

BEAST OF CLOUDS: THE GUARDIAN OF ANCIENT TIMES

雲之獸：來自遠古的守護者

* 2021 Golden Comic Award

The clouded leopards that once roamed the mountain forests of Taiwan are extinct, but in this creative blend of zoological fact and comic book fantasy, the spirit of the clouded leopard lives on as the guardian of a natural history museum.

The legendary Formosan clouded leopard, a fierce apex predator, once inhabited the remote reaches of Taiwan's mountain forests. Under pressure from the gradual expansion of human settlements, the clouded leopard eventually went extinct on Taiwan, leaving behind only museum specimens. But in this creative collaboration between comic book artist Hambuck and the National Taiwan Museum, the clouded leopard lives on as the spiritual protector of a museum.

The four stories contained within this graphic novel strike a delicate balance between zoological fact and creative fiction, tracing a family of clouded leopards through multiple generations as they navigate various challenges. Readers begin in the primeval forest, where they observe Jumper defend his territory, court a female leopard, and father offspring. In the next generation, Scarface detects the presence of a new creature within his forest kingdom. In his doomed attempts to defend his territory from this new threat, he inadvertently forms a mysterious bond with Muni, a human child on the way to becoming a powerful shamaness. As she matures, Muni realizes her ability to see the future is enhanced whenever she is in the presence of a clouded leopard. Using her powers, Muni foretells the grim blow that industrial society will eventually deal to the clouded leopard and her own people, but also manages to help a descendent of Jumper and



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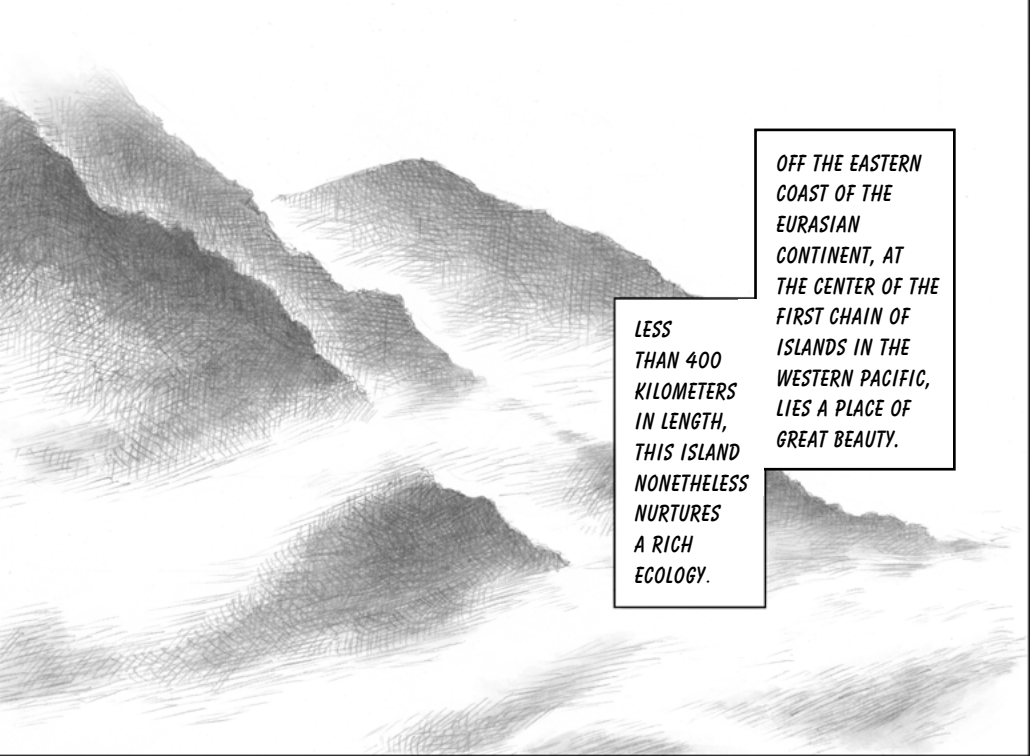
Volume: 1 (END)

Scarface fulfill his destiny and become the protector spirit of a natural history museum.

Blending the precision of a naturalist with the humor and appeal of comics, Hambuck's art summons the majestic spirit of an extinct predator to the page, while lending warmth to the subtle relationships between humans and animals that form the core of the story.

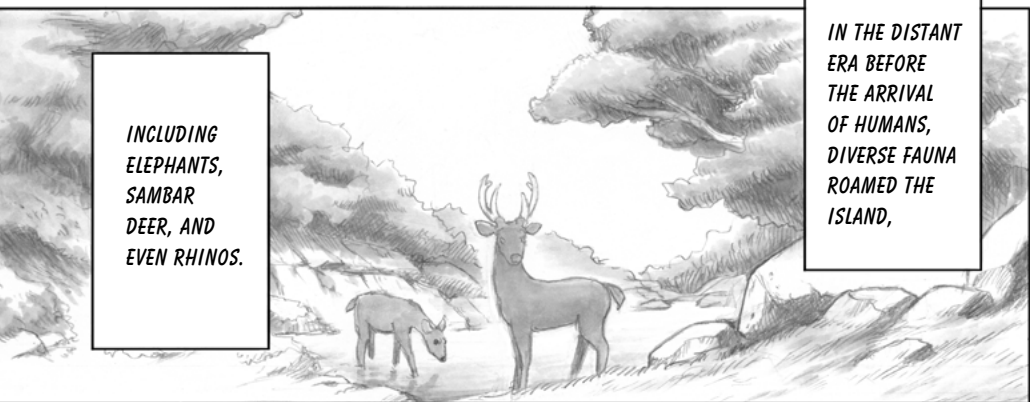
Hambuck 漢寶包

A native of Taipei, Hambuck was the resident artist for the Taiwan pavilion at the 2016 Angoulême International Comics Festival. Foreign language rights to his previous works have been sold in Japan, Thailand, France, and Russia.



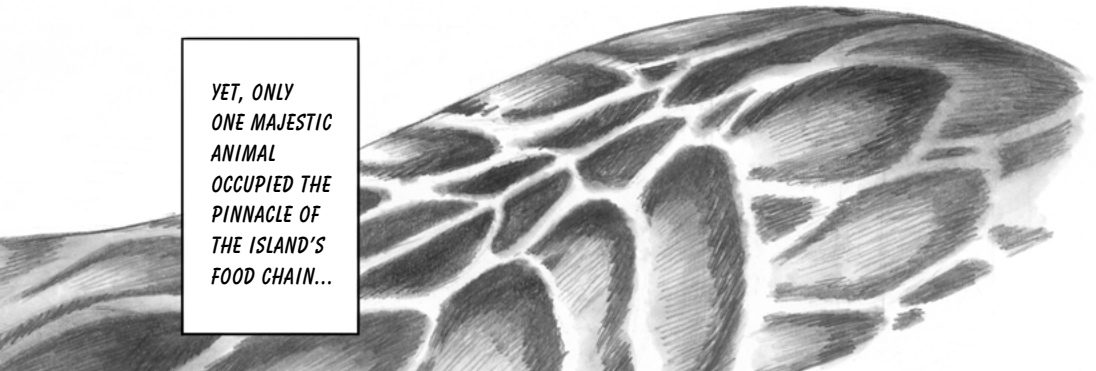
OFF THE EASTERN
COAST OF THE
EURASIAN
CONTINENT, AT
THE CENTER OF THE
FIRST CHAIN OF
ISLANDS IN THE
WESTERN PACIFIC,
LIES A PLACE OF
GREAT BEAUTY.

