

TAKUMAI

宅配

FREE • SUMMER 2005

THE AI-VOLUTION
OF A MANGA

I WAS
PRINCESS AI
FOR A DAY

CONFESSIONS
OF A COSPLAY
GODDESS

BIZENGHAST:

MARTY LEGROW
IS JUST DYING
TO TELL YOU
SOMETHING

AI YAZAWA:
THE INTERVIEW

PLUS:

CHECK YOUR MANGA TEMPERATURE
HOT 'N SPICY MANGA PREVIEWS
FROM JAPAN: LEGAL DRUG,
SAKURA TAISEN, AND MORE



TOKYOPOP TAKUHA!™

the new sizzling manga magazine

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TAKUHA!?

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for FREE**

TOKYOPOP Manga Excerpts,
Previews, Interviews,
Behind-the-Scenes Info

AI from
PRINCESS AI

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WELCOME TO TAKUHA! to the very first installment of TOKYOPOP's sizzling-hot quarterly manga magazine. You're probably wondering, "What on Pokopen is *Takuha*?"

Well, a wise and noble manga character once said, "I can beat you because I have my friends on my side." We have lots of friends—you, our fans!—and we are in the middle of a revolution...the Manga Revolution! So we decided to take action and offer you what's fresh and groundbreaking in all that is manga. That's when we came up with *Takuha*.

What Is *Takuha*?

Takuha isn't just about cool stories and cutting-edge art; it's about manga attitude. It's about what is truly hot in manga. Throwing together some previews for you wasn't gonna cut it. We wanted to give our friends and fans something extra. So we added features and interviews and behind-the-scenes information and fan art and...well, there's just a lot of stuff in here that you won't be able to resist.

How Do I Get *Takuha*?

After deciding what to put in *Takuha*, we needed to figure out how best to deliver it to you. Our first thought: Let's send it right to your door for free. That's right: Free manga, delivered right to your door, four times a year. If you're not on the mailing list, just go to www.TOKYOPOP.com.

On behalf of all of us here at TOKYOPOP, I would like to welcome you to the wonderful world of *Takuha*. Just be forewarned: The excitement of the Manga Revolution can be dangerously addictive. Good thing we have friends like you on our side.

~Marcoting



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

SO WHO ARE THESE ANIMATORS?

Team TAKUHA! greatly appreciates the contributions of the artists, writers, editors and sommeliers who made this issue a success. The following are just a few of the kind people who donated their time, energy and chibi essence.



TIM BEEDLE

Tim Beedle was born and raised in Southern California. His hobbies include writing, reading, eating marshmallows and asking the TOKYOPOP robofish out on dates.



BRYCE P. COLEMAN

Through no fault of his own, Bryce finds himself married to a beautiful wife, the father of two amazing daughters and reading comic books for a living.



LILLIAN DIAZ-PRZYBYL

Brains and beauty—a terrific combination!



CAROL FOX

Hellish, yet well-intentioned.



JILL FRESHNEY

As British as bangers and mash.



ALEXIS KIRSCH

Straight guy for the shonen-ai.



PAUL MORRISSEY

As a child, Paul Morrissey would freak out if the bows of his shoelaces weren't the exact same length.



LUIS REYES

A cool cat just trying to cut it in this crazy, mixed-up world. Luis is also into music, theater and long walks on the beach. Check out www.jacarandamusic.com if you're not afraid of rocking out.

Contributions were also made by:
Peter Ahlstrom
Jodi Bryson
Elizabeth Murchalla
Troy Lewter
Zach Rau
Suzanne Waldman

Aaron is trying to edit fewer books to make room on his desk for his growing Optimus Prime collection... (Current total: 17)



Julie is a 15-year-old
trapped in a 30-
something body.



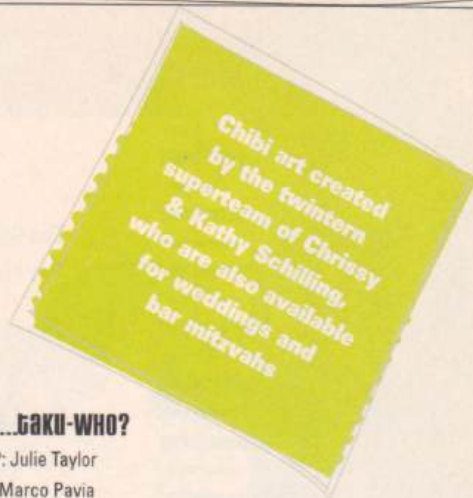
Rob Tokar will edit
for food.



Rob Valois hates you.
(And it's pronounced,
"Val-wah," folks.)

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[illegible]

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BAD COP: Marco Pavia
MYSTERY CONSULTANT: Ao Ringo
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Just look to your left.
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VP of Production: Ron Klamert (Why isn't my title in all caps?)
Publisher: Mike Kiley
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C.E.O.: Stuart Levy

Comments? Letters? Suggestions? Stories? Here's some info you should know about sending us your stuff:

All submissions of letters and art must be made via regular mail to:

TOKYOPOP attn: Takuhai
5900 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 2000
Los Angeles, CA 90036

Please print your name, your age, and your address clearly on your letter, art, story, etc.

No submissions will be returned to you. Anything you send to us becomes the property of TOKYOPOP Inc. We will have the right to print, reproduce, distribute, or modify the artwork for use in any of our products, royalty-free. We will have the right to print your name, city, and state if we include your work in any of our products.

If you are under 18, here's what needs to happen:

On the back of each piece of artwork or each page of a letter submitted, your parent or guardian must give his or her permission.

You acknowledge that all material you send to us is your original creation and does not violate the rights of others. (In other words, it's OK to send us art based on CLAMP's manga, but only if YOU are the artist and NOT if you ripped it off from your little sister or former best friend.)

We encourage you to buy TOKYOPOP goodies from your favorite bookstore and comic shop—look for manga in the graphic novel or manga section.

To find a store near you, visit:
<http://www.tokyopop.com/aboutus/buy.php>

E-mail: takuhai@TOKYOPOP.com
Come visit us online at www.TOKYOPOP.com

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Princess Ai

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We couldn't be more impressed with the artistic flair of our fans! Above is Kristen Bibby's depiction of Tohru from *Fruits Basket*. For more artful renderings of your favorite manga, see page 52.

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I LUV HALLOWEEN

It's never too early to LUV Halloween, so see page 78 to join a particularly disturbing group of trick-or-treaters going about their macabre business one dark and stormy night. It's like taking candy from a dead person...

The creator of
I Luv Halloween
was discovered at
a photocopy shop—
check out the
manga on page 78



MOOCHIE:

Finch's little sister. The single most evil, sinister, heartless, homicidal, sadistic creature walking the Earth. But cute? As a button!

PIG PIG:

Slovenly, gross and borderline feral, Pig Pig is always the butt of the joke.



MR. KITTY:

The pervert. A deviant in the making. If it's in questionable taste, it's Mr. Kitty.



DEVIL LAD:

No one knows what lies beneath his costume. This hellspawn only shows up on Halloween night.



FINCH:

Half sociopath, half spiritual leader of the group. This ringleader will do anything for candy and will stop at nothing to get revenge on those who get in his way.

manga101

HIYA, FOLKS! Welcome to Manga 101! If you've got a question about manga—how it's made, the history of a particular creator, the business in general, or life, the universe and everything—I'm your woman. Send a question, and I'll use my vast network of resources and covert contacts to give you a complete, fascinating, engrossing answer. Or something like that. Flowers and chocolates are acceptable, too.

Gotta question?
Write:

TOKYOPOP Takuhai
5900 Wilshire Blvd
Los Angeles, CA
90036



ASK ME FUN
QUESTIONS OR
I'LL SMACK YOU
WITH MY FAN!

Dear Lil,

I just saw the movie *Oldboy*, which I heard is a Korean production of a Japanese manga. Afterward, I noticed some of the books in my collection like *Priest* and *Kill Me, Kiss Me*—I have a wide range of tastes ;)—were originally published in Korea. So what's up with Korea? Is there other cool stuff coming outta there?

~PCBang4ever

Dear PCB,

Korea has been producing its own manga for years, and the quality continues to rise. Many Korean series are printed in Japan, and artists are being recruited to start new series in Japanese magazines. TOKYOPOP's *Warcraft* is a collaboration between a Korean artist and an American writer. If you're looking for some good Korean series released in English, check out *Rebirth* and *King of Hell*, two shonen action titles with nice-looking art. For comedy or shojo fans, there's *Faeries' Landing* and *Snow Drop*. There's also a popular series based on the online game *Ragnarok*. The list is endless: *The Tarot Café*, *Demon Diary*, *INVU*, *Model*... Good manga is good manga, no matter where it comes from!

Dear Lillie,

Some of us were discussing how there don't seem to be a lot of "big" shojo anime series nowadays. A lot of it seems to be more shonen-oriented. Of course this could be just biased by what we're seeing stateside via the fandom channels. Whaddya think? Also, do you notice any trends in what's popular and up-and-coming in manga?

Best wishes,
Dark Geisha

Dear DG:

Your perception isn't entirely off. Aside from the *Peach Girl* anime and a few more coming up this spring, not nearly as many top shojo titles make the transition from manga to anime. Apparently, the general rule that girls (a) buy books more than guys do and (b) are less likely to buy DVDs, is true in Japan as well as in the U.S. So, the anime that is produced is much more likely to be shonen than shojo. Also, a lot of shonen is designed to have strong crossover appeal, whereas while shojo does cross over, it's almost never to such a large extent.

As for what is up-and-coming, one of the amazing things about the industry in the last few years is that we're really not that far behind Japan here anymore. If it's popular in Japan, it's almost guaranteed to have a fan base here.

Dear Lil,

**In Japan, how does one go about becoming a manga-ka? I know some people like Hiroaki Samura [creator of *Blade the Immortal*] win contests or get discovered via doujinshi circles like CLAMP and Kazuya Minekura. Is that common? Or does it all just depend? Help me, Lil', help me! Artfully,
Manga-Ka-razy**

Dear MK,

Well, you covered two out of three of the typical ways of becoming a manga-ka. Especially if you're doing shojo, contests seem to be the way to go, but many of the newest shonen hits are from creators who won contests and got a career as their prize. That's a lot of the motivation behind our own *Rising Stars of Manga™* competition. It's a great chance to put together

FOR MORE
INFORMATION ON OUR
RISING STARS, CHECK
OUT TOKYOPOP.COM.



"...many of the newest shonen hits are from creators who won story contests or art contests and got a career as their prize."

your most professional work and get it in front of our crack creative team!

CLAMP and Minekura-sensei started in the doujinshi (fan comics) world and went from there.

The third way is to become someone's assistant. If you look at the author notes that many creators use as bonus content in the back of their books, you'll see that most manga is created by a team of people. Often this is a chance to hone your skills before moving on to a project of your own! Be a good employee for a while, befriend the editor, get your own book!

Dear Lillie,

**How do I get a tour of the TOKYOPOP offices? I hear you've got a great view!
Hoping 2 C U L8r,
Ivanna Job**

Dear IJ,

Alas, you're probably out of luck. It's an open office, which means no icky cubicles and a great view of the Los Angeles skyline. Unfortunately, it also means that having groups of people wandering through is a bit distracting to our hard-working team. However, we love having people come in as interns to help out in the company! If you're interested in becoming an intern, check out our website www.TOKYOPOP.com/ and look for the "Jobs" link! I got mine that way.

~Lillian Diaz-Przybyl

CHECK YOUR manga temperature

WITH THIS personality test

You're obviously a manga fan. But what makes you tick? Well, in an effort to help you figure this out, we've devised this incredibly scientific and painstakingly researched personality test. But this is no ordinary personality test, friends. This is *Takuhai*, after all, so obviously the most revealing answer would come from the question:

"If you were a character in a manga, what type of manga would you be in?"

While answering the questions below, try to be as honest as you can. Go with your first instinct. And don't cheat!

"This is no ordinary personality test, friends."

After all, this is a scientific survey, and there's a lot at stake. Possibly even...the fate of the world! Or maybe not.

1) If you were stranded on a desert island, which manga character would you most want to be lost with? (We've allowed for 2 answers to each question on this one, for, well...obvious reasons.)

A) Shuuya Nanahara (*Battle Royale*) / Hakufu Sonsaku (*Battle Vixens*)

B) Toji Tojikamori (*Peach Girl*) / Sumire Iwaya (*Tramps Like Us*)

C) Keroro (*Sgt. Frog*) / Ren (*DearS*)

D) Kalecgos (*Warcraft: The Sunwell Trilogy*) / Riku Harada (*D N Angel*)



2) Let's say you're attacked by a horde of zombie ninjas (it could happen!): How would you escape?

A) Smash in their heads with your fighting staff.

B) Bat your big baby blues at them and flirt mercilessly. Zombie ninjas need lovin', too!

C) Dazzle them with your spectacular dance moves, then moonwalk on outta there while they're still in a daze!

D) Spirit-powered steam robots all the way, baby!

3) Okay, your beloved school is about to be torn down by an evil corporate conglomerate. How do you put a stop to it?

- A) Threaten to blow up their corporate HQ if they don't cease and desist—then do it anyway.
- B) Write and perform a play that will show those evil execs the error of their ways.
- C) Initiate Operation: Slug Slug Mobile Armor Blossom! (Basically, it involves a few strategically placed banana peels.)
- D) Transform into your mysterious master thief persona and steal every penny of those greedy jerks' money—Ha ha ha!



4) During your free time, your favorite leisure activity is...

- A) ...sharpening your various swords, knives and throwing stars.
- B) ...plotting ways to break up the relationship of the person you have a crush on.
- C) ...embarrassing yourself at the public hot springs.
- D) ...exploring far-off lands and meeting fascinating new creatures.

5) You're desperately in love with someone. How do you go about making your feelings known?

- A) Brutally murder anyone else who may be vying for his/her affections. You know, show him/her you're serious.
- B) Conspire to have you and your beloved trapped alone in an elevator.
- C) Compose a song for them, which you will be performing in front of the entire school. (Too bad you can't sing!)
- D) Well, you *don't* write them a note professing your true love, only to be turned down and made a fool of! (Perhaps I've said too much!)

6) You can have any job in the world. What would your dream job be?

- A) High paid assassin (oh, wait, that already is your job!).
- B) Matchmaker (of course!).
- C) Headmaster for an all-girls school (or all-boys school, take your pick).
- D) Emperor of the Demon Realm! (All right, you can be Lord of the Elfin Kingdom, if you're such a goody-goody!)

"This is a scientific survey, and there's a lot at stake."



7) Your idea of the best pet in the universe would be...

- A) ...a trained 14-ft.-tall gorilla with biomechanical weapons capabilities.
- B) ...a cute boy.
- C) ...an alien frog, bent on world domination, with a penchant for all things Gundam.
- D) ...a shikigami. Particularly, a three-headed, white spirit-bird.

**Don't cheat—
the future of
the world might
be at stake!**

8) In your opinion, a superior wardrobe should always consist of...

- A) ...lots of hidden pockets for your various deadly weapons.
- B) ...clothes designed to make you absolutely irresistible.

C) ...items that tend to fall off—or burst open—at the most inconvenient and embarrassing moments!

D) ...a mystical fabric that glows. Preferably with a long, flowing cape or...no, wait...wings!

Yeah, wings!



9) Your most cherished possession in the world is...

- A) ...the hearts of your enemies (seriously... they're in a jar).
- B) ...a memento given to you by a long-lost sweetheart.
- C) ...a big, pink, stuffed bunny rabbit.
- D) ...a magical stone that will save your people from extinction!



10) The most beautiful sight you can imagine would be...

- A) ...a bloodstained battlefield, and you're the last one standing.
- B) ...a golden sunset, viewed over the shoulder of your one true love.
- C) ...a massive crowd of adoring fans, screaming your name (only to realize that your pants have fallen down).
- D) ...every kingdom, world, universe, or alternate reality (take your pick) united in peace and harmony.

answer key:

Okay, you're done!

Now, total up your answers. What category did the majority of your answers fall under—A, B, C or D? Below you'll see where you would be most at home in the manga world! And if there was a tie between two of the categories, don't worry. After all, all the best manga has a little bit of everything, right?



Mostly A's: Action Hero—Yikes! We can definitely see you kicking some serious butt in one of our Action series, such as: *Battle Royale*, *Saiyuki*, *Samurai Deeper Kyo* or *Tokyo Tribes*. That okay with you, tough guy?



Mostly B's: Hopeless Romantic—Ah, the hopeless romantic. It's all about finding that true love for you. We think you'd be in your glory in a Romance book like: *Fruits Basket*, *Peach Girl*, *Kare Kano* or *Tramps Like Us*. Pass me a hanky, I'm getting all weepy.

Mostly C's: Class Clown—No doubt about it, you'd be right at home in the wacky world of a Comedy title like: *Sgt. Frog*, *Gravitation*, *Love Hina* or *Dragon Voice*. Guess the joke's on you, huh?

Mostly D's: Definite Dreamer—Head in the clouds, yearning for adventure in some distant magical land... Might we suggest you visit the worlds of: *D-N-Angel*, *Crescent Moon*, *Warcraft* or *Arcana*? But, please, come back to Earth sometime, okay? We'd miss you.

"The best manga has a little bit of everything, right?"

~compiled by Dr. Bryce
P. Coleman, fictional personality
specialist

GUN-CRAZY, BOY-CRAZY, AND JUST PLAIN OLD CRAZY



The mechanisms, methods, and
minds behind the mayhem of
BATTLE ROYALE

When the 42 ninth graders of Shiro Iwa High School's Class B were kidnapped and forced to compete on *The Program*, a popular television reality show that requires its contestants to battle to the death, each was given food, water, and a randomly chosen weapon. Here are our top ten favorite weapons used in the series:



10

Boomerang: An esoteric weapon that can be effective in the right hands. In the wrong hands, it's just something to toss away before getting your head blown off.



9

Machete: Cuts through small trees, knees, vines, and veins all with a simple swing of the arm! With no moving parts, it's useful for even the dumbest student.



8

Insanity: Some students brought their insanity with them; others had this useful trait bestowed upon them by their circumstances. Those who were crazy before *The Program* did better than the ones who went crazy during *The Program*. In other words, experience counts!

7 Bomb Collar: Every student is fitted with an explosive collar that will detonate if it enters a "danger zone." It's designed to be the controllers' greatest weapon against the contestants...but in volume 5, the talented Kazuo "Killer" Kiriyama makes it work for him!

6 Crossbow: It's silent, it's deadly, and its victims look hilarious when struck in the head.



5 Uzi: The workhorse of the murdering set, it's light, fits comfortably in one hand, and can spray 600 rounds per minute. Perfect for the psychopath on the go!

4 Tracking Device: Allows you to know when you're closing in on a target...or someone else is closing in on you. Sure, it doesn't tell you specifically who the little blip on the screen is...but who cares--*The Program* can only have one winner anyway!



3 Scythe: The Grim Reaper carries a scythe for a good reason: it cuts big. Mitsuko Souma carries hers for the very same reason (but she looks a lot hotter than old Grim).

2 Bulletproof Vest: It saves Toshinori "Frog Boy" Oda several times...until someone pumps several rounds of Uzi fire into Oda's genitals. Defense contractors, take note: The genitals are the first thing we'd want bulletproofed!



1 Sex: If there's one thing that overrides a teenaged boy's sense of self-preservation, it's the opportunity to get some lovin'. When girls work their feminine wiles, boys drop their guard, drop their drawers, and then drop like flies.



~ Rob Tokar

BIZENGHAST

NOT EVERY LOST SOUL IS A LOST CAUSE

Dinah is a young teenage girl who lost her parents tragically and now lives with her aunt in a large, old house in the decrepit town of Bizenghast. Though Dinah has moments of clarity, she is sometimes out of touch with reality, and seems to be able to see the ghosts that inhabit the gloomy house in which she lives. But when Dinah stumbles upon the ruins of the town's darkest secret, she is forced to enter into a contract the likes of which is eerily ungodly, to say the least...

