FEATURE PRESENTATION SNK: THE ART OF GAMING NEWSLINE ZERO DIVIDE II, ENEMY ZERO, OVER BLOOD, SPEED RACER COMIX SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: CAMMY, SAMURAI SHODOWN

GAME ON! USA

THE MAGAZINE OF ELECTRONIC MANGA GAMING

FEATURE PRESENTATION

SNK: THE ART OF GAMING

SNKin' AROUND WITH THE MAKERS OF THE NEO•GEO
ART OF FIGHTING 3
NINJA MASTERS
SHIN OU KEN

NEWSLINE

ZERO DIVIDE II
LUNAR: THE SILVER STAR
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SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: CAMMY
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Split Personalities

System wars are exciting periods to enter the video game market, with manufacturers hoping you'll gamble $300 to try out their latest offerings. For Japanese gaming fans the choice of system becomes more complex, because many companies act like different beings in the U.S. and in Japan.

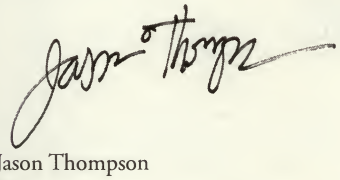
Many companies have entirely different Japanese and U.S. games. In America, Konami is almost exclusively known these days for sports titles, with the occasional action game. In Japan, shooters and simulation games such as ***Tokimeki Memorial*** are the company's greatest hits. Take Williams and Bally/Midway. ***Mortal Kombat*** continues to be big here, but in Japan it's never caught on and Williams is much less known. Even a hit in both countries, ***Doom***, is published in Japan by Imagineer, a company whose in-house titles consist of such things as ***Pretty Fighter X***. For every company which is successful here and overseas, there are many which are but shadows of their Japanese presence, or wear entirely different masks.

System manufacturers are far from immune to U.S.-Japan differences, and your preferences—import or domestic—could easily determine your choice. All the people in the U.S. who own PC Engines could probably hang out in this office right now, though in Japan the first CD system has a steady following for anime-based games. There aren't as many Neo•Geo owners here as in Japan, where Neo•Geo owns hundreds of arcades (perhaps a double-speed Neo•Geo CD, like the Japanese CDZ, could help…?). The triangle for most Americans is still Sony, Sega and Nintendo.

We all watched the PlayStation march in and seemingly knock back Sega at the end of 1995. However, the PlayStation is marketed at an audience older—and less familiar with games—than most, concentrating on racing and sports games, and anything with polygons. Until ***Beyond the Beyond***, Sony of America avoided RPGs, the #1 love of manga gaming fans. The Saturn made a much better impression in Japan with ***Virtua Fighter*** and more permissive games; many great RPGs and simulations are available for it. The truth is that in Japan, the Super Famicom/Super NES is still the primary platform. However, by not realizing that this may not apply in the U.S., Nintendo has allowed many of its greatest allies, such as Enix and Hudson Soft, to abandon their U.S. offices or go into hibernation waiting for the Nintendo 64. For software developers, it's a time of chaos, mergers and cutbacks.

In the last ten years, though, American console games have come into their own. Japanese games are receiving wider recognition, but simultaneously American developers—mostly driven by hardware—are improving. Look at the Nintendo 64's lineup of mostly-American developers such as Rare, and Sony's reliance on American developers such as Psygnosis. Even SNK is soon to begin development in America. Though I love manga gaming, we need good games from whatever source. I still doubt that many Japanese gamers are sitting up nights worrying about when the next ***Madden*** is coming out, but now it's not quite as one-sided—Americans wanting Japanese games—any more.

Audiences are sophisticated enough now to understand which countries games come from; there is more awareness of developers, and that the games make the system. How the Big Systems orient themselves—by using the development strengths of each country—may just determine who wins. Myself, I'm waiting for some American developers to start producing manga games of their own.



Jason Thompson
Editor

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©1996 Viz Communications, Inc. All rights reserved; reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. *Game On! USA* is a trademark of Viz Communications. FALSE GAME TIP OF THE MONTH: Start a two-player game of ***Fatal Fury Real Bout***. Immediately both players must "taunt" one another simultaneously. Simultaneously taunt again whenever the timer is on a prime number (17, 31, etc.) When the match times out, repeat. At the end of the third match both characters will get in the mood and begin making rude comments towards the people playing.

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T OF GAMING

Fatal Fury, Samurai Shodown, Art of Fighting... SNK's games have won fame with manga and anime fans as well as gamers, and behind them is the backing of a company that was in arcades since the beginning

Fighter's History

SNK's arcade ties are no mystery; the founder, Eikichi Kawasaki, was originally an arcade operator owning several sites in Japan. Kawasaki quickly saw he could produce as well as distribute arcade games. In July 1978 he founded the company under the official name Shin Nihon Kikaku (later changed to SNK Corporation), and established it in Osaka, Japan.

Before the Neo•Geo, SNK made dedicated arcade games like many other publishers. SNK made games throughout the '80s, in addition to other arcade standbys such as crane machines. The *Rambo*-like *Ikari Warriors* was one of their best-known early games; others included *Beast Busters* and *Iron Tank*. The company was a success, both as an arcade chain and a software developer. In 1986 SNK established their first foreign office, SNK Corporation of America in Torrance, California.

In Japan, where SNK owns several hundred arcades, distribution and public awareness of their games is second nature. In the States, where the business philosophy is different and independent operators are the rule, SNK owns no arcades. Searching for a way to appeal to arcade cabinet distributors (and, after them, the arcade owners) in Spring 1990 SNK developed the Neo•Geo MVS (Multiple Video System).

The New Neo•Geo

The MVS, with its distinctive red cabinet, was SNK's coup—as much a breakthrough in marketing as in technology. MVS machines are standups containing multiple cartridge slots, typically four, but sometimes six or two (for head-to-head play, with an accompanying two screens). The idea was that arcade owners could buy the basic MVS kit and, for a much lower price than continually buying new cabinets, switch and shuffle new cartridges as they were released.

It worked. In 1990, the 16-bit Neo•Geo MVS debuted, with colors, parallax scrolling backgrounds, and scaling ability which were phenomenal for its time. Even more impressively, MVS cartridges required only small adjustments (being physically larger than normal) for use in the Neo•Geo Home System. The system was launched nearly simultaneously in Japan and the States in early 1991. It boasted the exact arcade experience, but the system's high price (over $500) and higher cartridge price (over $200) kept away the majority of buyers. However, especially in Japan, a user base was established—a base (SNK estimates a generous 400-500,000) which seemed to live in a parallel world to the 8-bit, then 16-bit, fights between Sega and Nintendo.

In 1992 SNK Asia Ltd. opened in Hong Kong, and in 1994 SNK opened European offices in London. The American division also distributes games to the Central and South American market. In the search for greatest adaptability, SNK designed Neo•Geo games to be universal, switching to the appropriate language when played by either a Spanish, Japanese or English machine (the English versions often have more extensive changes, censoring the blood in *Samurai Shodown* and the lack of bra support in *Fatal Fury*). Despite this, SNK approves of import games no more than any game publisher, wary of pirate and bootleg versions.

Art of Fighting 3

Who Makes the Games?

SNK R&D takes place at the company headquarters in Osaka, Japan, employing over 300 people. It's not surprising that the R&D team that has produced more 2D fighting games than *anyone* is headed by Takashi Nishiyama, who developed Capcom's *Street Fighter*.

SNK does not have many external software developers, though among them are several memorabl names. ADK (also known as Alpha Denshi) developed the *World Heroes* games and others, Taito produced *Bust Move*, and third part Data East (*Fighters' History Dynamite*), Sunsoft (*Galaxy Fight*), Sammy, Hudson Soft, and Technos Japan also produce titles, to name several. The "SNK look" is not homogenous.

Samurai Shodown 3

SNK is reacting in various ways to gameplay trends. While in *Samurai Shodown 2* only four characters had secret moves, games such as *Art of Fighting 3* (released in May) and Alpha Denshi's 330 MB *Ninja Masters* (a *Samurai Shodown*-style swordfighting game, planned for late summer) have more secret boss codes, hidden characters, and blood codes than before. In *Art of Fighting 3* the characters are more powerful when played on their birthdays. *Shin Ou Ken*, released in May and developed by Saurus, is the first SNK game to use rendered graphics for its characters.

"With players demanding more codes and secret characters, you keep adding more memo-

©SNK

World Heroes: SNK's Best-Known Games

Samurai Shodown
First released in late 1992, ***Samurai Shodown*** (Japanese title "Samurai Spirits"), won a reputation as one of the bloodiest and most varied fighting games yet. Set in 1788 Japan, it was also one of the most historically intricate games ever, featuring characters based on archetypal or actual Japanese heroes such as Yagyu Jubei Mitsuyoshi and Hattori Hanzo, on manga characters (Charlotte, from ***The Rose of Versailles***) and on the Hanafuda card game (Genjuro). ***SS3*** is the latest in the series.

Fatal Fury
Fireballs, slum backgrounds, baseball caps...the first fighting game for the Neo•Geo in 1992 (it was in the arcades in 1991) set its own tone, being developed by Takashi Nishiyama (***Street Fighter***) himself. ***Fatal Fury*** is set in Southtown, crime-ridden, location-inspecific city, where two brothers—martial artists Terry and Andy Bogard—and their friend, kickboxer Joe Higashi, set out to avenge the death of Terry and Andy's father, Jeff Bogard, at the hands of crime boss Geese Howard. Eventually Geese is pushed out the window of his skyscraper... but he returns in four out of five other games in the series, all but ***Fatal Fury 2***. SNK promises that 1996's ***Fatal Fury Real Bout*** is Geese's last appearance in any fighting game.

Fatal Fury Special

Samurai Shodown 3

ry," says Jorge Hicks, the game counselor known as the Neo Messiah. (Hicks took over from the past counselor, Chad Okada, the Game Lord.) As SNK games improved, with more animation frames and characters, they have pressed against the limit of even the Neo•Geo's once-enormous 330 MB RAM. The first group of Neo•Geo games were in the 30-to-50 MB range, but by 1994 *Samurai Shodown* was already over 200 MegaBytes, and recent games are right up to the limit. Experiments are taking place in increasing cartridge RAM to 400 or 500 MB (*Shin Ou Ken* squeezes in at 338 MB, 8 over the usual limit).

The Neo•Geo CD home system, first released in 1995, solves the memory limit problem, and SNK hopes it will bring them a new audience on other merits as well. CDs are infinitely cheaper to manufacture than cartridges, bringing game prices down to a competitive level. However, the CD format has one disadvantage. Neo•Geo games are designed for the arcade, where memory access is instantaneous. The original Neo•Geo CD used a single-speed CD drive at a time when double-speed has become standard, bringing some loading times up to 40-50 seconds. Double-speed Neo•Geo CDs have been released in Japan, but no U.S. release is announced yet.

The CD format also frees Neo•Geo developers to make CD-only games, such as RPGs (multiple-hour play times and arcades don't mix), trivia and puzzle games. A long-awaited *Samurai Shodown* RPG (***Shinsetsu Samurai Spirits Bushido Retsuden***), made by the same team as the original fighting game, is tentatively scheduled for July release.

The Future of SNK

SNK has evolved through many years, but some fear the Neo•Geo has stood still since its initial release. Now the 32-bit systems can produce close adaptations without the Neo•Geo's proprietary chips. Games such as *King of Fighters '95* have been licensed to the Sega Saturn in Japan, and are scheduled for release on the Sony PlayStation in the States. SNK hopes the licensees will expand its audience, without less people buying the Neo•Geo home systems.

SNK's future plans are in America and in new technology. In 1995 SNK hired a select group of American programmers, then sent them to SNK Japan to learn the Neo•Geo development tools. When they return to America, probably sometime in 1997, they will form a bridge between SNK Japan's gaming experience and new American technology: SGI, motion capture, polygon graphics, digitized video. SNK R&D America will give SNK a greater American—and international—presence. A new arcade "simulation" machine is being developed—a sit-down cabinet which, with minor adjustments and cartridge-switching, will be able to switch between a racing and a flying game, for example. Lastly, a new hardware system is also in the works, said to be accompanied by at least three 64-bit games.

To be simultaneously an arcade operator, a game developer, and a hardware producer is to know about amusement and entertainment. SNK has a lot of experience to draw on for its future plans in gaming...whatever they may be.

Samurai Shodown 3

Art of Fighting 3

©SNK

Fatal Fury Real Bout

Fatal Fury Real Bout

Metal Slug

A VISIT TO SNK

Game On! USA heads to SNK's headquarters for a talk with its vice presidents and game experts. By reporter Kevin Lindsey

It's the gameplay.

That's the most frequent answer you get when talking to the employees of SNK Corporation of America.

Gameplay is the reason for their success and the reason that the company has been slow to move into the areas of 3D graphics and motion capture.

"We have always had the end user in mind when we make and market our games," Vice President Bruce Tomiyama said. "We want the punches to look like they're connecting and if you go for a kick we want the character to actually kick."

In the end, that's what defines game play for SNK and most of the game playing public.

"It's nice to have a game that looks nice, has a good graphics presentation and all of the 3D graphics, but if it doesn't give you a good game then it's a fad," Tomiyama said. "The underlying strength of any game is gameplay."

The company's United States headquarters, in Torrance, California, is the main marketing and sales warehouse for the Western Hemisphere. A small office section out front is there for the few executives, but the heart of SNK is the warehouse. It's where the MVS cartridges and the infamous candy apple red Neo•Geo cabinets are shipped. You can also find a small section for the home users tucked into the larger warehouse.

SNK has never made the big move into large scale production of home systems but still offers its fans something for the house.

"Our home product, at least in America, is geared towards the hard-core fan," Tomiyama said. "We've been successful with that core audience who is looking for the same game they get in the arcade."

IT'S GOOD TO BE THE MESSIAH

Jorge Hicks is one of SNK's core audience. He bought the original cartridge system before he started working for the company and still uses it.

Now he's got the job of his dreams. Hicks is the head of Marketing and Product Analysis for SNK Corporation of America. In other words, his job is to play with games.

"I play with the games and tell them what I think," Hicks said. "It's a great job."

Of course that's not all that he does for SNK; he also handles customers' questions about the games and operates the web site. For that reason he's called the "Neo Messiah." Hicks handles 50-100 calls a day.

How did Hicks get the job? "Purely by chance," he said with a grin. Chance and years of game playing experience. When he started playing games it was with the Odyssey game system and then Colecovision and finally Nintendo.

"I've played most of the systems out there," Hicks said.

Hicks understands the company's insistent refrain that game play has to be maintained.

"I think there is a stagnant environment out there right now," Hicks said. "The presentation has taken on a new dimension but the games are really lagging. "

However, Hicks does still see a bright future for the video game industry.

"I think it's all part of the learning curve," he said. "Once the game designers catch up with the technology, things will start to improve."

THE FUTURE HOLDS POLYGONS

SNK is moving into the future with an eye on putting motion capture and updated graphics into widespread use over the next year. ***Shin Ou Ken*** will be the first of SNK's new type of games featuring computer graphics.

"We think that you'll see a nice blend of the same type of game play and the nice graphics in the next year," Tomiyama said.

One of the most anticipated games to feature this new technology is ***Ninja Masters.***

"Japan is being very secretive about this game, in fact, we haven't even got much information about it yet," Tomiyama said. "But it's the one game everyone is buzzing about."

Exclusive Interview

Polygons, Fighters & Spies

SNK is well-known in America, but—as is almost always the case—it's Japan, specifically the company HQ in Osaka, where the actual games are made. Within the headquarters of R&D, overseen by Takashi Nishiyama, developer of *Street Fighter*, both the hardware and software futures of SNK and the Neo•Geo are in the works. *Game On! USA* took the time for, if not industrial espionage, at least some questions to Mr. Shoichiro Takatsu, Publicist for SNK Development.

ROUND 1

Game On! USA: To begin with…How is SNK R&D divided up?

Takatsu: They're divided into the *Fatal Fury* group, the *Samurai Shodown* group, etc. Each title has a team.

Game On! USA: Which *is* your all-time best-selling game?

Takatsu: If we had to pick one it'd probably be *Fatal Fury*. Probably around *Fatal Fury Special* was when the popularity was highest.

Game On! USA: Do you send out for art, or are all your character designers on staff? What about the artist who does the *Fatal Fury* designs?

Takatsu: They're all staff. However, their names are secret.

Game On! USA: I notice that everybody seems to say that when they talk about their developers…or they all have pen names.

Takatsu: Well, it's a small industry…there's a lot of headhunting going on from competition, so you really have to keep your chief designers' and developers' names secret. I think most companies do the same: hiding names, never publishing photos of these people.

Game On! USA: It's almost like spy/espionage.

Takatsu: Well, it *is* industrial espionage.

Game On! USA: With all these 2D fighting games, you have to come up with new ideas…using the really large characters in *Art of Fighting*, the line-changing in *FF*, or the swords in *SS*. What do you think the next step in making a game interesting might be like?

Takatsu: I guess one of the reasons *SS* was so popular was that it was one of the first to incorporate weapons into a head-to-head game. I think what we have to consider for developing any game is: how can we get the *occasional* video game player to enjoy it, not just the fighting

Shin Ou Ken

Shin Ou Ken©Saurus

Fatal Fury Real Bout

Shin Ou Ken

Ninja Masters

Ninja Masters

game freaks? That's going to be the main consideration for any game.

Game On! USA: Are you going to get into polygon games?

Takatsu: Right now we don't have any plans, but following the trend of the times we probably will.

Game On! USA: Is the Neo•Geo equipped to handle 3D, or will you have to do it through software?

Takatsu: I guess in the future the hardware will *have* to make polygons possible. At the present point, 2D games are the only thing we can do. Our basic goal is to make the games that you play in the arcade playable at home; most likely the topics of how to make the Neo•Geo CD faster or how to make it work with polygons will be what we'll address in the future.

ROUND 2

Game On! USA: Now, to change the topic a bit…recently Capcom released *Street Fighter Alpha*. There's a hidden character in *Alpha* and a playable character in *Alpha Two* named Dan. There's a rumor that he was made to look like a SNK character…he looks like a mixture of Ryo and Robert from *AoF*. Any comments?

Takatsu: He does look like him, yes…I think it's a good thing. It's a sign to us saying that even Capcom agrees this is a popular game. (*laughs*)

Game On! USA: So you think the resemblance is intentional?

Takatsu: Yes, I do. I'm not saying it's a bad thing that other companies are paying a homage to us.

Game On! USA: After *Art of Fighting 3*, what new releases do you have in the future?

Takatsu: There's a lot…*Ninja Masters*, and *Samurai Shodown RPG*. There's *Metal Slug*, a shooting game which is in the arcades already and is soon to be released for the Neo•Geo.

Game On! USA: Is *Ninja Masters* set in the same world as *Samurai Shodown*?

Takatsu: No, it's different…putting it in the same world would get monotonous.

Game On! USA: With another swordfighting game out, it makes me think that maybe there's going to be a swordfighting version of *King of Fighters '95* with the characters from *Ninja Masters* and *Samurai Spirits*.

Takatsu: If the users want one, I'm sure there could be.

Game On! USA: About *Samurai Shodown RPG*—is it going to be a *Dragon Warrior*-type game where you go around looking for party members and building up your statistics, then fight a boss at the end?

Takatsu: Yes, it's something like that, where you gather up the *Samurai Shodown* characters and play them as if they were role-playing characters.

Game On! USA: Seeing as it's an RPG, are the characters going to get into group battles like they do in normal RPGs, or is it going to have some other form of battle system?

Takatsu: There's both, actually. The standard battle is like a regular RPG where everyone gets together to fight the monsters they encounter. But it's going to have an action sequence—not *quite* the kind of fighting you'd see in *Samurai Shodown* the game, but definitely an action sequence. In Japan, it's coming out in July.

Game On! USA: Any plans for release in the United States?

Takatsu: At this time, we don't know.

ROUND 3

Game On! USA: Recently, you've begun releasing games for the Saturn and PlayStation. What's on the horizon for those systems?

Takatsu: *King of Fighters '95* came out for the Saturn in March. It'll be on the PlayStation in May, followed by *Samurai Shodown 3* on June 28, and then *Fatal Fury Real Bout*. For the Saturn we're doing the same titles, plus *Fatal Fury 3*.

Game On! USA: The Saturn version of *King of Fighters '95* requires a ROM cartridge as well as a CD to keep load times down. Is the PlayStation fast enough to handle everything with just a CD?

Takatsu: Well, it's not as fast as the Saturn version…but the PlayStation will feature a play mode that's not offered in the Sega release.

Game On! USA: How about the next generation of the SNK home machine?

Takatsu: I can't say there aren't any plans, since we have to make games, and the game machines evolve with the times. But I can't say anything concrete.

Game On! USA: About anime versions of SNK's games…what's next, or *is* there a "next?" I talked to Saiji Tanda at Studio G1, Masami Obari's studio, a little while back, and they said they were hoping to do anime for the *Gowcaizer* game, which is a fighting game featuring Obari character designs. Is there any news in that?

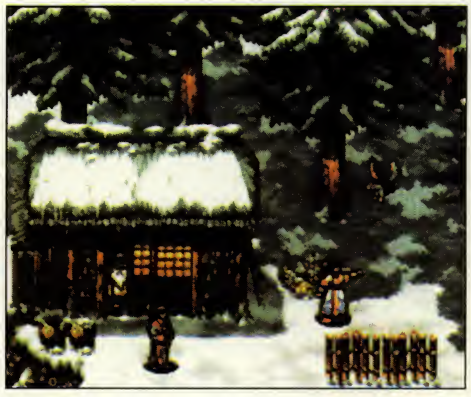
Takatsu: At present I can't speak of any plans. [*As of this time, the Voltage Fighter Gowcaizer animation has been announced and is expected in September in Japan—Ed.*]

Game On! USA: What audience would you say you aim at? In a previous interview with Capcom, they said that *Street Fighter II* was targeted at the U.S. market. Being that SNK owns a great number of arcades in Japan, would you say you think of the Japanese market first?

Takatsu: The Japanese market is important to us, of course, but we think games should be playable anywhere in the world.

Game On! USA: Now for the hardest question, that we always end every interview with…do you have any message to the readers in the U.S.?