LESS
THAN 400
KILOMETERS
IN LENGTH,
THIS ISLAND
NONETHELESS
NURTURES
A RICH
ECOLOGY.



INCLUDING
ELEPHANTS,
SAMBAR
DEER, AND
EVEN RHINOS.

IN THE DISTANT
ERA BEFORE
THE ARRIVAL
OF HUMANS,
DIVERSE FAUNA
ROAMED THE
ISLAND,

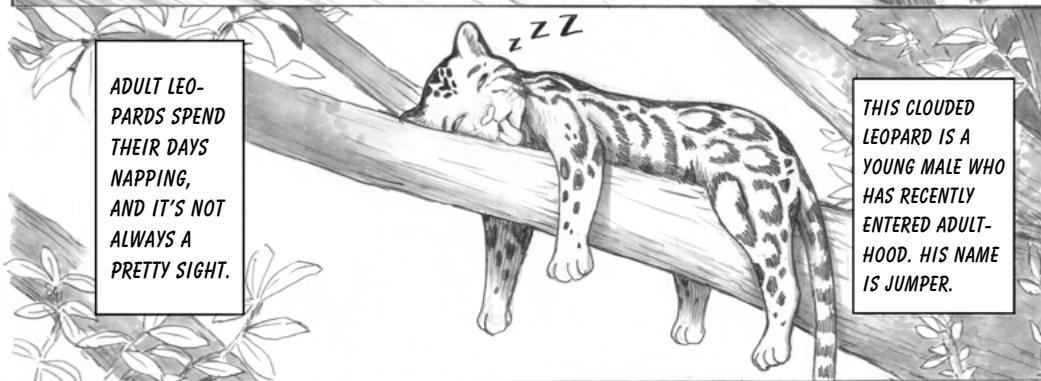


YET, ONLY
ONE MAJESTIC
ANIMAL
OCCUPIED THE
PINNACLE OF
THE ISLAND'S
FOOD CHAIN...

The Clouded Leopard



ADULT LEOPARDS SPEND THEIR DAYS NAPPING, AND IT'S NOT ALWAYS A PRETTY SIGHT.



THIS CLOUDED LEOPARD IS A YOUNG MALE WHO HAS RECENTLY ENTERED ADULTHOOD. HIS NAME IS JUMPER.



THIS IS A PRECIOUS MOMENT DURING WHICH HE CAN CATCH UP ON SLEEP.

BUT FOR JUMPER,



**TIME
TO GET
TO
WORK!**

... CLOUDED
LEOPARDS
WERE BORN
TO WORK
THE NIGHT
SHIFT.

JUST BECAUSE
HE'S AT THE
TOP OF THE
FOOD CHAIN
DOESN'T MEAN
LIFE IS EASY.

THAT'S HOW
JUMPER'S
BIG BROTHER
MET HIS
DEMISE.



OR, PERHAPS HE
MIGHT GET INJURED
WHILE HUNTING.
HE MIGHT SPRAIN
AN ANKLE, FOR
EXAMPLE.

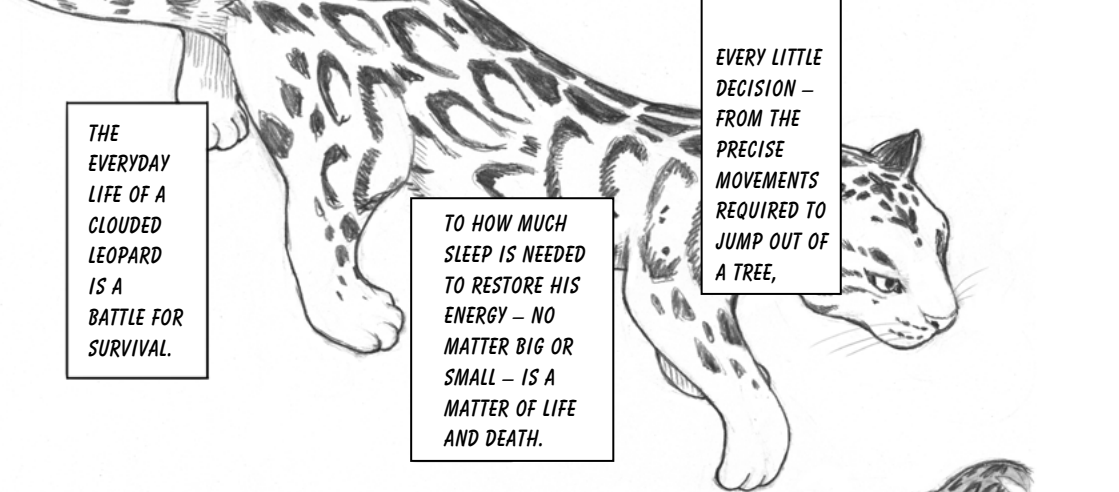
THAT WILL ALSO
MAKE IT HARDER TO
HUNT, INITIATING
ANOTHER DEATH
SPIRAL.

THAT'S
EXACTLY
WHAT
HAPPENED
TO
JUMPER'S
FATHER.



BECAUSE IF HE CAN'T
HUNT DOWN ENOUGH
PREY TO KEEP HIM-
SELF FED, HIS BODY
WILL WEAKEN.

AND ONCE HE STARTS
TO WEAKEN, HUNTING
BECOMES EVEN MORE
DIFFICULT, AND THE
DEATH SPIRAL BEGINS.



THE
EVERYDAY
LIFE OF A
CLOUDED
LEOPARD
IS A
BATTLE FOR
SURVIVAL.

TO HOW MUCH
SLEEP IS NEEDED
TO RESTORE HIS
ENERGY – NO
MATTER BIG OR
SMALL – IS A
MATTER OF LIFE
AND DEATH.

EVERY LITTLE
DECISION –
FROM THE
PRECISE
MOVEMENTS
REQUIRED TO
JUMP OUT OF
A TREE,



CONGRATU-
LATIONS!
JUMPER HAS
ONCE AGAIN
INCREASED
HIS CHANCES
OF SURVIVAL.

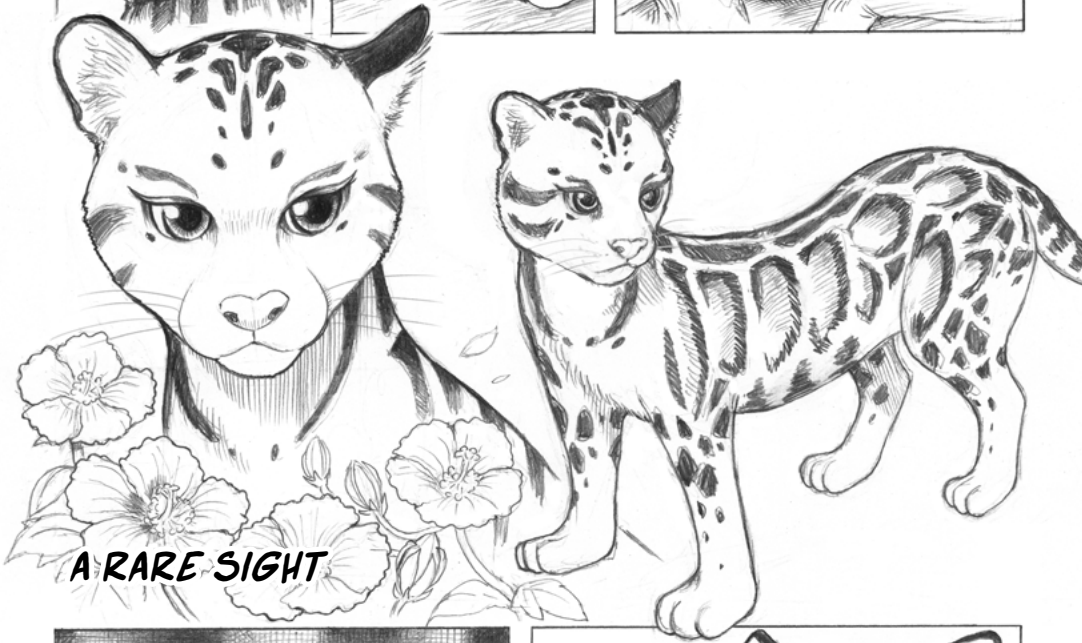
!?