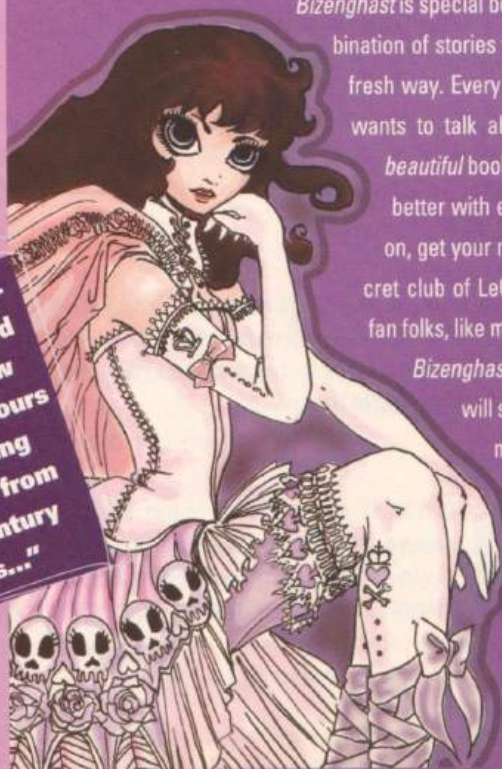


Bizenghast is a headrush, the kind where after you've been sitting on your hump for hours, you stand up and it's like you just sucked the helium out of a parade float coupled with a groovy temporary blindness—good stuff.

Bizenghast is special because it's a wicked-cool combination of stories you've grown up with told in a fresh way. Every person who reads *Bizenghast* wants to talk about it. This first volume is a beautiful book, and the series is only getting better with each subsequent volume. Try it on, get your money's worth, and join the secret club of LeGrow followers. Those curious fan folks, like me, welcome you to the world of *Bizenghast*'s main character Dinah, who I will swear is LeGrow's alter-ego (no matter how many times she's threatened to stab me in the neck with a knitting needle if I don't stop saying that).

~Jodi Bryson, Editor

"Can you say, 'authenticity'? As she crafted *Bizenghast*, LeGrow logged hours and hours online researching medical reports from turn-of-the-century madhouses..."





LeGrow weaves Victorian-style illustrations to create an unsettling feeling throughout her manga



M. Alice LeGrow says that no one person in particular was the inspiration for Dinah. Rather, she's an amalgamation of a number of characters with whom she's interacted and come across during her research.

>> Three different versions of this page were created before LeGrow decided upon this one. She came up with the concept while crashing on her friend's couch.

LeGrow
sketched this
dead animal after
passing it on
a drive down
I-84



The dichotomy of modern conveniences existing in the old world: There are no phone lines in Bizenghast, so if you want to make a call, you have to get a cell! >>

VIEW THE MANGA PLAYER AT
WWW.TOKYOPOP.COM/bizenghast



COME OVER.
I NEED YOU HERE.
DR. MORSTAN
HASN'T LEFT YET.



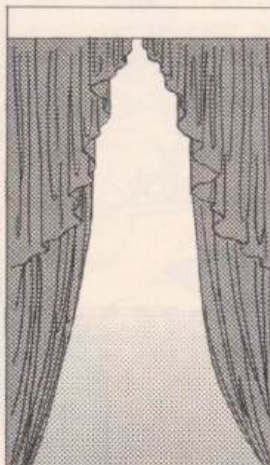
WHAT DO YOU
WANT *ME* TO DO?
HE AND YOUR AUNT
HATE ME.



BUT THEY KNOW!
THEY KNOW ABOUT
THE GHOSTS!



DON'T WORRY. I'LL
MAKE HIM LEAVE.
I'LL TELL HIM WHAT
HE WANTS TO HEAR.



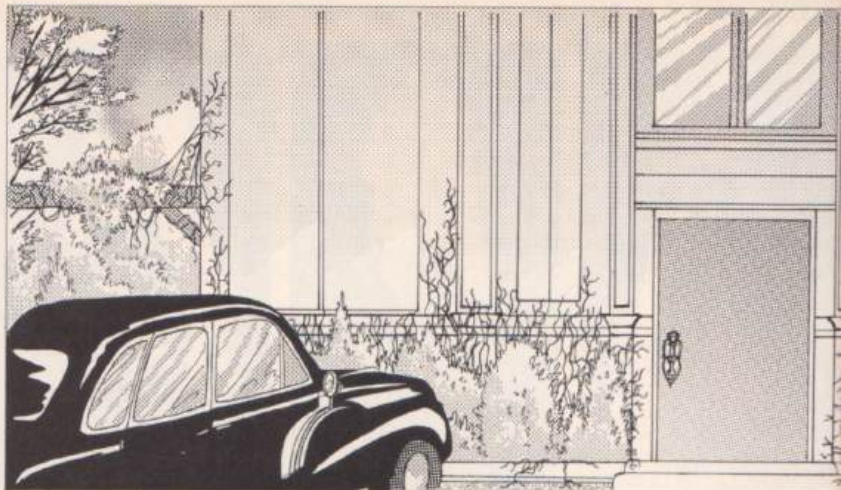
THEN HURRY!
HURRY UP, BEFORE
HE SENDS ME
AWAY!

LeGrow spent part of
her youth in Weisbaden,
Germany, where she
made several trips to
Neuschwanstein Castle.

The original
plan for this page
called for nine
windows, but only
six could fit
the layout

>> LeGrow gets a bit nervous when she is surrounded by large windows. She came up with the concept of this page after a visit to a pal's many-windowed home.

Growing up in
Germany gave
LeGrow a chance
to experience
the world in
a somewhat
untraditional
manner.



LeGrow
thought the
birds' angle
and perspective
was very
Burton-esque

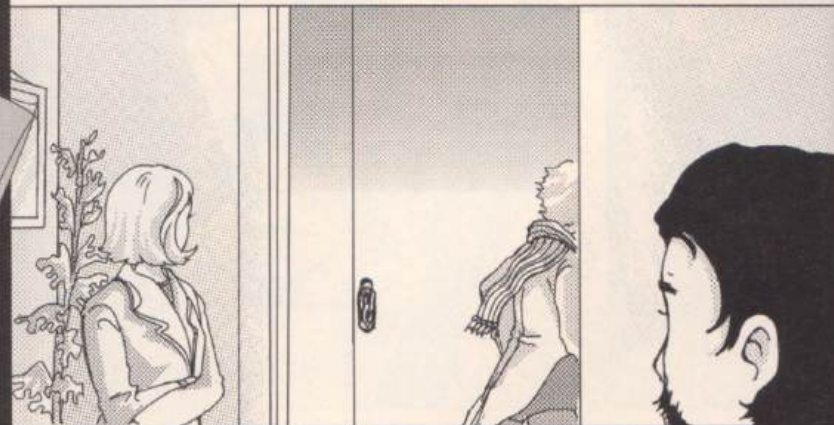
The car in the top panel was originally supposed to be a 1932 Auburn Boattail Speedster, the kind of car that LeGrow describes as "needing three keys to start." >>



The Victorian bell-pull is not made out of rope—the cross-weave is a decoration wrapped about a velvet cord

BUY THE MANGA AT www.TOKYOPOP.com/shop

>> The adults and teens in *Bizenghast* are depicted as if they were from different eras. The adults have a 1930s feel, the younger generation from the Victorian Era.



The panels showing Dinah going "mad" were originally filled with moths

The outfit Dinah wears in this page was modelled after a real candy stripper outfit, which now has a skull on the front. LeGrow bought it on eBay for \$45.00. >>

I JUST DON'T KNOW, JANE. I DON'T LIKE THAT BOY COMING HERE TO SEE DINAH, BUT SHE THROWS HERSELF INTO HYSTERICS IF HE'S KEPT AWAY. AND YET, IS IT WISE TO ACCOMMODATE HER MADNESS?



THE LOSS OF HER PARENTS SO EARLY IN LIFE CONTRIBUTES TO HER DELUSIONS. THIS PARANOIA OF GHOSTS AND GOBLINS MIGHT TURN INTO SELF-HARM ONE OF THESE DAYS.



YOU SHOULD REGULARLY CHECK HER FOR SCRATCHES OR BITE MARKS. KEEP A CLOSER MONITOR ON HER. WE MIGHT HAVE TO MOVE HER TO THE HOSPITAL IN WATERTOWN.



LeGrow
got inspiration
for Dinah's
hairstyle from
an art project
at SCAD

M. Alice LeGrow

often conducts "board meetings" as she creates her manga. The board's standing members include her sister and her best friend Noelle. In fact, LeGrow refers to Noelle as her co-creator and editor.

>> LeGrow depicts a lot of emotion in an economical way. Dinah barely moves in each frame, yet her emotional state is clearly present as she pretends to be asleep.

No animals
were harmed
in the making
of this manga

VIEW THE MANGA PLAYER AT
www.TOKYOPOP.com/bizenghast



One of the many themes throughout the manga is death. Dinah can't understand why people aren't upset that an animal has died—they pass it like a discarded coat. >>

THESE WOODS ARE SO UGLY. I WISH THEY'D BURN IT ALL DOWN.

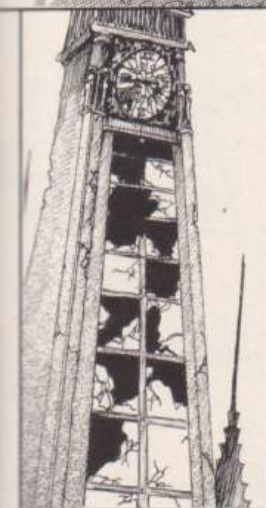
TOO DIFFICULT... THE WHOLE TOWN'S SURROUNDED BY WOODS.

THE WAY'S ROCKY HERE. WE'LL HAVE TO WALK FOR AWHILE.

WHY DO YOU HATE THESE OLD WOODS SO MUCH, ANYHOW?

I HATE THEM, AND I HATE BIZENGHAST.

Many of the elements throughout Bizenghast are real objects that are on or around LeGrow's home.



REMEMBER WHEN THEY WERE GOING TO REBUILD THE CHURCH? ALL THE TOURISTS WERE GOING TO COME BACK, AND WE'D BE A LIVING TOWN AGAIN.



BUT THEY TALKED AND TALKED, AND IN THE END WE DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH MONEY, NOT EVEN FOR REPAIRS.



EVEN THAT WEeping FOUNTAIN IN THE SQUARE BOTHERS ME. IT HASN'T WORKED FOR FIFTY YEARS. WHY IS EVERYTHING HERE BROKEN? WHY IS EVERYTHING SO OLD AND DESPAIRING?

The four figures on the fountain represent the four stories that LeGrow wants to tell in this manga series

>> The fountain in the bottom right panel has a code written on its base. This is not just a scribble—visit www.bizenghast.com for the secrets behind the code.

LeGrow often says she forgets things in real life, so she needs to tie strings on her fingers to remind herself that she needs to remember something. This "tying up" theme is woven into much of *Bizenghast*.

LeGrow absolutely loves Katherine Hepburn—the carriage is from a Hepburn movie



Detail is deceptive—LeGrow drew this page in 2–3 hours, and even included a hidden shout out (near the clock) to her friend Christy, who is also a manga creator. >>



LeGrow once had a Halloween costume that incorporated a picture frame

BUY THE MANGA AT www.TOKYOPOP.com/shop

>> LeGrow has vivid nightmares most nights. This page was created after one such nightmare, in which she was trying to get through a forest covered in string.

www.bizenghast.com

**The effective
use of toning
sets the mood—
some of the art
is only tone**



The two horselike figures atop the two pillars are named Ecclesia and Synagouga and are based on creatures described in medieval times. >>

Flying buttresses are a decorative yet functional element common in Gothic architecture

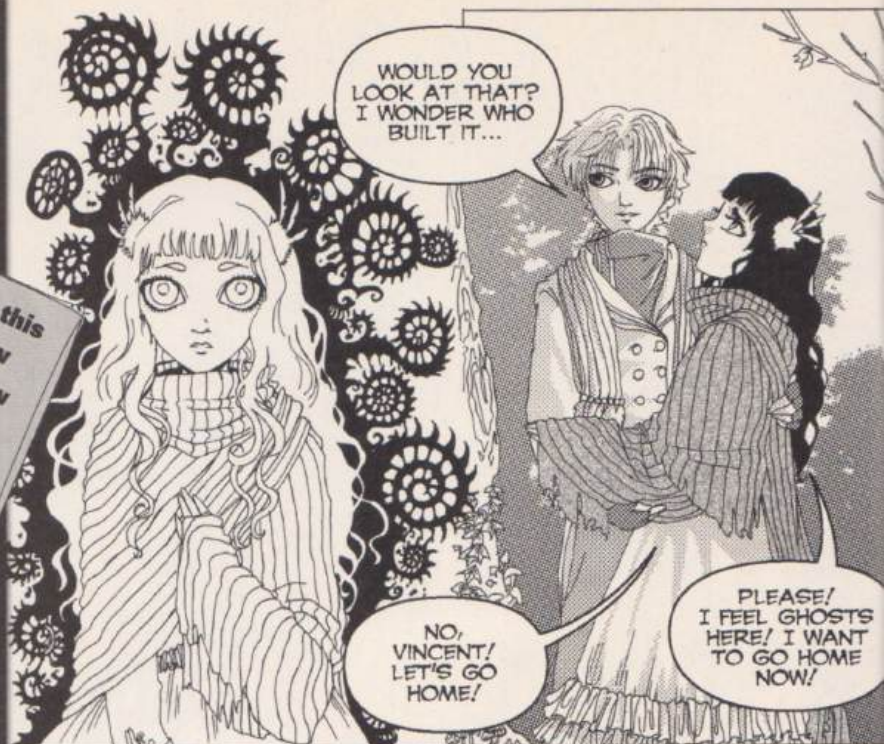


Ecclesia will leave the pillar and make an appearance in a future volume of *Bizenghast*.

>> LeGrow spent nearly two straight days (and nights) composing this intricately designed spread. She also did the toning for the entire scene.

Shortly after this page, LeGrow decided to draw Vincent without pupils for the rest of the book

VIEW THE MANGA PLAYER AT www.TOKYOPOP.com/bizenghast



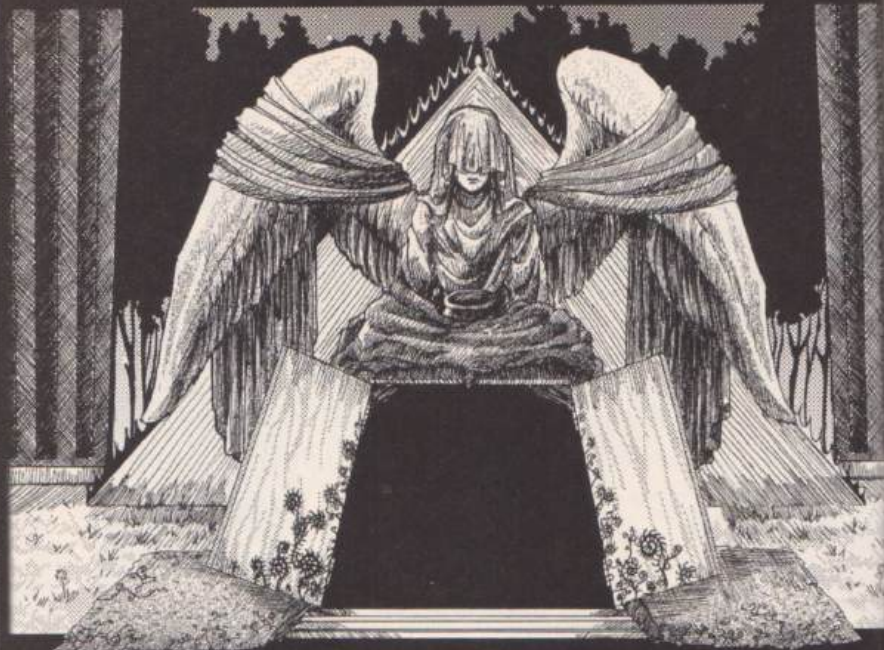
The creepy swirls in the top panel represent Dinah's "sixth sense"—when they appear, you know that something related to Bizenghast is around. >>



Even though much of the manga is a psychological thriller, LeGrow adds touches of humor hidden in the details

>> The statue in the top right panel is called Gabrielle's Horn. This page was originally part of the next page, but LeGrow thought they worked better on separate pages.

Attention cosplay
fans: When it comes
to dressing up,
LeGrow doesn't like
sloppiness. Take careful
note of the details
in Dinah's outfits.



LeGrow's
use of empty
space in panels
effectively shows
the passage
of time



The final version of this page was revised to focus on the doorway within the statue. The pyramid in the background is the top of a sunken mausoleum. >>

IN THE MIND OF M. ALICE LEGROW...

MEET CREATOR
M. ALICE LEGROW,
AND
PLEASE,
CALL HER
MARTY.

"I based my
manga, *Bizenghast*,
on my own
recollections of
growing up in
Germany."

And while you're at

it, call your best friend and

tell her that if she's going to

cosplay any of Marty's charac-

ters with you, both of you better

do your research, or Marty's

going to be pissed. Because

that's Marty. She doesn't like

sloppiness, especially when it

comes to anime and cosplay.

She especially won't tolerate it

if you're dressing up like Dinah

from *Bizenghast*, because Dinah

is her first big-market character.

Not only that, Dinah is fabulous.

Do Dinah right. Or don't

Dinah at all.

Understand?

Her goal as an artist/creator:

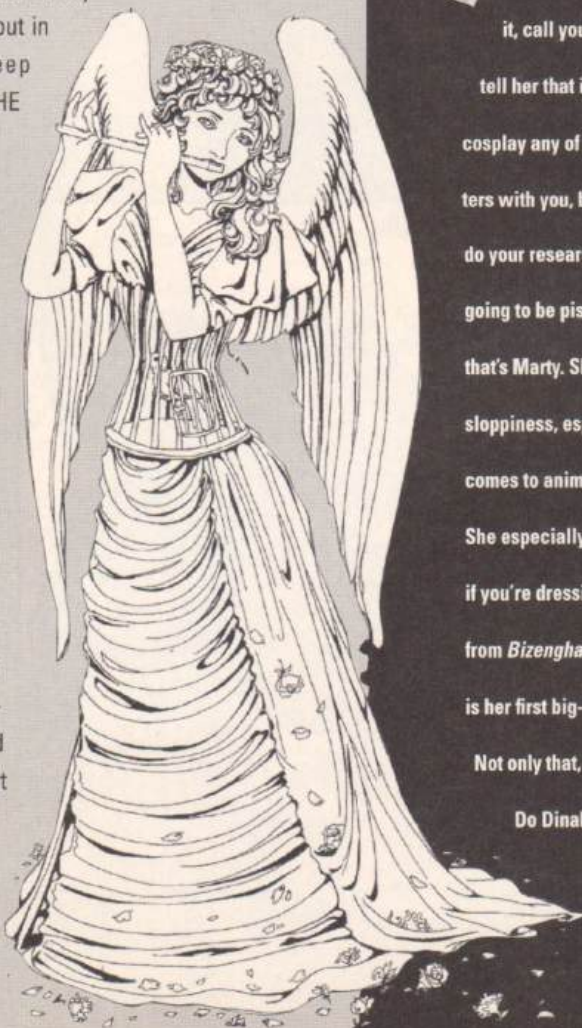
"To do what I want for a living and do it well. Also, to become so rich that I can afford to pay someone to carve the name of my comic series out in forty-foot-deep letters ON THE MOON."

What inspired *Bizenghast*.

I based my manga, *Bizenghast*, on my own recollections of growing up in Germany, designing a lot of the town after real German towns I had lived near, etc. I am a research fiend. I research all the architecture, location and climate, clothing, etc. I even research the plants in every shot. This book is 100% botanically correct.

Just how authentic *Bizenghast* is:

I spent a lot of time staring at pictures of plants, reproductions of copperplate engravings and costume designs from around the world. I also spent an unhealthy amount of time on CrimeLibrary.com and other sites that profile schizophrenics and murderers. I've probably logged about a solid week online reading the most





depressing medical reports on mental health ever written. I also did a lot of research into turn-of-the-century madhouses and asylums, so that I could base Dinah's house and other places in the town on actual historical places.

What makes *Bizenghast* unique:

It has extensive use of Victorian-style illustrations combined with comic art, which is kinda weird. Also lots of backgrounds, which is peculiar in that most manga artists are big lazy boxes of lethargy who don't do backgrounds. I draw lots of architecture instead of copping out with pre-made tone backgrounds. And it has Elegant Gothic Lolita stuff. Anime fangirls love EGL! :)

How to define

***Bizenghast*:**

It's not gothic, it's not fantasy, it's not horror. It's kinda of all those things without being totally one or the other. *Bizenghast* appeals to guys and girls, not just gothic chicks.



IN THE BEGINNING...

M. Alice LeGrow first crossed paths with TOKYOPOP in the second Rising Stars of Manga™ competition. It's no surprise that "Nikolai," Marty's winning entry, is the story of a lonely young girl who helps a restless spirit find peace.



In these pages from "Nikolai," you can see how much that earlier manga has in common with *Bizenghast*. Check out her characters, storytelling, and that appealing, haunting visual style that is uniquely LeGrow.