Takatsu: SNK will, in the coming times, make games playable by all game players using the new technologies as they become available. So please, please don't abandon us. (*laughs*)



Samurai Shodown RPG

Ninja Masters ©SNK/ADK, Shin Ou Ken ©Saurus, Fatal Fury Real Bout ©SNK

King of Fighters '94

Out of the Arcades

SNK games have never lacked for anime and manga adaptations. A recent issue of Gamest magazine contains manga based on *World Heroes 2*, *Galaxy Fight*, *King of Fighters '94*...six SNK-based titles in all, including the *SNK Game Parody Anthology*, which features skits such as Mai Shiranui going to Neo•Geo World.

Fatal Fury

Samurai Shodown

Samurai Shodown has undergone various multimedia adaptations, including several comics, many humorous. Nakoruru is not only an artist's favorite, but a common outfit for otaku idols such as Shibari Iko. In 1993 Hobby Japan Comics released a comic anthology with stories by various authors.

In 1994 Fuji TV and NAS produced the 80-minute ***Samurai Shodown*** anime, directed by Hiroshi Ishiodori and released in the States by A.D. Vision. However, game loyalty cuts both ways; fans flamed the adaptation for dropping the original story, one of the most historically complex of any game, and making the characters into resurrected "Saint Soldiers" seeking revenge on Amakusa, who betrayed them 100 years ago.

Art of Fighting 3

Fatal Fury

Fatal Fury is popular both for anime and radio-like "audio story CDs." The first two 50-minute *Fatal Fury* animated TV specials (from NAS and Fuji TV), 1994's ***Fatal Fury: Legend of the Hungry Wolf*** and 1995's ***Fatal Fury 2: The New Battle***, were directed by Hiroshi Fukutomi. For 1995's 100-minute ***Fatal Fury: The Motion Picture***, however, character designer Masami Obari took over the direction. Obari (***Bubblegum Crisis***) not only made Mai Shiranui into the crazily underdressed heroine she is today; he made Joe, Terry and the other men into ideals of masculine physique, after hours of Classical research—studying nudes.

Fatal Fury: The Motion Picture features an original plot that is half fighting game, half ***Indiana Jones*** or ***Armor of God***. The brooding Terry Bogard and company fight the megalomaniacal (aren't they all?) villain Laocorn, who wants to gain divine powers. The three movies have been released in the U.S. by Viz Video.

The best known *Fatal Fury* comic creator is the artist known as Mondo, who in 1993 produced several volumes of ***Fatal Fury 2*** comics for Studio Style. Mondo's scratchy, busy style spares neither blood, sweat, nor Zip-A-Tone; he now draws ***Fatal Fury Special*** monthly in ***Gamest***, using character designs clearly derived from the movie. But it's not the only series; one *Fatal Fury* spin-off is ***Geese Howard Gaiden*** ("Geese Howard Side Story"), a story centered on the unkillable crime boss, his thugs, and those (such as Blue Mary) who dare oppose him.

Art of Fighting

The first ***Art of Fighting*** story, in 1992, featured writer Zenji Ishii and artist Etsuya Amajishi. Amajishi drew the story in a deliberate, heavily-muscled way with guns, tanks and hundred-hand strikes. Amajishi took over the scripting for the ***Art of Fighting 2*** manga, the latest episode in the series, which was collected in two graphic novels in 1994.

Art of Fighting's 1995 video version, from the company Star Child, is the least well-known of SNK anime and has not been released in the states. The 45-minute-long show (subtitle: "Battle Spirits") reportedly had low-quality animation and the fight scenes weren't especially dramatic; the saga is yet to be properly told.

The King of Fighters

King of Fighters '94 manga in a sharp-lined but appealingly clear style by Ryo Takamisaki runs in ***Gamest*** to this day, and has been collected in four graphic novels. The story focuses more on the all-female fighting team and less on big names such as Terry Bogard—though RuGal appears as the antagonist. Evidently the release of ***King of Fighters '95*** wasn't enough to make this story obsolete.

Samurai Shodown

Samurai Shodown/Fatal Fury ©SNK/Fuji TV/NAS,
Art of Fighting 3 ©SNK, King of Fighters '94 ©SNK 1994/Ryo Takamisaki

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newsline

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Square off and fight: Tobal No.1

RPG maker Square's polygon fighting game, ***Tobal No.1***, will be out for the ***PlayStation*** in July. Square's first combat game, the development team are staff who worked on ***Tekken*** and ***Virtua Fighter***, then left to create a new team at Square.

The game's biggest draw is character designs by Akira Toriyama (***Dragon Ball***). The setting is the year 2048, in one of the regular fighting tournaments on frontier planet Tobal. Combatants include the human (or nearly so) Chuji-Wu, Molly, Epon and Fei; the robot Hom; and the aliens Oliems, Eel and Muhu.

The game incorporates 360° movement, not rolling out of the way as in ***Toshinden***, but complete movement in any direction. There are many grabbing moves, more interactive than in most games. The jump heights and throwbacks are realistic, and your attack buttons determine your attack level, with high punches and medium or low kicks.

Zero Divide 2: The Secret Wish

The sequel to the ***PlayStation*** cyborg battle game released here by Time Warner Interactive has been announced and will probably appear in the States. Counting the boss

characters, there are four new playable characters in ***Zero Divide 2***, plus new techniques (when hanging off the edge of the ring, you can actually move hand-over-hand along the edge) and the ability to lose your exoskeleton (which looks extremely gross). The frame rate has been upped to 60 fps. Summer release in Japan, from Zoom.

Samurai Shodown RPG

More screen shots have arrived of the much-awaited ***Neo·Geo CD*** RPG! There are two scenarios or storylines in the game; players can choose from a variety of the game's characters to complete it, based either on their samurai skills or sheer personal preference (say, a party full of girls). The game's animal companions, such as Mamaha and Poppy, also count as characters. For release in July from SNK.

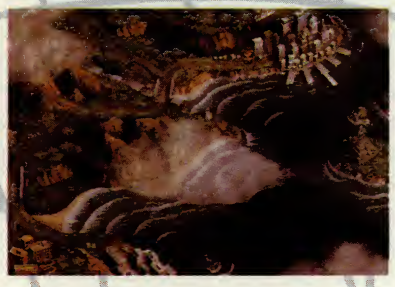
Capcom Hazards *Resident Evil, Mega Man X* Sequels

Biohazard 2 (which would be ***Resident Evil 2*** in the U.S.) has been announced by Capcom Japan, who will also be producing ***Rockman X 4*** (the Japanese title of ***Mega Man X 4***) for the ***PlayStation***. ***Resident Evil 2*** is a sure port, while *Mega Man X 4* will probably be if it takes advantage of 32-bit capacities instead of being a 16-bit upgrade. Meanwhile, ***Street Fighter Alpha 2*** is still steadily expected for the U.S. PlayStation in the 4th Quarter 1996.

Over Blood

Over Blood is a new Japanese ***PlayStation*** title from Riverhill Soft whose gameplay and setting are reminescent of ***Resident Evil***. ***Over Blood*** takes place in an abandoned research laboratory, with four underground levels and 80 rooms. The main character, Laz, awakes from cold sleep (seems almost like Laura's ***Enemy Zero*** predicament...lot of that going around lately) to find he has no memory of his life and is about to freeze as the power fails. After the first trap, the game includes puzzles, zombies, and other people who may be allies or enemies (including "Peepo," your little robot partner). Your controls let you move forward, left and right, turn around, dash, and (a new feature) jump. It was released June 28.

Tobal No.1 ©Square/Dream Factory; Characters ©Square/Dream Factory/Bird Studio/Shueisha, Zero Divide 2 ©Zoom, Inc., Samurai Shodown RPG ©SNK/Fuji TV/Asatsu, Street Fighter Alpha 2 ©1996 Capcom Co. Ltd., Over Blood ©Riverhill Soft, Inc.



The Hero becomes the Hunted: Arc the Lad II

Sony intends to release ***Arc the Lad*** as its second official ***PlayStation*** RPG, so if it is successful, the sequel may also appear in the States. ***Arc the Lad II*** from Sony Computer Entertainment is scheduled for Summer release in Japan, almost a year after the appearance of the original. Probably the largest reason for U.S. release would be its strict continuation of the storyline—and the mysteries—of *Arc the Lad*.

Arc the Lad ends with Arc, the main character, as a fugitive from the law. In *Arc the Lad II* you begin the game as Elk, a 15-year-old hunter who is searching for Arc. When eventually you encounter Arc and his crew, their strength may be determined by your saved memory card from *ATL*. *Arc the Lad II* will have at least five times as much animated movie footage as the original, and as far as completion time, will have at least three times as much combat alone (sometimes clues or storyline elements will be revealed during combat). As in *ATL*, the music is performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Enemy Zero

The developer/publisher, Warp, has sided with Sega over Sony, and ***Enemy Zero*** is scheduled for Fall release. The ***Saturn*** game takes up *4* CDs (most of the first CD is the opening, plus a "practice mode" for the action parts of the game).

The plot is similar to ***Alien***. Laura (the design from ***D***, though a different character) wakes up from cold sleep on a spaceship and is instantly threatened by an unknown being on the other side of a sealed door. She is one of a crew of seven headed for Earth, but something has attacked the ship, forcing Laura to roam its halls in first-person perspective solving puzzles and fighting in third-person action scenes. Laura has a video phone to talk to the other crew members, and a radar to judge when the rarely-seen alien is nearby.

Albert Odyssey Gaiden: Legend of Eldean

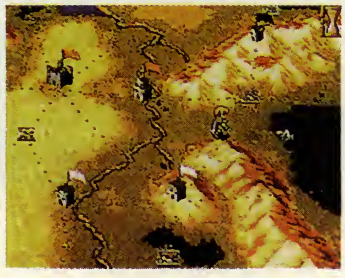
Another ***Saturn*** sequel to a Super Famicom simulation RPG, the new ***Albert Odyssey*** has less military strategy and more RPG elements, and is an entirely new game with the same characters. The two-part story is complex and surrounded by subplots, as you gather allies (including dragon-like and bird-like humanoids) and develop your party. The characters will be voiced by professional voice-actors (a large part of the Japanese publicity push for the game). Sunsoft, who released the game in May in Japan, will release it in the States sometime before Christmas this year.

Der Langrisser 3

The first two ***Langrisser*** games were released for the Sega Mega Drive; this latest is expected in July in Japan, from NCS Messiah. ***Der Langrisser 3*** is a military simulation RPG with battles in a true 3D view, instead of the usual hexagons. The ***Saturn*** game begins as the Goddess Luceris asks you questions, your answers to which set up your statistics for the game. The character designer is Satoshi Urushibara, character designer for the notorious ***Plastic Little*** and ***Legend of Lemnear***, as well as some Super Famicom games. Various anime voice-actors do the voices.

Dragon Force

Neither all RPG nor all simulation, Working Designs (Sega of America's primary Japanese-conversion people these days) will be releasing this hard-to-classify entry in July or August for ***Saturn***. Choosing from eight warlords, you follow your alter ego on his/her quest to take over the land, narrated with colorful animated sequences as you encounter the other protagonists. Entering combat, you deploy troops, priests, monsters and mecha on a "horizon line" perspective. The graphics should bring the frequently-dry simulation genre to life.



Dragon Force ©Sega Enterprises, Ltd. 1996, Enemy Zero ©Warp, Arc the Lad II©Sony Computer Entertainment, Inc., Der Langrisser 3 ©NCS, Albert Odyssey Gaiden ©1996 Sunsoft

newsline

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Guilty Gear

2D fighting games continue to be hits in Japan. This dark-future weapons fighter for *PlayStation*, made by Arc Systemworks in the SNK tradition, uses several new techniques such as a "gamble attack" which makes the upper part of your body invincible while leaving your lower body vulnerable to attack. The character designs are even crazier—a pirate girl with a huge axe, a dwarf with a giant butcher knife, and a mad scientist with a giant scalpel, to name a few (one character controls shadows to make his own shadow into a blade). As in ***Shin Ou Ken*** or ***Killer Instinct***, the characters are rendered but 2D. Expect it this Fall.

Virtua Fighter 2 wins Japan Software Awards

The 4th annual Japan Software Awards just announced its 1995 winners in the Business, Education and Entertainment categories, with ***Virtua Fighter 2*** taking first place in the Entertainment division.

The award, on the grounds of the 60 frames per second movement rate and arcade perfection, was delivered with the news that since Dec. 1, 1995 over 1.5 *million* ***Virtua Fighter II*** copies have been sold in Japan. The other four winners were as follows: ***Derby Stallion 3*** (Super Famicom), ***Jumping Flash!*** (PlayStation), ***Aquanauts Holiday*** (PlayStation) and ***Dungeon of Wonder II*** (Super Famicom).

Full Moon Rising: Lunar: The Director's Cut

The Sega CD ***Lunar*** series has always had a large base of fans, with its proudly anime-based story and designs. ***Lunar: Silver Star Story***, scheduled for late 1996 release in Japan (following several delays from an August release date), takes the game to the ***Saturn***. It is an expanded version of the first *Lunar* game, with new storylines and characters, not to mention retouched graphics. Working Designs has announced they will release it in the U.S. in Spring 1997 as ***Lunar: The Director's Cut***.

Ninjas and Rappers: Jaleco Plots Game 'Ports

After announcing that they will not be releasing the ***PlayStation*** game ***Shokendo***, Jaleco has scheduled two other possible Japanese conversions (in addition to the seemingly eternally delayed ***DreamKnight***). One is ***Funky Gatsuman***, a game derived from the manga by artist Syufo from Digital Comics. The main character is a rap star, M.C. A.T.. Another title is ***Jajamaru***. The title character, an old Jaleco mascot revived for the occasion, is a ninja who wanders a 3D castle fighting traditional Japanese ghosts and spirits, depicted with manga-style designs (some looking *very* ***Urusei Yatsura***-like...). Both titles are very early in development, especially ***Funky Gatsuman***.

Arcadeline

Calling all quarters! Overseas titles that may hit home.

Sengoku Blade

In Japan, this shooter also known as ***Sengoku Ace Episode II*** (the sequel to ***Sengoku Ace***) has arrived; this time it's a side-scrolling game featuring flying humans instead of conventional ships. Your characters (a total of five) include a Samurai-armored robot, a battle-hardened monk and two female warriors, each accompanied by animals, spirits and other guardians as you gain power-ups. From Psikyo.

Lunar © Studio Alex/Game Arts/Kadokawa/Character designs by Toshiyuki Kobuoka. Virtua Fighter 2 © Sega, Guilty Gear © Arc System Works, Ltd., Jajamaru ©1996 Jaleco, Sengoku Blade ©1996 Psikyo

Cels and CD-ROMs

Upcoming Japanese game releases based on anime and manga.

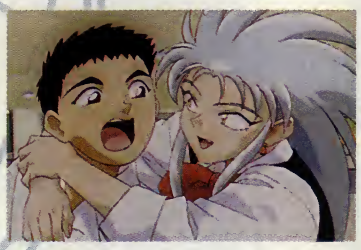
Speed Racer

Johnny Depp may be playing Speed Racer in the upcoming movie, but now a ***PlayStation Speed Racer*** racing game, ***Mach GoGoGo!*** (the original Japanese title), will let everyone play the role of Speed. Like the hero of the classic anime TV series, you drive the Mach Five in races against 20 cars, using the same button pad as in the original series. Using the car's seven special powers, run underwater, jump over other cars, and send out the Gizmo bird rocket to ensure victory. An original animation sequence opens the game. September release, from Tomy.

Fist of the North Star

Fist of the North Star, the (in)famously violent postapocalyptic manga series, has appeared from Banpresto as an adventure game on ***PlayStation*** following an earlier Saturn version. The story is original, and heavily interspersed with battles in the ***Yû Yû Hakusho*** format; you enter complex commands at the correct time, and animation sequences (reportedly from over 3000 frames) appear on the screen showing the results on you and your opponent. A one-on-one mode is included. For the first time since the SNES game, you can play Ken, the mighty Fist, and bloodily explode the heads of your opponents. Release date July 25.

We Don't Need No Education: *Tenchi Muyô: No Need For School*



Tenchi Muyô (***No Need for Tenchi***) has been one of the anime most widely adapted into games, beginning with PC CD-ROMs and working its way through the home systems. ***Tenchi Muyô: No Need for School***, an all-new game, is due out this summer for the ***PlayStation*** from developer Xing. An adventure/simulation game (of the "interactive comic" variety), it takes place in Tenchi's little-seen school, with all the usual characters wearing school uniforms. In addition, three original characters rear their heads—Sakaki, Ibara, and Kinoko, a bounty hunter from outer space.

Ultraman Battle

After years of 16-bit games, mostly super deformed, a serious polygon fighting game based on the ***Ultraman*** TV series is on its way for the ***Saturn***! The Ultra Warriors (not just one!) and their monstrous foes clash in a rendered 3D cityscape. (Hopefully the buildings, such as the Eiffel Tower, can be demolished.) It'll be up to the developers to decide which TV characters (out of about 30) will appear in the game, so they've taken input from Japanese players on the favorites. The game (from Bandai) will fill a cartridge and CD, and is expected in December.

Ultraman Battle ©Tsuburaya Production/Bandai•Megumi Tachikawa/Kodansha/ABC/Denshu/TMS/Tomy. Speed Racer ©Tatsunoko Productions/Tomy.
Fist of the North Star ©Buronson/Tetsuo Hara/Shueisha/Fuji TV/Toei Animation. Tenchi Muyô: No Need for School © AIC/Pioneer LDC/Xing

Game On! Japan's Top Ten Games

This top ten list is based on sales, overall popularity, and industry expectations compiled by Game On! Japan, one of the leading cross platform game magazines in Japan. The following list appeared in its June 1996 issue.

#1—Super Mario RPG

Super Famicom/Nintendo/RPG
A very high-action, well-balanced RPG using ***Donkey Kong Country***-style rendering techniques, this RPG introduced a new genre to the character (and, possibly, non-RPG-oriented American fans). The American version came out in May. With this and ***Mario 64***, those goombas just getting more and more 3D.

#2—Derby Stallion '96

Super Famicom/Ascii/Simulation
This much-hyped horse racing simulation sold out the day it was released. Japanese games normally only have one print run, but *Derby Stallion '96* was so successful that it will be re-released. Ascii is better known for ***King's Field***.

#3—Tekken 2

Sony PlayStation/Namco/Fighting
PlayStation games don't tend to sell out in Japan, but *Tekken 2* sunk to 35% availability, to delay both Japanese fans and American import buyers. Few games have received more space in Japanese magazines, with enormous move lists and every character in the book.

#4—Biohazard

Sony PlayStation/Capcom/'Survival Horror'
Capcom's frightening first polygon game had a mixed reaction in Japan, but sales have been strong, and a sequel has been announced. Perhaps the genre will become more popular on consoles. Severed hands and FMV bullet wounds were censored from the American opening video.

#5—Kirby Super Deluxe

Super Famicom/Nintendo/Action
Six mini-games within one, including a two-player head-to-head mode, made this latest *Kirby* a success. (For an example of countries' marketing differences, consider the U.S. *Kirby* games' ads which portray the pink-marshmallow hero as a tough guy you don't want to mess with.)

#6—Gundam ver. 2.0

Sony PlayStation/Bandai/Action

#7—Realistic Powerful Pro Baseball

Super Famicom/Konami/Sports

#8—Super Family Stadium Five

Super Famicom/Namco/Sports

#9—King of Fighters '95

Sega Saturn/SNK/Fighting

#10—Panzer Dragoon Zwei

Sega Saturn/Sega/Shooting Action

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SF Alpha	Burn Fest 120%	Motortoon GP 2
Alien Trilogy	College Slam 96	Ridge Racer 2

SEGA SATURN

King Fighters 95	Darkstalkers 2	Virtua Fighter 2
Panzer Dragoon 2	X-Men	Guardian Heroes
SF Alpha	Dragon Force	College Slam 96

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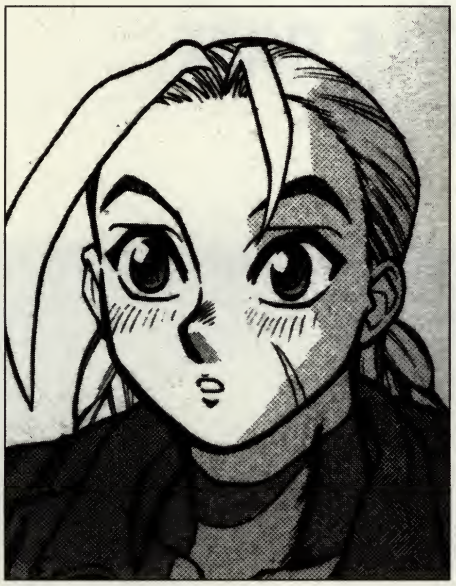
MANGA

FEATURES

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: CAMMY



The story so far...

Working for MI-6 (British Intelligence) might be too much for most 19-year-olds...but not Cammy! Her first mission for the Special Operations Unit finds her at Battleland, a little-known island in the Mediterranean dominated by the Battle Rave tournament. Working with U.S. Air Force Major Guile, her mission is to join the tournament, climbing as high in the fighting circuit as she can. Cammy has reason to worry, as five of the last Battle Rave champions mysteriously disappeared, and four resurfaced as suicidal terrorists.

While Guile investigates the mansion of a Battle Rave sponsor, Sang Froid, Cammy is challenged to a fight with the down-and-dirty Madross Brothers. But for amnesiac Cammy, no fight is as frightening as the recurring memory that she's been to Battleland before!

Name: Sang Froid
Identity: Sponsor of Battle Rave
Notes: A multimillionaire and fighting connoisseur, he has suspected ties to the terrorists.

Name: Diego
Identity: Friend of Guile
Notes: One of the five champions who vanished after participating in the Battle Rave.

SAMURAI SHODOWN

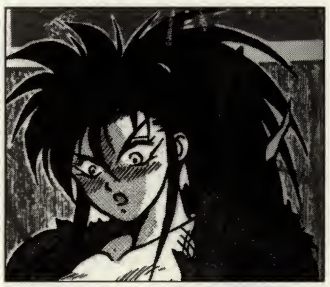
The story so far...

The year is 1787, the place is Japan. Plague and famine sweep the Tenmei Era, and the swordswoman Nakoruru, attuned to the forces of nature, senses the supernatural Dark Kingdom is to blame. Seeking to combat the darkness, she finds an ally in the swaggering samurai Haohmaru.