みん
さん

A close-up of a deer's face on the left and a leopard's open mouth on the right. The leopard's mouth is wide open, showing its tongue and teeth. A jagged speech bubble with '!?' is between them. In the bottom left, a small leopard is lying on the ground, and a small speech bubble with Japanese text 'みんなさん' is next to it.

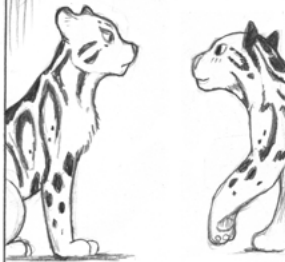


BUT THERE'S
SOMETHING
IN THE AIR
TONIGHT THAT
MAKES JUMPER
FEEL RESTLESS.

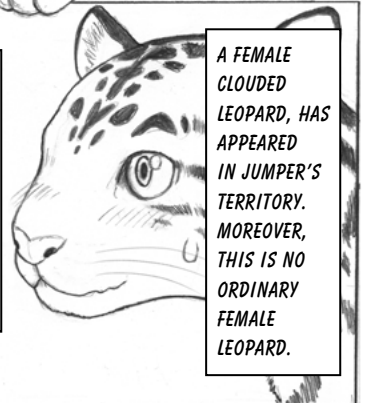


A RARE SIGHT

AS A SINGLE
MALE,
JUMPER FEELS
COMPELLED TO
UNDERSTAND
THIS THING
THAT MAKES
HIM FEEL SO
RESTLESS.



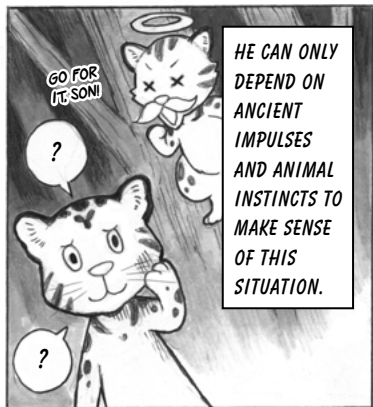
SHE JUST
SO HAPPENS
TO BE IN
HEAT, AND
IS EMITTING
POWERFUL
PHEROMONES.



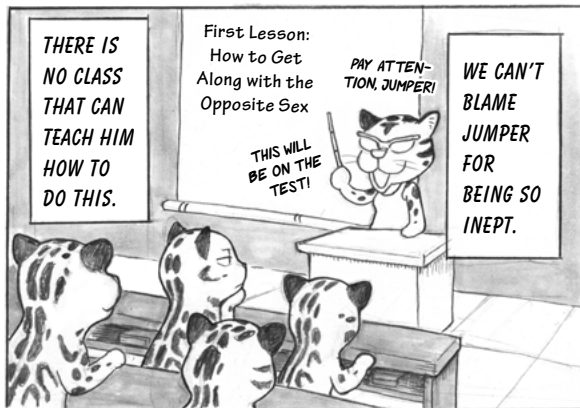
A FEMALE
CLOUDED
LEOPARD,
HAS
APPEARED
IN JUMPER'S
TERRITORY.
MOREOVER,
THIS IS NO
ORDINARY
FEMALE
LEOPARD.



IT APPEARS THAT JUMPER IS NOT MAKING GOOD PROGRESS.



HE CAN ONLY DEPEND ON ANCIENT IMPULSES AND ANIMAL INSTINCTS TO MAKE SENSE OF THIS SITUATION.



THERE IS NO CLASS THAT CAN TEACH HIM HOW TO DO THIS.

First Lesson:
How to Get
Along with the
Opposite Sex

PAY ATTENTION, JUMPER!

THIS WILL
BE ON THE
TEST!

WE CAN'T
BLAME
JUMPER
FOR
BEING SO
INEPT.



HE ALSO DETECTS THE SCENT OF ANOTHER MALE LEOPARD IN HIS TERRITORY.



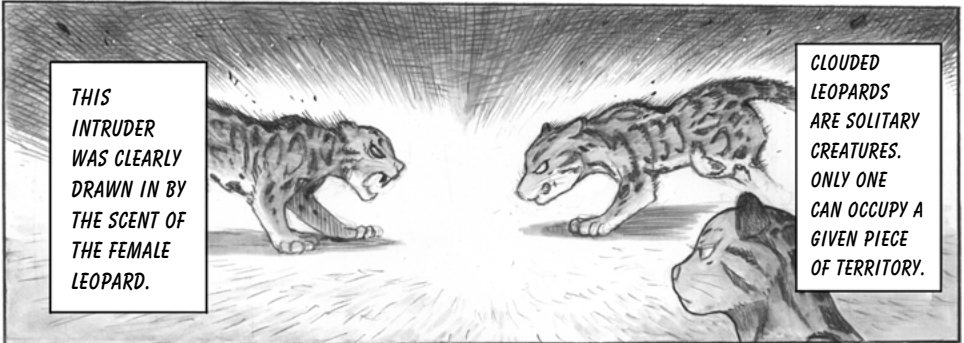
BUT PHEROMONES AREN'T THE ONLY SOURCE OF JUMPER'S RESTLESSNESS.



Grrrrr!



THIS IS
SOMETHING
JUMPER
CANNOT
ALLOW.



THIS
INTRUDER
WAS CLEARLY
DRAWN IN BY
THE SCENT OF
THE FEMALE
LEOPARD.

CLOUDED
LEOPARDS
ARE SOLITARY
CREATURES.
ONLY ONE
CAN OCCUPY A
GIVEN PIECE
OF TERRITORY.



ARE YOU
KIDDING
ME, RUNT?
YOU THINK
ANYTHING
YOU PISS
ON IS YOUR
TERRITORY?
(HYPOTHETICAL
DIALOGUE)



YOU LOOKIN'
FOR AN
EARLY
DEATH?
THIS IS MY
TERRITORY!
(HYPOTHETICAL
DIALOGUE)

JUMPER
HAS NO
CHOICE BUT
TO PUT ON
A SHOW OF
STRENGTH.

IF A SHOW OF
STRENGTH IS
ENOUGH TO
CONVINCE AN
OPPONENT TO
RETREAT, A
DANGEROUS
CONFLICT CAN
BE AVOIDED.



EVEN THE WINNER
HAS A CHANCE OF
COMPROMISING
HIS HUNTING
ABILITY THROUGH
INJURY, IN WHICH
CASE IT WILL BE A
HOLLOW VICTORY.