PARADISE KISS BACKSTAGE:

INTERVIEW WITH

Ai Yazawa is the popular manga creator of such series as *Nana* and TOKYOPOP's *Paradise Kiss*, and is the character designer for *Princess Ai*. She was born on March 7, 1967, and made her debut in *Ribon Magazine* when she was just 18. *Takuhai* has the pleasure of presenting the following interview with the renowned manga-ka, who discussed her goals, what she would do if she wasn't a manga artist, and how blowing off an important exam in school may have made all the difference.

"My parents really understood and supported my goals of becoming a manga creator."

Q: Why did you create *Paradise Kiss*?

Ai Yazawa: In *Zipper* (a popular fashion magazine in Japan), I did some fashion illustrations entitled "Happy Berry Exhibition" and was then asked to create a manga based on the illustrations. I decided I wanted to create a manga based on the fashion industry as a whole. However, I didn't use all my characters from my previous

work, *Gokinjo Monogatari*, which was also a fashion-related manga. Miwako, Mikako's sister, is the only one who made an appearance in both. I wanted to depict Yaza Arts (the fashion school in *Gokinjo Monogatari* and *Paradise Kiss*) through different points of view.

Q: How did you create new characters for *Paradise Kiss*?

Ai Yazawa: First of all, I was a little hesitant to make Yukari the heroine

ai yazawa

since she went to the "normal" school and somehow looked down on people who go to Yaza Arts. The audience of *Zipper* tends to be fans of Yaza Arts, so I was afraid that the audience might hate Yukari because they can't feel empathy for her. I hope the audience viewed Yukari as a heroine who was attracted to and seduced by the fashion world. If I created a heroine who was a wannabe fashion designer who enrolled in fashion school, the story might have overlapped with *Gokinjo Monogatari*. I wanted to do something different this time—a story about a girl who is changing little by little, both physically and emotionally. That's the reason I chose Yukari to be my heroine.

Q: How about the other characters?

Ai Yazawa: I wanted to bring Miwako back. Since Miwako is soft and girlish, I made Yukari extremely spirited. And George is a guy I have dreamed of creating for a long time. But I have been hesitant to use him,

because I wasn't sure he would be accepted in a shojo manga magazine. He's not your typical prince. He's really assertive. And he's selfish and mean enough that most women would just give up on him. I also loved drawing Isabella, too, because I've always wanted to create a drag-queen character. It takes lots of time to draw his outfits!

Q: We consider *Paradise Kiss* the story of Yukari's coming of age. When you wanted to become a manga creator, were you anything like Yukari?

Ai Yazawa: Well, I was kind of a kid who did whatever I wanted. So I didn't have as many doubts as Yukari does. She has always followed her parents' wishes and doesn't really know what she wants to do in the future. I discovered my own career goals quite early, so I didn't share Yukari's problems or frustrations. My parents really understood and supported my goals of becoming a manga creator.



paradise kiss is all about high fashion and hot passion. In keeping with this theme, last year TOKYOPOP revamped the covers for all five volumes in the stylish series.



WHEN AI YAZAWA

sat down with the TOKYOPOP creative team to discuss character designs for Princess Ai, the result was a dynamic combination of Gothic Lolita style and Japanese pop fashion. No surprise, given the über-popularity of *Paradise Kiss*!

However, I did have one teacher in high school who thought I was kidding when I said I wanted to be a manga creator. Even though I was being serious about my hopes and dreams, he took them as a joke, and this hurt me.

Q: When did you decide this is what you wanted to do?

Ai Yazawa: I made up my mind when I was a sophomore in high school. When I was a freshman, I had started to write manga and enter competitions. At first, I didn't win any prizes, but later I started to have more success. Before long, I was invited to "manga school," which was a one-day manga seminar in Tokyo. Some manga creators I adored were there, and I got to ask them questions. I had a chance to talk to some editors and make lots of friends who also wanted to be manga creators. One girl I met was very passionate and had a strong will to succeed. She gave me courage. Before that, I had vaguely considered being a manga creator, but hearing her talking about her own dreams gave me a new drive and focus. Her passion was contagious. I believed very strongly that I could succeed. I was encouraged by the fact I'd won

some prizes. I set a goal: I would draw one manga in two months, then make my debut. It wasn't as easy as I thought it'd be, but I finally did it!

Q: When did you actually debut?

Ai Yazawa: My senior year of high school. I entered a contest called Shinjin Manga Sho, and the editor told me if my manga was good enough for the competition, I could debut as a manga creator. Even though I had an important exam at school, I kept drawing manga and didn't study for the test. I totally blew off school for this contest. I guess I thought I didn't need to worry about school if I was going to

be a manga creator anyway. When I think back on it now, I realize I did a really bold thing. I didn't even feel guilty about it either. I'm just the sort of person who goes her own way no matter what. And my parents never interfered. They said, "If you wanna do it that much, then try it." Even now, they buy my manga on the first day it hits stores and always give me feedback. My mom will say, "Wow, this month's chapter was interesting!" She's just that kind of mom.

Q: How do you design the clothes for *Paradise Kiss*?

Ai Yazawa: Well, if I hadn't been a manga creator, I would have been

"...if I hadn't been a manga creator, I would have been a fashion stylist or designer."

a fashion stylist or designer. I am inspired by designs while reading magazines and watching movies. I refer to drawings of old aristocratic books for Isabella's clothing. Sometimes I pick a theme and then choose clothing for each character based upon that theme. For example, a theme for *Stage 17* is the movie *Death in Venice*. At the stage, Arashi wears clothing with a sailor collar that was inspired by the movie.

PRINCESS AI: HOW HOT?

Ai Yazawa crafted quite the gorgeous heroine in *Princess*

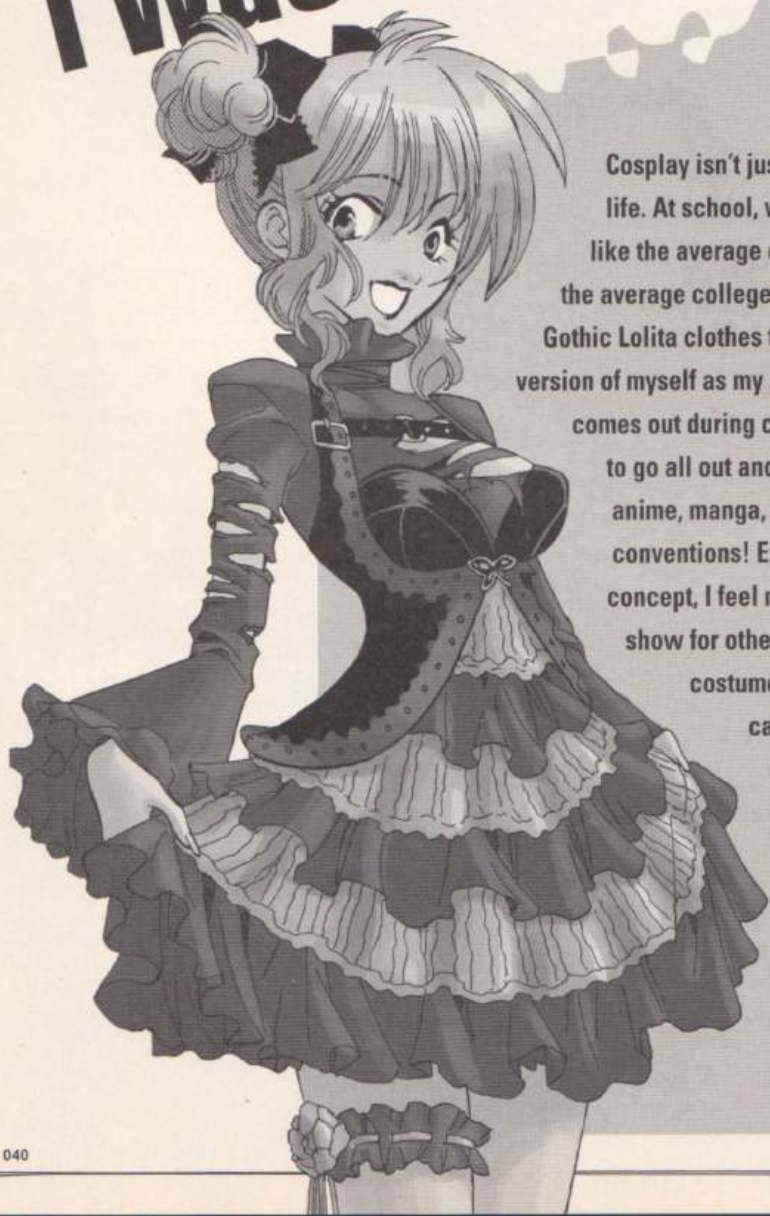
Ai—Ai's got the looks, the voice, that certain *je ne sais quoi* that some guys can't live without. But just how hot is Ai? Here's one editor's un-edited take:

So you're standing in some dank corner bar or walking down the street as day turns to night, and you hear a voice, a sweet, effervescent voice. A voice that makes

your bad knees throb with pain. A multicolored voice. You turn to see who would own such a voice. Before you stands a cherubic-faced, leather-clad goddess wearing ripped fishnets and a vacant look. A punk rock princess. A gutter trash queen. The two tiny wings on her back appear to be tattoos and are a hint of her angelic nature. She is an angel in the devil's lair. A dirty girl with scruples. The girl next door who raided The Sex Pistols' closet. She's part fantasy, part reality... She is Princess Ai.

~Zach Rau

I Was Princess Ai For a Day



Cosplay isn't just a hobby for me; it's a way of life. At school, work, and in daily life, I look like the average college student...or, correction: the average college student with pink hair wearing Gothic Lolita clothes to class! I refer to this normalized version of myself as my alter-ego. You see, the real me comes out during certain weekends, when I'm able to go all out and dress head-to-toe like my favorite anime, manga, and video characters at anime conventions! Even though this seems like a weird concept, I feel more at ease when putting on a show for other convention-goers in elaborate costumes and wigs than I do in the so-called "real world." Let's face it: at conventions we're in our own little microcosm of brotherly, geeky love—and it's what I live for.

When I finally laid my hands on *Princess Ai*, I was psyched. The story and characters were great, but *Princess Ai* is also filled with amazing designs!

The costume I chose to create was designed by Ai Yazawa, my all-time favorite manga artist—and creator of *Paradise Kiss*. I picked this design because of its fantastic combination of Gothic Lolita style and Yazawa's own impeccable creativity! I bought yards of purple and blue fabric that matched her illustration. I worked relentlessly for a month designing, sewing, and hunting for accessories. It probably took me around a hundred hours to finish the costume and accessories, including many boo-boos here and there. For instance, I found out that putting metal grommets in tights is impossible and impractical, so I tossed the idea of having lace-up tights. I'm a stickler for details when it comes to cosplay, but sometimes the laws of the real world just don't mesh with the anime world!

I transformed into Princess Ai at Anime Expo, the biggest anime convention in America. I

was amazed at the caliber of the other cosplayers: there were huge feathered, painted, and wooden angel wings, literally *hundreds* of

"PRINCESS AI IS ABSOLUTELY FILLED WITH AMAZING DESIGNS!"

Naruto ninjas, beautifully embroidered and hand-painted kimonos, and of course, a 10-foot-tall scale replica of a Gundam. Oh my.

I was surprised—and flattered—when people started taking my picture. Because it was such a big convention, it seemed like I posed

for hundreds of pictures. The worst part of dressing up in cosplay is the group of guys that asks to take a picture with me...and then assume it's okay to grab me tightly around the waist. Uh-uh. I've developed my own patented geek-repellent elbow for just that occasion! So guys, watch out!

Dressing up helps me discover other people who are excited about anime or manga, and it also helps me to express my own art form. Cosplaying to me is art: it takes inspiration, ingenuity, and hard work for hours on end. Cosplaying Princess Ai was my way of transforming a vision of art into a tangible reality—and this is what's at the heart of cosplay.

~Michelle Nguyen



AI-VOLUTION OF A MANGA



BEHIND THE SCENES OF PRINCESS AI VOLUME 2: LUMINATION

Princess Ai has been hailed by many as a fresh, exciting new manga... but those people don't know the half of it. Behind the scenes, the transglobal creative process used to create *Princess Ai* was in many ways as complex and innovative as the story itself. For those of you who haven't heard, *Princess Ai* is the first story to be jointly produced by TOKYOPOP and Japanese publisher Shinshokan, and it is published chapter-by-chapter in the monthly Japanese magazine *Wings*. How do we do it? Read on!

STEP 1. The initial story for *Princess Ai* began in the U.S., where D.J. Milky—while visiting from Tokyo—worked with the editor to plot the rough outline for the entire three-volume series before a single page was drawn.

PRINCESS AI: LUMINATION

Scene 3

Characters: Kaz, Meggi

Location: Ai-Land. Same type of elegant and mysterious atmosphere as in the previous chapters.

Plot: Meggi is at Kaz's side again. Clearly, she is infatuated with Kaz and is very excited to be with him. She tells Kaz that her sister Tess has not succeeded. "Noble sir, I regret to tell you what my sororal instincts tell me. Tess, while on the Other Side, has lost her will to fulfill. Something has happened—I'm not sure exactly what."

Kaz listens, nodding. He also senses that Tess has lost her fight. Kaz has no choice. "That bitch—if we cannot bring her back here, we will never be assured of sealing away the Human Royal Family. Meggi—I have no choice but to send you. Don't fail me like your sister did!"

Meggie smiles like a vixen, excited to be able to please Kaz and to put her skills of vengeance to work. "Thank you, thank you, noble one. I won't let you down, sir!"

Scene 4

Characters: Hayabusa, Takeshi, two masseuses.

Location: H.T.A. complex. Hayabusa is getting a massage in a very sophisticated and luxurious spa within the H.T.A. complex. He is lying down on a massage bed, with a towel over his bottom half. A beautiful and obedient masseuse is massaging Hayabusa's back and shoulders with oil. He is still

wearing his sunglasses and holding a TV remote control in his hand. A plasma TV is on the wall and the final scene from the *Heaven Tonight* show highlighting Princess Ai's performance is just finishing. Takeshi is in a comfortable chair against the wall, with his feet in a bucket of warm, bubbly water, soaking. Another petite yet pretty masseuse is holding one of his feet, massaging it just outside of the bucket. Hayabusa begins to talk to Takeshi.

Plot: Hayabusa turns off the TV via remote control just as the concert ends. He snickers and turns his head, facing Takeshi. "Looks like our rock diva is even more rebellious than I had imagined. By the end of the week, the entire population of teenagers will be her devotees."

Takeshi nods, smiling in agreement, "Yes, sir."

Suddenly, Hayabusa's facial expression becomes cold and hard. Takeshi is a bit surprised. "It looks like she's trying to change the game—no one is permitted to do that."

Takeshi tries to cover a bit of fear. "How so?" he asks.

Hayabusa mutters, almost to himself. "Threatening me with breaking the contract, refusing to cooperate—there is a point where one can cross the line."

STEP 2. Taking his plot to Tokyo, Milky worked with talented manga-ka Misaho Kujiradou and her editor Akane Ishii to refine the storyline. From this revision, Kujiradou created the "name" (the Japanese term for rough layouts of manga pages), complete with rough dialogue.



STEP 3. After reviewing the name with Ishii and Milky, Kujiradou made any agreed-upon revisions and drew more finished versions of the pages in pencil.



STEP 4. Once the pencils had been approved, Kujiiradou inked the pages, erased any stray pencil lines, and then added tones. Though Kujiiradou inked the outlines of the balloons, the lettering was added at the publisher (Shinshokan).



STEP 5. After five chapters were published, they were collected into a tankobon (graphic novel) of their own. At this point, Kujiiradou had the opportunity to retouch the already-published pages if there was anything she wanted fixed or adjusted. If you'd like to see what changes (if any) were made at this stage, buy the book to compare!

PRINCESS AI IS A DOLL....

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7- and 12-inch Figures

Coming Summer 2005

Exclusively from

BLEEDING EDGE™



"Borrowed Threads Ai" 12in

"Angelic Ai" 7in

"Fell-to-Earth Ai" 7in

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TOWER
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...FROM THE BOOKSTORE TO THE TOY STORE

**BLOOD, SWEAT
AND WAX:**

**ADDING A NEW
DIMENSION TO
PRINCESS AI**



DID YOU KNOW THAT PRINCESS AI IS STEPPING OFF THE MANGA PAGE AND INTO YOUR HOT LITTLE HANDS? IT IS TRUE...THANKS TO STEVE VARNER AND BLEEDING EDGE!



Steve Varner with a work-in-progress.

Steve Varner is C.E.O. and founder of Varner Studios and Bleeding Edge, the company that created the super-popular Bleeding Edge Goths line of dolls. A veteran of the toy business, Steve is also a sculptor: he fashioned the very first *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle* figure

ever! The studio's list of credits includes *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Star Wars*, *The Simpsons*, *Star Trek*, *Tomb Raider*, and *South Park*. Varner Studios has been producing high-quality toy sculptures for major American toy companies since the 1970s, and they're best known for producing accurate portraits and likenesses of famous people and characters.

Now, Steve and his talented crew of craftspeople are bringing Princess Ai into the third dimension! Several varieties of Ai will be available in both seven-inch and twelve-inch sizes, and it's like the figures just stepped right out of the book. How do they do it? Read on!

THE PROCESS:

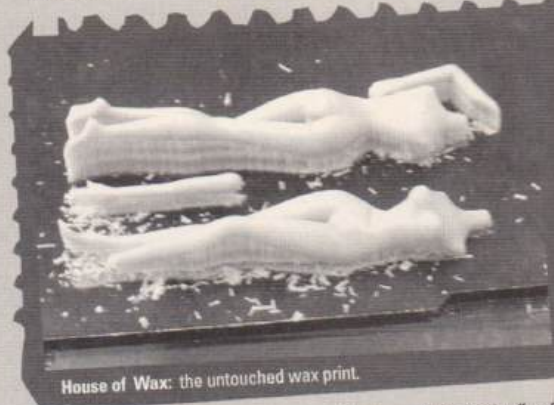
1. DRAW: First, James does turnaround drawings of all the figures (based on images from the *Princess Ai* manga).

2. 3-D: Based on the drawings, a 3-D computer model is built in Maya by Matthew. (Maya is a 3-D computer program that is often used by animators.)

3. SCULPT: The Maya model is transferred to Freeform, a program that Steve finds "more like sculpting by hand" than Maya. When asked about whether he preferred hand sculpting or computer sculpting, Steve explained, "Computer sculpting is used for things that save us time and can be done better with the machine. If sculpting by hand works better, I do that."

4. MORE SCULPTING: Ai's head is sculpted separately from her body in Freeform. Steve sculpts a lot of heads for various dolls using that program.

5. POSE: Steve transfers the Freeform-enhanced model back to Maya to remesh and to add a skeleton. The skeleton enables the model to be easily posed.



House of Wax: the untouched wax print.

6. WAX: Once a pose is finalized, a 3-D "print" of the figure is made in wax. A "wax printer" creates a rough version of the figure by adding layer after



Pieces of Ai: an unassembled urethane figure.

layer of wax in controlled amounts to form a 3-D object. Though he and his staff are more than capable of creating models without the high-tech machinery, Steve noted, "Using computer sculpting and the 3-D

wax printer can cut development time in half."

7. MOLD: The wax figure is cleaned up and used to create a rubber mold. Using the rubber mold, a urethane model is made. At this stage, the garments, accessories, and hair are all hand-sculpted on the urethane model using Sculpey, clay and/or wax.

8. TOOLING: While a tooling copy of the model is sent to the factory to create a steel injection mold (also known as a production mold), white copies of the figure are made in-house for paint samples / approvals. The final paint samples are sent to the factory to be guides for the mass-produced models.



3 Faces of Ai: just a few of Ai's many looks.

9. PAINT: At the factory, electroplated masks are created so assembly lines of people and machines can airbrush the paint onto the dolls.

QUALITY CONTROL:

When it comes to quality control, Steve works with tooling engineers via phone, e-mail and actual trips to China to ensure parts fit together properly, seams are in the right places, and that there is enough room for connectors.

The large dolls' bodies are made in a similar fashion to the bodies of the 7-inch dolls, but their heads and clothes are quite different:

Heads:

The large, hollow, vinyl heads are created using a process called "rotocasting." On the heads, a hairline is drawn, the scalp is sprayed the same shade as the hair color, and the hair is sewn in. Think it's tricky getting your hair to behave at times? Try styling the hair on a head that's smaller than a golf ball!

Clothes:

The clothes are designed on paper by Bleeding Edge. Bleeding Edge then hires a seamstress in the U.S.A. She is a woman who worked in the Chinese garment industry before becoming Princess Ai's couturier. She begins by creating patterns and then sewing Ai's outfits based on those patterns. After seeing how the outfits work (or don't work) on the figures, she revises the patterns and the garments accordingly. Once approved, the clothed dolls and the patterns are sent to the factory along with fabric swatches.