Haohmaru brings his own trouble, however. He is pursued by the ninja Nagiri, who accuses him of killing her father. Haohmaru and Nakoruru escape Nagiri, but come across a new mystery when a dying ninja leaves them a scroll. The scroll is a pledge from the land's five most powerful warlords to attack the capitals, Edo and Osaka, which would leave thousands more people dead.

A stranger then reveals himself as Hattori Hanzo, a government spy. It is his mission to stop the warlords, and he tries to win Haohmaru and Nakoruru's help. But they are interrupted by a sound from the night as monsters—the Dark Kingdom's lackeys—attack to regain the scroll...

Name: Hattori Hanzo
Identity: Shogunate Ninja
Notes: In order to win Haohmaru and Nakoruru's trust and prevent war, he has done the most dangerous thing a ninja can do—exposed his face.

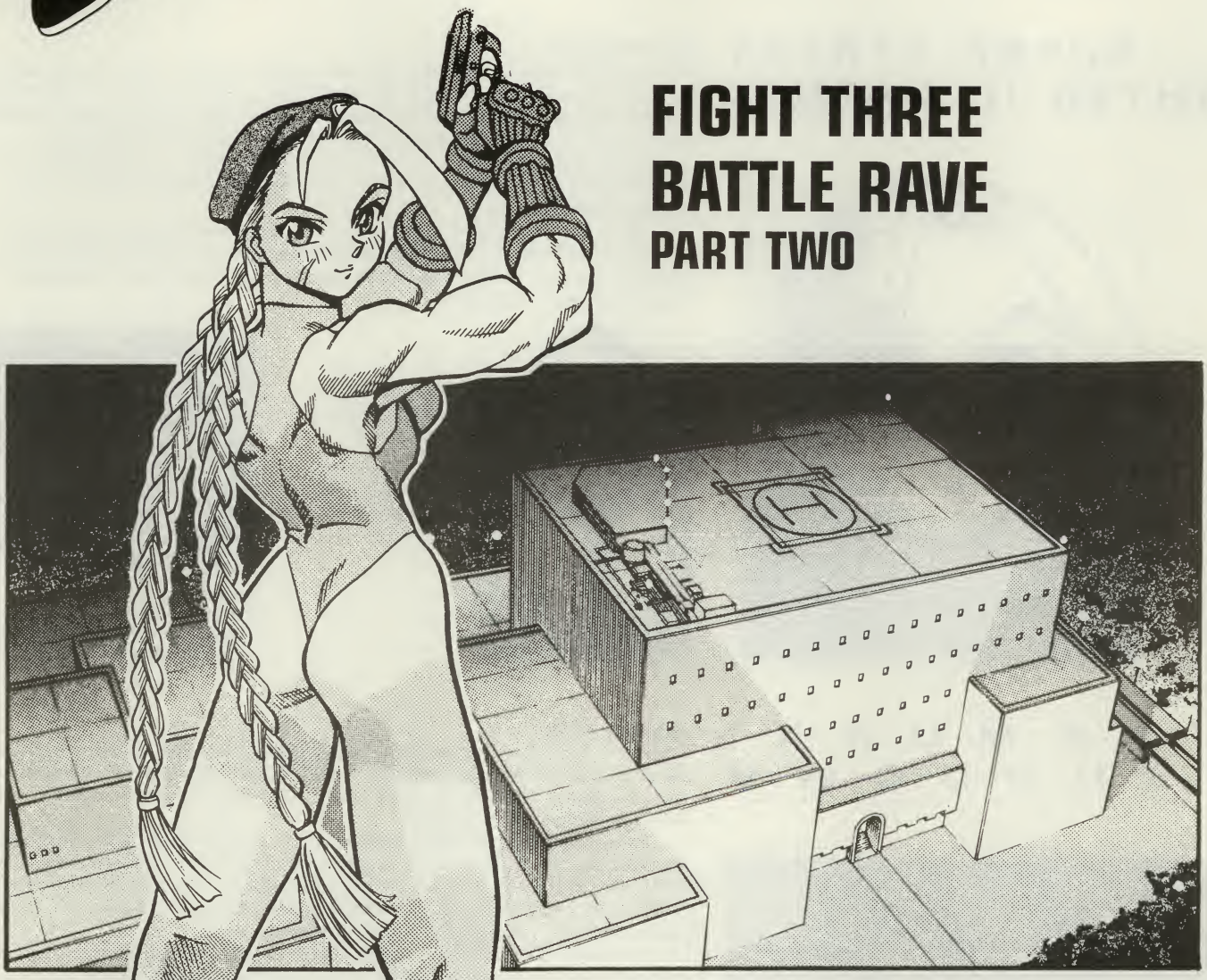


Name: Nagiri
Identity: Ninja Assassin
Notes: If her father was Haohmaru's friend, why does she want Haohmaru dead?

Super Street Fighter II ©1994 Capcom/Masahiko Nakahira, Samurai Shodown ©1995 SNK/Kyoichi Nanatsuki/Yuki Miyoshi

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II

CAMMY



FIGHT THREE
BATTLE RAVE
PART TWO

Story & Art by **MASAHIKO NAKAHIRA**

English Adaptation by **JAMES D. HUDNALL & LILLIAN OLSEN**

Lettering & Touch-up by **MARY KELLEHER**

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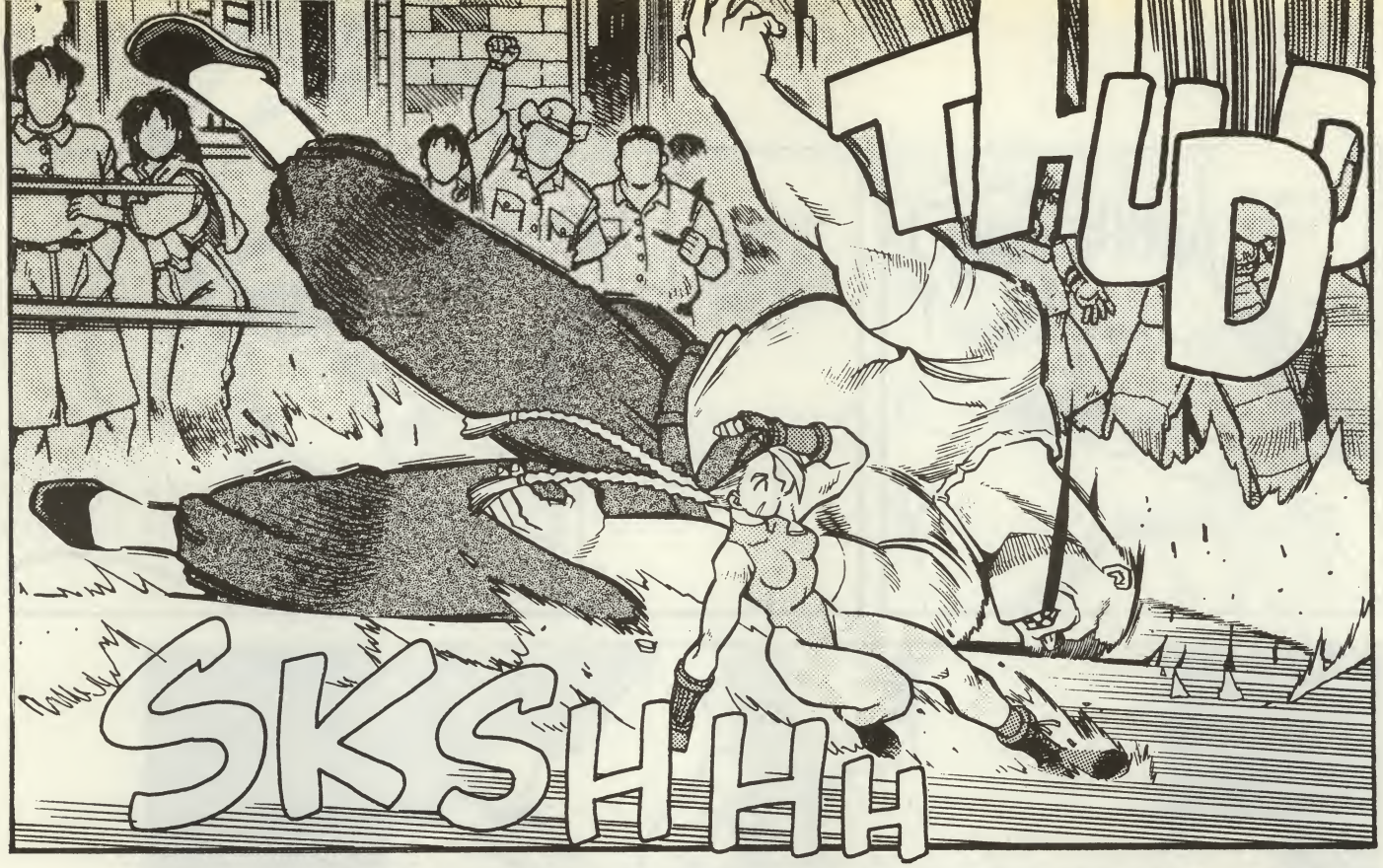
For the purposes of publication in English, the artwork in this publication is in reverse from the original Japanese version.


THUD
SKSHHH

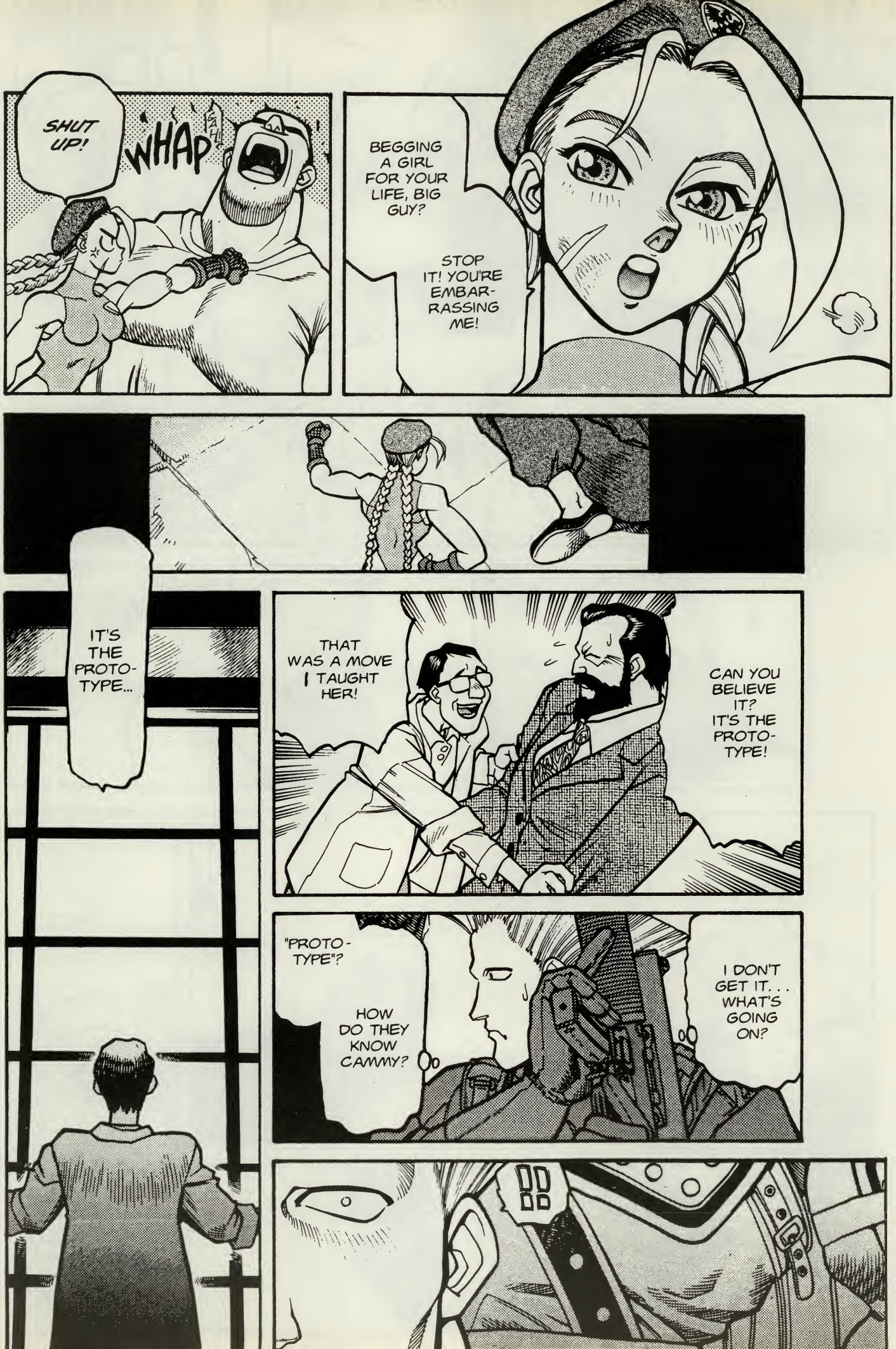
M-MY... BROTHER!

UH...!

Y-YOU WIN!
WE'RE SORRY!! OKAY?!

UHN...
ARG...

PLEASE DON'T HURT ME!!

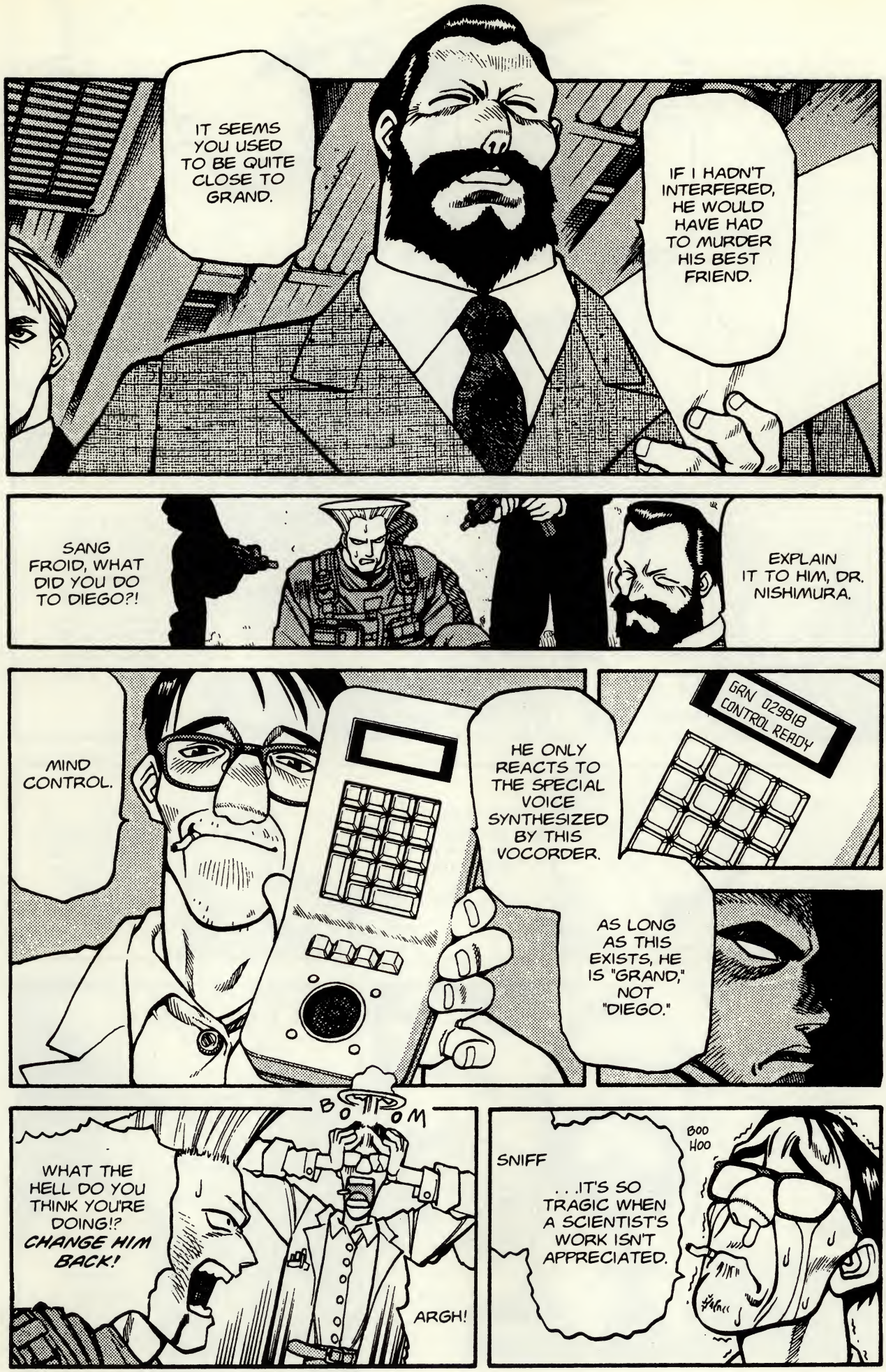

SHUT UP!
WHAP
BEGGING A GIRL FOR YOUR LIFE, BIG GUY?
STOP IT! YOU'RE EMBARRASSING ME!
IT'S THE PROTOTYPE...
THAT WAS A MOVE I TAUGHT HER!
CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? IT'S THE PROTOTYPE!
"PROTOTYPE"?
HOW DO THEY KNOW CAMMY?
I DON'T GET IT... WHAT'S GOING ON?

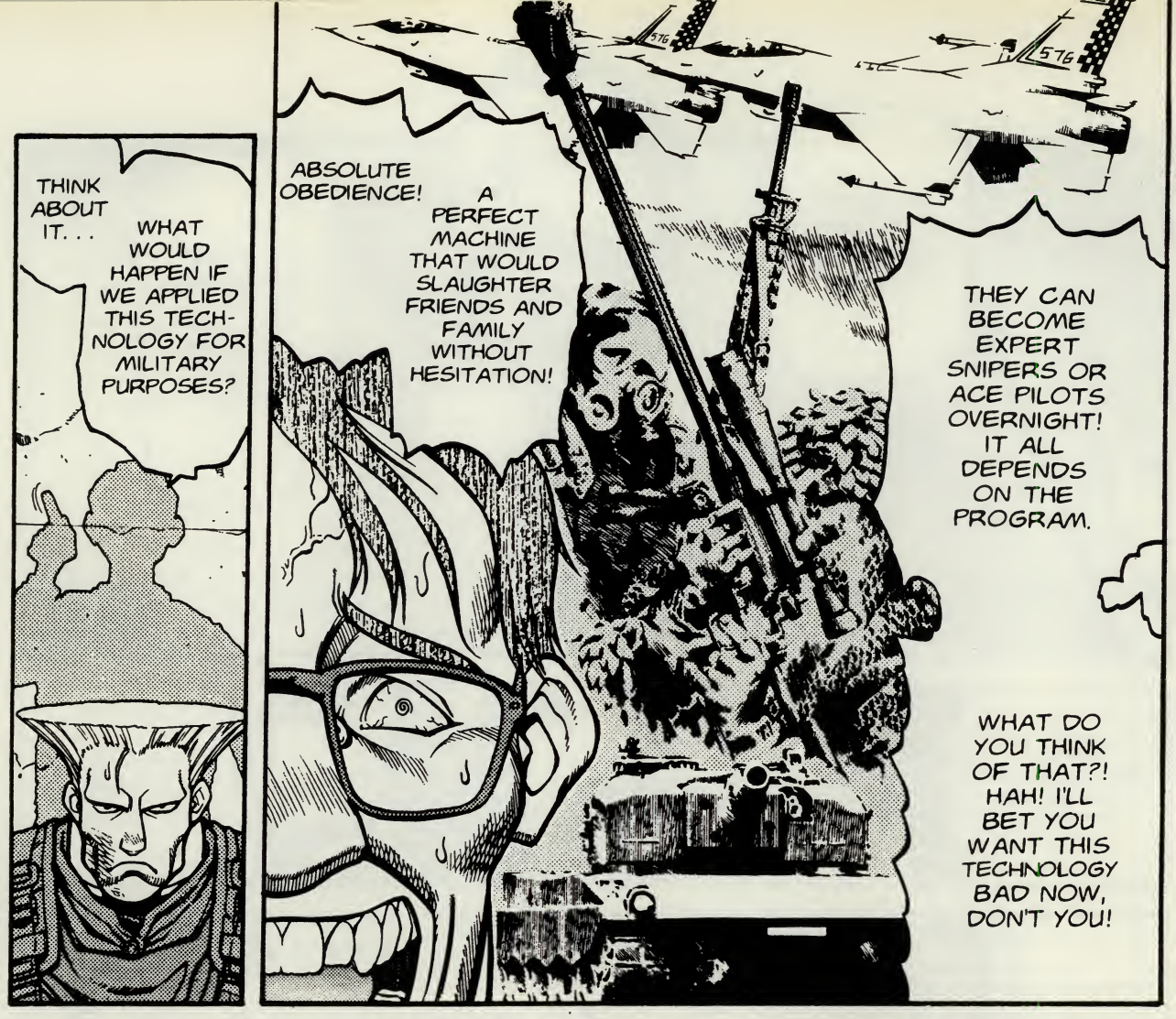
KRAK
FWOOM
WHAT!?
YOU'RE. . .
BATTLE
WORLD CHAMPION
DIEGO. . .?!

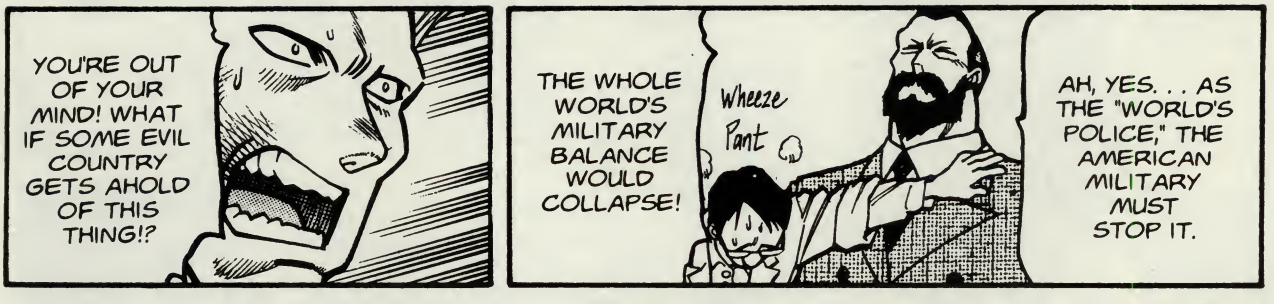
GRAAH!
ROAR
S-STOP IT, DIEGO!
IT'S ME, GUILE! DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME?
WHAK
THUD
THOK
CHUDD
KRAKK
THOOM
KAFF
HACK...
ARE YOU TRYING TO KILL ME, DIEGO...?