YOU
BETTER
SCRAM!
I'VE
NEVER
LOST IN
A FIGHT!
(HYPOTHETICAL
DIALOGUE)



YOU'LL WISH
YOU COULD
STILL TAKE A
PISS AFTER
I'M DONE
RIPPING
OUT YOUR
THROAT!
(HYPOTHETICAL
DIALOGUE)



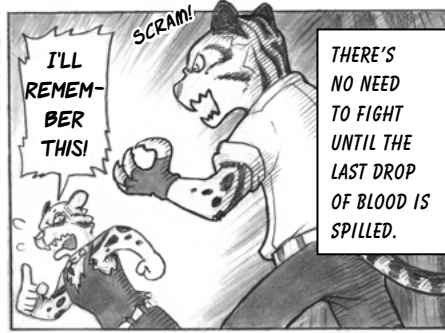
BUT THIS TIME, OUR
OPPONENTS APPEAR
EQUALLY MATCHED,
AND WITH THE ADDED
STIMULATION OF THE
PHEROMONES IN THE
AIR TONIGHT...



I'M
GONNA
DESTROY
YOU!

LET'S
GO!

... IT SEEMS
THERE IS NO
EASY WAY
TO AVOID A
FIGHT.

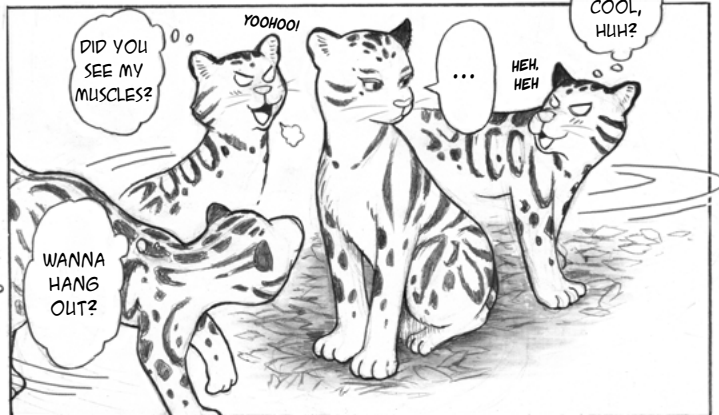




BACK
OFF
GRIEP!

BUT THAT
MAY NOT BE
ENOUGH TO
WIN THIS
FEMALE'S
AFFECTION.

Pow!



DID YOU
SEE MY
MUSCLES?

YOOHOO!

WANNA
HANG
OUT?

...

HEH,
HEH

PRETTY
COOL,
HUH?



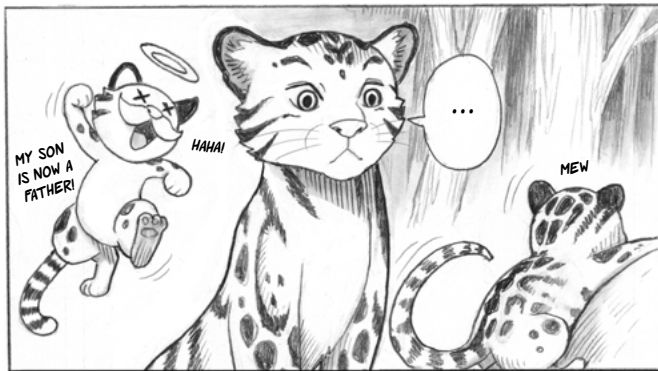
AND FIND
SOME
WAY TO
ACCEPT
EACH
OTHER...

IF ONLY THESE
TWO YOUNG
LEOPARDS
CAN UNLOCK
THE MYSTERY
OF THEIR
INSTINCTUAL
IMPULSES,



WILL BE
WELCOMED
INTO THE
WORLD.

... IN THREE
MONTHS
TIME, A
NEW LITTER
OF CLOUDED
LEOPARDS



AFTER THE MATING PERIOD ENDS, CLOUDED LEOPARDS RETURN TO THEIR SOLITARY LIVES. THIS IS A FACT THAT JUMPER UNDERSTANDS ALL TOO CLEARLY.



WHERE SHE CAN RAISE HER KITTENS IN SOLITUDE.

CLOUDED LEOPARDS ARE ACCUSTOMED TO GOING IT ALONE. THIS MOTHER LEOPARD WILL FIND A SECRET PLACE...



HIS NAME IS SCARFACE.



THAT'S THIS LIVELY LITTLE FELLOW.



SADLY, ONLY ONE OF THESE FOUR LITTLE LEOPARDS WILL LIVE TO ADULTHOOD.

THREE
YEARS
LATER...

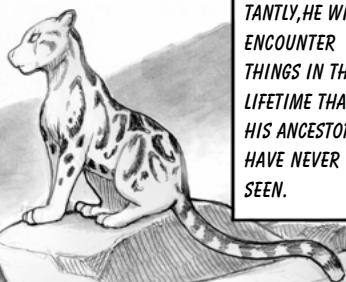
SCARFACE
HAS BECOME
THE GREATEST
HUNTER IN
THE REGION,

HIS STRENGTH
AND FEROCITY
EXCEEDING
EVEN HIS
FATHER IN
HIS PRIME.

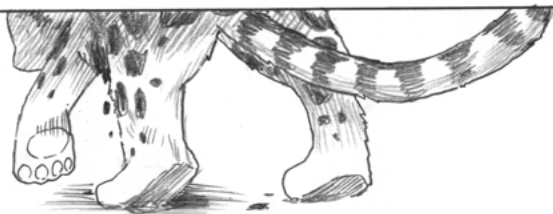


MORE IMPOR-
TANTLY, HE WILL
ENCOUNTER
THINGS IN THIS
LIFETIME THAT
HIS ANCESTORS
HAVE NEVER
SEEN.

BUT
THAT'S
ANOTHER
STORY.





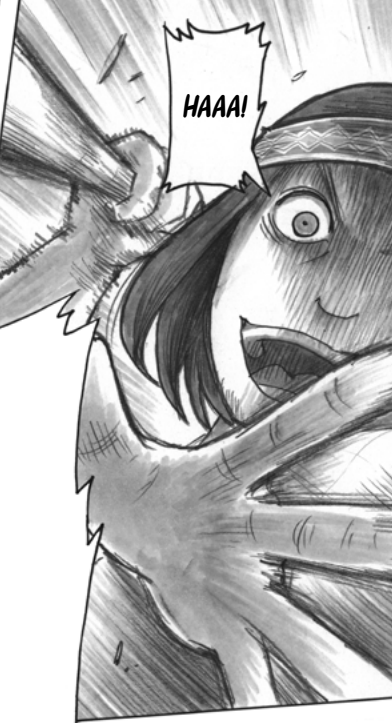


huff...

huff...



huff...



RAAAARRRRG!!





AN
ENTIRELY
NEW
ANIMAL...

HAS JOINED THE
COMPETITION
FOR SURVIVAL
IN THE ANCIENT
FOREST.

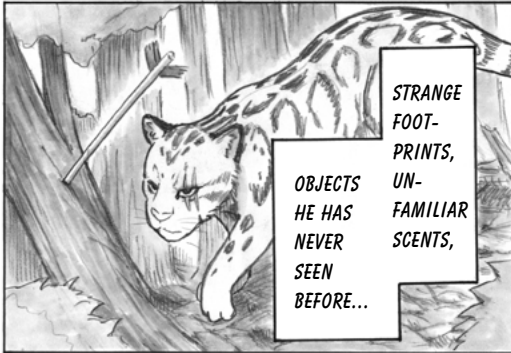


AND WITH
THEM WILL
COME RADICAL
CHANGES TO
THE RULES OF
SURVIVAL.

AS THEIR VILLAGE
EXPANDS, THEIR
FOOTFALLS ARE
MORE FREQUENTLY
HEARD WITHIN
THE FOREST,



THIS IS NOT
SOMETHING
THAT GOES
UNNOTICED BY
SCARFACE, THE
KING OF THIS
MOUNTAIN.