**THINK IT'S TRICKY
GETTING YOUR HAIR
TO BEHAVE AT TIMES?
TRY STYLING THE HAIR
ON A HEAD THAT'S
SMALLER THAN A
GOLF BALL!**

Want to see more about Princess Ai and Varner Studios/Bleeding Edge? Go to www.TOKYOPOP.com, www.varnerstudios.com and www.begoths.com!

Thanks to the Varner Studios/Bleeding Edge staff for showing us a glimpse of how our tempestuous Princess became an absolute doll!

Varner Studios/

Bleeding Edge is:

Matthew Coffin
Butch Hewitt
Veronica Mihalopoulos
Robert Sutton
Steve Varner
Russell Vossler
Toni Deaso
James Muscarello
Ivy Poon / Hong Kong office
Siw Varner
Ben Velasquez

FANTASTIC!

Art from Our Creative Fans

As the editor of the immensely popular *Fruits Basket*, I probably receive more fan art than anyone in the TOKYOPOP office. Opening our fans' letters and looking at their drawings never fails to put

"Our readers are clever, often hilarious and extremely dedicated."

a smile on my face (and a paper cut on my finger—really, I get a lot of mail). It's inspiring to know that so many people love the books we make. I've been proved right about some-

thing I've felt for years: Our readers are clever, often hilarious and extremely dedicated. They feel a strong connection to the characters in our books, and with every wonderful piece of art I look at, I feel more and more connected to them!

So, with no further ado, please enjoy some awesome fan art for *Fruits Basket*, *Samurai Deeper Kyo*, *Vampire Game*, *Rave Master* and *Peach Girl*! And when you guys and gals send art and letters in the future, be sure to include some Band-Aids!

~Paul Morrissey



Vampire Game by Brandy Nepinak

This is definitely a cute cat, with a nice, simple sketch style. It's always good to see some series that are not number-one best-sellers getting love from the fans.



Samurai Deeper Kyo by Elizabeth McLachlan

This is great. I mean, how can we not include fan art that has a really cool sword fight?



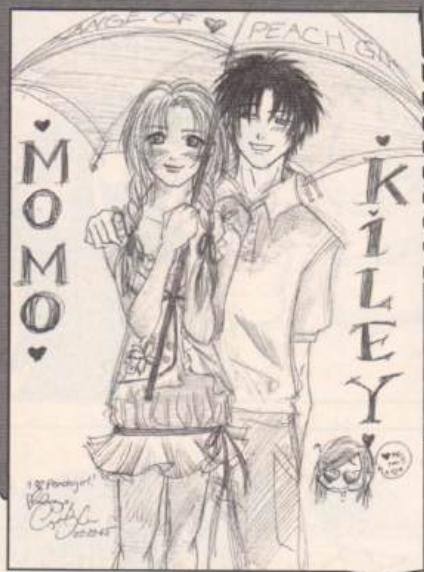
Fruits Basket by Paige Hope Thor

This piece has it all: cute, well-drawn animals, with Shigure holding the dress in the upper right corner. All the animals are awesome. I wonder what Shigure has in mind for Tohru?



Rave Master / Elie by Claudio Glavan

Keep on drawing, Claudio! Rave Master is a really fun series!



Peach Girl / Momo & Kiley by Crystal Lee

This piece sums up *Peach Girl* really well. This notion of striving for romance that's depicted here really shows what the series is about. Also, Crystal adds a bit of the love triangle with Sae near the bottom right. Good job!



Samurai Deeper Kyo / Yukimura by Robin Rognstad

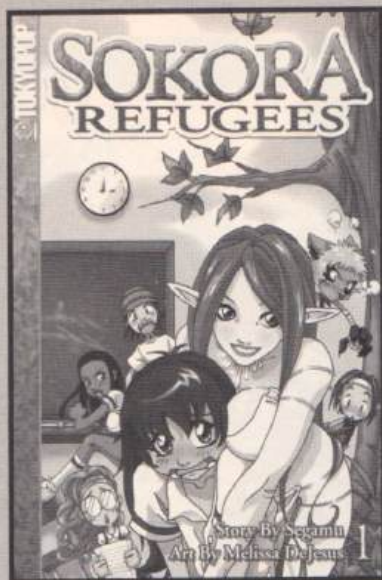
The inking is really nice, Robin—you've made this piece totally your own. It's always cool when we receive fan art from people who love and know the book but don't mimic the style.

SOKORA REFUGEES

THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD FACES HER GREATEST CHALLENGE: CLEAVAGE

The world of
Sokora Refugees
is a fan service
extravaganza

There's a saying in manga: A little fan service goes a long way... and a lot of fan service is what you get in *Sokora Refugees*. But nestled between the T and the A you'll find a charming story about Kana, a girl who is trying to get noticed by someone...anyone! But when the new boy in class conjures up a portal in the girl's shower, she is transported to the magical world of Sokora—in the middle of a giant battle between good and evil! Now, on top of landing at the center of this conflict, she finds that her body is beginning to go through some tremendous changes! ~Rob Valois





DUDE,
WHAT'S WITH
MY FEET?



freakish

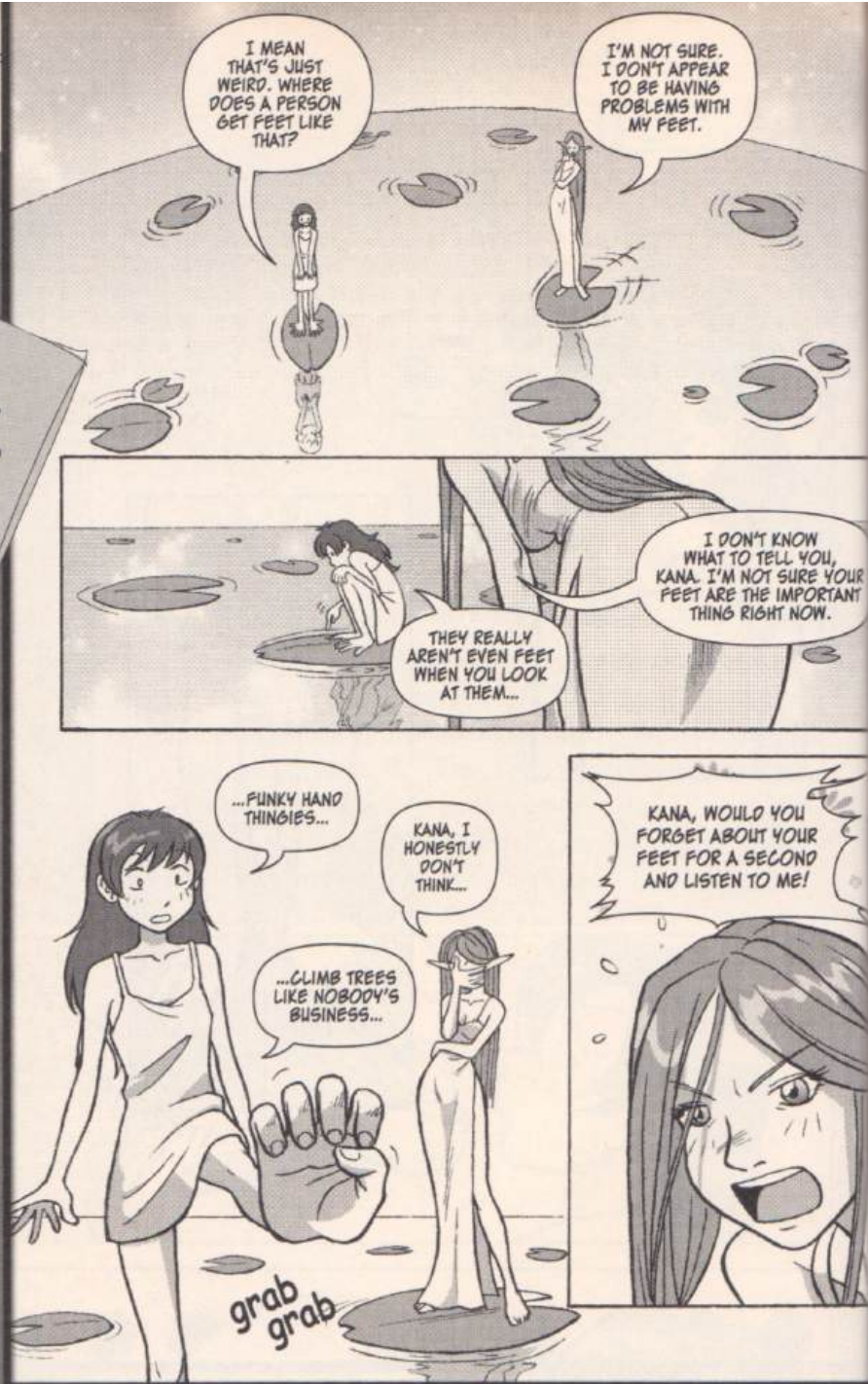
This is just
one of the
many sight gags
in the manga

What you need to know about Kana is that she's a big slacker who is consistently behind on her schoolwork and has no luck with the boys. Oh, and she hasn't blossomed (yet).

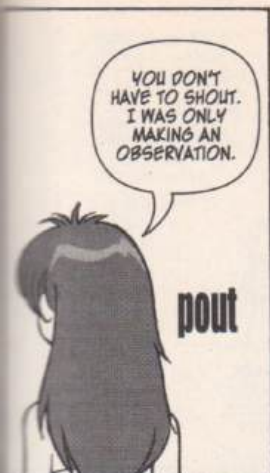
>> If you look closely at this page, you'll see that on Kana's left foot is a right hand (and on the right foot is a left hand). This just adds to the freakish quality of the entertainment.

The balloons
always seem to
cover up the
good stuff

VIEW THE MANGA PLAYER AT
WWW.TOKYOPOP.COM/SOKORA



Not only is Kana a bit of a slacker, she has a short attention span. But you would, too, if you suddenly developed funky hand thingies on your feet! >>



What distinguishes *Sokora Refugees* from other manga is that its American creators have all the conventions of a good fan service Japanese manga down pat. There's a portal in the girls' shower, a high school soap opera, and a fair amount of cheese.

Visit
www.sokora.com
 for more...
 way more

>> When her body is possessed by the spirit of a very powerful (and sexy) elf sorceress, there's not a whole lot Kana can do except go with the flow.

What is it about long, flowing hair in manga? In some cases, it makes for a nice segue to a flashback or backstory. Look at how Melissa DeJesus uses Veila's hair to lead readers through the bottom panels.

Like we said earlier, a little T & A goes a long way



Kana is the only one of her friends who hasn't blossomed, if you get our drift. But when Veila embeds her essence into Kana, things turn a bit explosive. >>

WHAT'S NEXT FOR KANA?

So you get the picture.

There's Kana the flat-chested, down-on-her-luck girl. And then there's the bodacious, bootylicious elf who is time-sharing Kana's body (long story involving a gargoyle). But the fun doesn't begin or end there—*Sokora Refugees* has cool worlds between which the characters go back and forth, a giant battle raging on and on, and, of course, fabulous sight gags and jokes. *Sokora Refugees* is at your (fan) service. Sweet dreams!



TOP 10 FAN SERVICE SERIES

Looking for some manga with "revealing" shots, exposed skin, compromising positions, and cleavage? Here's a top-10 list of some of the best we have to offer.

If you're
looking for a
little fan service
with your
manga...

10. Sokora Refugees

This one advertises cleavage, and oh does it deliver! Plenty of steamy action in the shower. And nothing lost in the translation!

9. Remote

This one would have been ranked a bit higher, but ultimately it was left at number nine because it's too much substance and not enough tease. But many bonus points for angles that allow the reader to see Kurumi's panties in many panels.

8. GetBackers

This one makes the list entirely due to buxom character Hevn's ability to show almost everything and still leave something for the imagination.

7. Ai Yori Aoshi

One nerdy guy with a whole zoo of hot girls for him to accidentally see naked. Wait, that sounds strangely familiar... Check this one out if you're in the mood for some frontal nudity.

6. Legal Drug

Fan service isn't always about the T & A—sometimes it can be more subtle and without the T. And sometimes it can be right out there and flaming as in *Legal Drug*. Boys this pretty should be against the law.

5. Mahoromatic

Ever wish you had a hot maid to "take care" of you? Ever dream you had a hot teacher to "take care" of you? This one has it all—tension, comedy and robot nudity. Take care!

4. DearS

A semi-naked girl who lives in your closet and calls you master, what else do you need? Whoever said an intelligent race of aliens understands the concept of clothing?

3. A.I. Love You

If you thought things on the Internet were dirty, wait until they escape out into the real world and hentai literally comes to life!

2. Love Hina

One nerdy guy with a whole zoo of hot girls for him to accidentally see naked. Six girls plus 12 breasts equals more fan service than you can shake a stick at. From the same dirty mind that brought us *A.I. Love You*.

1. Battle Vixens

Don't you just love it when the girls' clothes explode off as they fight? Watch the sexy main character Hakufu go up against the toughest kids in high school!

the RISING STARS of MANGA™

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

The grind of producing a complete 20-page manga is no small matter. Sleep deprivation, intense focus, and the absence of sunlight and outdoor air has contributed on numerous occasions to the RSoMbification of many fresh faced manga-ka. Those who do not expire in the endeavor, however, face even greater challenges as they move onto professional projects with TOKYOPOP and other publishers.

We thought it would be fun to catch up with past winners, and preview some of their upcoming projects. These names are only the beginning. There are other finalists with whom we are working who cannot be announced at this time. We trust that this success will continue with the winners on this page, some of whom are featured in this edition of *Takuhai*. Hopefully these manga-ka will prove to be an inspiration to all the RSoMbies of future contests. ~Brandon Montclare



Ron Kaulfersch & Mike Schwark

RSoM Vol. 1: "Van Von Hunter"
Elder statesmen to RSoMbies everywhere, Mike and Ron continue to sponsor RSoM hopefuls on the forums at their www.pseudome.net. And keeping up the street cred, their Second Place entry from RSoM is now the Original Manga series *Van Von Hunter*. **See Page 70!**



Michael Vega

RSoM Vol. 1: "Emmalyn's Mansion"
Michael's RSoM entry wowed us with clean linework and characters that could appeal to a wide range

of readers. He will be exercising those talents again as he picks up the artistic duties on the forthcoming *Dark Moon Diary*.



Wes Abbott

RSoM Vol. 2: "Dogby Walks Alone"
It's been a long, lonely walk for the fan favorite Happy Place mascot. At long last we are proud to announce that Wes is working on a *Dogby Walks Alone* Original Manga series.



Lindsay Cibos

RSoM Vol. 2: "Peach Fuzz"
RSoM 2 Grand Prize entry *Peach Fuzz* is now an Original Manga series. Fun for all ages continues

as we explore further the epic struggle inherent in the relationship between man (well, a girl) and beast (here, a ferret).



Tania Del Rio

RSoM Vol. 2: "Love Sketch"
We all loved her RSoM entry, and so did the editors at Archie Comics. Tania has picked up both

the writing and art duties during her critically acclaimed run on *Sabrina*.



Shane (Konecny) Granger

RSoM Vol. 2: "Possessions"
The reader feels immediately the impact of Shane's pencils in his RSoM entry. His skills and

creativity in penciling are now being applied to the upcoming Original Manga series *Psy-Comm*, which we'll preview for you in the next issue of *Takuhai*.


Marty LeGrow

RSoM Vol. 2: "Nikolai"

Marty's vision of manga impressed us with its innovative style and uncompromising attitude. Her unique flair is being applied to the new Original Manga series *Bizenghast*. **See Page 16!**


Irene Flores & Ashly Raiti

RSoM Vol. 3: "Life Remains"

Irene and Ashly wowed us with their touching relationship story in RSoM. The creators evidence a broad artistic range as they delve into the gothic genre with the forthcoming Original Manga series *Mark of the Succubus*.


Nathan Maurer

RSoM Vol. 3: "Atomic King Daidogan"

A mix of wild hilarity, over-the-top action, and lovable characters made *Atomic King Daidogan* the top entry in RSoM Vol. 3. Readers will continue to be blown away as Nathan expands his Grand Prize entry into an Original Manga series. Anticipation is the high.


Christy Lijewski

RSoM Vol. 3: "Doors"

After her RSoM entry helped her land a gig at Slave Labor Graphics on the creator-owned *Next Exit* series, Christy returns to the TOKYOPOP fold with the full-length Original Manga *Re:Play*.


Felipe Smith

RSoM Vol. 3: "Manga"

The Second Place entry in RSoM Vol. 3 made every editor fear slightly for our lives. Luckily, it turns out that Felipe is really a nice guy. Check out his latest manga creation: *MBQ*. **See Page 62!**


Andy Helms

RSoM Vol. 4: "Bombos versus Everything"

It turns out that everything is—well—a lot, so be on the lookout for more


Amy Kim Ganter

RSoM Vol. 4: "The Hopeless Romantic and The Hapless Girl"

Amy proved she could handle the ups and downs of love in her RSoM Vol. 4 Third Place entry. Fans can look forward to new misadventures in romance in the upcoming full-length Original Manga series *Sorcerers & Secretaries*.


Karen Remsen

RSoM Vol. 4: "Le Masque"

Slightly more challenging than her 20 pages of manga in RSoM was probably Karen's recent graduation from high school. Look for her original "Chronicles of Koryo" back-up feature in a future issue of *Threads of Time*.

"SLEEP DEPRIVATION, INTENSE FOCUS, AND THE ABSENCE OF SUNLIGHT AND OUTDOOR AIR HAS CONTRIBUTED ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS TO THE RSOMBIFICATION OF MANY FRESH FACED MANGA-KA."


Jess Stoncius

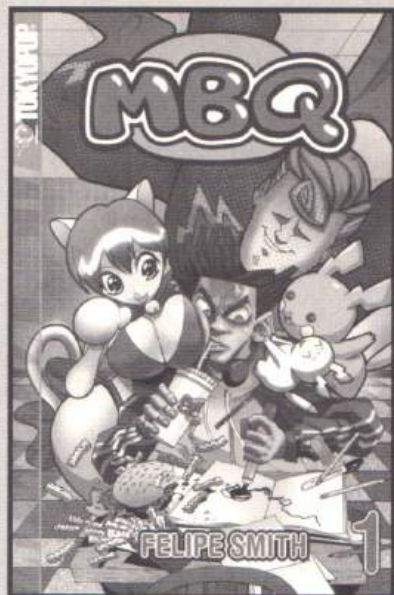
RSoM Vol. 4: "Work Bites"

Work still bites. Catch up with the dark tribulations of the wannabe-lord-of-the-night-yet-stuck-in-my-crappy-job-at-the-mall vampire Lars in the forthcoming full-length Original Manga series *Work Bites*.

mbq

LIFE IN THE GREAT BIG, BURGER-FED UNDERBELLY OF THE BIG CITY

Omario struggles
to eschew the
commonplace in
comics and tries to
tell his own story
in his own way



MBQ is about life. It's about people. It's about the extraordinary in the everyday. Some of it's going to thrill you, some of it's going to make you cry, some of it's going to make you cringe, and some of it is going to make you die laughing. When I first came across Felipe Smith's work about a year and a half ago—in one of the *Rising Stars of Manga™*

submissions that would eventually make it into the book as its second place winner—I sensed that here was an artist with a vision. His winning story was about an exasperated artist who, in a fit of frustration, decides to shoot his editor. What else could I do but strive to be the editor this cat does not want to end up shooting. (And by the way, in the story he ends up deciding not to shoot his editor, but is satisfied instead by flipping him off.) Now, here we are on the eve of publication for *MBQ*, having learned that this is only the beginning from this incredible storyteller. Please enjoy this little taste of *MBQ* in which Omario, the main character, finds himself in the midst of deep contemplation about his artistic convictions.

~Luis Reyes

An American of Jamaican-Argentine descent, Felipe Smith completed high school in Argentina and went on to pursue a BFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His ongoing efforts to achieve fame and fortune have included: busing tables in a country club; waiting tables at a Chinese restaurant in Los Angeles; and packing boxes and popping bubble wrap at a postal center.

But **WAIT**, I read comics, too...



MBQ is going to
thrill you...make
you cringe...make
you cry...and make
you die laughing

I just see no
personality
in comics.
Comics, like any
other art form,
should be a
reflection of the
artist himself, if
there's any hope
for **originality**.

Originality...

something
personal
is original. Doing
what everybody
else is doing
is **NOT.**

>> Omario, a comic book artist, unleashes his anger at an industry that he sees is growing fat by its sheer inaction. Notice his prototypical comic book geeks: the obese, the scrawny, the little kids, the Gothic freak...all people we know and love. I think we can all understand that.