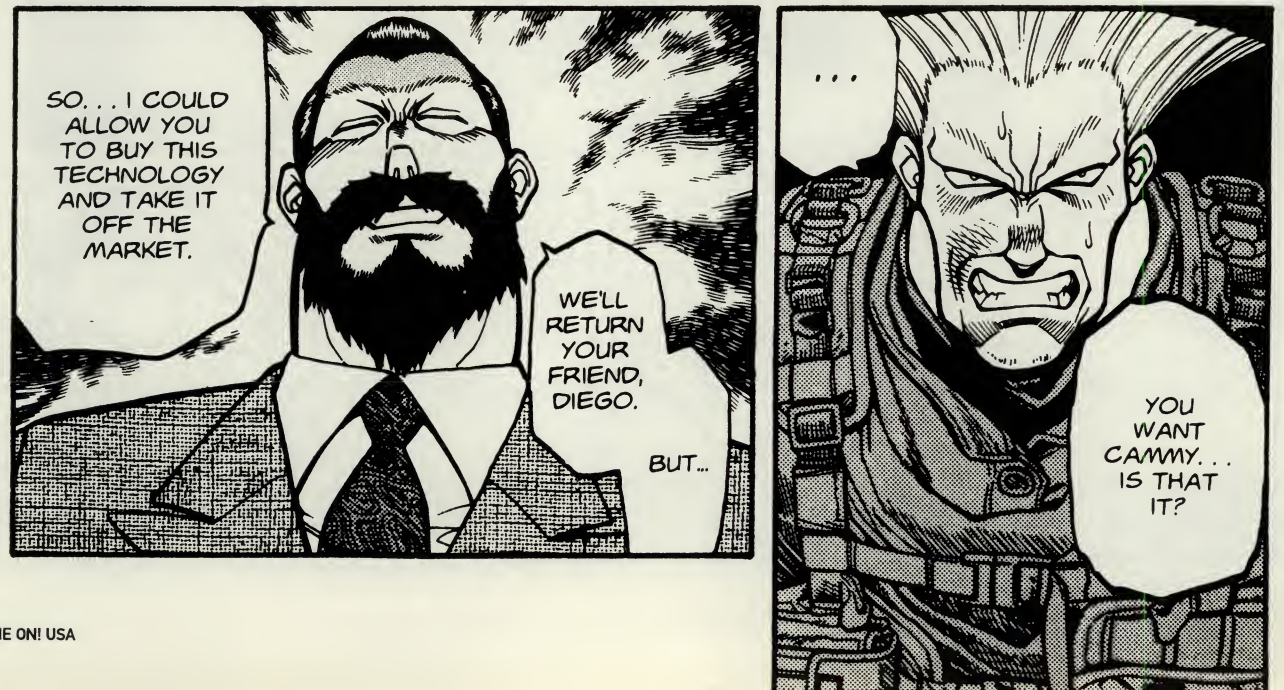
WHUD
FMP
!!
DIEGO . . .!
ALL RIGHT, GRAND, STOP!
KLIK
KLLK
BATTLE RAVE

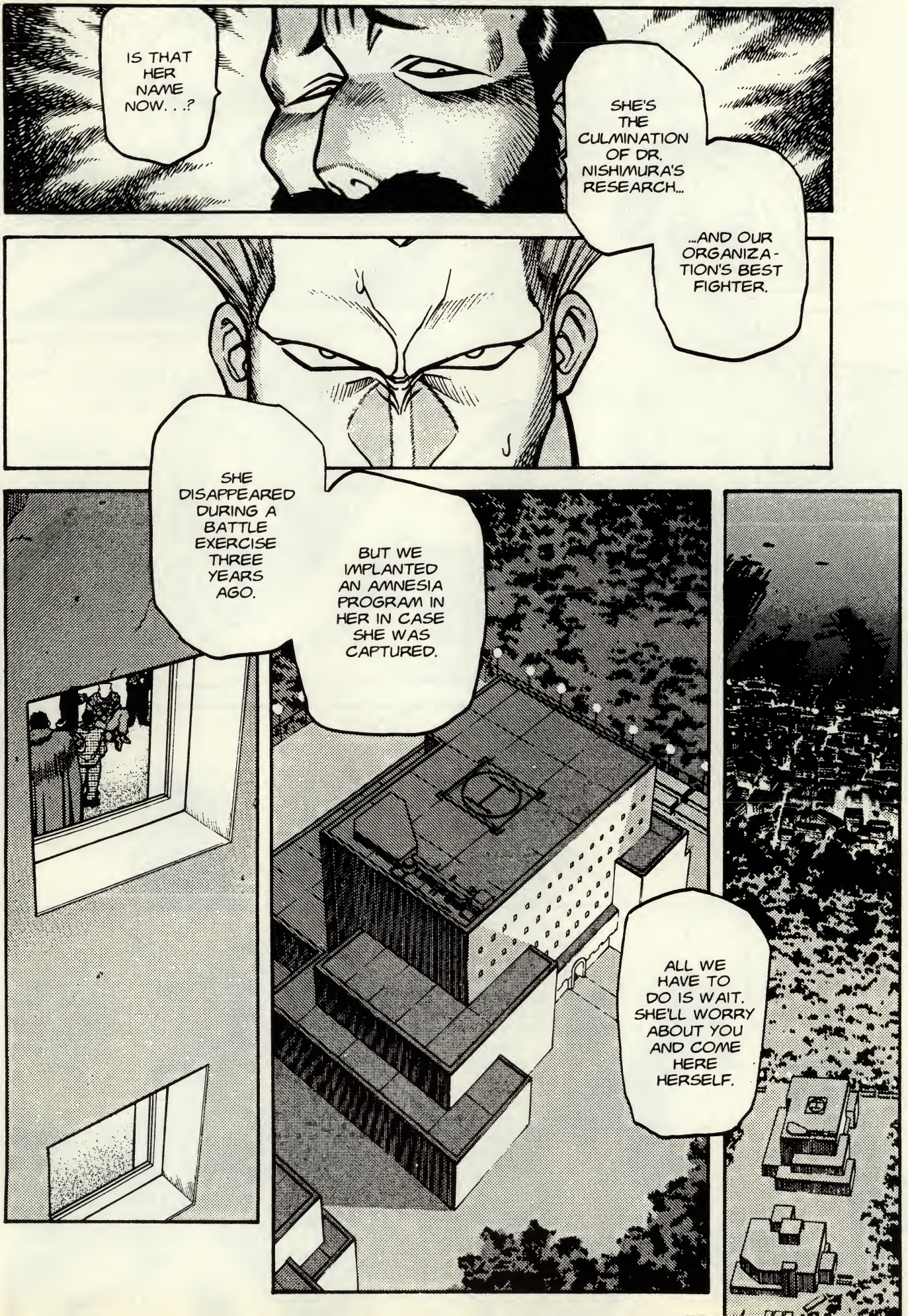
WELCOME TO MY MANSION, MAJOR GUILE.

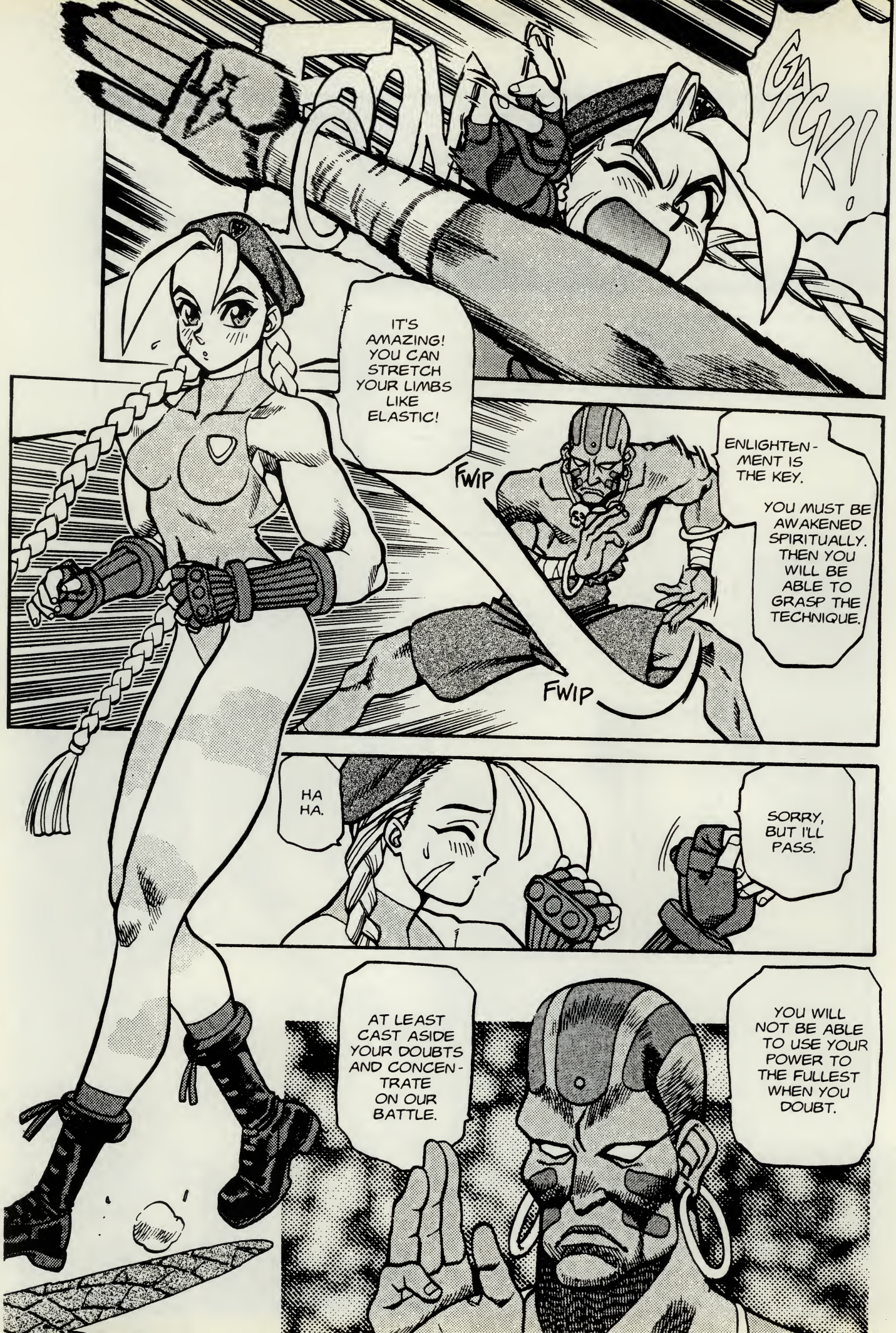

IT SEEMS YOU USED TO BE QUITE CLOSE TO GRAND.
IF I HADN'T INTERFERED, HE WOULD HAVE HAD TO MURDER HIS BEST FRIEND.
SANG FROID, WHAT DID YOU DO TO DIEGO?!
EXPLAIN IT TO HIM, DR. NISHIMURA.
MIND CONTROL.
HE ONLY REACTS TO THE SPECIAL VOICE SYNTHESIZED BY THIS VOCORDER.
GRN 029818 CONTROL READY
AS LONG AS THIS EXISTS, HE IS "GRAND," NOT "DIEGO."
BOOM
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING!? CHANGE HIM BACK!
ARGH!
SNIFF
. . .IT'S SO TRAGIC WHEN A SCIENTIST'S WORK ISN'T APPRECIATED.
BOO HOO

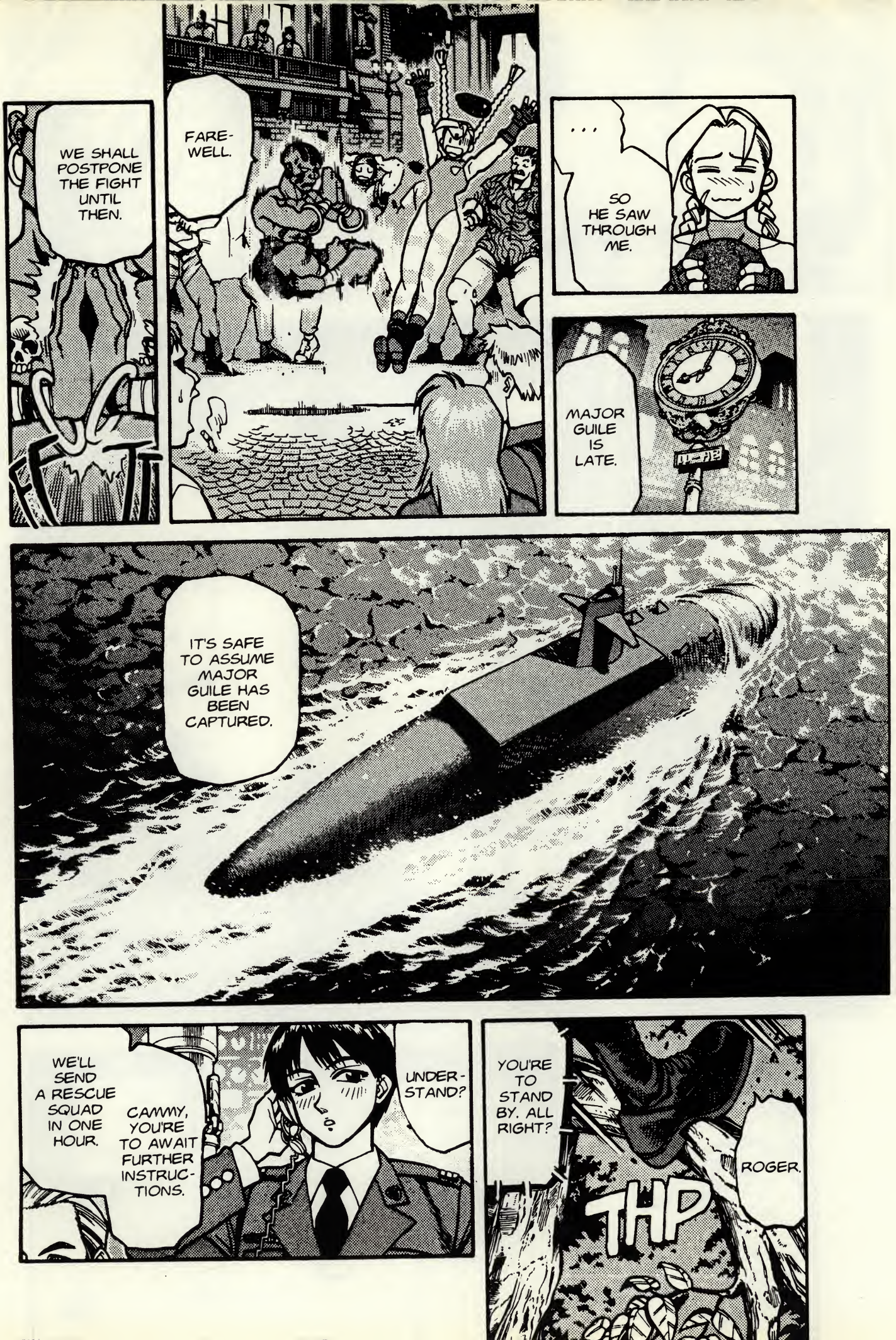

THINK ABOUT IT. . .
WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE APPLIED THIS TECH-NOLOGY FOR MILITARY PURPOSES?
ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE!
A PERFECT MACHINE THAT WOULD SLAUGHTER FRIENDS AND FAMILY WITHOUT HESITATION!
THEY CAN BECOME EXPERT SNIPERS OR ACE PILOTS OVERNIGHT! IT ALL DEPENDS ON THE PROGRAM.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT?! HAH! I'LL BET YOU WANT THIS TECHNOLOGY BAD NOW, DON'T YOU!

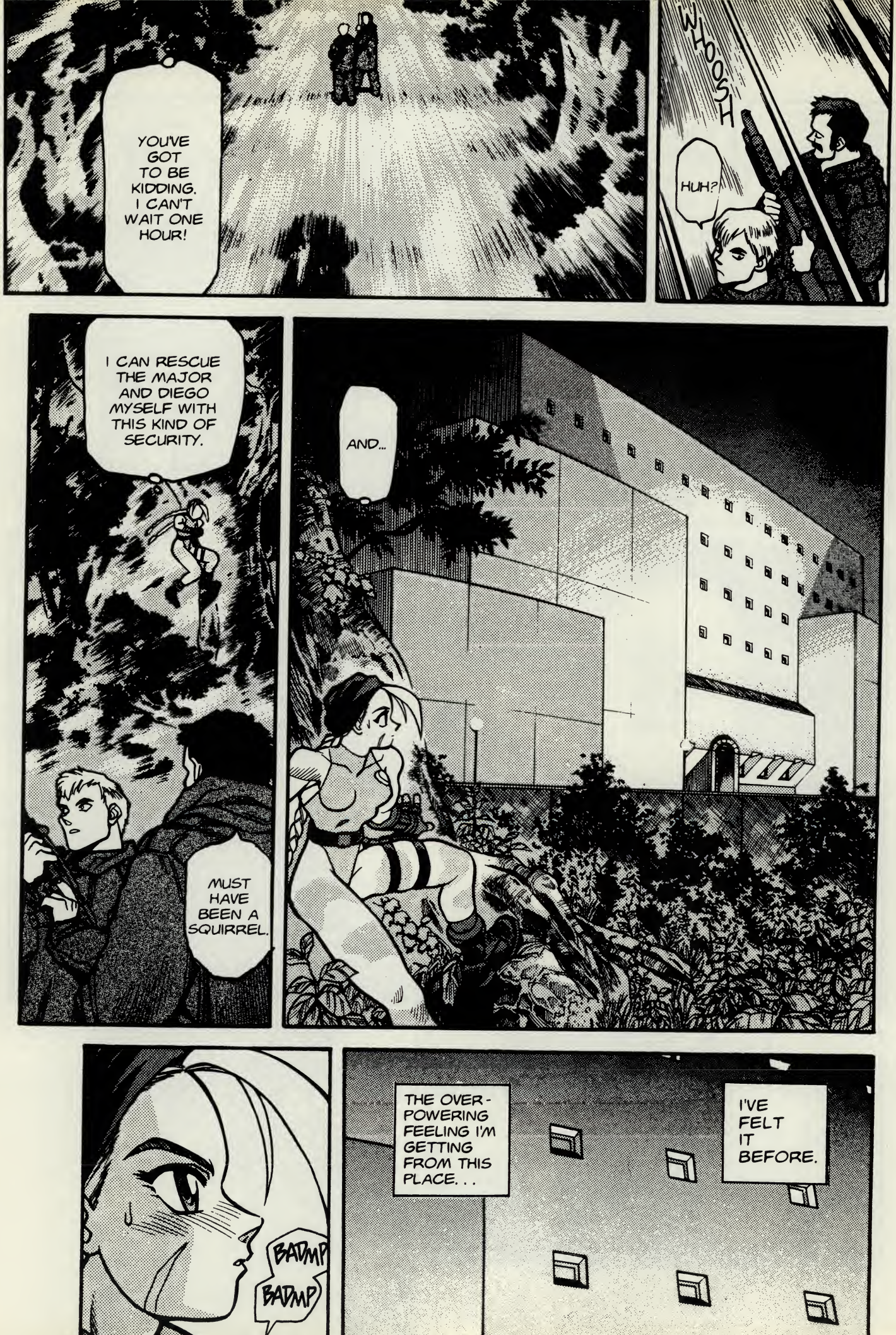

YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR MIND! WHAT IF SOME EVIL COUNTRY GETS AHOLD OF THIS THING!?
THE WHOLE WORLD'S MILITARY BALANCE WOULD COLLAPSE!
Wheeze
Pant
AH, YES. . . AS THE "WORLD'S POLICE," THE AMERICAN MILITARY MUST STOP IT.