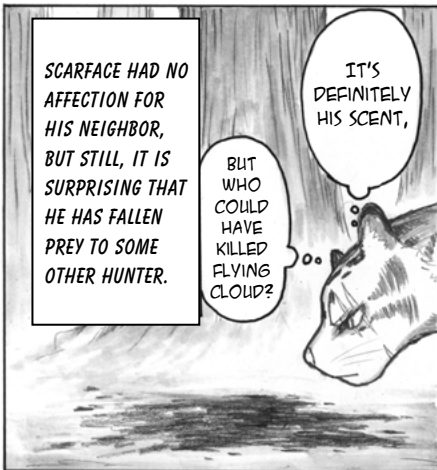


OBJECTS
HE HAS
NEVER
SEEN
BEFORE...

STRANGE
FOOT-
PRINTS,
UN-
FAMILIAR
SCENTS,



IN FACT,
FOR A LONG
TIME NOW
HE HAS BEEN
NOTICING NEW
THINGS WHICH
HE CANNOT
UNDERSTAND.



SCARFACE HAD NO
AFFECTION FOR
HIS NEIGHBOR,
BUT STILL, IT IS
SURPRISING THAT
HE HAS FALLEN
PREY TO SOME
OTHER HUNTER.

BUT
WHO
COULD
HAVE
KILLED
FLYING
CLOUD?

IT'S
DEFINITELY
HIS SCENT,



AND THE
DEATH
OF HIS
NEIGHBOR,
FLYING
CLOUD.

AND
SCARFACE
CANNOT
ALLOW
THEM TO
CHALLENGE
HIS
SUPREMACY.



THERE
ARE NEW
INTRUDERS
ON THE
MOUNTAIN,



HE FOLLOWS
THE SCENT
DOWN THE
MOUNTAIN,
HIS BLOOD
PUMPING
FIERCELY IN
HIS VEINS.



"THIS
TERRITORY
BELONGS TO
SCARFACE!"



"I WILL
MAKE HIM
UNDER-
STAND:"



"I WILL
FIND THIS
HUNTER!"





"GOT-CHA!"



WAAAA!



"SO,
YOU'RE THE
ONE WHO'S
BEEN
CAUSING
TROUBLE ON
MY TURF!"

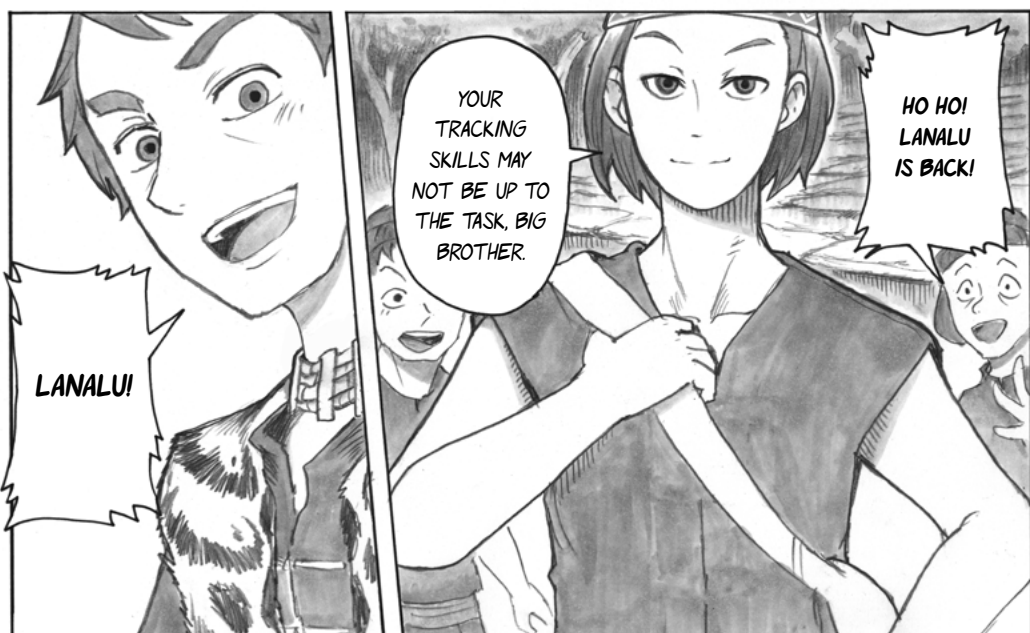


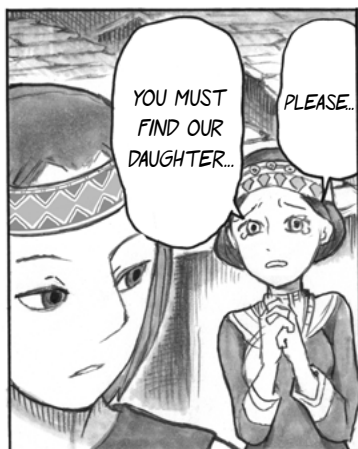
WAAA!

AY
YA
YAI












IT IS AN
EXCELLENT
SURVIVAL
STRATEGY.



AND BETTER
PROTECT THEIR
CHILDREN
AND OTHER
VULNERABLE
INDIVIDUALS.



LIVING IN
GROUPS
ALLOWS
THEM TO
MORE EASILY
DEFEND
AGAINST
ENEMIES,



BUT, AS SOCIAL
ANIMALS, THEY
ARE FORCED TO
CONTEMPLATE
MORE COMPLEX
PROBLEMS.



HUMANS
HAVE MUCH
IN COMMON
WITH
CLOUDED
LEOPARDS,



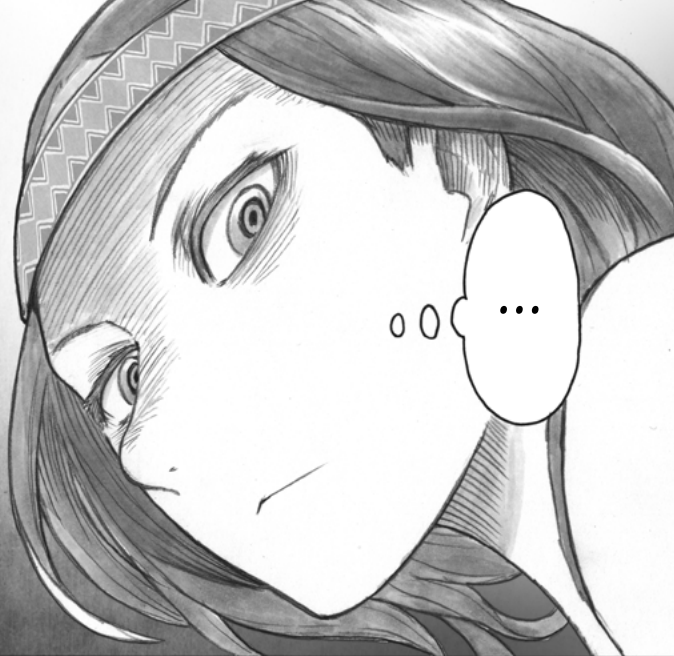
"WHAT IS
MY STATUS
WITHIN THE
TRIBE?"



