meet each other in the middle while the rest of the brothers are now focused on them with a slight bit of shock.

TOSHI

Do you think I care? We are most likely riding off to our doom. you should worry of yourself and take stock of your own failings.

PANEL 5

The same shot as last panel with everyone back in their seats and quiet, while Daisuke has a embarrassed look on his face.

PANEL 6

Similar to page 4 panel 2 as the brothers arrive quietly. Maybe this shot is later in the day with long shadows to mark the somberness.

PAGE 21

PANEL 1

EXT. ROYAL GARDEN - SUNSET

Establishing shot near the large barn. A huge celebration of people with the honor surrounding the Maeda brothers while the emperor is giving a speech. There are torches lit all around the scene. The two royal advisors are also present, Takako stands by the brothers, she is also dressed in ninja clothing. The dragon from earlier is clearly healed and strapped down in the background of the scene. It is calm and has a saddle strapped to it's back.

JAPANESE EMPEROR

Today we honor the Maeda clan with
our very lives.

PANEL 2

Closer on the emperor now, who continues to address the crowd. The brothers are lined up in front of him.

JAPANESE EMPEROR (CONT'D)

We owe the brothers a debt we can
never repay. I swear before you
that the Maeda name will be forever
honored.

PANEL 3

CU as the emperor leans in to whisper to Toshi.

JAPANESE EMPEROR (CONT'D)

And I swear to you that I will take
care of your family and land in
your absence.

PANEL 4

The emperor lifts his arms and shouts to the crowd again. Six servants with intricately designed, sword length, boxes come from behind the emperor.

JAPANESE EMPEROR (CONT'D)

And in honor of your sacrifice to us and the great spirits, we honor you now with a small token of our thanks.

PANEL 5

The boxes are presented to the brothers and Takako. The servants bow and open the boxes toward the group. We Can't see the contents of the boxes but the brothers can and their expressions range from honored, happy, shocked and sad.

PANEL 6

Toshi reaches into the box...

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PANEL 1

Toshi pulls out the most breathtaking Japanese sword you can imagine. The Emperor is standing in the BG of the shot with a proud look on his face as he announces to the crowd...

JAPANESE EMPEROR (CONT'D)

I had the finest swords in all the land made for each of you, to help you on your journey.

PANEL 2

Medium shot of the group looking at each other and their swords that are now in each of their hands. They all have uneasy looks on their faces.

PANEL 3

Kei turns toward Takako and bows. Takako is taken aback.

KEI

It is an honor to travel with you.

TAKAKO

It is I who is honored to serve our people and be in the company of the Maeda Clan.

PANEL 4

The brothers start climbing into the saddle on top of the dragon, which is being held down by several servants holding straps.

PANEL 5

As Daisuke, the last to enter the saddle, climbs up, he takes a moment to address the crowd, with a fist raised high.

DAISUKE

It is the Maeda clan which is honored to serve you all and protect the great spirits. We will not fail you!

PANEL 6

Small insert of the straps going slack as the hands of the servants let go.

PANEL 7

The dragon lifts off immediately as dust flies and the straps fall in every direction. The wind it creates, shakes the leaves in the garden and disturbs the flames of the torches.

JAPANESE EMPEROR

May the great spirits guard over you...

PAGE 23

Worms eye view splash page of the emperor, remaining advisor and servants looking to the sky. We can see the dragon's swirling figure, disappear into the night as it sheds ropes and straps.

JAPANESE EMPEROR (CONT'D)

For all our sake.

END ISSUE 1