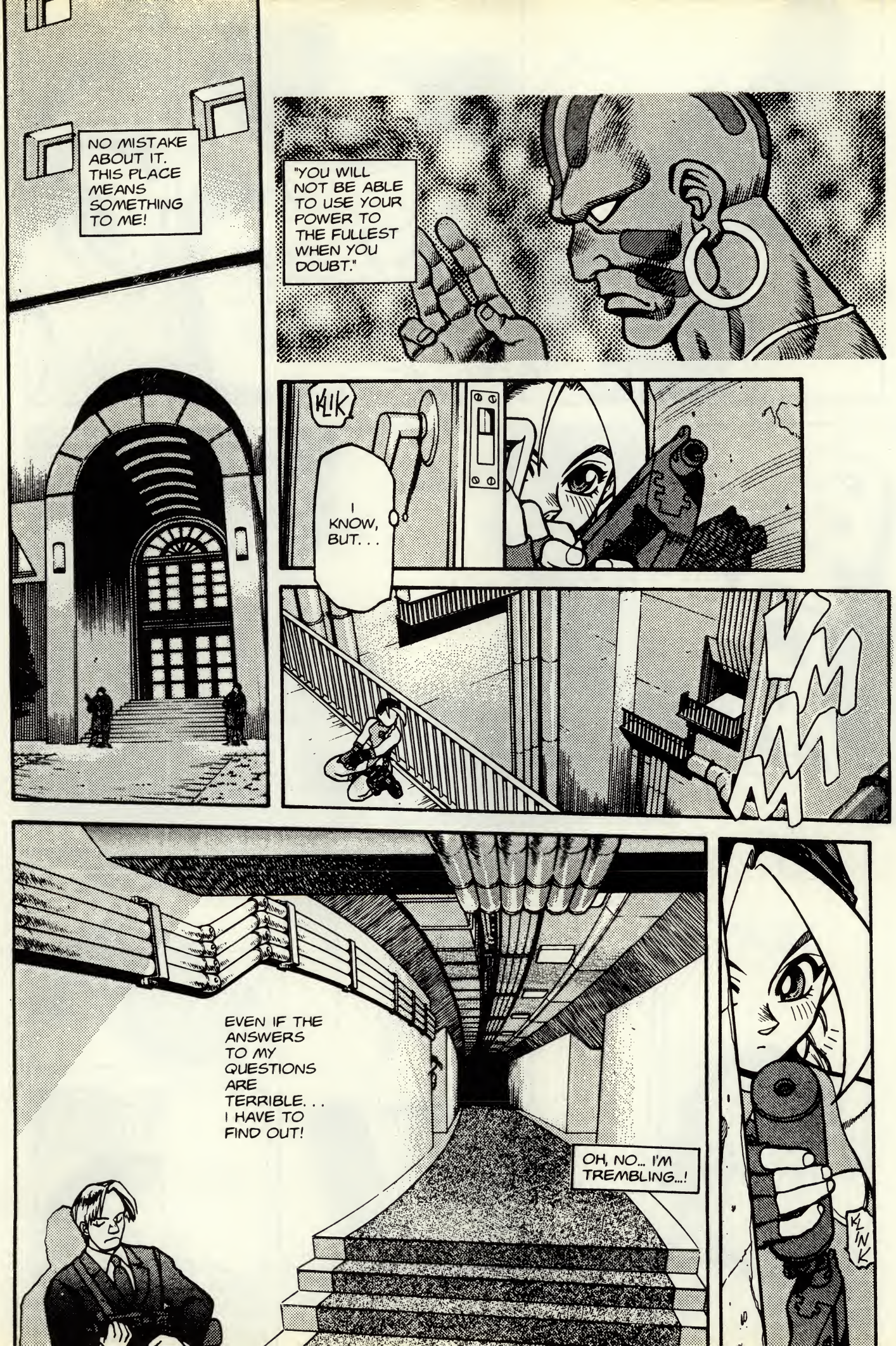

SO. . . I COULD ALLOW YOU TO BUY THIS TECHNOLOGY AND TAKE IT OFF THE MARKET.
WE'LL RETURN YOUR FRIEND, DIEGO.
BUT...
. . .
YOU WANT CAMMY. . . IS THAT IT?

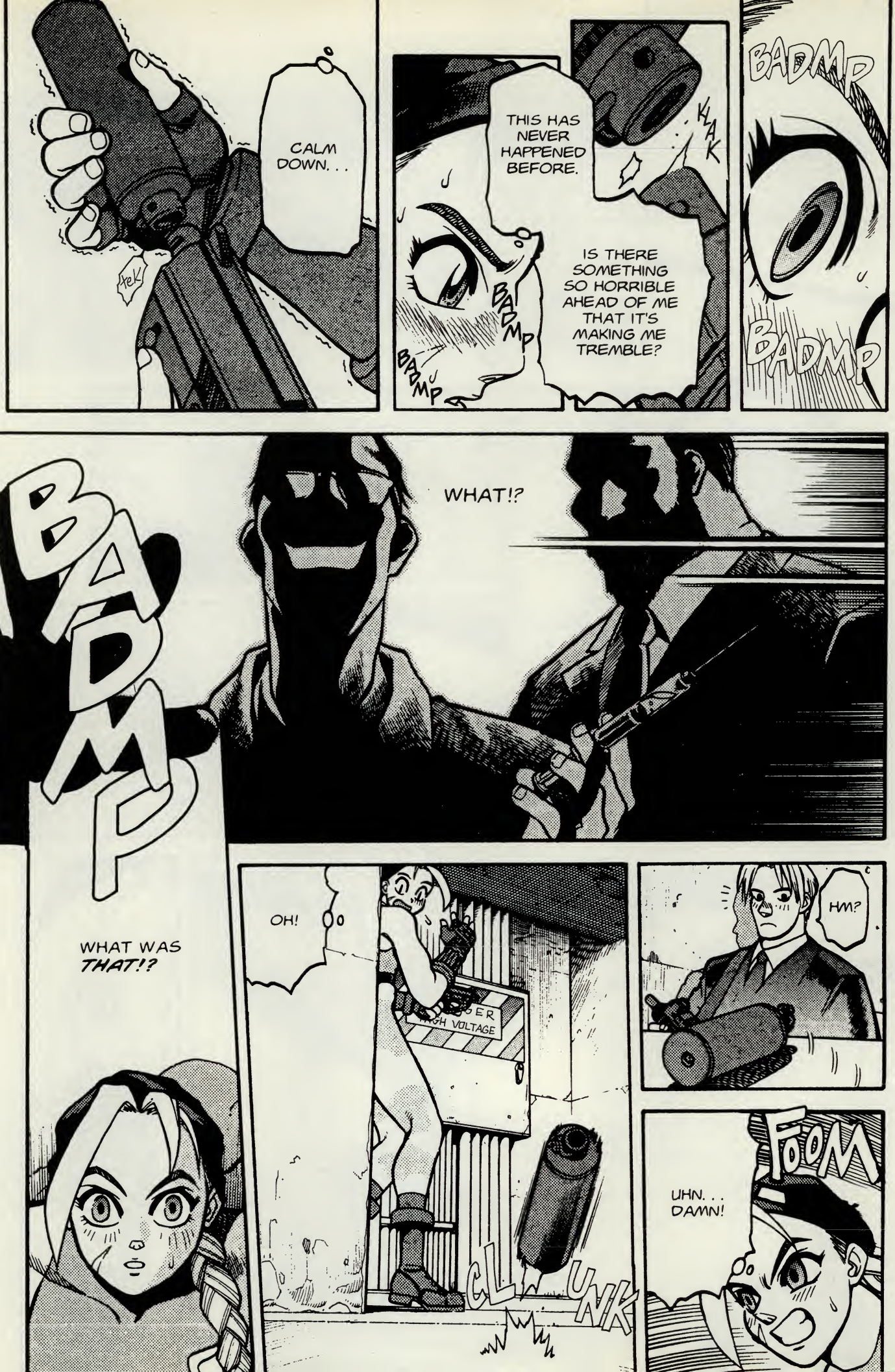

IS THAT HER NAME NOW. . .?
SHE'S THE CULMINATION OF DR. NISHIMURA'S RESEARCH...
...AND OUR ORGANIZATION'S BEST FIGHTER.
SHE DISAPPEARED DURING A BATTLE EXERCISE THREE YEARS AGO.
BUT WE IMPLANTED AN AMNESIA PROGRAM IN HER IN CASE SHE WAS CAPTURED.
ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS WAIT. SHE'LL WORRY ABOUT YOU AND COME HERE HERSELF.

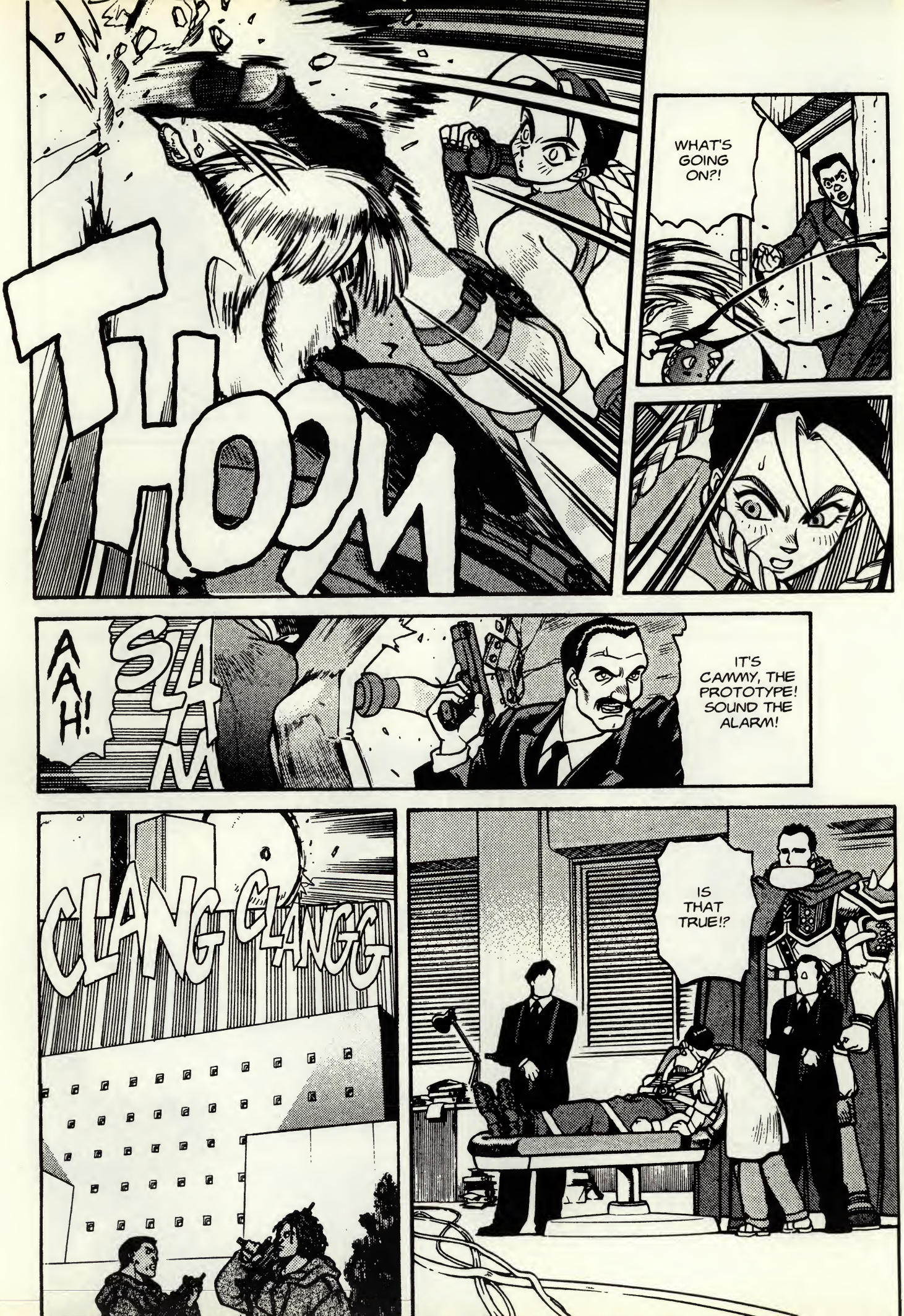

GAGK!
IT'S AMAZING! YOU CAN STRETCH YOUR LIMBS LIKE ELASTIC!
FWIP
ENLIGHTEN-MENT IS THE KEY.
YOU MUST BE AWAKENED SPIRITUALLY. THEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO GRASP THE TECHNIQUE.
FWIP
HA HA.
SORRY, BUT I'LL PASS.
AT LEAST CAST ASIDE YOUR DOUBTS AND CONCEN-TRATE ON OUR BATTLE.
YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO USE YOUR POWER TO THE FULLEST WHEN YOU DOUBT.

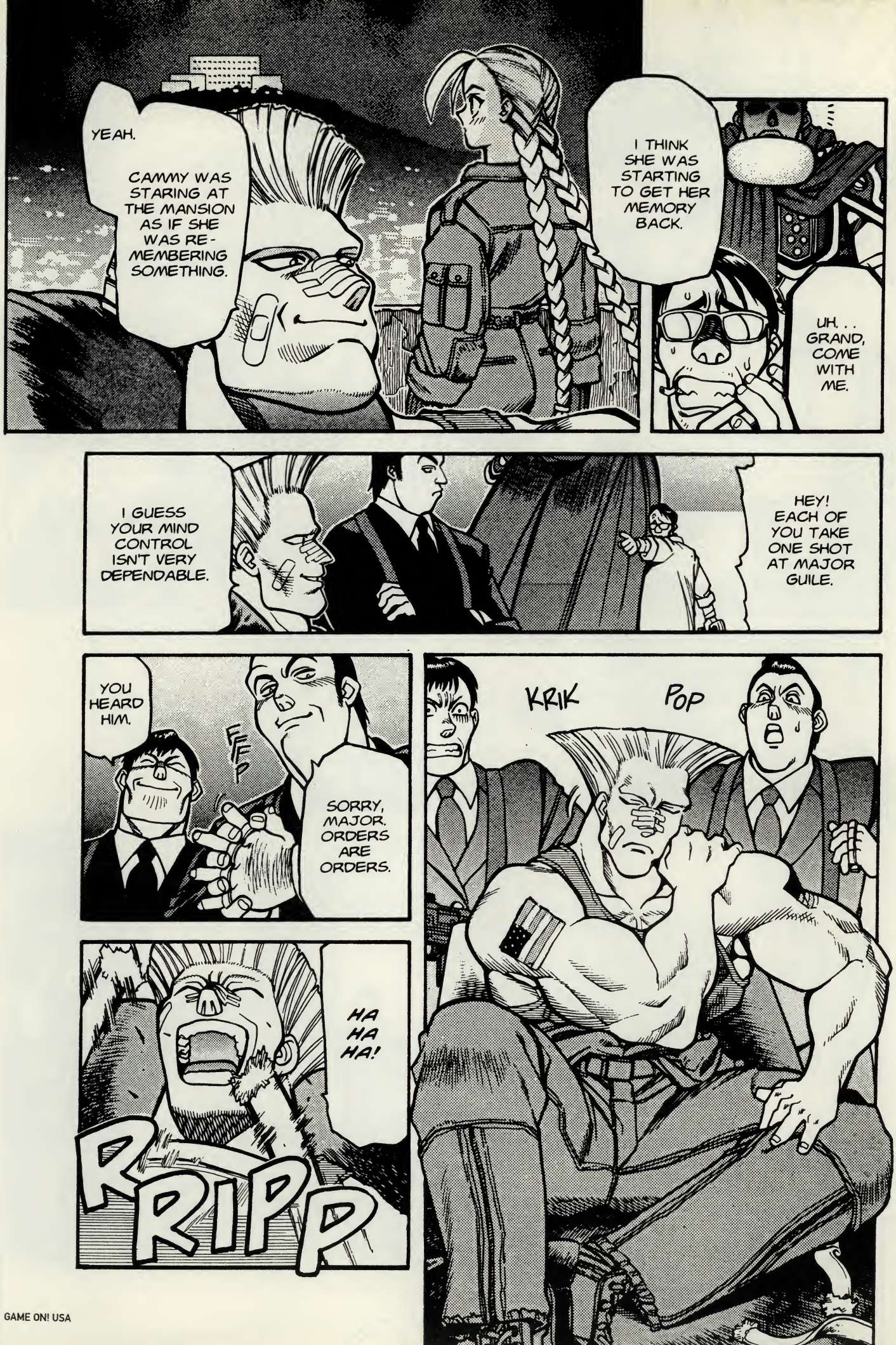

WE SHALL POSTPONE THE FIGHT UNTIL THEN.
FARE-WELL.
...
SO HE SAW THROUGH ME.
MAJOR GUILE IS LATE.
IT'S SAFE TO ASSUME MAJOR GUILE HAS BEEN CAPTURED.
WE'LL SEND A RESCUE SQUAD IN ONE HOUR.
CAMMY, YOU'RE TO AWAIT FURTHER INSTRUC-TIONS.
UNDER-STAND?
YOU'RE TO STAND BY. ALL RIGHT?
ROGER.
THP


YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING. I CAN'T WAIT ONE HOUR!
WHOOSH
HUH?
I CAN RESCUE THE MAJOR AND DIEGO MYSELF WITH THIS KIND OF SECURITY.
AND...
MUST HAVE BEEN A SQUIRREL.
BADMP
BADMP
THE OVER-POWERING FEELING I'M GETTING FROM THIS PLACE...
I'VE FELT IT BEFORE.


NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT. THIS PLACE MEANS SOMETHING TO ME!
"YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO USE YOUR POWER TO THE FULLEST WHEN YOU DOUBT."
KLIK
I KNOW, BUT. . .
MMMMM
EVEN IF THE ANSWERS TO MY QUESTIONS ARE TERRIBLE. . . I HAVE TO FIND OUT!
OH, NO... I'M TREMBLING...!
KLINK


CALM DOWN. . .
HEK!
THIS HAS NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE.
IS THERE SOMETHING SO HORRIBLE AHEAD OF ME THAT IT'S MAKING ME TREMBLE?
KAK
BADMP
BADMP
BADMP
BADMP
WHAT!?
WHAT WAS THAT!?
OH!
ER
GH VOLTAGE
CL
UNK
HM?
UHN. . .
DAMN!
FOOM

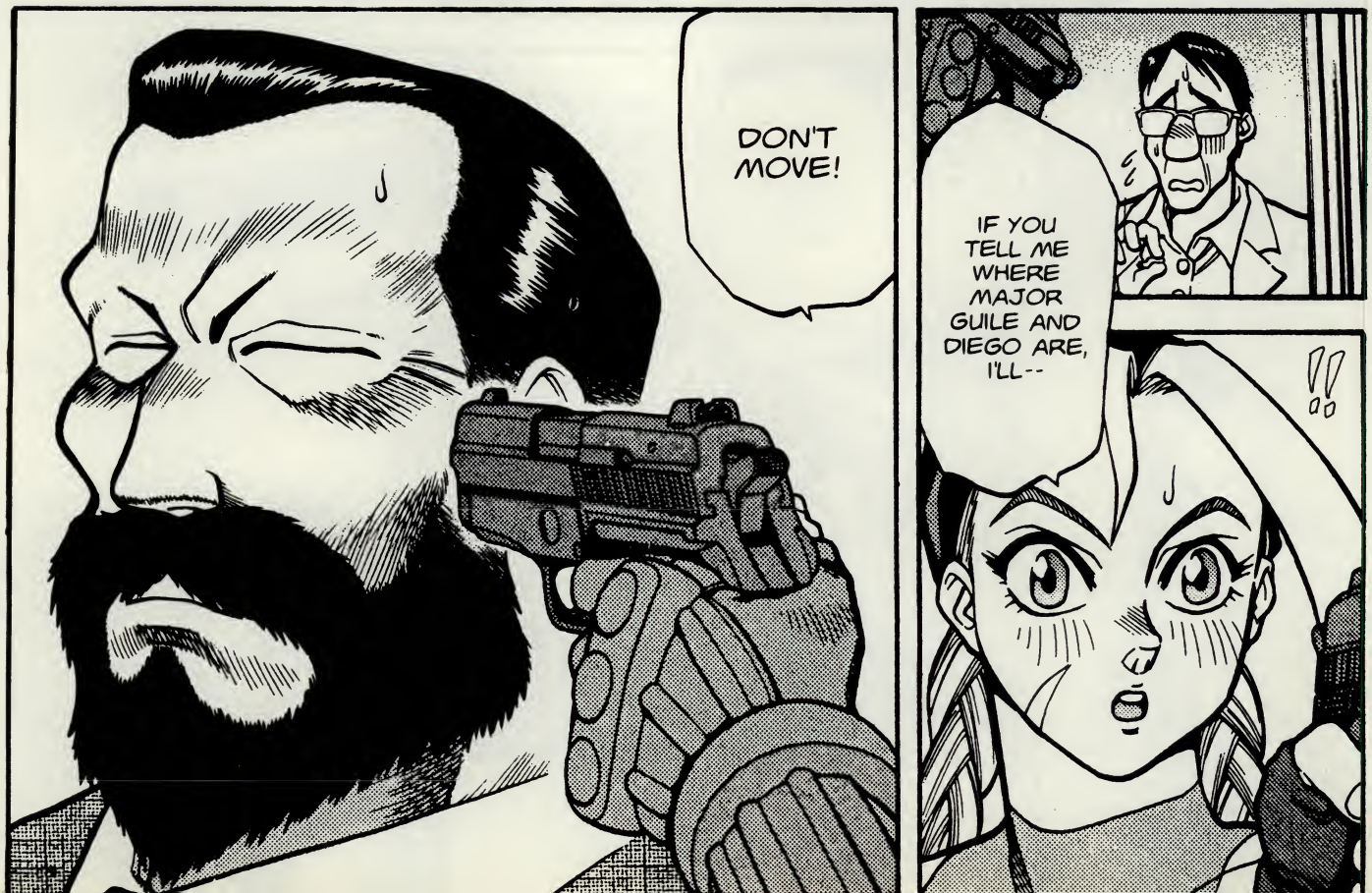

THOOM
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
AAH!
SLAM
IT'S CAMMY, THE PROTOTYPE! SOUND THE ALARM!
CLANG CLANGG
IS THAT TRUE!?