SIGN UP AT: www.TOKYOPOP.com

National Public Radio
is hip to manga?
Felipe Smith was
recently interviewed on
NPR for a piece called,
"A Day in the Life." Go
to the National Public
Radio website and
search the "A Day in
the Life" archive to
hear more.

Felipe Smith
was an
artist for
Transformers

VIEW THE MANGA PLAYER AT
www.TOKYOPOP.com/mbq

This
is what they call
"CLASSIC," and
classics **never**
die.

So forever we'll
see **caped**
beefcakes
punching
through
walls...

bounding
over buildings and carrying
large breasted blondes
in their arms through
smoldering
wreckages.

I hate comics,
but ironically,
that's what I'm
here to do.

So, Omario doesn't want to draw superheroes—but is Felipe Smith's hero a case of art imitating life? Whatever the answer is, I think we can all understand that. >>

**BUT I DON'T
WANT TO DRAW SUPER
HEROES, ROBOTS
OR ALIENS**

**NO NINJAS,
NO SUPERVILLAINS,
NO TIME-WARPING
MONSTERS.**

**NO GOTHIC
ADVENTURES,**

**NO MAGICAL
QUESTS.**

How many actual manga and anime characters can you identify on this page? Well, the answer is "zero"...but some look like they might be distant relatives of our favorites, don't they?

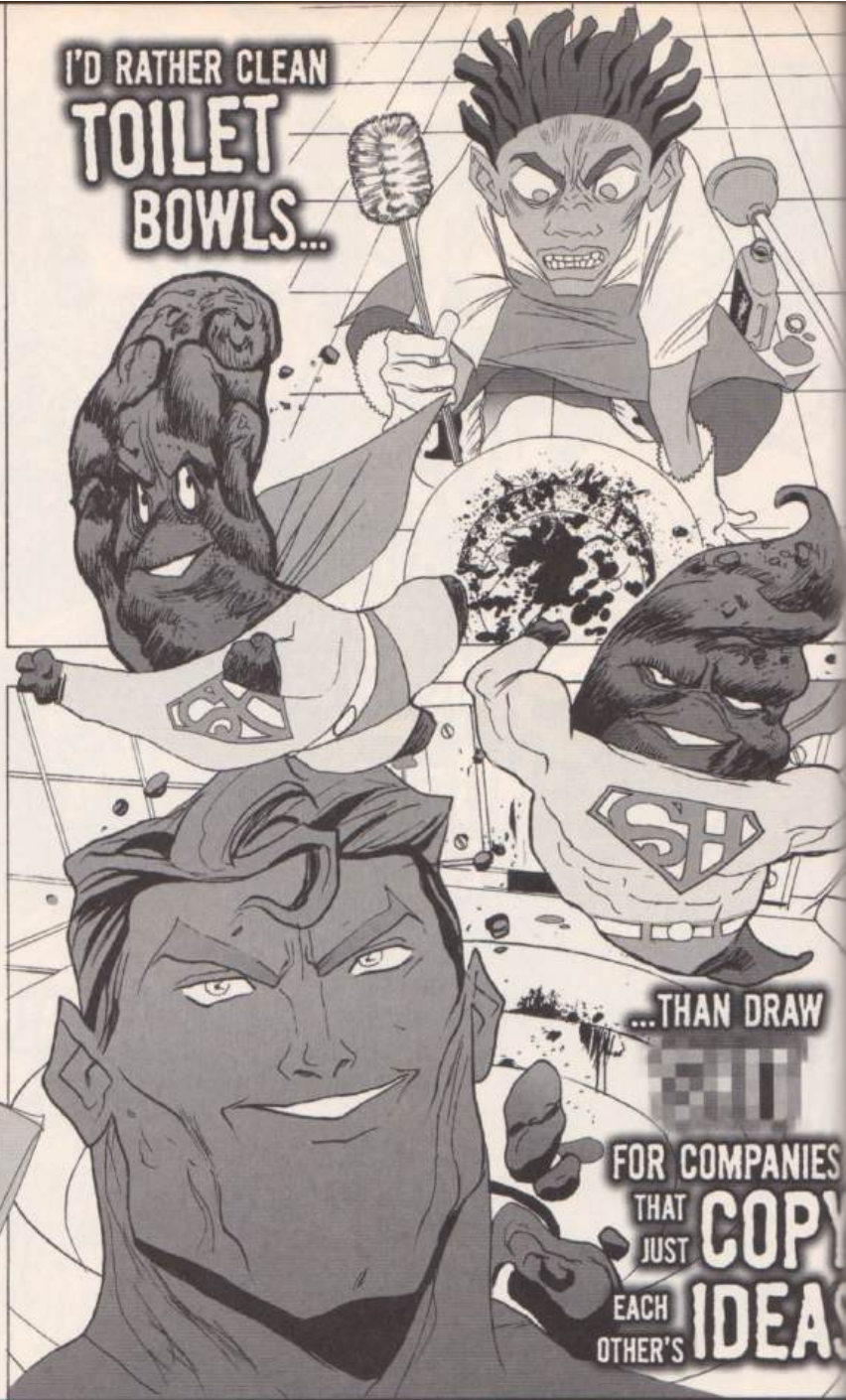
These are
all parodies
of comics
archetypes

>> So, Omario doesn't want to draw cutesy, mecha, monster, sci-fi schlock. Again, given his background and talent, I think we can all understand that.

Felipe had to take
some pretty wretched
jobs before he started
MBQ. Perhaps his
sense of humor about
it is what makes him
able to draw poop
that looks so cool.

Omario
stands firmly
on his soap
box...

I'D RATHER CLEAN
TOILET
BOWLS...



...THAN DRAW

FOR COMPANIES
THAT JUST COPY
EACH OTHER'S IDEAS

So, Omario is dedicated and committed not to give into the corporate hogs that regurgitate material time and time again in the myopic pursuit of money. I think we can understand that. >>

Instead of trying to
create the **next**
original hit, they
merely imitate
past hits.

The result is a
lame, uniform,
non-variable
unchanging
industry.

I'm not
gonna do
that.

...until
Omario receives
a note from his
roommate

That's why I
don't have a job.



I need to
get a job.



Omar
It's almost
the 3rd! Soon.
Rent is Due!
Please pay S.A.P.
So...

>> So, Omario has some bills to pay. And he has to struggle between artistic integrity and paying the rent. I think we can all understand that.

BUY THE MANGA AT
www.TOKYOPOP.com/shop

TOKYOPOP editor LUIS PEYES sat DOWN TO CHAT WITH FELIPE SMITH

The stories are
about people—
not about thugs,
not about cops,
not even about
struggling artists

WHAT'S NEXT IN MBQ?

This story is not a diatribe on the state of the manga industry. This particular rant is the whirlwind that is occurring in Omario alone. It seems like everyone else in the book is buckling down and serving their time in the hard life while they work toward their dream. There are all sorts of people cruising through *MBQ* looking for the thing that makes their life complete. Some find it, some don't. You just have to keep reading.

LR: When people pick up *MBQ*, what do you want them to pay attention to?

FS: I want them to notice that this is not like most of the manga that's out there in English now.

First of all, it's a manga about the U.S., not Japan. There are a lot of real places and real events in the book, and people may not know that by reading, but it adds to the texture of the world I put these characters in. I think if people did know that, they'd pay a lot more attention to what's going on in the stories. The stories are about people—not about thugs, not about cops, not even about struggling artists. It's just about people in general, and how they get along, and why they do things.

LR: How is telling the story of people rather than plot intrinsic to the way you write?

FS: When people meet, they talk, or they don't talk. There's the story. It runs with dialogue and human interaction. And not dialogue that just describes the plot to you, a story from A to B. It's just dialogue in a natural kind of way that moves the characters through their paces. It's through the dialogue that you find out who the characters are.

These are actual people that like and respond to things. They have favorite foods, places they like to be. What I don't want people to think is that this is a book about violence.

LR: Talk about the violence, because it is acute in the book.

FS: I want to bring a certain sense of realism to the story. And violence is a part of reality. The way people feel is often violent. However, when violence shows up in other manga, or in anime, it's two dudes squaring off, one on one, each with power. But that's not how real violence is. People fight dirty, people get hit when they're not looking. There are no heroes coming out of violence in *MBQ*. Readers should not be shocked that there are eight straight pages of one dude getting his head kicked in. They should read into the story and see why this violence is happening. It is a way to show how these characters think and operate. And through the violence, the reader has to build an opinion about this character that might actually change later on. Things aren't always what they appear to be. Omario is not an "angry black man." He's a man who can express his emotions. Not everyone, not every culture can express what they feel. He's a guy that expresses what he feels a lot. Maybe too much sometimes. Maybe it gets him in trouble.

REAL-LIFE LOCATIONS FEATURED IN MBQ

LR: It's kind of like you're breaking down stereotypical perceptions of character in the very way they act, be it through violence, their work ethic, or the way they talk.

FS: I think stereotypes are something you can't really use as a guide when reading this book. You can't really look at the characters' physical appearance and determine who they are or what they're doing. You really have to listen to how they speak and see how they move, what they do. You have to figure out who the good guy is and the bad guy is, because they're not going to be who you think they should be.

LR: Are there good guys and bad guys in this book?

FS: Certainly. There are all kinds of people. There are as many people as you could find in L.A. in this book. It's not just black and white. There are so many tones of gray, your eyes will fall out.

LR: So what does Omario ultimately want?

FS: Omario wants to be happy. Omario wants to do something that he wants to do. He doesn't want to be told what to do. He believes he has a vision. He is a very proud character. He may even think he's a genius. But the one thing he is on the right track about is that he knows what he wants to do with his life. I think many people don't know that. And no matter how old you are, I think some people never figure it out.

One of the interesting things about Felipe Smith is that he's lived in Los Angeles for four years and has never owned a car, which means he rides his bike and his skateboard everywhere. Doing so, he gets a really good look at the city, the buildings, the neighborhoods, the concrete and organic features that make up the cityscape. As a result, *MBQ* is filled with actual locations from the city. Here are a few.

Omario's Apartment Building—we'd show you Omario's bedroom but right now it is too messy even by Omario's low standards.



IN-N-OUT Burger—The model for the local MBQ, a bustling fast food joint indigenous to Southern California that serves some of the freshest burgers in town. Just as Omario sticks to his ideals, IN-N-OUT Burger is famous in California for, despite several offers by larger restaurant chains, maintaining its family-run status and a consistent high quality. By contrast, MBQ is a chain conglomerate



bent on selling the most mediocre food for the highest price. Like I said, IN-N-OUT was simply the visual model for the local MBQ.



L.A. River—The L.A. River winds through Los Angeles like a confused snake starving for a drink. Thus one of Felipe Smith's most fictional elements of the book, an LA Riverbed filled with water. Maybe after El Niño.



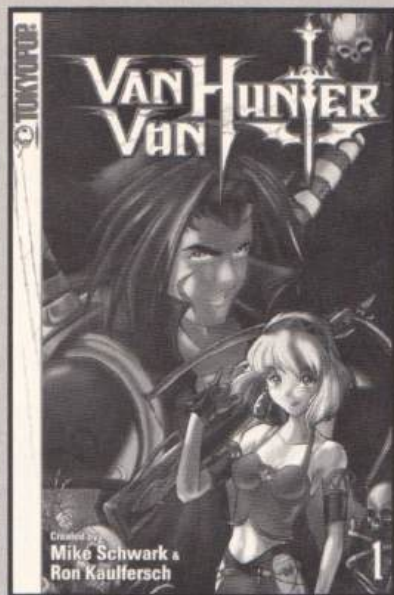
Yuu Yuu's—In the book, it's Uuy Uuy's, a Karaoke bar near the corner of Olympic and Sawtelle, a corner known for its Japanese businesses.

VAN VON HUNTER

THE LEGENDARY HUNTER OF EVIL...STUFF

The best way to win over a non-fan of a genre is to make fun of the genre—enter *Van Von Hunter*

VAN VON HUNTER: THE BEST-SELLING MANGA OF ALL TIME!*



If someone asked me what my favorite genres were, fantasy would probably be pretty low on my list. There's so much out there that is derivative and unoriginal, and as much as I like reading, those 900-page tomes that are part 7 of 23 in the series have never held a lot of appeal for me. I love *Lord of the Rings* as much as the next girl, but give me a good anthropological dissertation on the representation of women in Japanese theater any day of the week. Or some *Fruits Basket*. ;)



Then came *Van Von Hunter*. The best way to win over a non-fan of the genre is to make fun of the genre, and this series totally won me over. For one thing, the art just keeps getting more and more impressive as the series goes along, and it started out pretty awesome to begin with. Then there's the wacky and wild cast of characters—I mean, how can you go wrong with a series that has deposed, but ever-fashionable royalty (with a really unfortunate nickname), another character who doesn't seem to have a name at all (she's got plenty of charm and guts to make up for it), and a maid who likes to use a butcher knife to clean the floors? The series is whip-smart with a sharp sense of humor and the style to back it up. I was hooked. Watching these guys go from devoted but struggling independent artists to real pros has been a lot of fun. ~Lillian Diaz-Przybyl

*According to quantum mechanics, any and all possibilities that can exist do exist. Thus, there are an infinite number of dimensions in which *Van Von Hunter* is the best-selling manga of all time. Well, no?



LET ME TELL YOU OF THE TIME OF LEGENDS.
BACK WHEN THE WORLD WAS STILL YOUNG, AND
THE BLACKEST FORCES OF DARKNESS SOUGHT
TO TAKE THE EARTH AS THEIR OWN.

What kind
of kingdom
is called
"Dikay"?



EVIL FOUND ITS WAY INTO
THIS WORLD THROUGH A
DEMONIC GATE ERECTED IN
THE KINGDOM OF DIKAY, AND
BROUGHT WITH IT ALL
MANNER OF GHOULS,
VAMPIRES AND THE UNDEAD.

THE DARKNESS TWISTED
THE LAND INTO AN IMAGE OF
ITS OWN MALICIOUSNESS,
AND THE KINGDOM BECAME
THE CORNERSTONE OF EVIL
IN THIS WORLD.

The creators' Van Von
Hunter webcomic

(which can be found,
predictably, at www.vanvonhunter.com)

does help to fill in some
of the backstory of the
characters and their
world (you'll get the
jokes about breakfast
buffets better).

>> Sure, the narration begins in a traditional, "Once upon a time" fashion found in most fantasy series. But here you can find hints of the wacky humor that is about to follow throughout this epic tale.

The name should
be pronounced
"Vahn Von Hunter,"
but no one actu-
ally says that—not
even the manga's
creators

VIEW THE MANGA PLAYER AT
www.TOKYOPOP.com/vanvonhunter

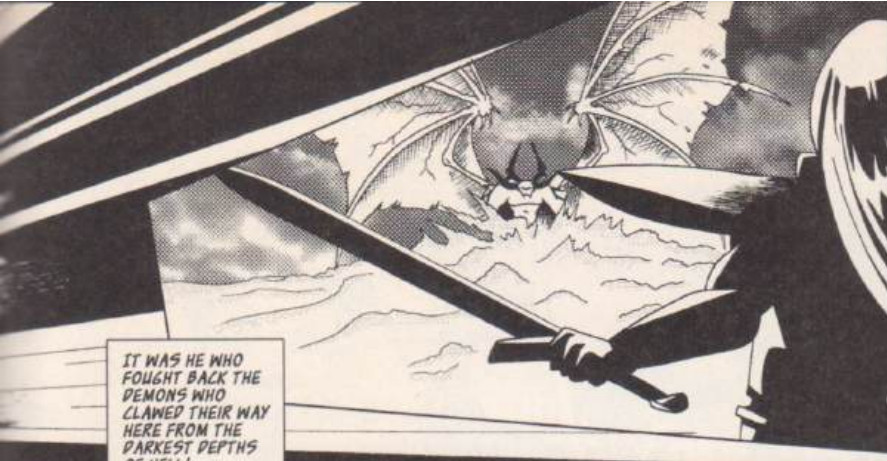


IN THOSE, THE
MOST ANCIENT
OF TIMES,
A GREAT
CHAMPION
EMERGED! HE
LIVED FOR ONE
PURPOSE AND
ONE PURPOSE
ALONE!

TO HUNT ALL
THAT IS EVIL,
AND DESTROY
IT UTTERLY!!

IT WAS HE WHO
OVERTHREW THE
CORRUPT PRINCE
WHO HAD
ENGINEERED THE
ASSAULT OF THE
LEGIONS OF TERROR!

Here is a big whopper of a setup to the ensuing chaos and shenanigans. There's a bit of backstory, but the sight gags and one-liners and parody begin to emerge... >>



IT WAS HE WHO
FOUGHT BACK THE
DEMONS WHO
CLAWED THEIR WAY
HERE FROM THE
DARKEST DEPTHS
OF HELL!



AND THEN, AT LAST,
WHEN THE WICKED
SORCERESS WAS
ABOUT TO DESTROY
THE UNIVERSE WITH
HER ULTIMATE ATTACK,
HE VANQUISHED HER
AS WELL, AND BROUGHT
ABOUT FINAL PEACE!

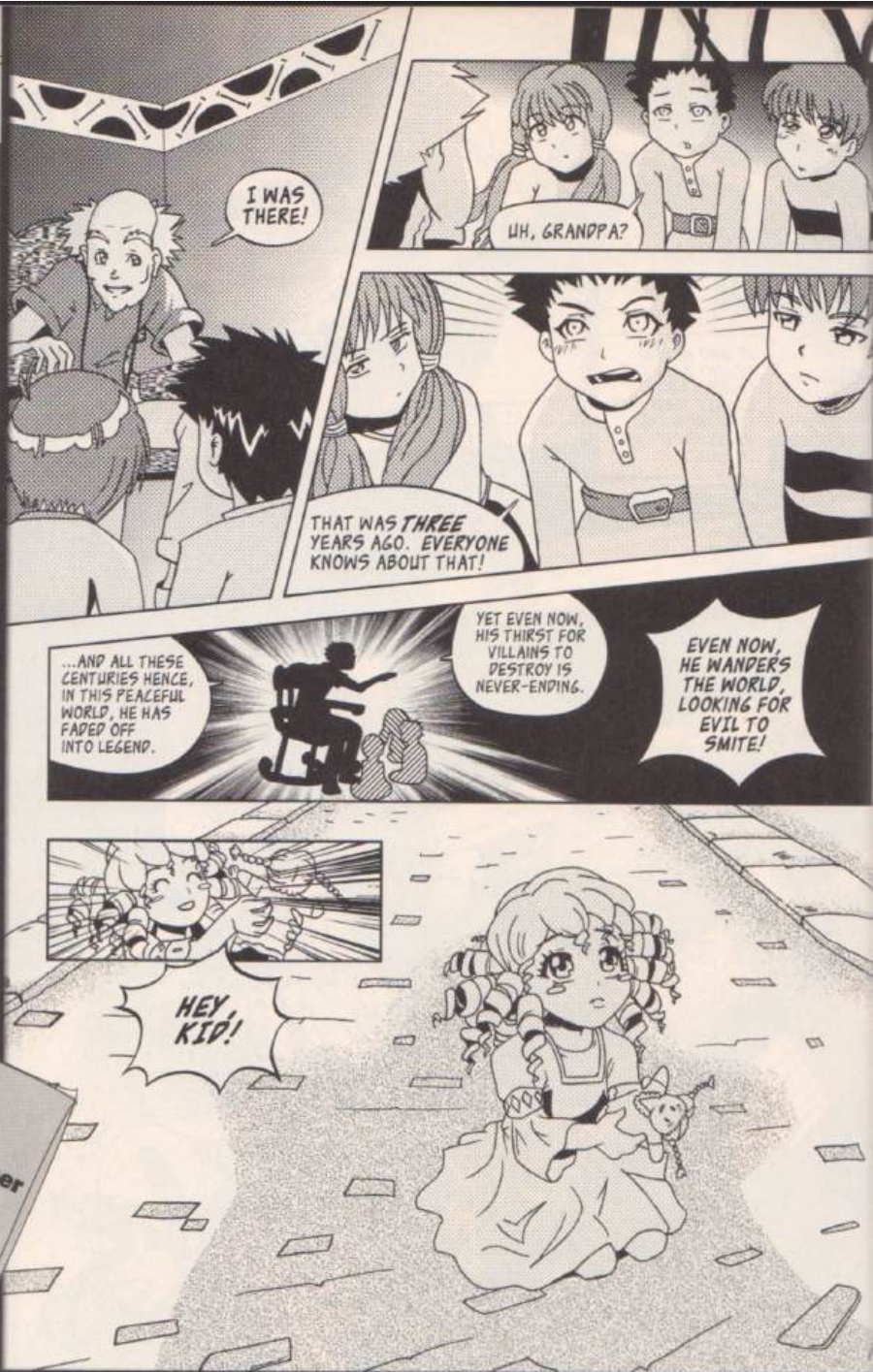


AND HOW
DO I KNOW OF
THESE THINGS,
WHICH CAME TO
PASS NEARLY
10,000 YEARS
AGO, YOU
MAY ASK?