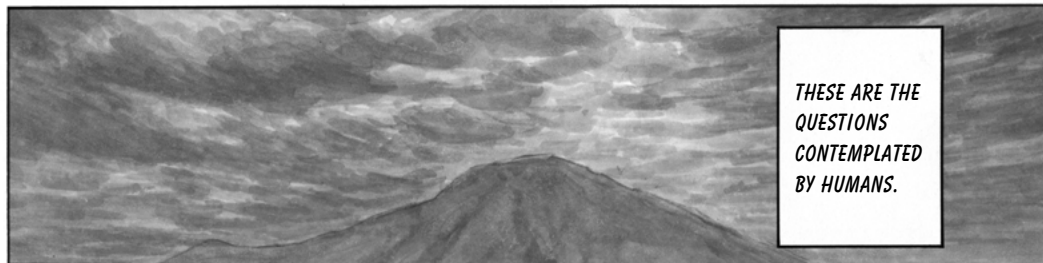
"HOW AM
I SEEN BY
OTHERS?"

AND...

**"IF MY BROTHER
DIES IN AN
ACCIDENT, WILL
I BECOME THE
NEXT CHIEF?"**



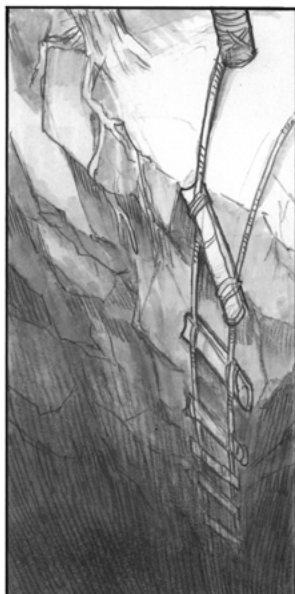
THESE ARE THE
QUESTIONS
CONTEMPLATED
BY HUMANS.



NO, I CAN
MAKE THE
JUMP!

WE'LL
HAVE
TO GO
AROUND

THE ROPE
BRIDGE IS
BROKEN.









Flash!



EVEN IF
THE BODY
IS FOUND,
I HAVE
NOTHING
TO FEAR.

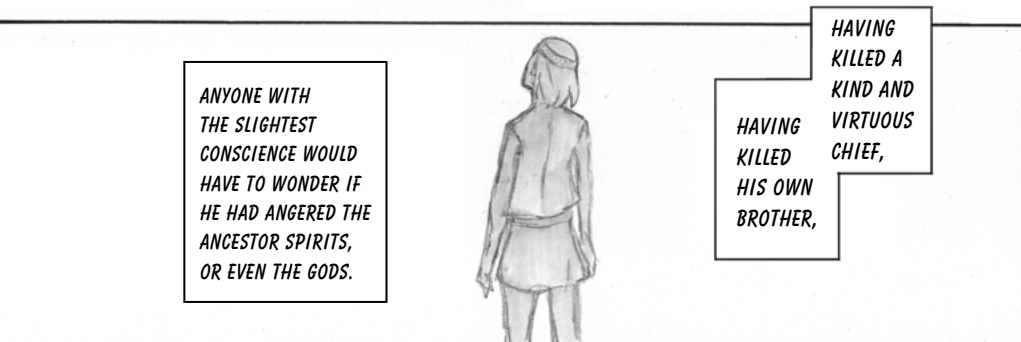
I USED
A KNIFE
FROM
A RIVAL
TRIBE.

THAT
FALL
WILL
FINISH
HIM
FOR
SURE.



THE THUN-
DEROUS
CLAP REVER-
BERATING
THROUGH
THE MOUN-
TAINS.

A FLASH OF
LIGHTENING
PIERCES THE
BLACK SKY,



ANYONE WITH
THE SLIGHTEST
CONSCIENCE WOULD
HAVE TO WONDER IF
HE HAD ANGERED THE
ANCESTOR SPIRITS,
OR EVEN THE GODS.

HAVING
KILLED
HIS OWN
BROTHER,

HAVING
KILLED A
KIND AND
VIRTUOUS
CHIEF,



BUT THIS
THOUGHT
NEVER
CROSSES
LANALU'S
MIND.





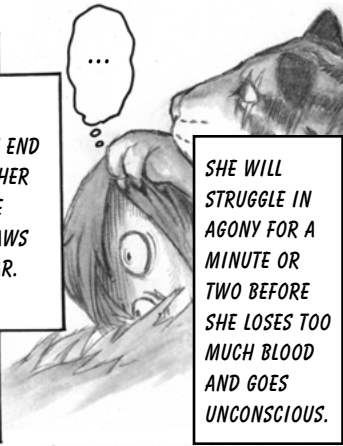
THE ANIMAL
IS NO LONGER
CURIOUS.
ITS EYES
ARE FILLED
WITH A COOL
INDIFFERENCE,
LIKE TWO DEEP
POOLS.



THE LITTLE
GIRL CAN
SENSE THAT
THINGS ARE
ABOUT TO
CHANGE.



THE END
OF HER
LIFE
DRAWS
NEAR.





...

SHE WILL
STRUGGLE IN
AGONY FOR A
MINUTE OR
TWO BEFORE
SHE LOSES TOO
MUCH BLOOD
AND GOES
UNCONSCIOUS.



THE
LEOPARD
WILL
ATTACK,
BITING
INTO HER
NECK.

WITH SENSES
SHE CANNOT
FATHOM, SHE
SEES WHAT
THE NEXT FEW
MINUTES WILL
BRING.



SHE'S ONLY
SIX YEARS
AND THREE
MONTHS
OLD. NO
ONE HAS
HAD THE
CHANCE TO
TELL HER...

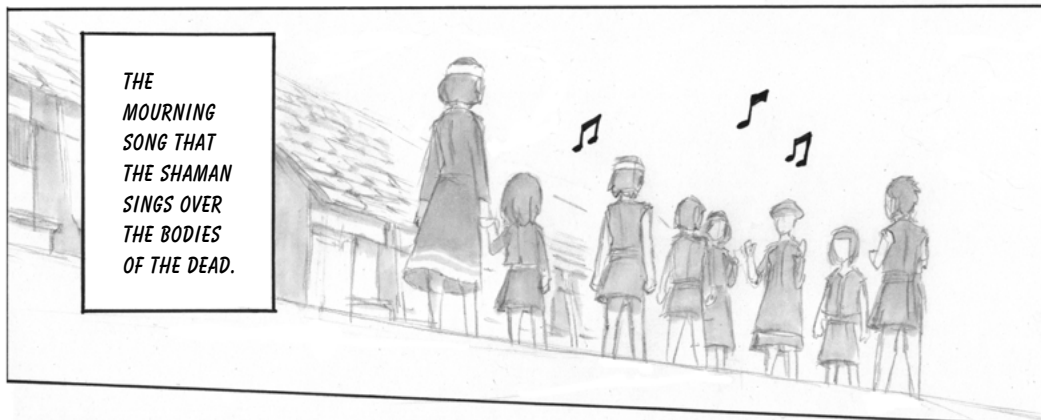
HOW SHE
SHOULD
PREPARE
TO FACE
HER OWN
DEMISE.