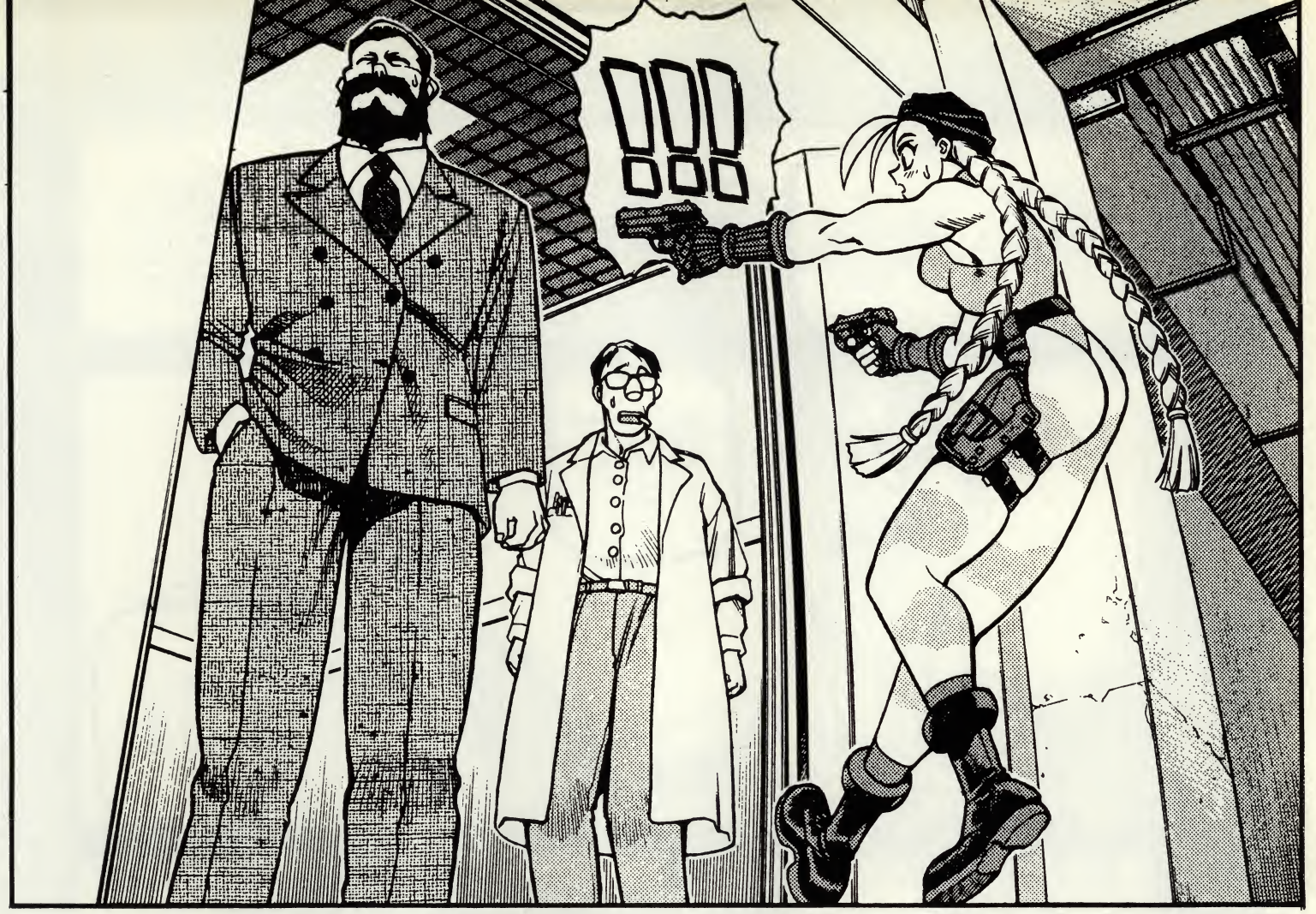

YEAH.
CAMMY WAS STARING AT THE MANSION AS IF SHE WAS RE-MEMBERING SOMETHING.
I THINK SHE WAS STARTING TO GET HER MEMORY BACK.
UH. . . GRAND, COME WITH ME.
I GUESS YOUR MIND CONTROL ISN'T VERY DEPENDABLE.
HEY! EACH OF YOU TAKE ONE SHOT AT MAJOR GUILE.
YOU HEARD HIM.
FFF
SORRY, MAJOR. ORDERS ARE ORDERS.
KRIK
POP
HA HA HA!
RRIPP

NOW THEN...
YOU'RE BOTH GOING TO TAKE A SHOT AT ME, HUH?
WHAT IN-- HE RIPPED APART THE KEVLAR RESTRAINTS!
UM...
SHAK
UH!
HMPH!
UHH!
FAP
THAT STUPID CAMMY.
I TOLD HER TO WAIT!
SHE CAN'T HAVE TOO MANY GOOD MEMORIES OF *THIS* PLACE.
RIP
B3 · B4 · B5
DETER-IORATION.

UNLIKE COMPUTERS, PEOPLE FORGET THINGS!
THEY FORGET THE MIND CONTROL AS TIME GOES ON.
PROTOTYPE CAMMY'S CONTROL FUNCTIONS MUST BE QUITE DETERIORATED BY NOW.
NOT GOOD. IF SHE REGAINS HER MEMORY, SHE WILL REVEAL THE SECRET OF OUR TECHNOLOGY.

SHALL WE ORDER SECURITY TO EXECUTE HER?
SHWIP
W-WAIT! WE COULD USE GRAND.


DON'T MOVE!
IF YOU TELL ME WHERE MAJOR GUILE AND DIEGO ARE, I'LL--
!!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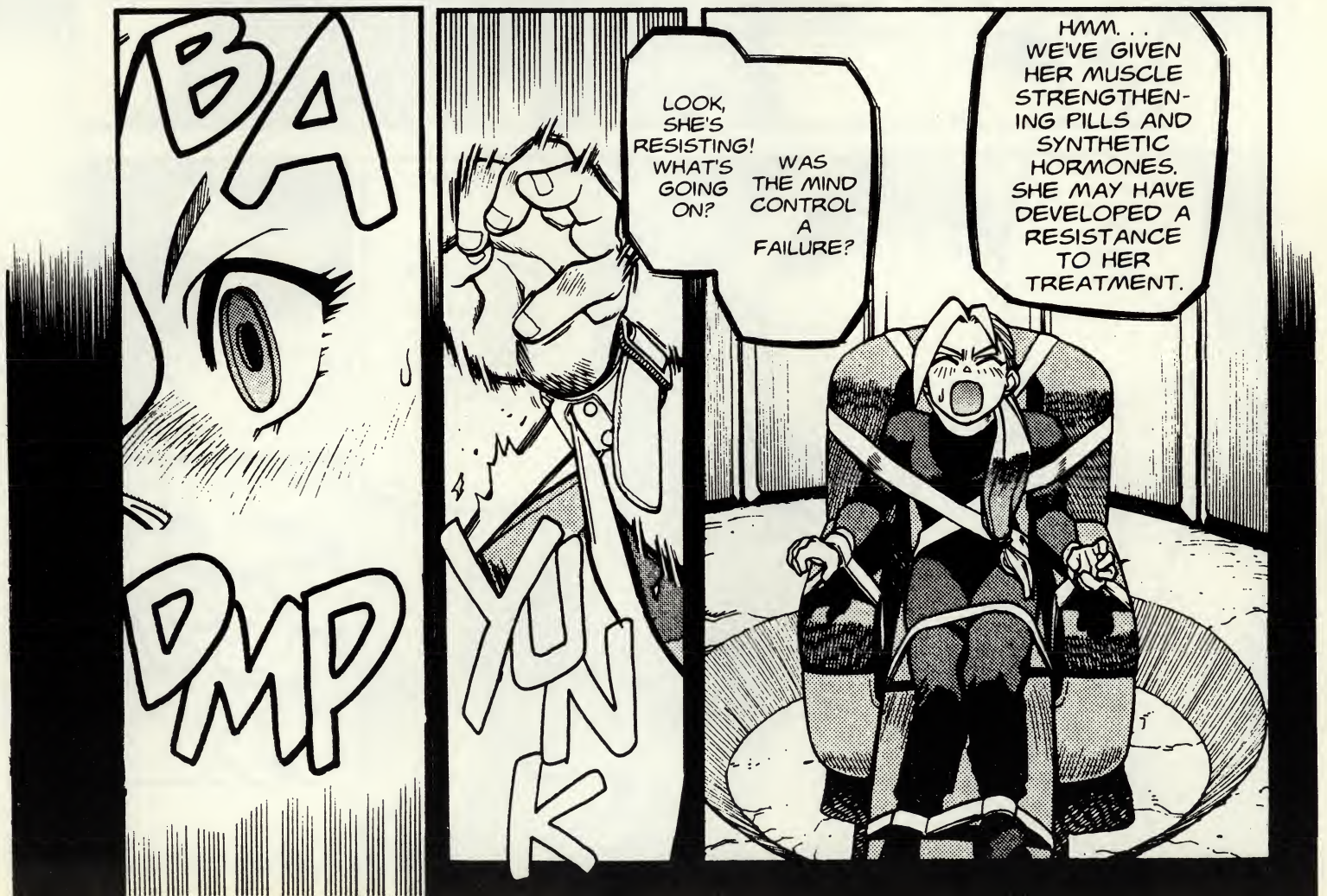
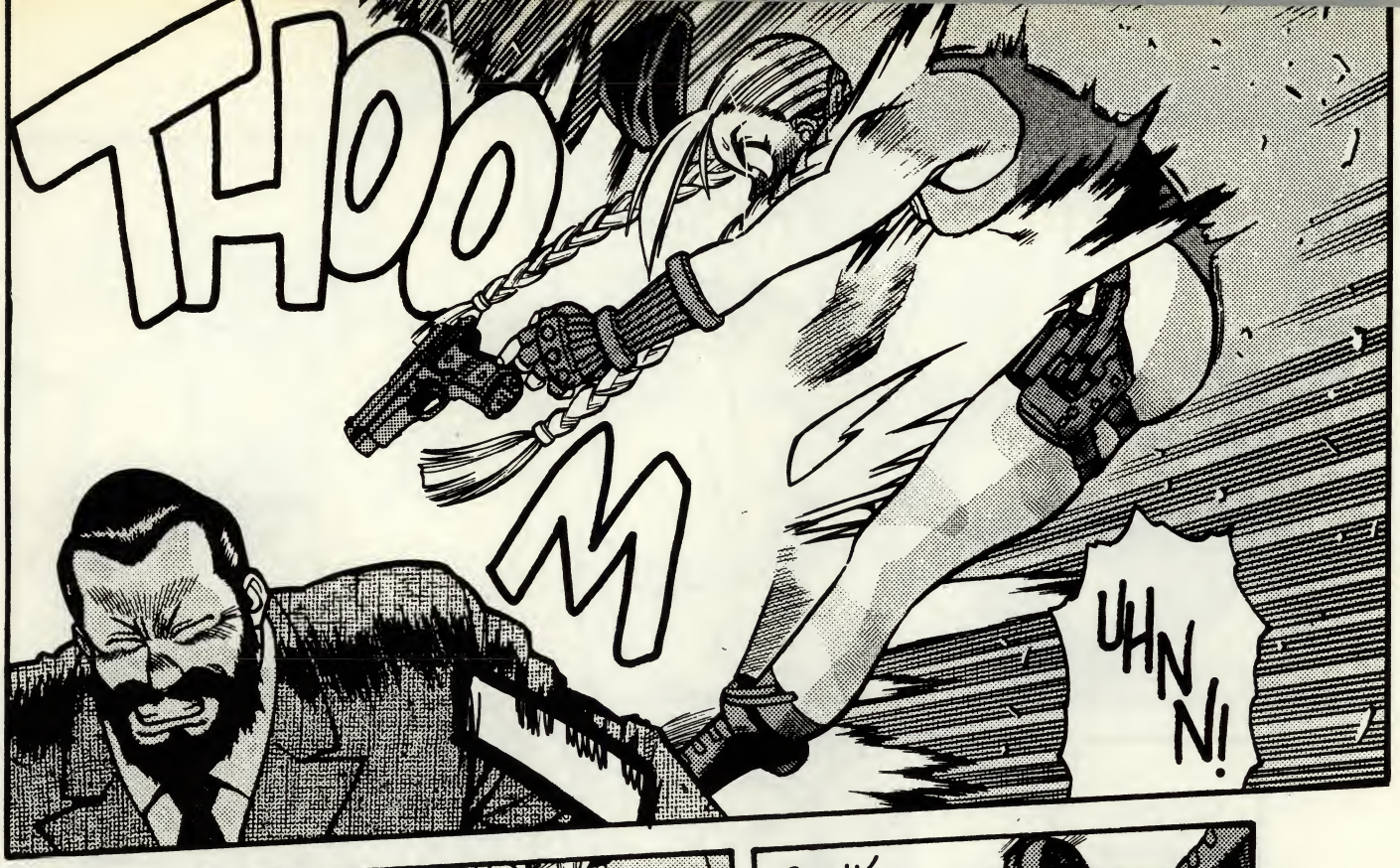
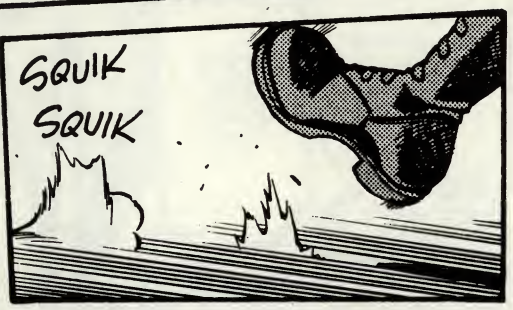
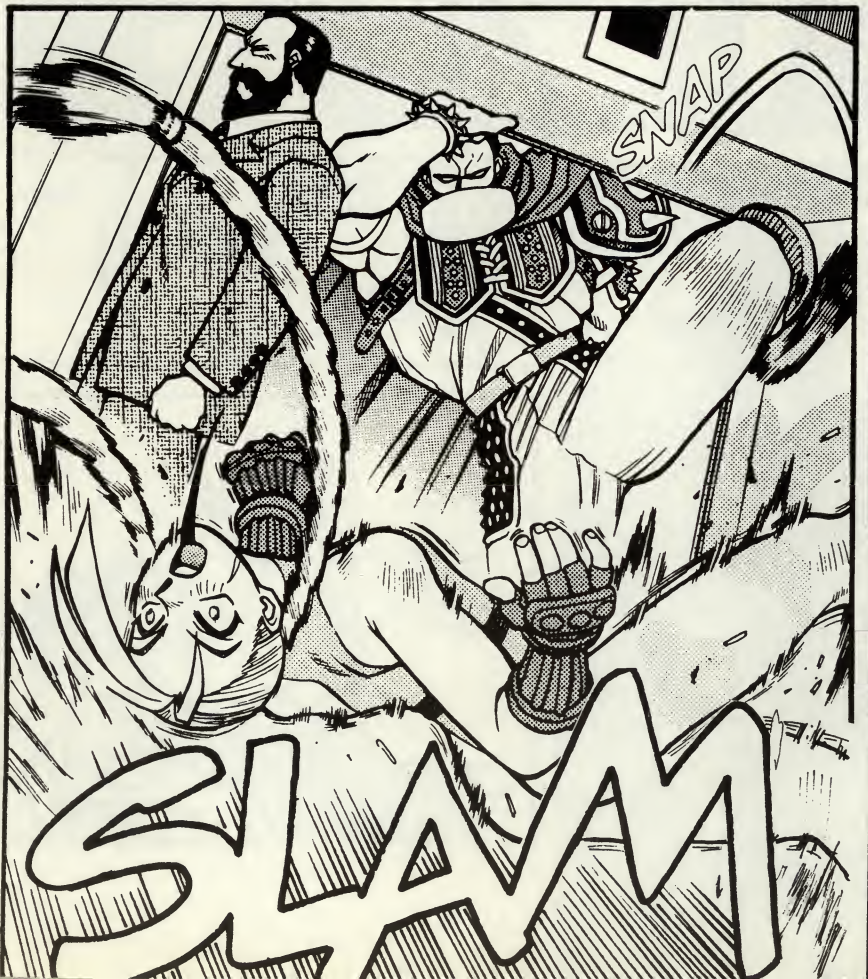

BA
DMP
YUNK
LOOK, SHE'S RESISTING! WHAT'S GOING ON?
WAS THE MIND CONTROL A FAILURE?
HMM. . . WE'VE GIVEN HER MUSCLE STRENGTHENING PILLS AND SYNTHETIC HORMONES. SHE MAY HAVE DEVELOPED A RESISTANCE TO HER TREATMENT.

DOCTOR, USE THE TYPE 3 STIMULANT.
IF SHE DEVELOPED A RESISTANCE, IT SHOULD BE ALL RIGHT.
ARE YOU SURE? SOMETHING LIKE THAT COULD KILL A GROWN MAN.
I DON'T CARE. REPLACE-MENTS ARE EASY TO GET.
THEN I'LL JUST GO AHEAD. HEE HEE.
KLIK
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
YOU WON'T HAVE TIME TO WRITHE IN PAIN LIKE I DID. ONE SHOT TO THE HEAD!
RRK
GRAND !!

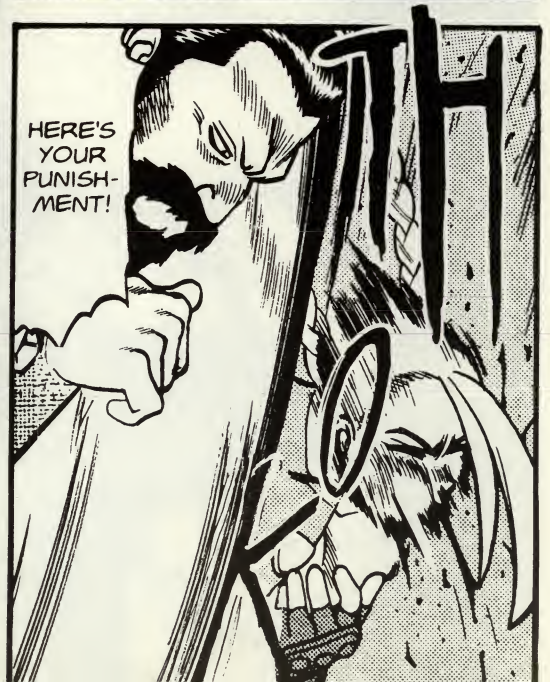

THOOM
UHNN!

HACK!

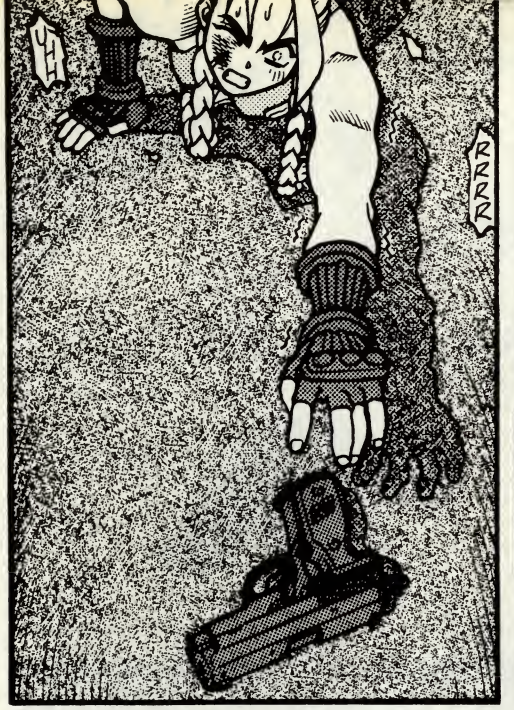

SQUIK
SQUIK


SNAP
SHAM

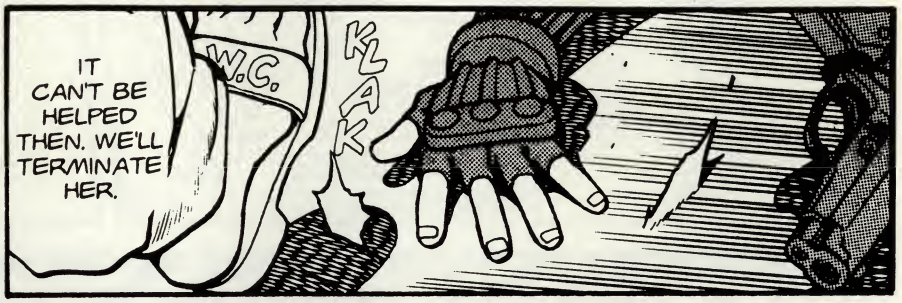
HOW DARE YOU POINT A GUN AT ME!

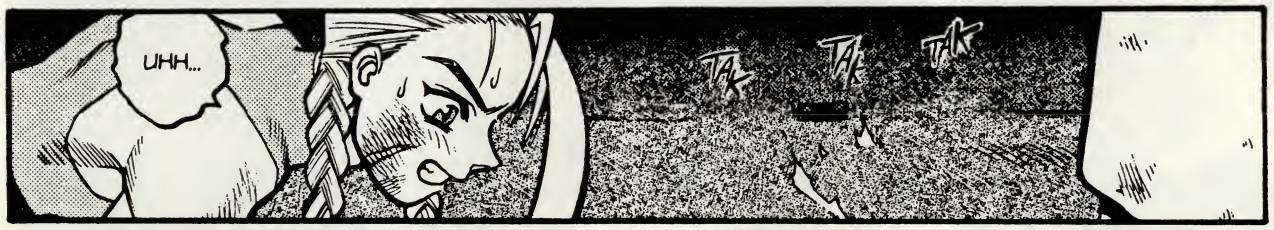

HERE'S YOUR PUNISH-MENT!
TH
OK

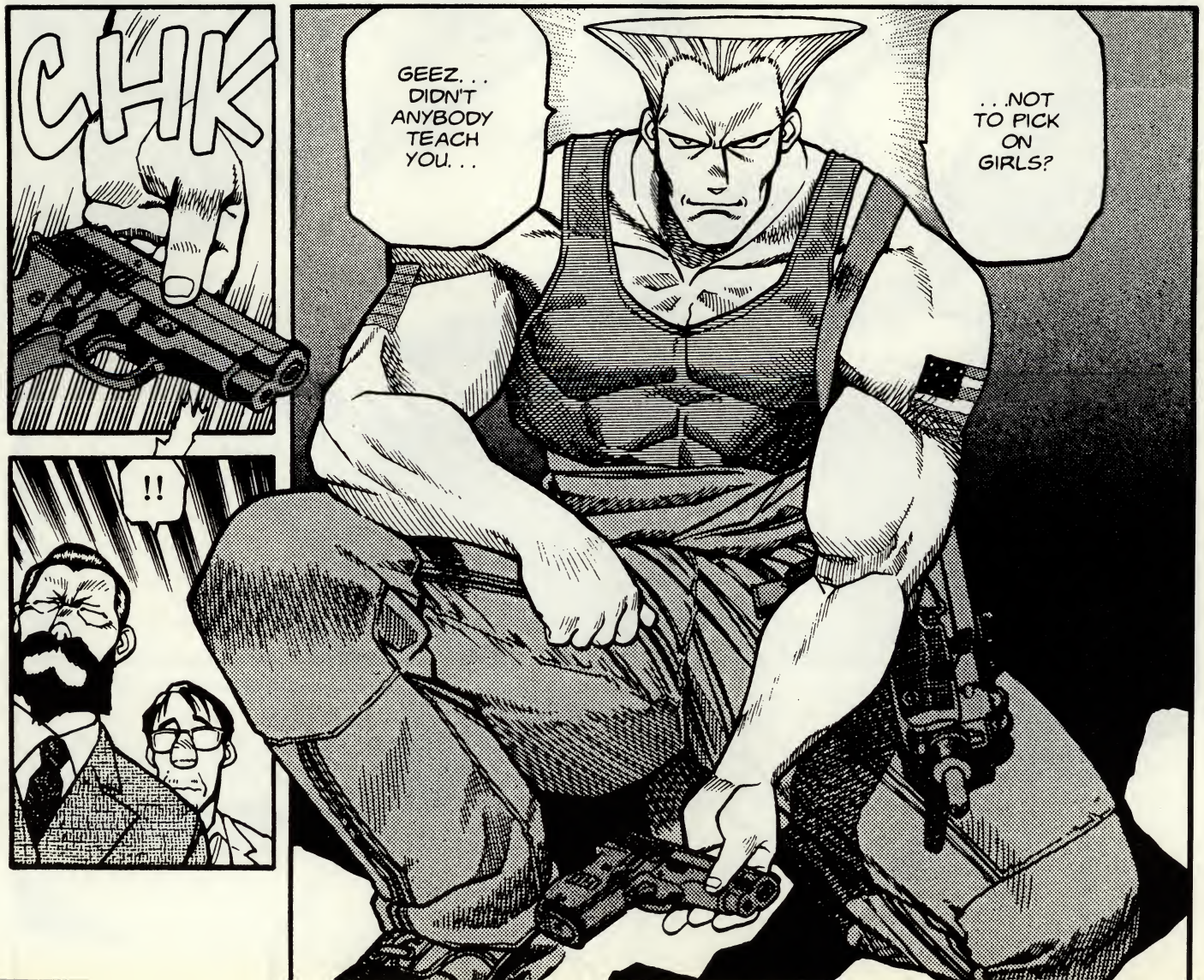
YOU'RE MERELY AN EX-PERIMENT!
BEAR THAT IN MIND...
PROTO-TYPE 740106!
...
I'LL KILL YOU, SANG FROID!
THAT WILL BE ALL. MR. FROID HAS LITTLE PATIENCE.
PROTO-TYPE, DON'T MOVE!
!!
KRUK
KRIK
MY BODY. . .?! I CAN'T MOVE?!
UHN
CREAK
LOOKS LIKE THERE'S SOME CONTROL LEFT.
NO...