Despite
some rumors on the
Internet, the Hair
Club for Men
did not sponsor
this manga

>>...amidst the, uhm, one-liners and sight gags and parody. It all amounts to a clever and professionally executed takeoff of series such as *Sorcerer Hunters* and *Slayers*.

The characters and story were a result of many brainstorming sessions between creators Mike Schwark and Ron Kaulfersch. Some of the sessions took place in Italy—Italy, Ohio, that is.



The girl resembles a character in another manga previewed in *Takuhai* (hint—it's in the right-to-left side)

Schwark and Kaulfersch have gotten a lot of inspiration from watching anime where characters exhibit completely irrational behavior. Here, the kids call their grandpa on a potentially "tall" tale...or is it? >>

OUR STORY CONTINUES IN VAN VON HUNTER VOLUME 2!

Our heroes continue their quest to rid the world of evilishness, facing off against zombie hordes, dark, malevolent forces buried underground for centuries, and everyone's favorite attractive, armor-clad necromancer! Get set for another laughter-packed, action-filled volume!



pseudomé studio is

composed of Mike Schwark

and Ron

Kaulfersch.

They began their

creative endeavors

back in the mid '90s

with their work on the

indie anime project, "Il:

Prologue." With such a large

project hanging over their

heads, they created the studio

to help house it and future

projects. Afterwards, the studio

produced a fully animated talk

show entitled *THE Show*, which

was designed as an informative

yet fun take on the how-to of

making animation and comics.

Van Von Hunter was featured

as the First Prize winner in

TOKYOPOP's inaugural *Rising*

Stars of Manga™ anthology.

Pseudomé is pronounced:

Sue-Dough-May.

Visit:
vanvonhunter.com
for more milk-
out-your
nose laughs

Spicier Than Kimchi:

FRESH HOT MANGA FROM KOREA



The popularity of Japanese manga has been a boon for Asian comics art getting to the United States. Sure, there are amazing things coming out of Japan, but since manga is now super-popular at home and on the international stage, let's face it—with immense popularity comes an inevitable sterilization of the field. Simply put, creativity can get a bit dulled, yielding to mass appeal, all of which can result in the form of a big fat yawn.

How many times have you been given the next big thing from Japan only to realize that it's a regurgitated version of *Sailor Moon*?

So what's a manga fan who thirsts for cutting-edge art and stories to do?

ENTER KOREA.

Although the industry isn't as big and perhaps, as of yet, not

as world-renowned as Japan's, truly innovative work has come flooding out from this country just a few hundred miles from Tokyo.

Japan isn't the only country hot for Korean manga talent. Recently TOKYOPOP released the first volume in the bestselling manga series *Warcraft: The Sunwell Trilogy*.



The artist they hooked for the project? Korea's Jae-Hwan Kim, artist of the sizzling *King of Hell*.

Take a look at *Priest*, a gritty, undead western that explores the fragility of the human soul in men of faith. Or fan favorite *Kill Me, Kiss Me*, which takes the popular Japanese conceit of cross-dressing high school students and winds it about an incisive comedy of gender issues.

Then there's *Rebirth*, which reinvents the vampire tale as a battle between black magic and white magic that turns up all kinds of shades of gray.

And of course *Ragnarok*, the fantasy riff on Scandinavian folklore that has enjoyed

tremendous success as a comic and as a lauded online role-playing game. Why have these Korean series thrived? Without the kind of constraints a manga-ka might encounter in the Japanese industry, a lot of Korean work is pushing the boundaries of art and narrative to create absolutely incredible comics. Many Korean artists are being recruited to start new series in Japanese magazines.

~Luis Reyes



EDITOR'S PICK

Min-Woo Hyung's *Priest* begins as a horror story, then soon expands into a dark epic about a former priest's quest for revenge. It's a bloody tale

full of breathtaking visuals and seat-of-your-pants action, but to describe *Priest* as a simple action comic is to do it injustice. This is intelligent, riveting stuff, dealing with man's search for the truth about his existence. Boasting stylish, Mignola-influenced art, *Priest* is perfect for any comic fan interested in giving manga a try.

~Tim Beedle

PRIEST

I LUV HALLOWEEN

TREATS?! WE DON'T NEED NO STINKIN' TREATS!

Send us your
Halloween stories:
TOKYOPOP Takuhai,
5900 Wilshire Blvd.,
Los Angeles, CA
90036—
we just might
publish your story
in our next issue

Keith Giffen, the writer of *I Luv Halloween*, is a veteran comic book artist and writer who is best known for his critically acclaimed work on *Justice League* and *Legion of Super Heroes*. He is well known to TOKYOPOP fans for his adaptations on *Battle Royale* and *Battle Vixens*. Benjamin Roman, the series' artist, was born in 1977. Roman's childhood was heavily influenced by comic books and sci-fi movies. For more on Benjamin Roman, see page 82.



I don't know about you, but for me, Halloween has mainly been about one thing. No, not candy—although I'd always have to keep a stash hidden from my older brother, who'd beat me silly for my Halloween stash of treats.

And Halloween isn't about the costumes—although I remember once many years ago I dressed up as C-3PO, and the mask tasted awful, like spoiled plastic. I still have that taste in my mouth.

Anyway, I digress. I do like candy, I do like costumes. But for me, Halloween is all about the mischief, especially the macabre, chilling kind—you know: bloodcurdling tricks, disturbing mayhem, and everything in between. That's what draws me to *I Luv Halloween*. And I'd like to invite you to join the misadventures of a group of particularly unsettling trick-or-treaters as they go about their "business" on Halloween night.

Read these tales during a scary sleepover in the dead of winter, or in the heat of summer when you just can't sleep. Any time, it doesn't matter. I mean, who doesn't love Halloween?

~Rob Valois



It took less than six hours to draw this page, but more than nine hours to tone it



The editor of *I Luv*

Halloween confesses:

"My worst Halloween

was when my parents

made a mummy

costume out of ripped-

up bed sheets. The

strips of cloth kept

falling off while I was

trick-or-treating."

>> Roman admits that it took a few pages before he got into a drawing groove—it was at this point in the manga that he felt the artistic connection with his characters.

Roman has
always worked
in color—
I Luv Halloween
is his first
gray-scale book

VIEW THE MANGA PLAYER AT
WWW.TOKYOPOP.COM/ILUVHALLOWEEN



Roman wanted the houses to have a unified look—he didn't want the backgrounds to compete with the characters, especially with such a large cast. >>



TREATS...OR TRICKS?
THESE ARE SOME OF THE
WORST THINGS WE'VE
GOTTEN ON HALLOWEEN:

pennies

pet rock

raisins

school supplies

toothbrush

brownies with
a strand of hair

Choco willies
are technically
not candy—Roman
envisioned them
as second-rate
sprinkled cake
treats

>> Roman wanted all the Halloween costumes to be distinctive, even the ones in the background. The characters were all based on his first-draft character designs.

HOLLYWOOD TURNS HALLOWEEN FOR BENJAMIN ROMAN

Benjamin Roman was raised in Miami, where he worked and worked and worked on his portfolio, preparing it for con season. For 5-6 years, he went to San Diego and Chicago to try to get an editor, any editor, to look at it.

After minimal success with one or two publishers, Roman had just about given up on trying to break into the industry, so he decided to move to Los Angeles. He got a job at a copy shop in Hollywood and assimilated into the strange and remarkable world that is L.A. One day a guy walked in and placed an order. After a brief conversation, Roman told the guy that he was an illustrator and proceeded to show him some art samples. After a few months went by, the guy returned to tell Benjamin Roman that he

showed the samples to his editor and that his editor wanted to discuss publishing "I Luv Halloween" as a full-length series. The rest, as they say, is history. Go figure.

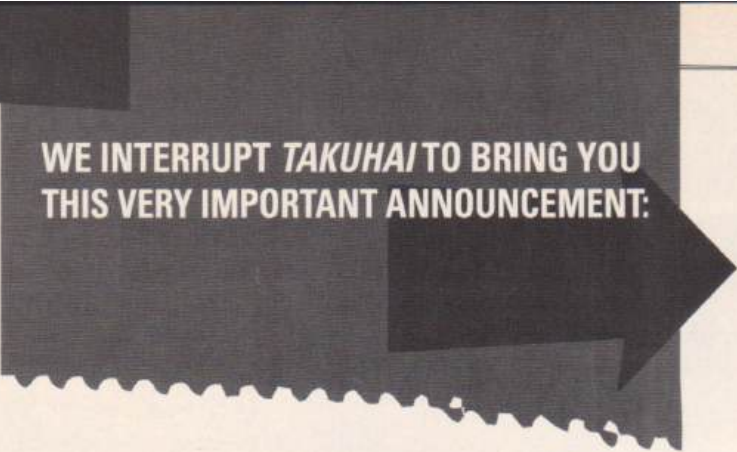
A guy
walks into a
copy shop...



WHAT'S NEXT FOR I LUV HALLOWEEN?

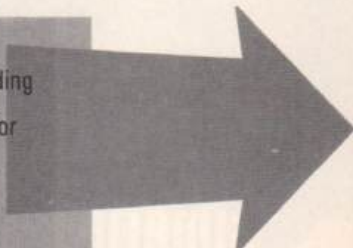
Sorry to cut this short, but there's only so much of this dark, funny and sometimes shocking series that I can show. I know what you're thinking: These guys are freaks! What're they gonna do to the house that gave them the apple? Is Pig Pig a couple cards short of a full deck? And what will William Shatner have to do with it all? (You'll see when you read more.) I could tell you it all right here, but that wouldn't be any fun now, would it?





WE INTERRUPT *TAKUHA!* TO BRING YOU
THIS VERY IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT:

pause



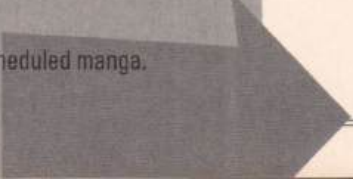
If you've been enjoying the unforgettable left-to-right reading experience, we invite you to jump to the back of *Takuhai* for more cutting-edge manga...this time from Japan!



Or, if you've just soaked up the hottest manga from Japan, you need to turn to the front of *Takuhai* for some of TOKYOPOP's originally created manga and other cool articles.

**LEFT-TO-RIGHT OR RIGHT-TO-LEFT — WE'VE
GOT MANGA COVERED IN ALL DIRECTIONS!**

Finally, if you're blown away by what you've been reading, then e-mail your friends, call your loved ones, and write the president—tell them all about the Manga Revolution!



We now return you to your regularly scheduled manga.

SIDE NOTES:

The names of the characters who make up the Hanagumi (Flower Troupe) correspond to different plants. "Sakura" is the Japanese word for "cherry blossoms," "sumire" is a type of violet, "tachibana" is a type of tangerine, "kohran" means "red orchid," "ayame" is the Siberian Iris, and of course, Iris is herself!

The names of the different troupes (flower, wind, star, moon, snow, rose, etc.) of the Capital Defense Formation are modeled after the phenomenally popular all-female Takarazuka theatrical troupe!



Timeline:

2005:	2004:	2003:	2002:	2001:
January: Second volume of the OVA series: <i>Le Nouveau Paris</i> .	September: Launch of the 5th <i>Sakura Taisen</i> game, <i>Samurai Girl in the Wild West</i> - Episode 0. October: Launch of fourth OVA series: <i>Le Nouveau Paris</i> .	February: Launch of <i>Sakura Taisen</i> manga! March: Launch of the OVA, <i>Sakura Taisen: Ecole du Paris</i> . June: Launch of <i>Ecole du Paris</i> OVA vol. 2. August: Launch of <i>Ecole du Paris</i> OVA vol. 3	March: Release of fourth video game, <i>Paris is Burning</i> . December: Release of the <i>Sumire</i> OVA.	March: Release of third video game, <i>Fall in Love, Maiden!</i>

THE HISTORY OF SAKURA TAISEN!

The *Sakura Taisen* franchise was spawned from a series of love sim/action-adventure games under the same name, released by Sega on numerous platforms. The first OVA series released in Japan in 1997, entitled *Sakura Wars*, tracks major events from the first game. The second OVA, *Sakura Wars 2*, takes place after the second Demon War has been fought and won, and traces the lives of the Hanagumi as they spread out across Japan. The TV series with the same name presents an alternate-universe retelling of the events of *Sakura Taisen* and was released in 2000. Next up is...well, just see below for the extensive timeline of the super-popular series, which has also spawned numerous soundtracks, character singles and drama cds, and various other goods that, sadly, are not widely available in the U.S.

**OVA series,
soundtracks,
singles, drama
CDs... the list
is endless**

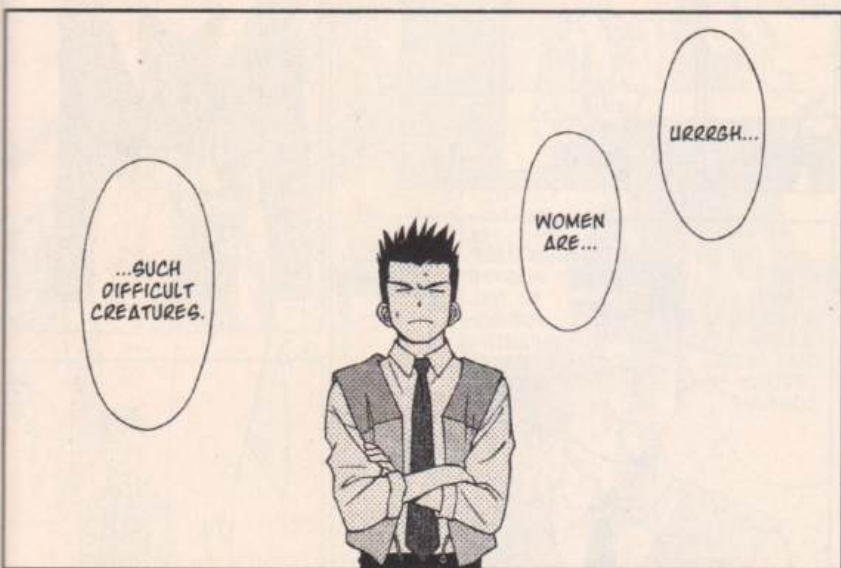
2000:	1999:	1998:	1997:	1996:
February: 2nd volume of second OVA series.	December: Beginning of release of second OVA series.	February: Release of the second episode of the first OVA.	February: Release of the second <i>Sakura Taisen</i> video game.	Fall: Release of the first <i>Sakura Taisen</i> video game!
March: 3rd volume of second OVA series.		May: Release of the 3rd episode of the first OVA.	December: Release of the first episode of the first OVA.	
April: Beginning of 25-episode TV series.		December: Release of the 4th episode of the first OVA.		
June: 4th volume of second OVA series.				
September: 5th volume of second OVA series.				
December: 6th volume of second OVA series.				



Yoneda is a retired general from the Russo-Japanese war. Apparently he was quite a war hero, but he's now a humble theater manager who rarely passes up a drink. <<



The theater is done
in the traditional
Western style rather
than Japanese style.



<< Maria is dressed in drag, which is part of her character. Because it's an all-female troupe, she must play a man. Maria makes a good romantic male lead.

Ogami means "great
god," and his first name
Ichiro means "first
boy," as in the first boy
born in the family.



Maria is half Japanese and half Russian, which isn't made super-clear in the series, other than the fact that her family name is Tachibana. She's got a bit of a dark past, which will appear later in the series. <<



<< Sakura seems to get awfully upset, considering her competition is a nine-year-old! And the clothes that Sakura wears aren't really worn anymore in Japan, other than in school ceremonies (graduation, etc.).



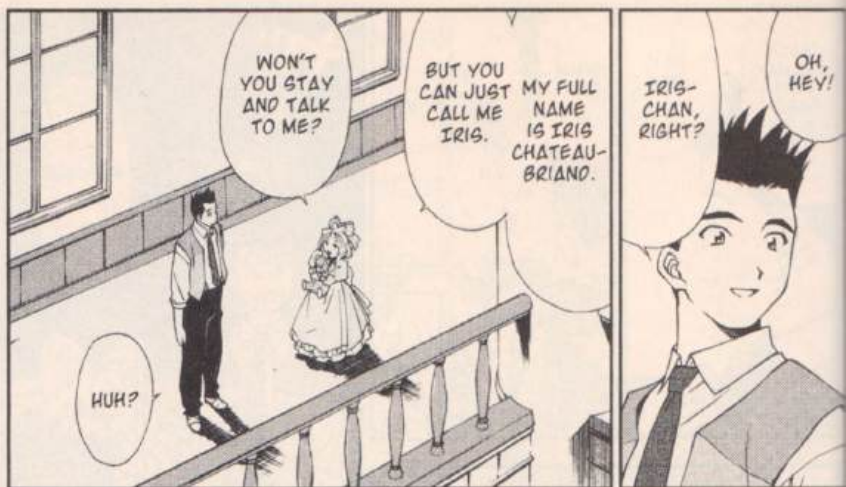
Iris calls him Onii-chan as a term of endearment—literally, it means “older brother.” She obviously doesn’t know what being a girlfriend entails! <<



<< When all else fails, just start sweet-talking the kid! Iris refers to herself in the third person a lot, a typical manga-cutesy-girly thing to do.

The sound effect on this page is a "noise of shock," like being hit on the head with a gong.

READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT



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www.TOKYOPOP.com

READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT

Iris Chateaubriand's name is actually pronounced differently in French, so when she pronounces it the second time (top frame), she's using the English/Japanese pronunciation. <<



sakura taisen!

The demon hordes are marching in, new villains are making their dastardly plans and rallying their mechanical troops, and the Hana Troupe is stuck in between. When they are not busy protecting the city from the growing threat, Sakura, Sumire, Maria, Iris and the rest of the crew are honing

their skills as actresses and warriors! Poor Ensign Ogami may finally be finding his place, too. The full scope of what exactly is going on in Tokyo is revealed to him, and his job as ticket-puncher might not have been as useless as he first thought. Ogami's budding spiritual powers rival those of our lovely heroines, and his military training makes him the perfect leader for this elite cadre. With the help of the Wind and Star Troops, Tokyo may just stand a fighting chance!

~Lillian Diaz-Przybyl

*Things are
just starting
to heat up in
the Imperial
Capital!*

...SUCH
DIFFICULT
CREATURES.

WOMEN
ARE...

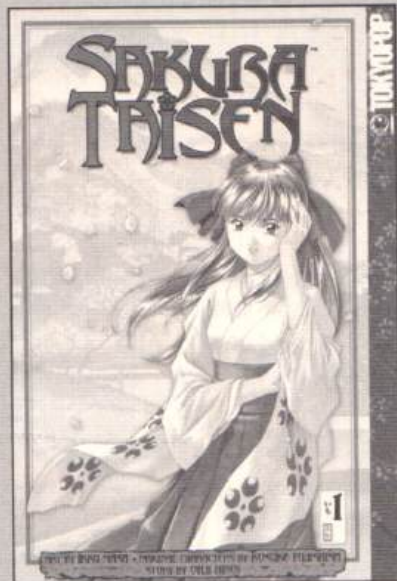
URRRGH...



SAKURA TAISEN

STORY: OHJI HIROI, ART: IKKU MASA, CHARACTER DESIGNS: KOSUKE FUJISHIMA

Things are
just starting
to heat up in
the Imperial
Capital...



Sakura Taisen, also known as *Sakura Wars*, has one impressive pedigree! Based upon a series of computer games, it has spawned several OVA series, movies, and most recently, a television series. Originally created by Hiroi Ouji, creator of *Virgin Fleet* and *Moeyo Ken*, written by Satoru Akahori, creator of *Sorcerer Hunters* and *Saber Marionette J* and writer of *Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi*, with character designs by Kosuke Fujishima, creator of *Oh My Goddess!*, this series has everything going for it. The manga features art by a brand new artist, using the original character designs, with scripts by the creator, Hiroi Ouji. Talk about a manga supergroup!

Welcome to a Tokyo that never was! It's Year 12 of the Taisho era, or approximately 1922, and the Roaring Twenties brought with them a respite from the Roaring Demon Wars. It's been eight years since the leathery-winged, man-eating hordes were last seen, and Tokyo is a peaceful, prosperous place. Wander the streets of Shinjuku or Ueno, and you're likely to

run into a flapper with bobbed hair alongside her friend in full kimono with a samurai sword at her waist. Beware, though—you may also run into the occasional steam-powered robot.