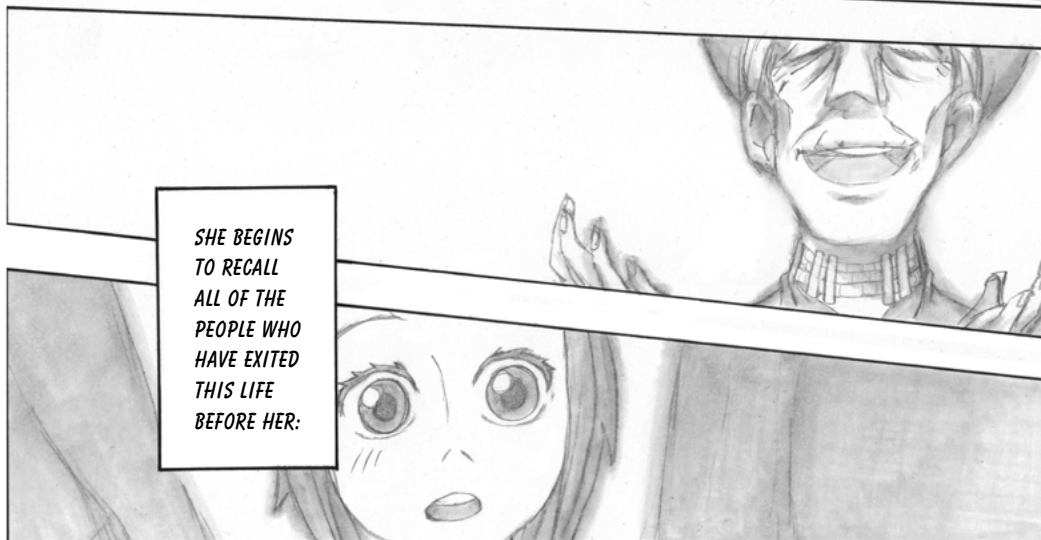
AND
SO SHE
BEGINS
TO SING



HER
FAVORITE
MELODY,



THE
MOURNING
SONG THAT
THE SHAMAN
SINGS OVER
THE BODIES
OF THE DEAD.



SHE BEGINS
TO RECALL
ALL OF THE
PEOPLE WHO
HAVE EXITED
THIS LIFE
BEFORE HER:

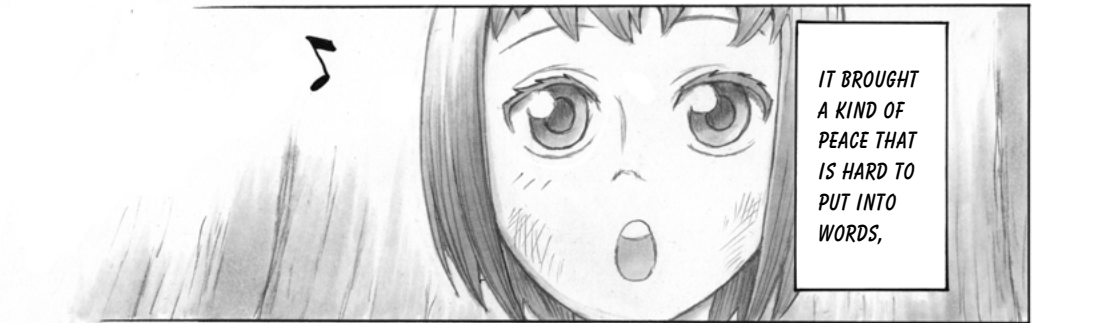


WHEN
THEY
DIED,

THE
SHAMAN'S
SINGING
HELPED TO
EASE HER
PAIN.

THE
NEIGHBOR
SHE OFTEN
FOUGHT
WITH, BUT
WHO STILL
PLAYED
WITH HER
EVERY DAY.

HER GRAND-
MOTHER,
WHO
ALWAYS
COOKED THE
BEST SOUP,



IT BROUGHT
A KIND OF
PEACE THAT
IS HARD TO
PUT INTO
WORDS,



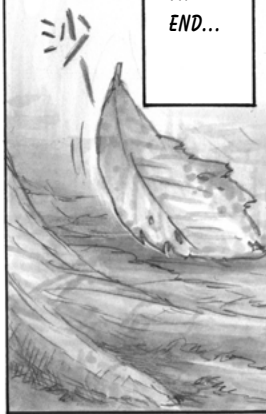
AS IF A
VOICE
WERE
TELLING
HER...

YOU WILL
NEVER BE
LONELY
AGAIN,

THERE IS
NOTHING
TO FEAR,



DEATH
IS NOT
THE
END...



WHEN SHE FINISHES SINGING,

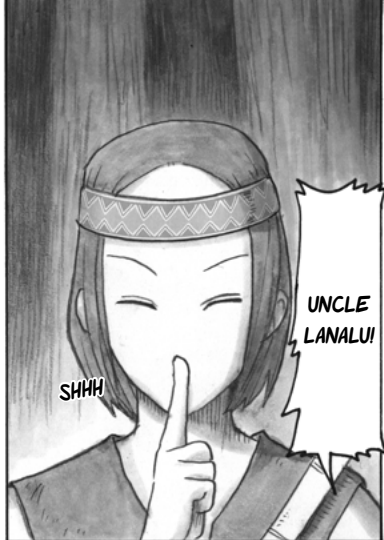


HUH?



DID THE
LEOPARD
UNDER-
STAND
WHAT
I WAS
SINGING
ABOUT?

THE
LEOPARD
IS NO
LONGER IN
THE TREE
ABOVE
HER.





BEFORE A
HUNTING
KNIFE
CLEAVES
HER BODY
IN TWO.

SHE SEES
HERSELF WALK
FORWARD A
FEW STEPS,



YOUR
MOTHER'S
BROTHER?

OH YEAH,
MY OTHER
UNCLE...

sheath



WHAT'S
WRONG?

...
...



THEN
HE WENT
TO THE
VILLAGE TO
GET MORE
HELP

HE SAID
I SHOULD
WAIT
HERE FOR HIM.



HE
FOUND
YOU
EVEN
BEFORE
I DID

OH
MY.



HE
TOLD ME
I SHOULD-
N'T BE
RUNNING
AROUND
ALONE.

I RAN
INTO HIM
ON THE
MOUNTAIN.



!?



SO GOOD
THAT IT'S
EASY TO
TELL WHEN
YOU ARE
LYING.

YOU
REALLY
ARE A
GOOD
LITTLE
GIRL.



LIKE
BEAUTIFUL
LAKES.

EYES
LIKE
WATER,

...



ARE JUST
LIKE
YOUR
MOTHER'S.

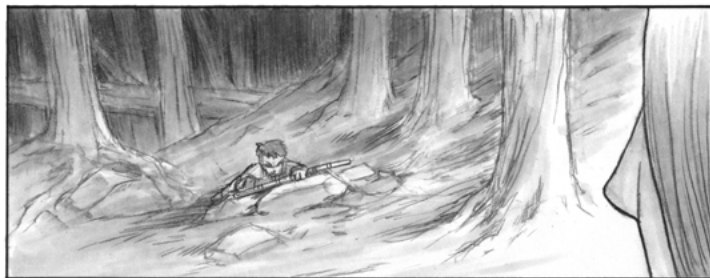
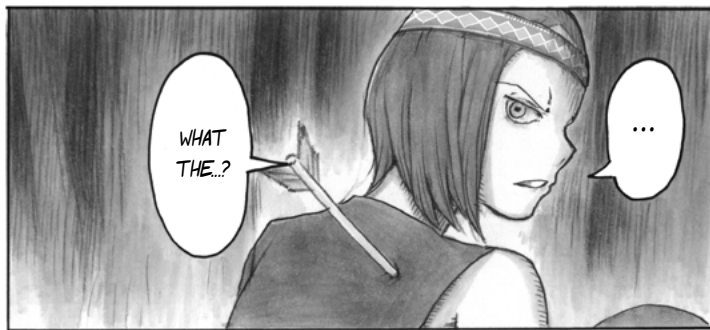
YOUR
EYES...



THIS WILL
BE OVER IN
A MOMENT...

draw

BE A GOOD
GIRL. CLOSE
YOUR EYES,
AND TURN
AROUND





WHY
CAN'T
THE TWO
OF YOU
JUST
GIVE UP?