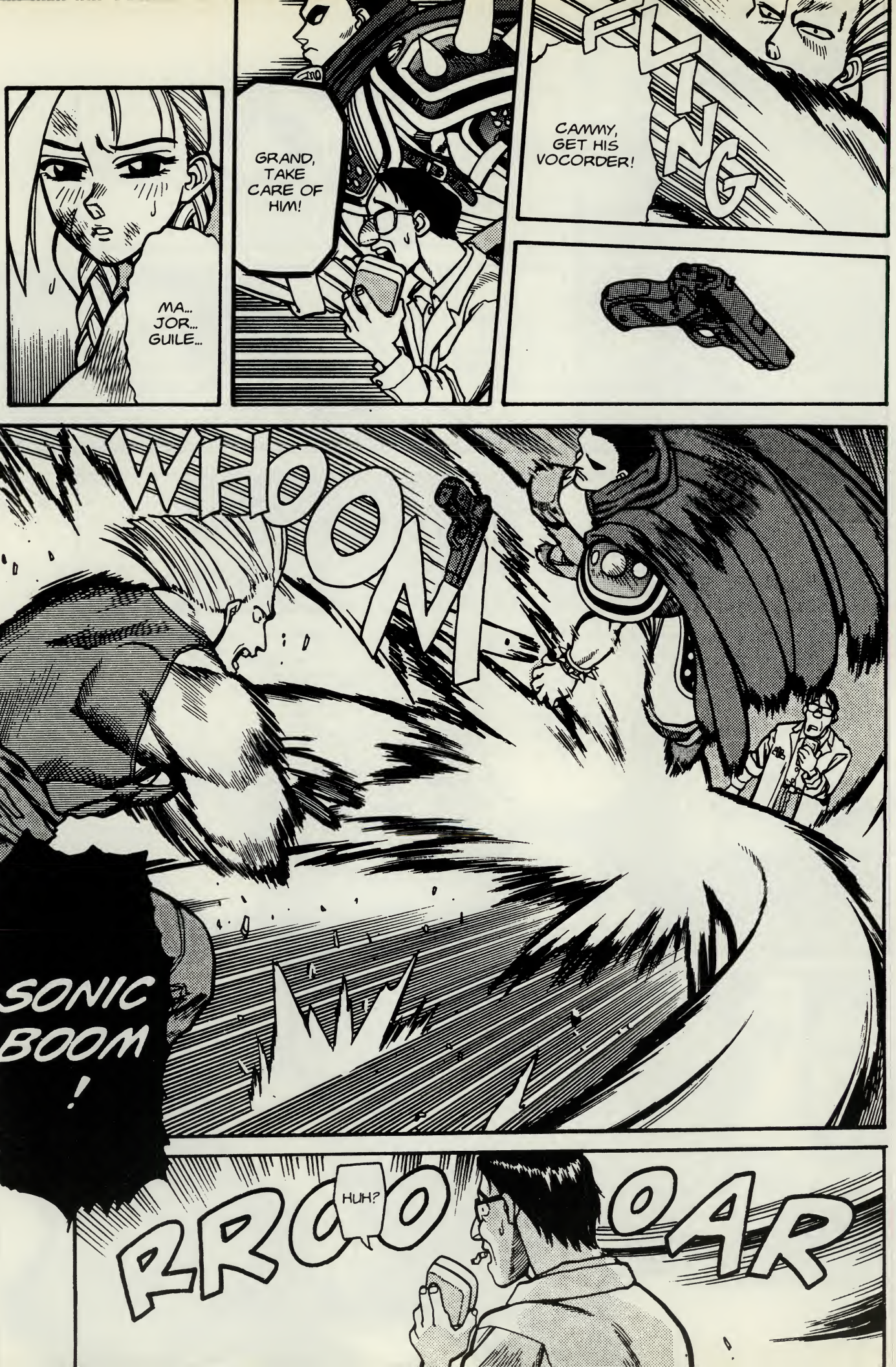

RRRR

SHE'S MOVING! THE DETERIORATION MUST HAVE PROGRESSED.
HMM... LOOKS LIKE IT.


IT CAN'T BE HELPED THEN. WE'LL TERMINATE HER.
W.C.
KLAK


UHH...
TAK
TAK
TAK


CHK
!!
GEEZ... DIDN'T ANYBODY TEACH YOU...
...NOT TO PICK ON GIRLS?

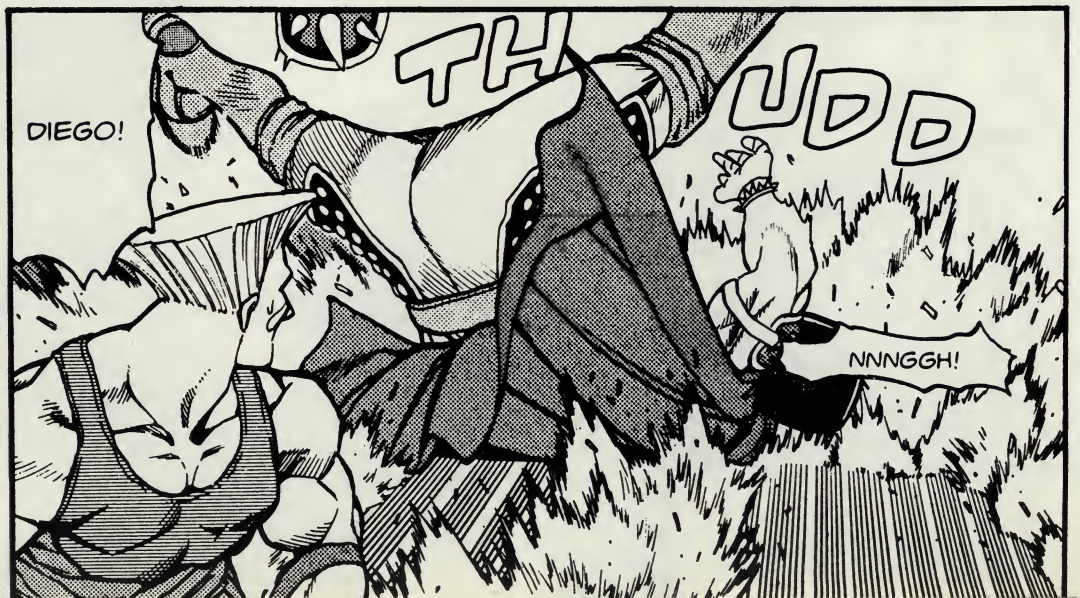

MA... JOR... GUILE...
GRAND, TAKE CARE OF HIM!
CAMMY, GET HIS VOCORDER!
FLYING
WHOOM
SONIC BOOM !
HUH?
RROOOAR

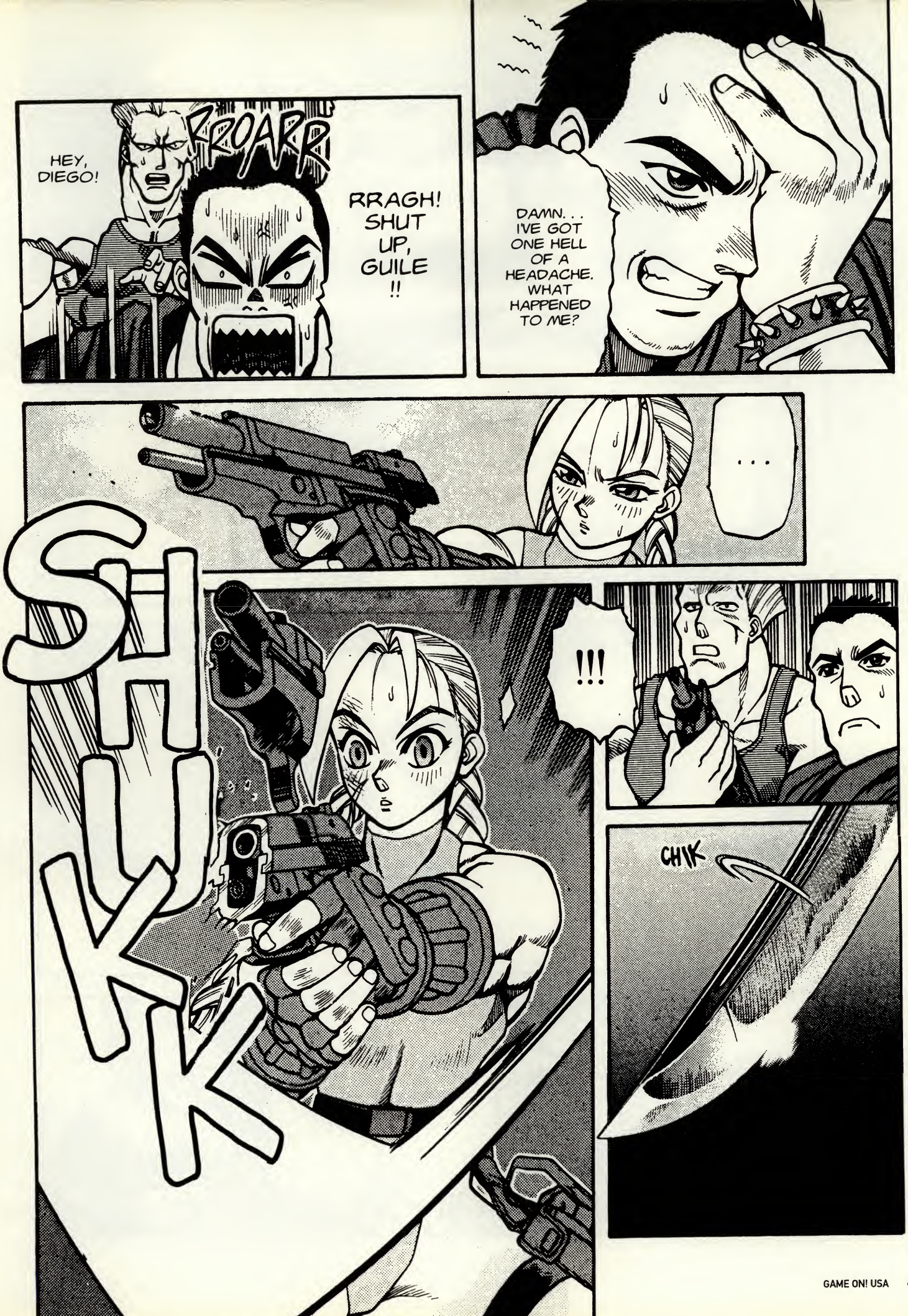
GUH!
THOK
CHK
KLIK
BLAM
RAUGH!!

BLAMM
WHA!?
SCREEEEE
AAAHH!!
BLAM

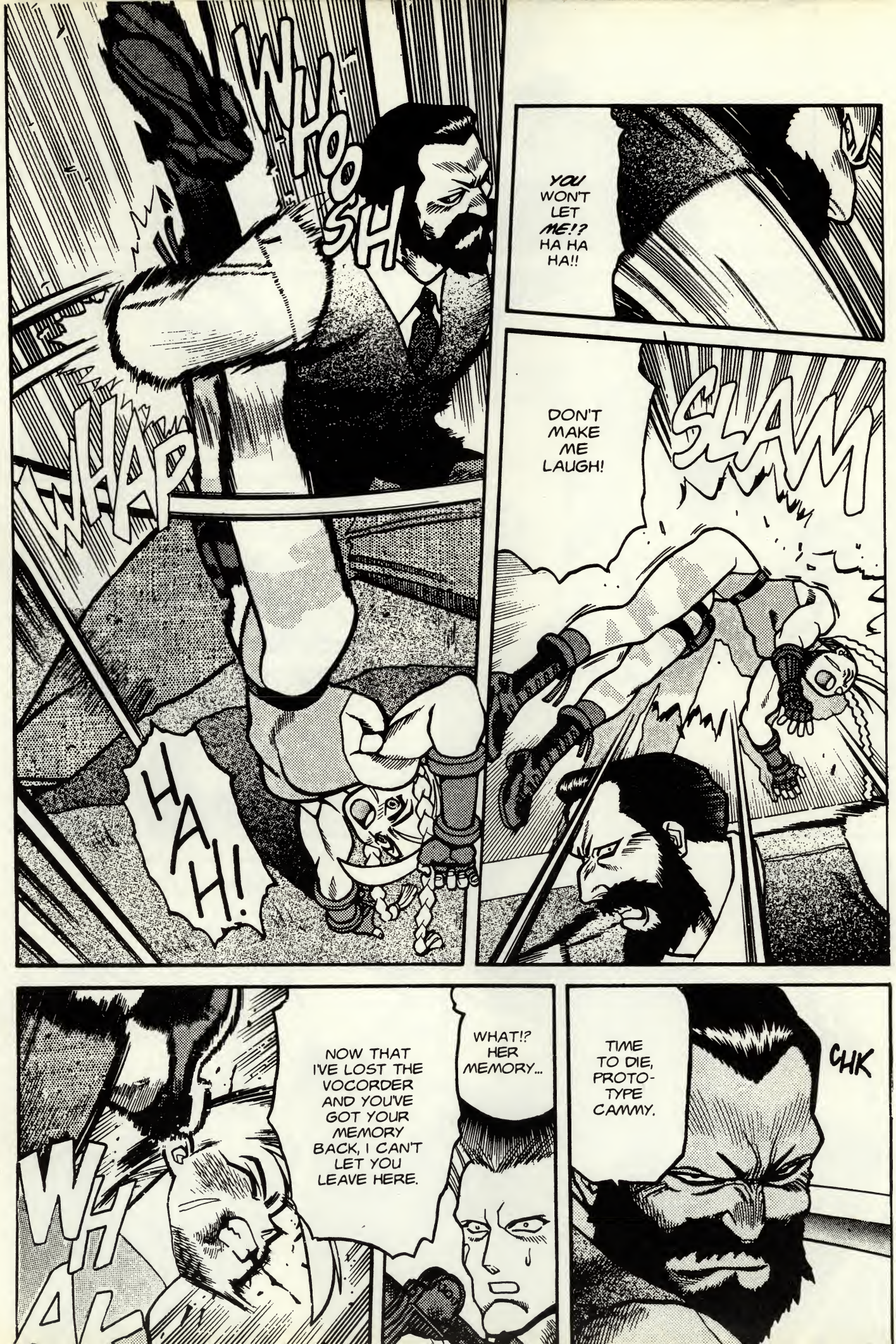
OH NO, THE VO-CORDER!

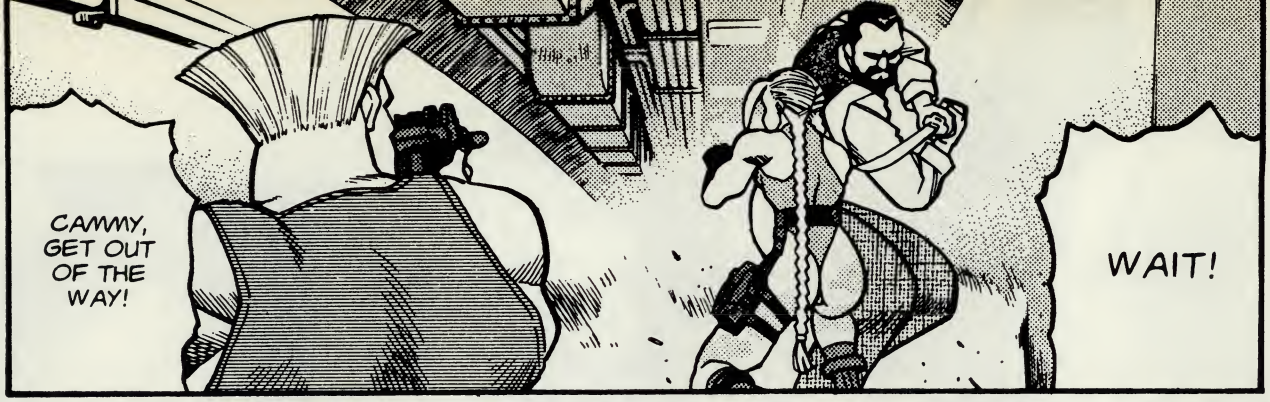
!!
WHO
WHA!?
OSH

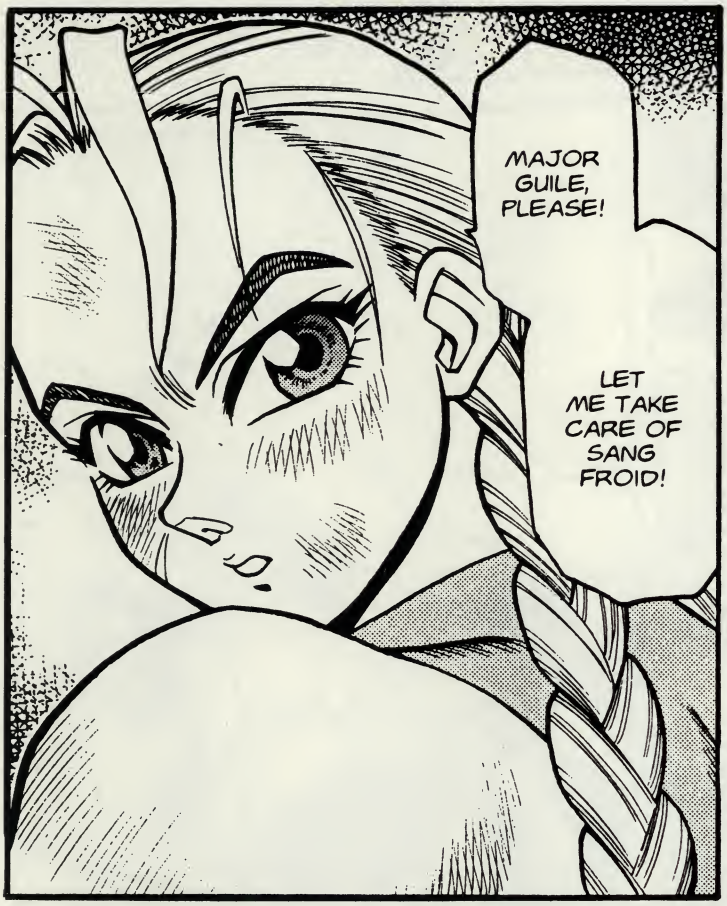

DIEGO!
TH
UDD
NNNGGH!


HEY, DIEGO!
RROARR
RRAGH! SHUT UP, GUILE !!
DAMN... I'VE GOT ONE HELL OF A HEADACHE. WHAT HAPPENED TO ME?
...
SHUKK
!!!
CHIK

IT'S A PITY. . . I WAS GOING TO SUBJECT YOU TO MIND CONTROL. . .
AND HAVE YOU SERVE ME AS ONE OF MY SOLDIERS.
OH, WELL. . .
I CAN ALWAYS MAKE MORE.
THERE'S PLENTY OF FRESH MATERIAL AT THIS BATTLE RAVE TO CHOOSE FROM.
WAS THAT THE BATTLE RAVE'S REAL PURPOSE?
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?!
I WON'T LET YOU DO IT!
HM!?