Meet Ensign Ogami Ichiro, who has just graduated from the Naval Academy. He's assigned to a base in Tokyo, but soon discovers that his headquarters is the Imperial Theater and his first mission is collecting tickets at the gate. Yawn, right? He gamely goes about his menial jobs at the theater, surrounded by beautiful girls who seem to know a lot more about what's going on than he does. But Ogami's about to be swept into a roiling world of steam-robots, psychic powers, demons and babes in uniform!

~Lillian Diaz-Przybyl

THE EDITOR SPEAKS!

TOKYOPOP editor Paul Morrissey answered the most pressing questions about Sugisaki-sensei's highly lovable manga series!

Why is it called *Lagoon Engine*?

It's a play on our main characters' names—Yen and Jin Ragun. In Japanese, "Ragun Yen Jin" is phonetically pronounced as "Lagoon Engine." Get it?

What's it like to work with Sugisaki-sensei?

Sugisaki is very particular about her books, including *Lagoon Engine* and *D•N•Angel*. For example, she's very involved in approving the covers we use for her books. She also reads our adaptations of our works, so when I'm working on one of her creations, I do my best to be faithful to her original vision. When it comes to Sugisaki, I'm always on my toes!

Why was there a TOKYOPOP Robofish in volume 1?

Wow. You have keen eyes! Well, there's an innocent shower scene in volume 1, and a white circle covers up Jin Ragun's privates. In the original Japanese book, the circle contained the following text: Kadokawa. Kadokawa, of course, is the Japanese publisher of *Lagoon Engine*. So, for our adaptation of *Lagoon Engine*, we thought it would be pretty hilarious (and brilliantly clever) to replace "Kadokawa" with TOKYOPOP's Robofish. Maybe we should hide a Robofish in every book we publish!

Is *Lagoon Engine* a shonen-ai series?

Of course not! Despite the aforementioned shower scene, *Lagoon Engine* is totally innocent. It's a very youth-oriented series. Hmm... although, you could say there are a few boy-on-boy crushes in the book, but it's all harmless subtext.

Can you explain how the fighting unravels?

Let me try my best to explain this—Yen and Jin are brothers in elementary school. But they're not ordinary students. They constantly undergo training to join the family business as "Gakushi." Basically, Gakushi are ghostbusters. They confront spirits called "Maga." Are you with me so far? Good, because here's the tricky part. In order to subdue the Maga, Yen and Jin must guess their opponent's true name. Once they know their opponent's name, Yen and Jin are able to get the upper hand in battle. While fighting Maga, the brothers wield staffs called "Gakuki," which are family heirlooms that amplify their powers and abilities. But all of this is terribly dangerous for Yen and Jin, too, because if a Maga discovers their real names, both could be killed. Yup, you read that right! Yen and Jin both have secret names that only they know! Now, this is how the duo operates: Yen uses his wits to deduce the names of enemy Maga, while the obnoxious Jin clobbers the spirits into submission once their names are known.



...I
DON'T
NEED
IT?

DIDN'T
I TELL
YOU...

#1
4



WE'RE A
FAMILY
OF
GAKUSHI.

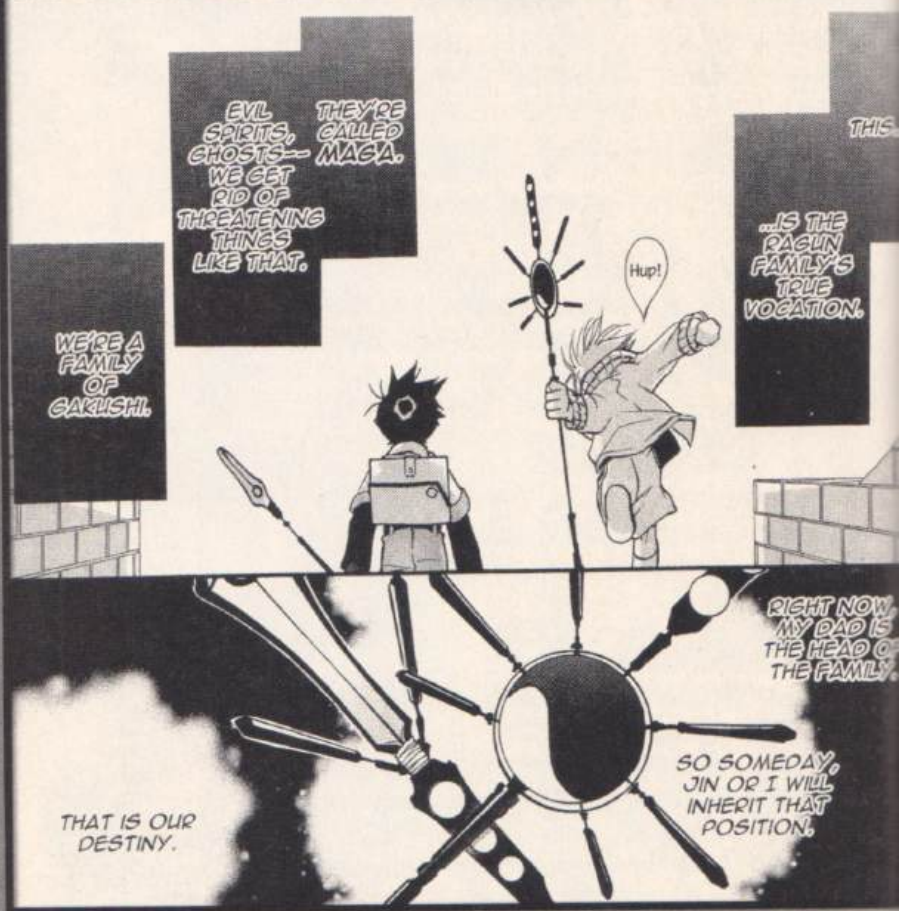
EVIL
SPIRITS,
GHOSTS--
WE GET
RID OF
THREATENING
THINGS
LIKE THAT.

THEY'RE
CALLED
MAGA.

THIS

...IS THE
RAGUN
FAMILY'S
TRUE
VOCATION.

Hup!



RIGHT NOW,
MY DAD IS
THE HEAD OF
THE FAMILY.

SO SOMEDAY,
JIN OR I WILL
INHERIT THAT
POSITION.

THAT IS OUR
DESTINY.

So that's how Yen and Jin deal with Maga. Please don't try their dangerous techniques at home. Leave phantom fighting to the professionals. <<

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Yeah, yeah.
I know.

And for your
information,
this is a family
heirloom.

STILL...

HOW DID
YOU KNOW
THAT I WAS
FIGHTING
MAGA?

HMM?

HE'S
SO
BLUNT...

THIS.

noticed.
YOU
HAVEN'T
BEEN
TAKING
YOUR
MEDICINE.

MOM
TOLD ME
TO GIVE
YOU
THIS...

GIVE
ME
WHAT?

IT WAS
JUST
GOOD
TIMING.

So I
was
bringing
it to
you.

In a rare moment, we actually see Jin being a caring little brother! The family that fights phantoms together stays together! (And remember, don't fight phantoms on your own—seek out the help of professionals, even if they're only in grade school!)

<< Hmm... I wonder what Yen's medicine is for. I hope Yen isn't gravely ill! Someone needs to manage the world's Maga!

READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT

Gakuki are weapons
that are passed down
as family heirlooms in
Gakushi families.



Okay, so Ghostbusters Peter Venkman and Egon Spengler used proton packs, but our heroes use "gakuki," weapons that enhance Yen and Jin's powers. <<



BUY THE MANGA NOW AT
www.TOKYOPOP.com/shop

<< Jin's a total showboat, huh? This usually causes some brotherly tension, since Jin's braggadocio frequently clashes with Yen's reserved style.

READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT



Whoa? Something seems a bit odd here, even for a Gakushi. I wonder why Yen seems so surprised... <<



The Maga is calling Yen and Jin "Omi." Why? Well, Maga call humans Omi. Gakushi have names other than the ones their parents gave them—names they've had since birth, known as Omi names. Those names are for personal knowledge only, and they must remain a complete secret...

<< Once they've guessed the Maga's name and attain yuusei, negotiations begin: Will the Maga join them?

READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT



Good ol' Jin! As you can probably tell, this ghostbusting Gakushi is bold and brash. When exorcising Maga, he's in charge of attacking. Aiding Jin is his "pet" Maga named Sora. <<

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Koga—from the previous page—is Yen's "pet" Maga. Koga excels at gathering data and analyzing the enemy.

<< As a spectral problem solver, Yen is in charge of creating barriers. Then, Yen decides on a stipulation that is effective inside the barrier—anything from a large amplification of attack power to preventing death.

...I CAN'T
ESCAPE,
EITHER!!

WHAT
WILL
YOU
DO?

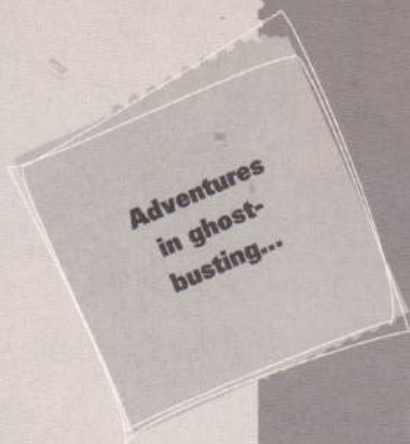
MY
KOS
HERE
IS A
PERCE
TION
TYPE

EEP!

Y
E
N
N
/ / / / / !

read right-to-left

<< "Attaining yuusei"? It's ghostbusting terminology—if a Gakushi is able to analyze a Maga and correctly guess its name, they attain yuusei—a state of having superiority in battle, wherein attacks are 100% effective.



Sure, *Lagoon Engine* is very cute and cuddly...but a deeper look reveals secrets, spooks and suspense! Children love characters who must keep their special magical powers under wraps. And in that regard, *Lagoon Engine* certainly does not disappoint. Yen and Jin Ragun are brothers in elementary school. They seem perfectly normal, but they harbor a secret—they're training to become Gakushi, people who can confront ghosts and evil spirits called "Maga." *Lagoon Engine* is funny, chilling and thrilling! And if you want to know what a "lagoon engine" is, read on!

Keep reading *Lagoon Engine* to find out if Yen and Jin can master their "ghostbusting" techniques! Thrill at their daring exploits, as they try to reunite a dead dog with its young, sickly owner... Laugh as Kana Mikami falls madly in love with Yen (or does she?)... Get goosebumps as Yen and Jin confront the ghostly Maga that's menacing a macabre mansion... The pages of *Lagoon Engine* summon you! You've been chosen to read the chronicled adventures of our young Gakushi-in-training!

~Paul Morrissey

The manga luminary Yukiru Sugisaki is the sole creator of *Lagoon Engine*. She's a Capricorn with an O blood type. Her birthday is December 26. She's really into video games and rabbits. You probably know her work from the immensely popular *D•N•Angel*. Her other works include *Brain Powered* and *Candidate for Goddess*. That's one prolific manga-ka!

YUKIRU SUGISAKI

Lagoon engine

TRAMPS LIKE US...ON TV?!



What do *Tramps Like Us* and *Desperate Housewives* have in common? Sure, they're both filled with drama, intrigue, and beautiful people...but they're also both TV shows!

Kimi wa Pet, starring Japanese supermodel Koyuki as Sumire and hunky Jun Matsumoto as Momo, debuted in 2003 on the small screen in Japan. Koyuki, who starred opposite Tom Cruise in *The Last Samurai*, is absolutely fabulous as Sumire, the career woman who's searching for love—and for herself. J-Pop singer Jun Matsumoto (of Arashi fame) proves he's just not another pretty face with his spot-on portrayal of Momo, Sumire's loyal "pet." Unfortunately, the DVD of the series is only available in Japan (sigh), but our trusty editor Lillian owns it and says "it does an interesting job of expanding on the manga...it's a love story that's sweet, goofy, and funny without being cheesy or contrived." Perhaps one day this cool show will make it over to the States—but, in the meantime, I'll continue to get my Momo-and-Sumire fix from the *Tramps Like Us* manga, a sensational series that never disappoints.

~Julie Taylor

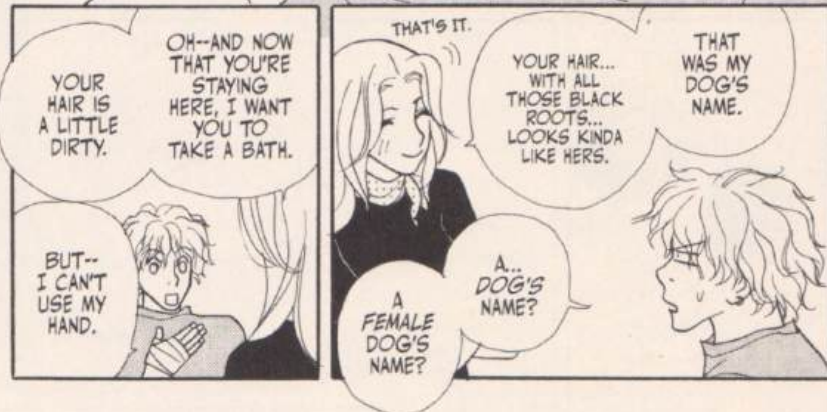
What do
Tramps Like Us
and Tom Cruise
have in common?

Official website (in Japanese): <http://www.tbs.co.jp/kimipe>



The cheating that
Sumire has
experienced
really explains
a lot about her
current stance
on relationships!

<< Ha ha...Sumire seems so worldly, yet she still has to wear dark glasses just to make it that much less likely she'll see Momo in the buff. Goes to show that just about everyone has something that can make them blush. ^ _ ^



BUY THE MANGA NOW AT WWW.TOKYOPOP.COM/SHOP

The situation with Sumire's ex-fiancé is covered earlier in the book—basically, he had an inferiority complex dating someone as awesome as Sumire, so he cheated on her! <<

WHAT
DO
YOU
SAY?

BUT YOU
WOULD HAVE
TO OBEY MY
ORDERS.

I MEAN, I
COULD KEEP
YOU HERE.
AS A PET.

IF YOU'RE
GOOD ENOUGH,
I MIGHT EVEN
FEED YOU.

Didja know?

"Momo" means

"peach" in

Japanese.

SHAKE!
NICE TO
MEET YOU,
MASTER!!

TALK
ABOUT
GETTING
LUCKY!!!

YEEE-
HAW!!

THIS'LL
GET RID
OF HIM
FOR SURE.

I'M
KIDDING,
OF COURSE.

Y...
YE...

WHOA...
HOW DO
YOU HAVE
SUCH A BIG
PLACE?

WELL, I
THOUGHT
I WAS
GETTING
MARRIED
WHEN I
BOUGHT
IT...

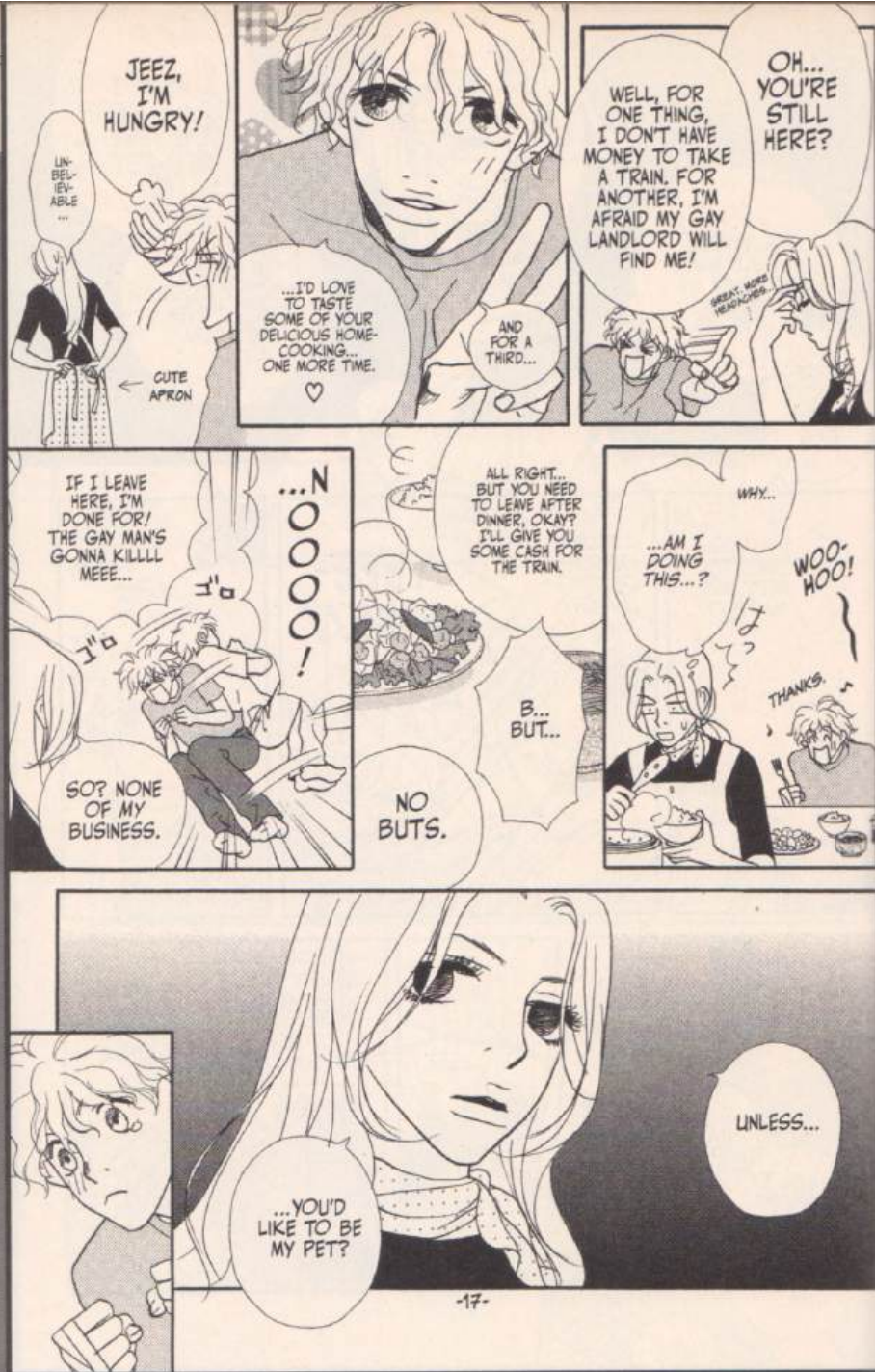
WELL,
THE LOFT'S
OPEN.

WHY DON'T
YOU USE
THAT AS
YOUR... AREA?

-18-

<< Nice to see Sumire taking the upper hand for a change, in contrast with how she's just been treated at work! Note Momo's victory sign, which, in Japan, is sometimes used to express violent enthusiasm.

READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT



Momo's reference to his landlord as "the gay man" might read a bit weird out of context. He's not hating on gay people—rather, he is obliquely referring to the fact that his landlord propositioned him. <<



BUT IT'S
ALWAYS
LIKE THIS.

IT WAS
NOTHING.

Tramps Like Us is often mistaken for a shojo manga, but it's actually "josei." In Japan, manga is classified based on which demographic magazine it is originally published in. *Kimi wa Pet* was originally published in *Kiss*, a josei magazine.

THE HEADACHE THAT NEVER ENDS.



<< Poor Sumire. Somehow her combination of beauty, brains and business elicits very strange reactions—even in the workplace, where you're supposed to be businesslike! Oh, well...

In Japanese, "Kimi wa Pet," the original title of *Tramps Like Us*, literally means "you are a pet" or "you are my pet" (either is correct). The English word "pet" is actually the noun of choice for companion animals in Japan. However, the Japanese verb for the act of keeping a pet is "kau."



In large offices in Japan, it's very common to eat lunch on-site in a cafeteria rather than going out or brown-bagging it. So when Kuraki bursts into tears here, you can bet she's got a lot of witnesses! <<

...BUT I
COULDN'T
MOVE TO
FULL-TIME
STATUS WITH
ONLY AN
ASSOCIATE'S
DEGREE.

I GOT
THIS
JOB
THROUGH
MY
CONNECTIONS...

I'M NOT LIKE
YOU, WHO
GRADUATED
FROM
COLLEGE IN
THE UNITED
STATES.

...I MEAN, EVEN
THOUGH YOU
CAME TO THIS
DEPARTMENT
AFTER ME,
YOU CAN STILL
CORRECT MY
MISTAKES.

I GUESS
I'M NOT
THAT
SMART...

I'VE
ALWAYS
JUST
DONE
IT LIKE
THIS.