IS THIS
WHAT THEY
CALL THE
"PROTEC
TION OF
THE AN-
CESTORS"?

HMMPH...



cough,
cough

gasp

LET'S
GO,
LANALUI!



LET'S
PLAY
A NEW
GAME.

DO YOU
REMEMBER
THAT ONE
WE USED
TO PLAY?



I DOUBT I
COULD HAVE
SURVIVED
A FALL
FROM THAT
HEIGHT.

YOU
DEFINITELY
WON THAT
ROUND BIG
BROTHER.

COME
ON!!!

IS THAT
ALL
YOU'VE
GOT?

gasp



YOU'D
PLACE
BETS ON
WHAT BODY
PART OF
I COULD
SHOOT.



LISTEN
TO ME,
LANALU...

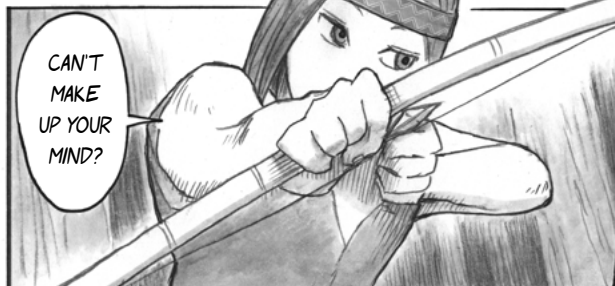
cough
gasp

gasp
WAIT!



THE
LEG?
THE
BODY?

MAYBE
THE
HEAD?

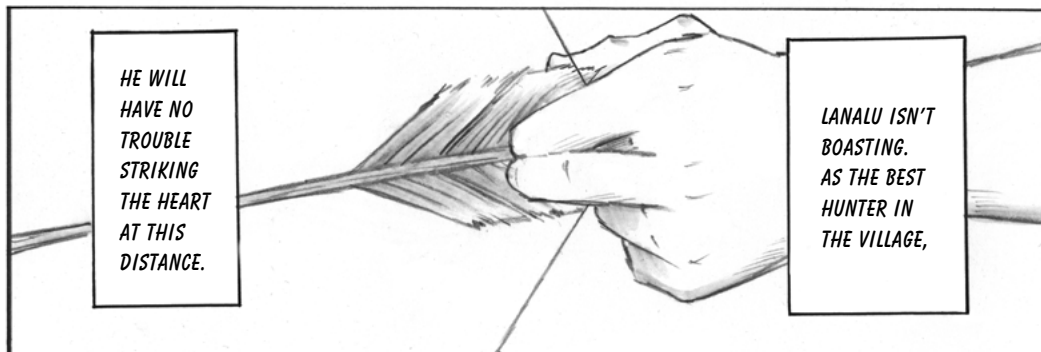


CAN'T
MAKE
UP YOUR
MIND?



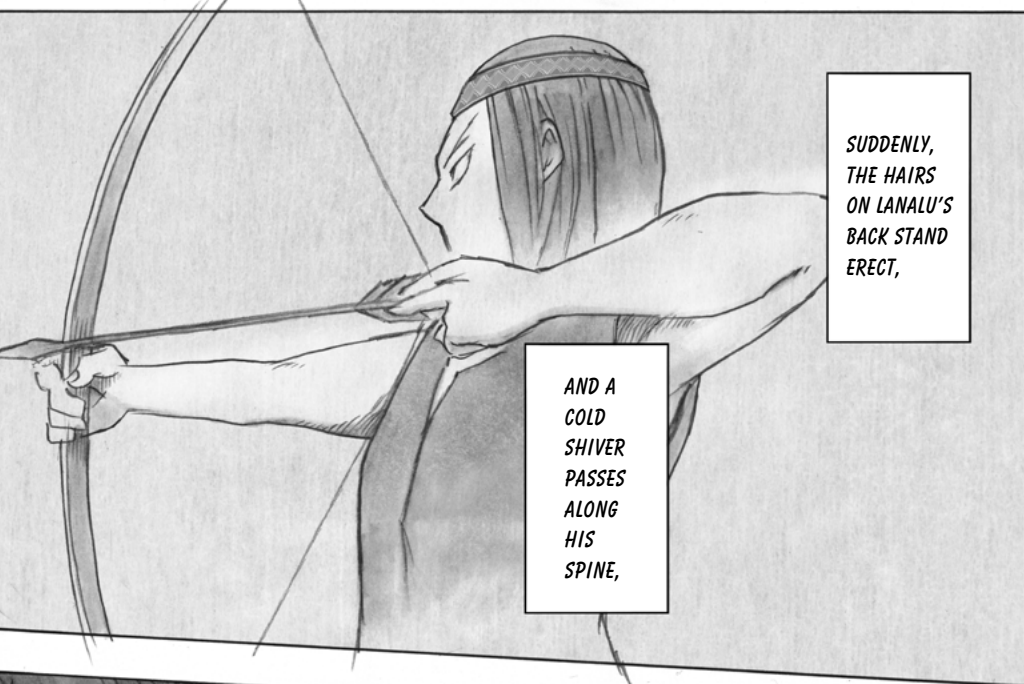
MY ARROW
GOES STRAIGHT
THROUGH THE
HEART.

THE
STANDARD
BET THEN.
ONE POUND
OF WILD BOAR
MEAT SAYS...



HE WILL
HAVE NO
TROUBLE
STRIKING
THE HEART
AT THIS
DISTANCE.

LANALU ISN'T
BOASTING.
AS THE BEST
HUNTER IN
THE VILLAGE,



SUDDENLY,
THE HAIRS
ON LANALU'S
BACK STAND
ERECT,

AND A
COLD
SHIVER
PASSES
ALONG
HIS
SPINE,



LIKE A
CHILL WIND
BLOWING AT
HIS BACK.



TO AN
EXPERIENCED
HUNTER LIKE
LANALU, THIS
CAN ONLY
MEAN ONE
THING.



DEATH IS
CLOSING IN.



**"AT
LAST
I'VE
FOUND
YOU!"**

A A A H H H !

咻!

**"YOU'RE
THE ONE
WHO DARED
TO KILL
ANOTHER
LEOPARD..."**

**"... IN MY
TERRITORY!"**



AHHHHH!



ARRGH!
A LEOPARD?!



DIE
!!!



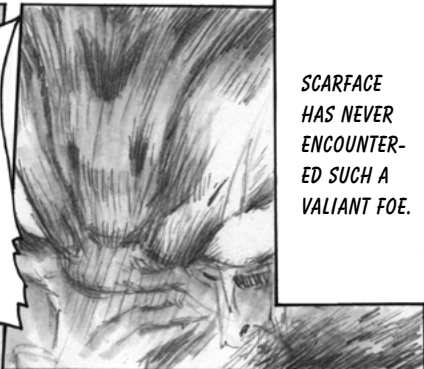
draw



THE IRON
HUNTING
KNIFE
DELIVERS
A VICIOUS
BLOW.

...

AHHHHH!



SCARFACE
HAS NEVER
ENCOUNTER-
ED SUCH A
VALIANT FOE.



**SURPASSING
THE STRENGTH
AND FEROCITY
OF HIS FATHER
IN HIS PRIME.**

**HE HOLDS
BACK
NOTHING,**

**BUT
SCARFACE
HAS NO
INTENTION
OF
RELEASING
HIS GRIP.**



**TONIGHT,
HE IS KING
OF THIS
MOUNTAIN.**