IS THAT
SO? I'M
SORRY...
I HAD
NO IDEA.

WELL, YOU
CAN DO IT THE
RIGHT WAY
NEXT TIME. IT'S
NOT A BIG
DEAL.

MY
HEADACHE
NEVER
GOES
AWAY.

AM I
WRONG?
IS YOUR
LIFE REALLY
AS GREAT
AS IT
SEEMS?

I REALLY
ENVY
YOU.

JUST
LOOKING AT
YOU, MISS
IWAYA... I FEEL
LIKE GOD
GAVE YOU NOT
JUST ONE GIFT,
BUT TWO OR
THREE...

ALTHOUGH I'M
NOT SURE ANY
COLLEGE WILL
TEACH YOU HOW
TO WRITE A
MAILING
ADDRESS.

IT'S
NOT
LIKE
THERE'S
AN AGE
LIMIT.

IF YOU'RE
SO JEALOUS
OF ME, WHY
DON'T YOU
JUST APPLY
TO
COLLEGE?

-14-

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<< Isn't Sumire's hair lovely? Look how gracefully it falls compared to the lines of Kuraki's hair. No wonder Kuraki's jealous! Of course, Sumire's blunt manner contrasts completely with her hair. ^_^



-13-

READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT

<< Our preview begins the morning after Sumire takes in a cute boy, whom she finds sleeping in a box behind her apartment. Sumire's best friend, Yuri, is understandably concerned.



Known in Japan
as *Kimi wa Pet*,
Tramps Like Us
is a tale about
the unlikelyst
of pairs...

Tramps Like Us—known in Japan as *Kimi wa Pet*—is an unlikely pairing: A successful woman takes in a scraggly boy as a pet...and I can't tell you how much I love it! My first glimpse into the series was when I was doing English adaptations for TOKYOPOP. I had never seen art quite like Yayoi Ogawa's—the characters actually had noses and lips! And the story was so much more subtle and, well, *adult* than the other series I had worked on. At first I wasn't quite sure what to make of it, but by the end of the first volume, I couldn't wait to read the next one! So you can imagine my joy at picking up the title when I became an editor. I guess you could call it my "pet" series. (Ha!)

WHAT'S COMING UP IN THIS SERIES

I have official word that Hasumi-senpai is definitely moving to Hong Kong! Of course, Sumire will visit him...but how they're going to make a long-distance relationship last, I have no clue. Momo, however, will definitely be around for a while to come. Will his relationship with Sumire stay "tame" with Hasumi out of the country? I can already feel the delicious tension bubbling up, especially since Sumire and Momo will be taking a weekend trip together soon... oops! I said too much. Or have I? In any case, I can't give away all the surprises!

~Carol Fox

Like Sumire, Ogawa-sensei worked for a newspaper until 1998. Her manga debut was in 1994 with "Sugao ni Kisu Shite" ("Kiss My Unpainted Face"), which won the Mimi & Kiss First Manga award from Kodansha. Her work is currently published in *Kiss* magazine, and her official website, Extra Heavy Syrup, is <http://www.linkclub.or.jp/~asasin>. *Kimi wa Pet*, the original Japanese version of *Tramps Like Us*, was made into a live-action TV series and is currently one of the top josei manga in Japan.

YAYOI OGAWA

TRAMPS LIKE US

STRAIGHT GUY FOR THE SHONEN-AI

If *Legal Drug* fills your prescription, and you're looking to satisfy your ever-blossoming cravings, check out these other great titles.

Hands Off!

Imagine being the new boy in school, and the two hottest guys in class are always trying to "touch" you. Okay, it's not exactly what you're thinking...or is it? If cute boys, the paranormal, and lots of angst is your thing, then check this one out. You'll be pleasantly surprised—and you'll definitely be left wanting more-more-more!

Gravitation

Zaniness and angst abound in this mega-hit title. *Gravitation* is a serious, in-depth look at the music industry... Ah, who am I kidding?! It's about a whiny singer who dresses up in a schoolgirl outfit! How can you go wrong?

FAKE

This boys'-love favorite features two cops whose partnership definitely doesn't shoot blanks! The romance plays itself out slowly, but devoted readers will be well rewarded when they get their hands on book 7, where Dee and Ryo finally take their relationship to a more mature level.

~Alexis Kirsch

Psst...

Already own all these and wanting more? Don't feel blue! Stay tuned for some exciting news in the coming months regarding more series in this hot genre from TOKYOPOP!

~Aoi Ringo





22

<< Rikuo is paying a lot of attention to where Kazahaya slips that gift from Kakei. His sinuses are a bit stuffed up...

Future volumes of
Legal Drug will see the
 boys sent on a mission
 during one of Tokyo's
 major festivals...enroll
 in a mysterious high
 school...and fight over
 who gets to say, "I do!"

READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT



HE'S SO
PRETTY.

I CAN'T
BELIEVE HE'S THE
MANAGER OF A
DRUGSTORE.

...BUT
HE ACTS
LIKE HE'S
BETTER THAN
ME! HE'S NOT
EVEN OLDER
THAN I AM--
WE'RE BOTH 17!

WE'RE BOTH
LIVE-IN
WORKERS,
PRACTICALLY
EQUAL...



...BUT IT'S
KAKEI-SAN
WHO'S
REALLY
LETTING ME
LIVE HERE.

IT MIGHT
BE TRUE
THAT
RIKUO
IS THE
ONE WHO
RESCUED
ME...



KNOW
WHAT I
MEAN?

I DO
SOMETIMES
WONDER,
THOUGH, WHY A
HEALTHY YOUNG
BOY LIKE
YOURSELF IS
SATISFIED WITH
JUST SLEEPING
AT NIGHT.



Katsei's suitability to run a drugstore comes into question throughout the series, not necessarily because he's so pretty... <<

Green Drugstore

GOOD
MORNING,
BOSS!

GOOD
MORNING.

SPLENDID.

YES,
THANK
YOU VERY
MUCH.

DID
YOU
SLEEP
WELL?

20

<< It is a very ecologically friendly drugstore, owned by a man who looks shockingly like a Kudo with glasses. And he has a tall, dark and handsome companion as well.

The Green Drugstore
may be dealing in more
than just aspirin...

READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT

Rikuo is the kind of
guy who would res-
cue a shivering little
boy left to freeze
on the unforgiving
streets of Tokyo.



DO YOU
HAVE TO
READ THE
PAPER
WHILE WE
EAT?



THIS JERK HAS
NO MANNERS.
HE DOESN'T
KNOW HOW
TO LIVE WITH
PEOPLE.



I SHOULD BE
GRATEFUL, AT
LEAST FOR
THAT...

...AND ONLY
THAT.

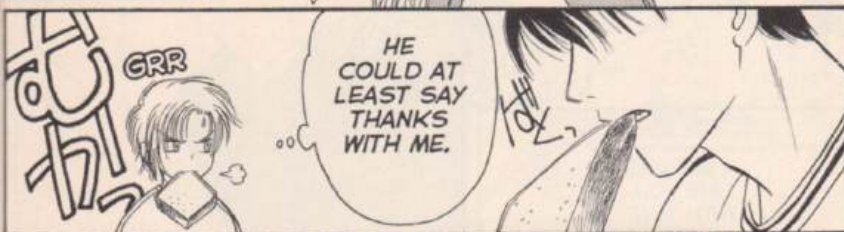
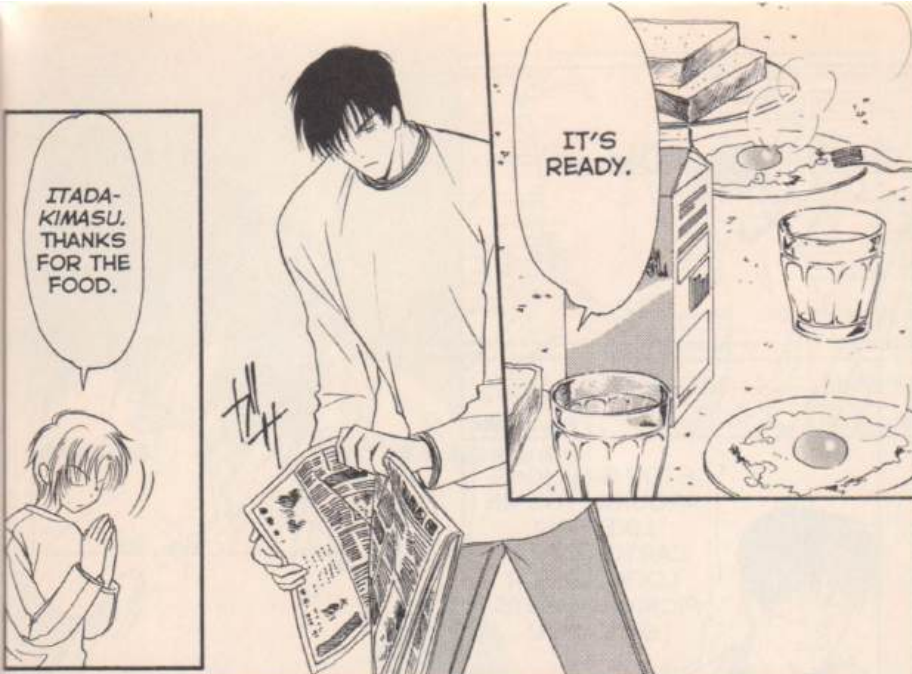


WHAT
AN
ASSHOLE!



DID
HIS FAMILY
SPOIL HIM OR
SOMETHING?

You see, Kudo grew up, we find out, in an affluent house-
hold, sheltered from the cruel realities of the world. But
still, what a jerk! <<



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<< You wouldn't be able to tell by that scowl and his tearing viciously into the piece of toast as if it had just insulted his inseam, but Rikuo is also a sensitive, caring man.

READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT



17



Oh, I didn't know Rikuo popped up behind Kudo. But now that I know, I see where he might hang those picnic baskets. <<

I'LL FADE
AWAY, BUT I'LL
NEVER DIE.

peek

EXTRA
SALTY FOR
THE EXTRA
JERKY.

<< Yep, those jeans stretch mighty wide. They're not going to split anytime soon, no matter how desperately we may wish...

Volume 1 of *Legal Drug* includes a unique "What If" manga short, in which Kakei is getting remarried to...well, you're just gonna have to read it for yourself!

READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT

THEN AGAIN,
WHO AM I TO
TALK? KUDO
KAZAHAYA IS
ALSO PRETTY
SKETCHY.



"YOU KNOW,
KAZAHAYA..."

...YOUR NAME IS LIKE A
WARNING. IT'S TELLING
YOU THAT ONE DAY YOU
MIGHT DISAPPEAR.

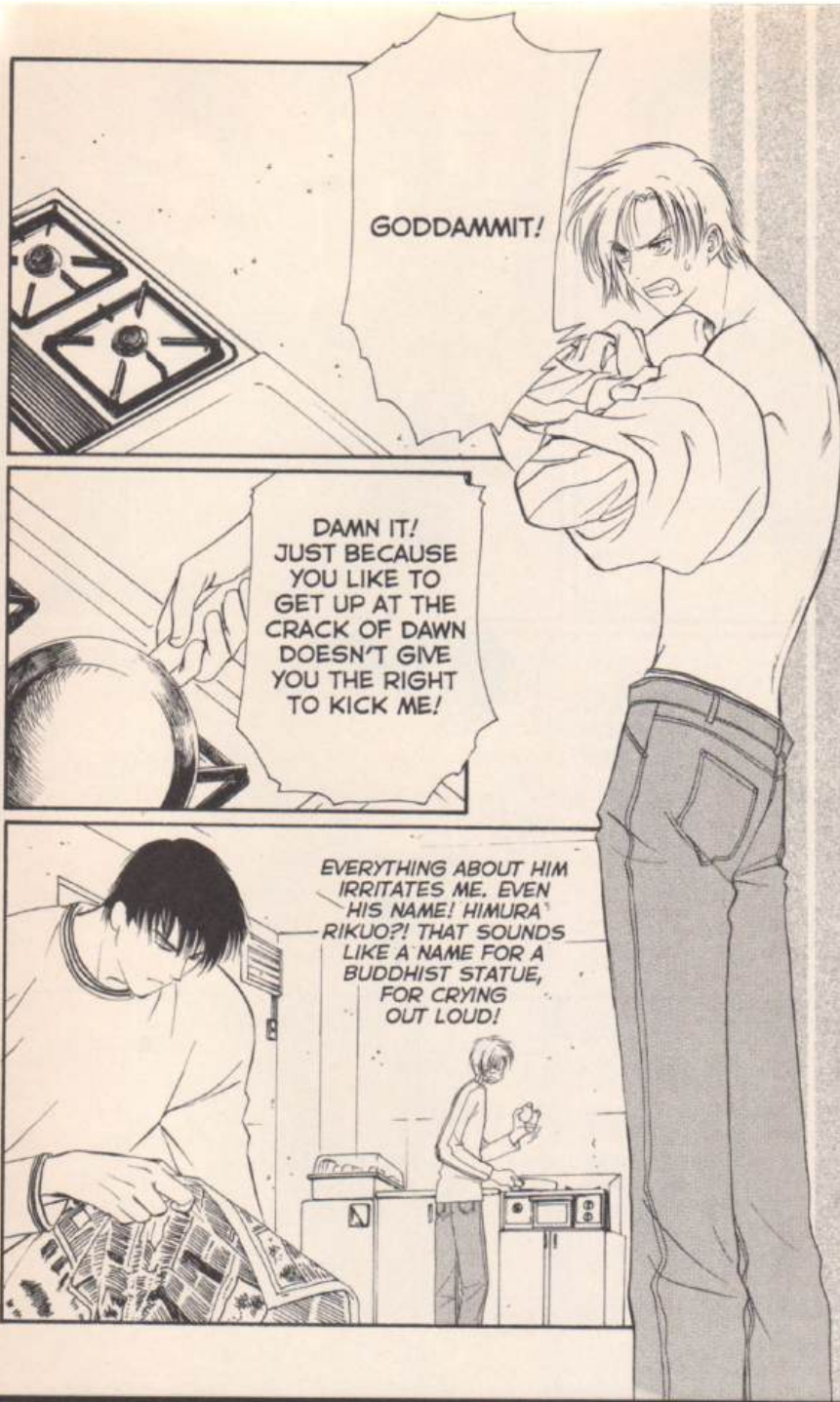
...JUST LIKE THE WIND"



"The hourj 'tsun' in Kazahaya's name means 'wind'."

"Kazahaya" is made up of the characters for "wind" and
"rapidly"; "Kudo" means "oak hall." <<

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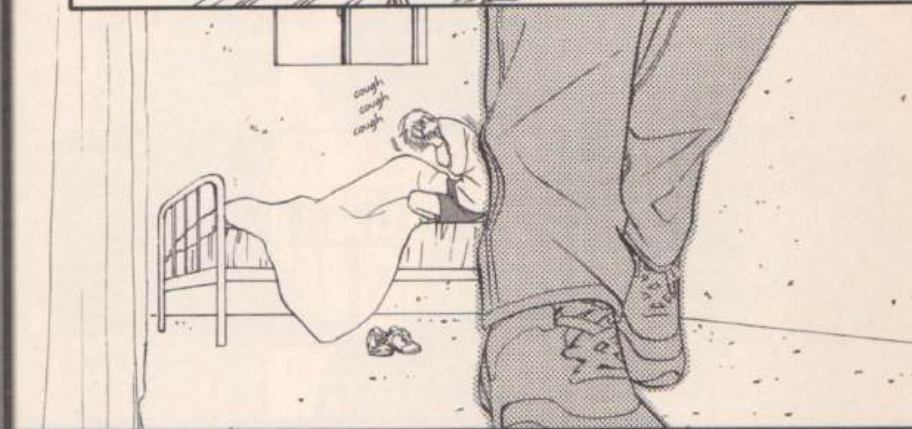


Not all Buddhist
dieties are jovial
fat men. For every
Bishamonten,
there is always a
Bishonen nearby.

<< "Rikuo" is made up of the characters for "shore king";
"Himura" means "gathering fire."

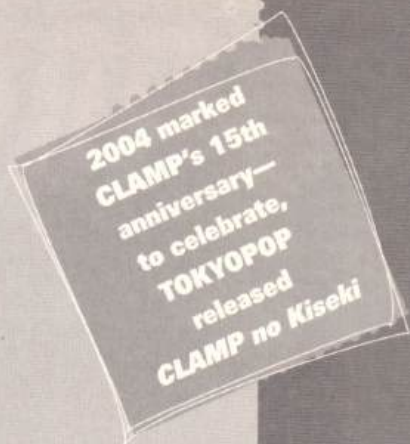
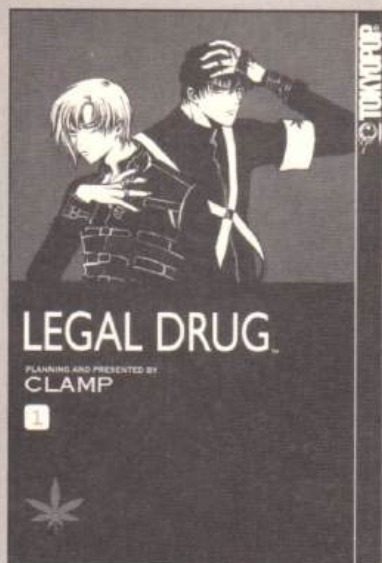
READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT

The more the boys reveal to each other about their pasts, the closer they seem to get—and the more frustrated they seem to be about it! Oh, the lad doth protest too much, methinks.



READ RIGHT-TO-LEFT

<< Look at that! The tension pretty much starts from page one. Now that's my kind of manga!



CLAMP

LEGAL DRUG

CLAMP has always edged toward a little love between boys, but in *Legal Drug* they take innuendo and unresolved tension to new levels. When Kudo is found unconscious and alone on the streets of Tokyo, Himura takes him home to his apartment above the Green Drugstore. Kakei, the proprietor of the store, and his tall, dark and handsome companion Saiga, employ the boys at the drugstore, but also offer them freelance work as investigators of sorts. You see, Kudo and Himura are more than your average beautiful boys—they possess a form of extrasensory perception. Kudo can see into the histories of objects he touches, while Himura can break things with his mind. Even Kakei and Saiga seem to have powers of their own, too, although exactly what they are and why they act the way they do is a mystery that has yet to be unraveled.

And if this tale of teens entwined in mystery and danger isn't enough to sate your appetite for the tacit love between attractive guys, *Legal Drug* just keeps creeping dangerously closer to the thin line that separates suggestion from torrid, steamy stuff. For example, Kudo often finds himself dressed as a girl, ostensibly as a way to find out information. But come on! CLAMP just likes to dress up these hotties. In volume 3, the boys are sent to investigate an all-boys school. And sometimes...well...boys get a bit lonely.

~Luis Reyes

In case you've been away from planet
Manga, CLAMP is the four-woman super-
group that creates the world's most popular
manga. These femmes dell'arte create
everything from the adorable shōjo hit
Cardcaptor Sakura, to the dark and brooding
Tokyo Babylon, to the sci-fi romantic comedy
Chobits. Last year marked the team's 15th
anniversary, and to celebrate TOKYOPOP
has released a retrospective collection:
CLAMP no Kiseki: The Ultimate Collection.

TOKYOPOP EDITOR Shunsuke Nakazawa dishes the drama behind every manga page you read!

Konnichiwa! I'm Shun from the TOKYOPOP Tokyo office. I'm now working as an editor and developing various manga that will be coming soon, and I assure you that you will really enjoy them!

Before my TOKYOPOP career, I worked as a shojo manga editor for 4 years. During that period, I heard and experienced a lot of interesting incidents that no one in any other occupation would be able to experience. Some of them I love to remember, but some of them are... You don't want to know...

This time, I want you to talk about "deadline." This word evokes mixed up feelings among both manga-ka and editor. Because, in Japan, almost all the mangas are published in various periodical magazines first, and deadlines that come monthly or weekly have serious meaning. Before they start working, manga-ka and manga editor are good friends. They go out for meetings, joke around and sometimes talk about their dream. It is very a sweet, pleasant time. But as deadline closes, their relationship changes. Both are obsessed with the date artwork is completed. Editor asks, "When?" and manga-ka replies, "Not yet." This conversation repeats over and over until the manga-ka finishes their work. It becomes some kind of psychological warfare, and at last they exhaust themselves physically and mentally. At this point, they think they don't want to work any more, don't want to see single page of manga, don't want to say the word "manga." But after a few days have passed, they miss their works. And the same story begins all over again. They are really strange creatures.

Anyway, when you read any mangas, you don't need to remember such strange dramas are hidden behind every page you read. All you have to do is just to enjoy! Sayonara!!

~Shun Nakazawa

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