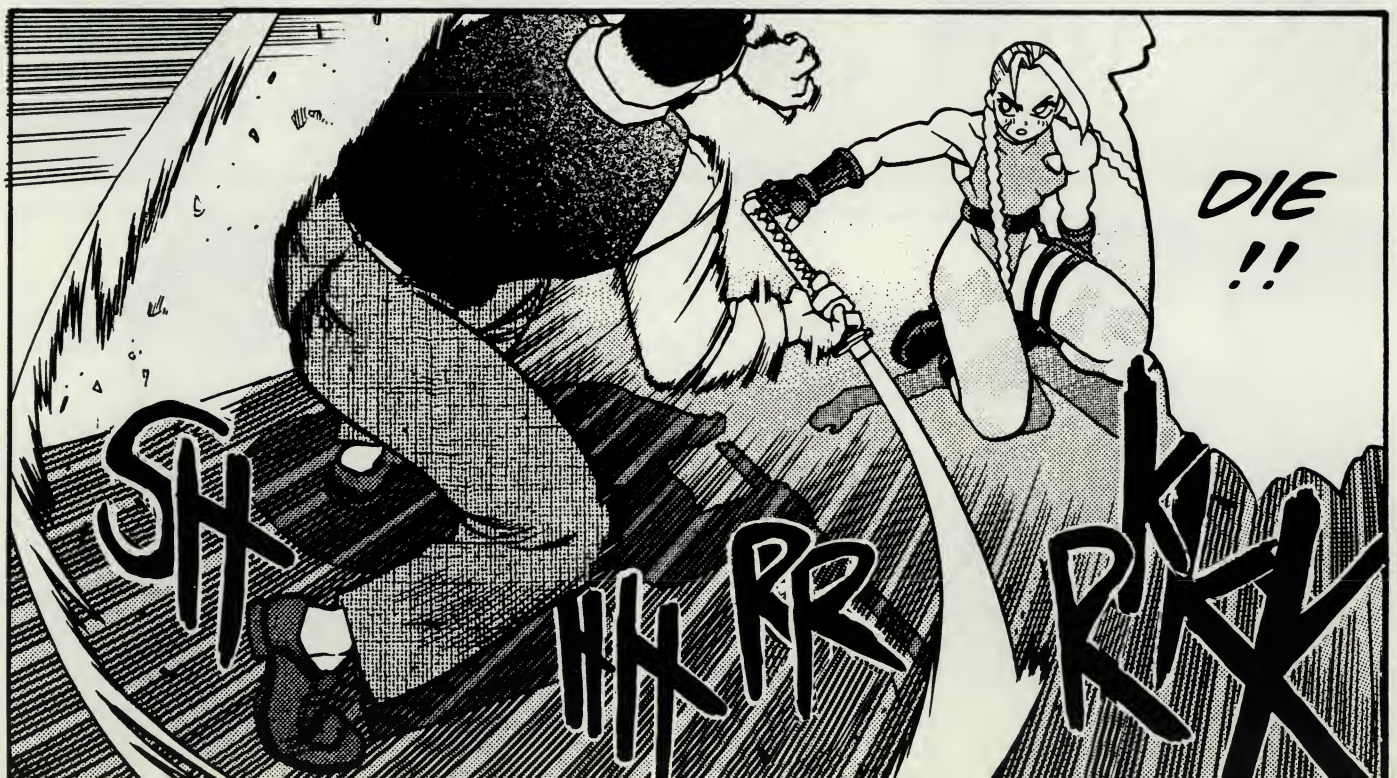

WHOOSH
WHAP
HAH!
YOU WON'T LET ME!? HA HA HA!!
DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH!
SLAM
NOW THAT I'VE LOST THE VOCORDER AND YOU'VE GOT YOUR MEMORY BACK, I CAN'T LET YOU LEAVE HERE.
WHAT!? HER MEMORY...
WHA
TIME TO DIE, PROTO-TYPE CAMMY.
CHK


CAMMY, GET OUT OF THE WAY!
WAIT!

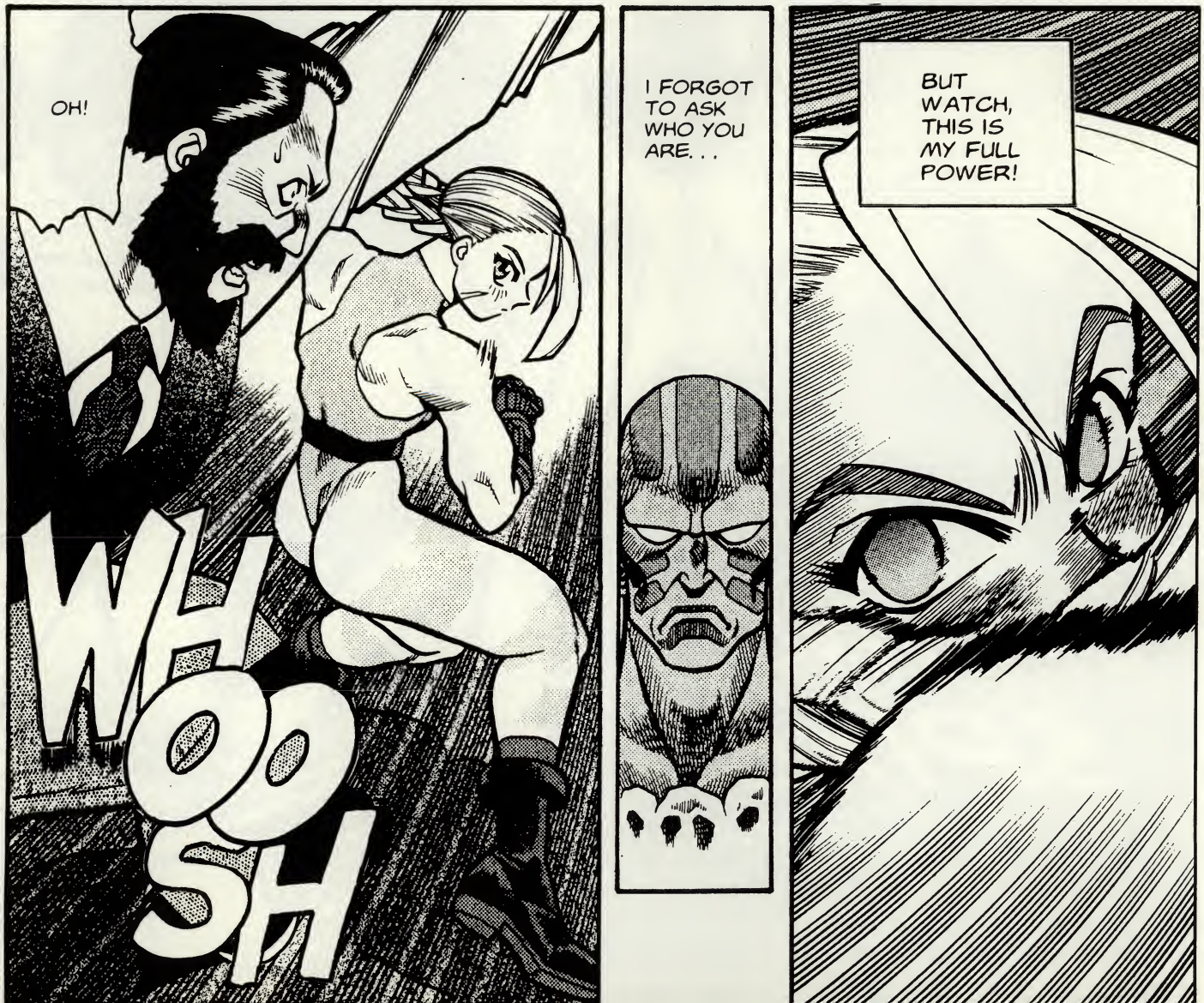

MAJOR GUILE, PLEASE!
LET ME TAKE CARE OF SANG FROID!

CAMMY ...
...

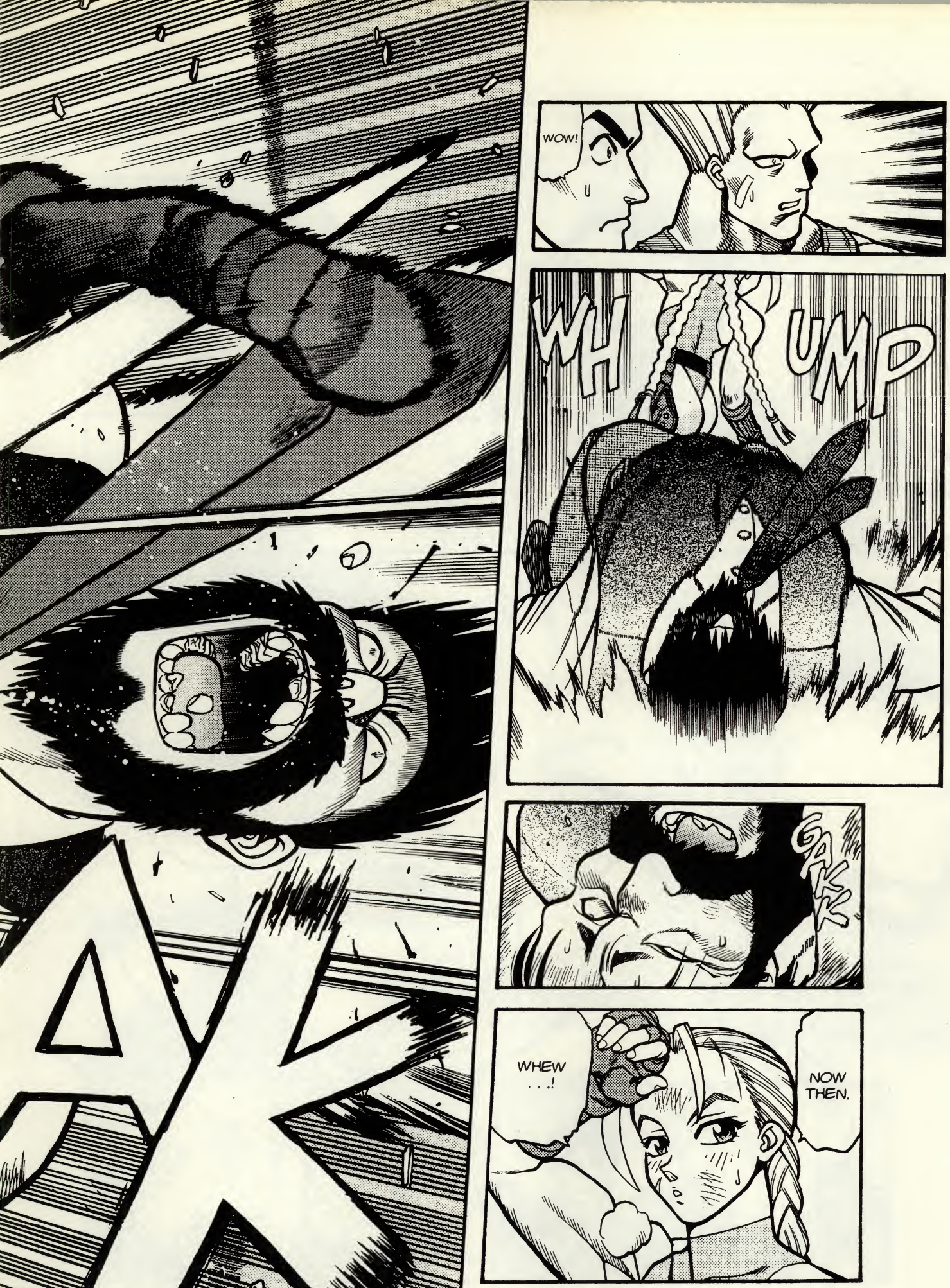
HA HA HA! DON'T BE SO IMPUDENT!

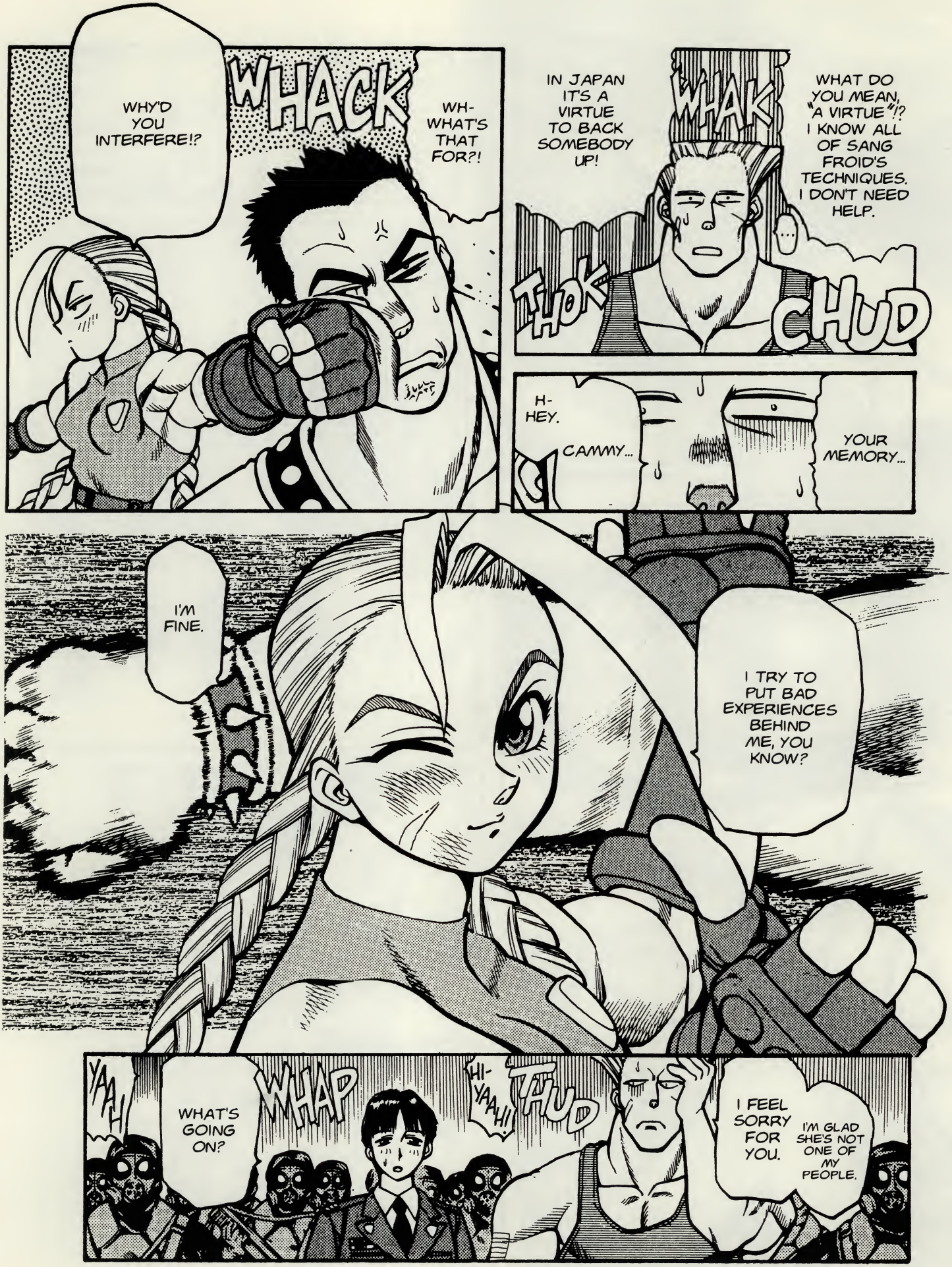

DIE !!
SH
IHK RR
RKK

SNAP
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOIN' ON HERE. . .
BUT YOU MUST BE THE BAD GUY!
MY PRECIOUS...


OH!
WHOOSH
I FORGOT TO ASK WHO YOU ARE. . .
BUT WATCH, THIS IS MY FULL POWER!

CANNON SPIKE!
KR


WOW!
WH
UMP
GAK
WHEW . . .!
NOW THEN.



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English Adaptation by **FRED BURKE & KAORU HOSAKA**
Lettering & Touch-up by **MARY KELLEHER**

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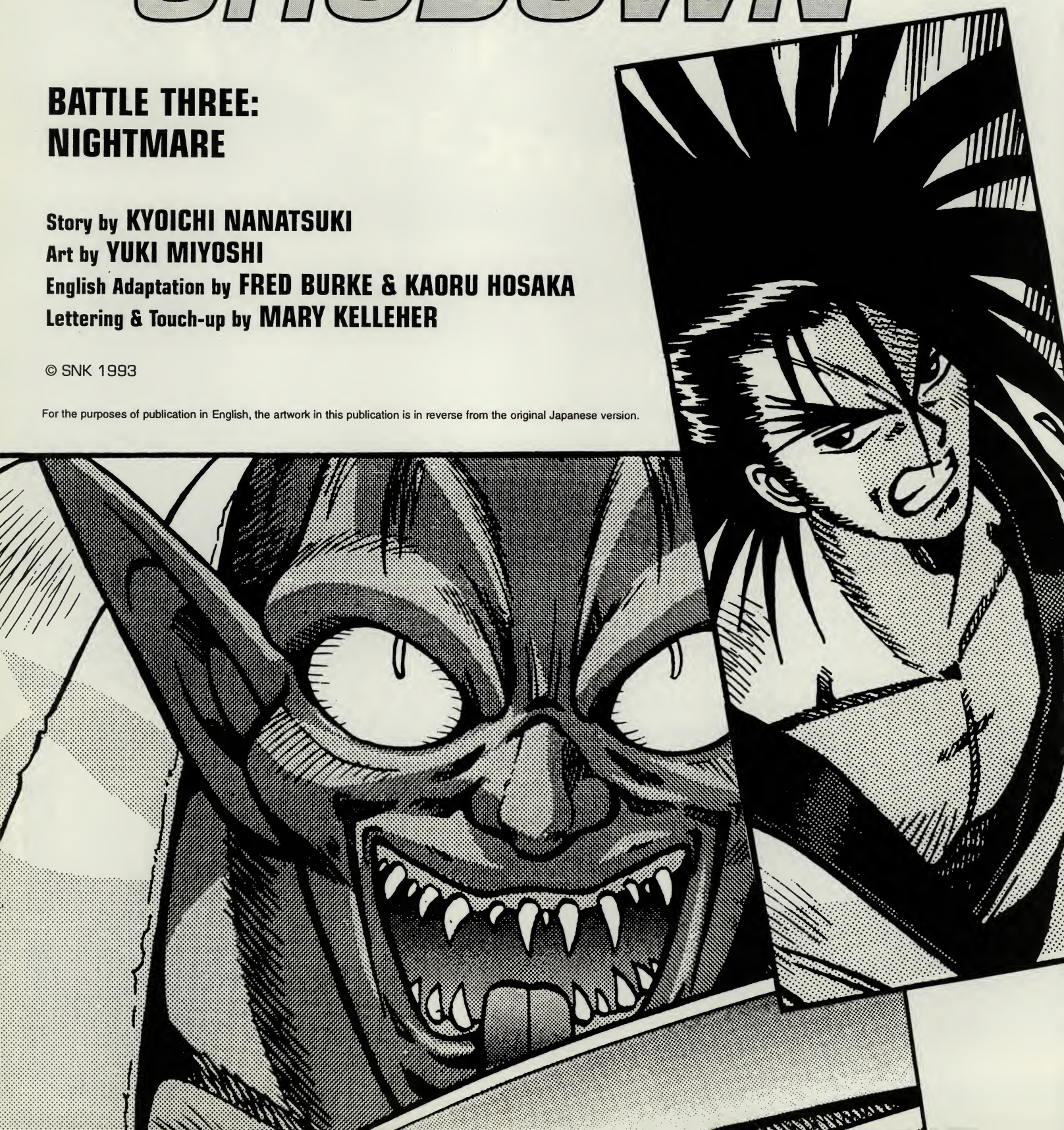
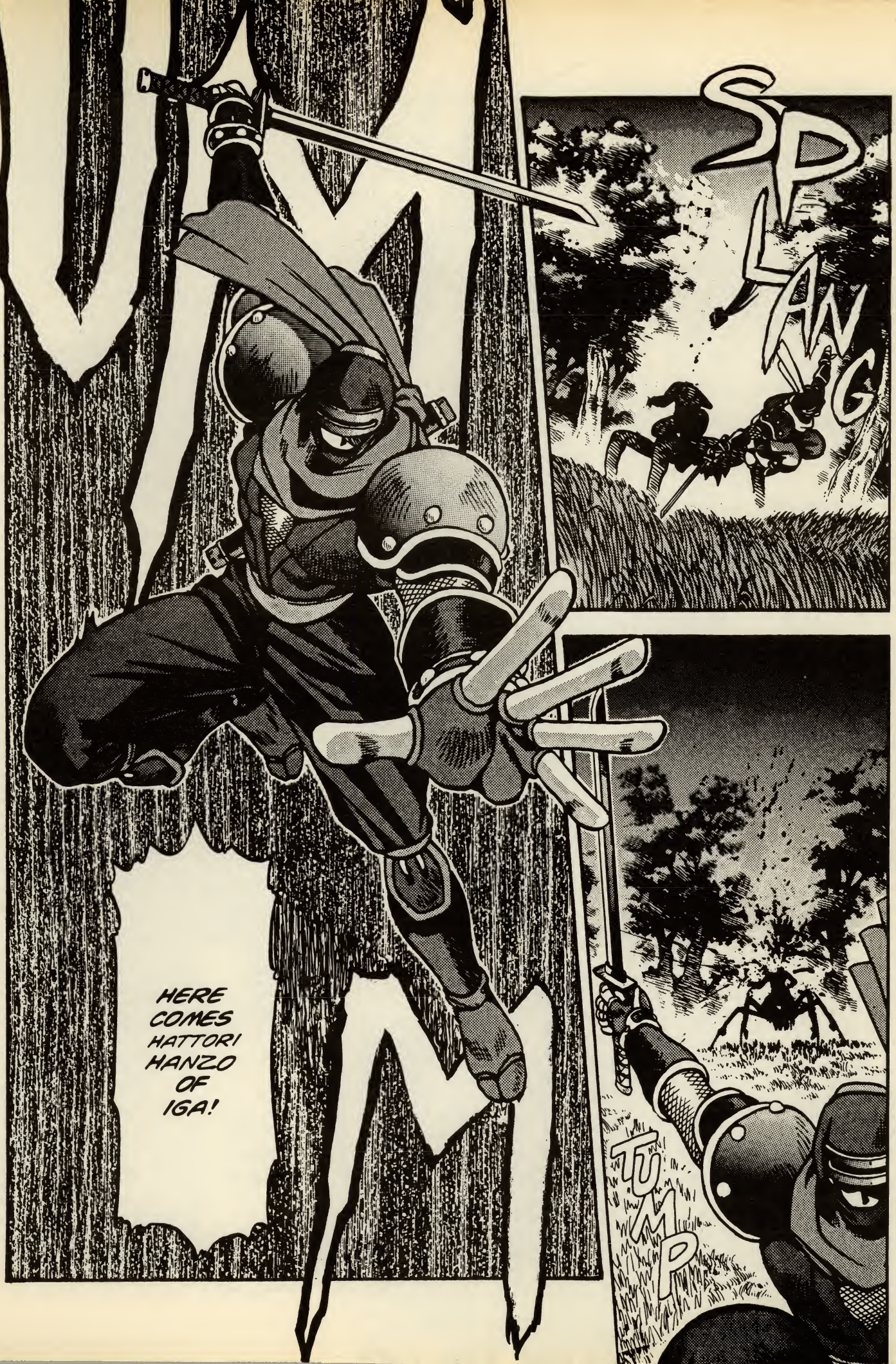


SHWSH
TWEEK
TK
TK
TK
?!
!!
KAYAAAA!!

CRESCENT MOON SLASH!
SHA
SHA
SHA

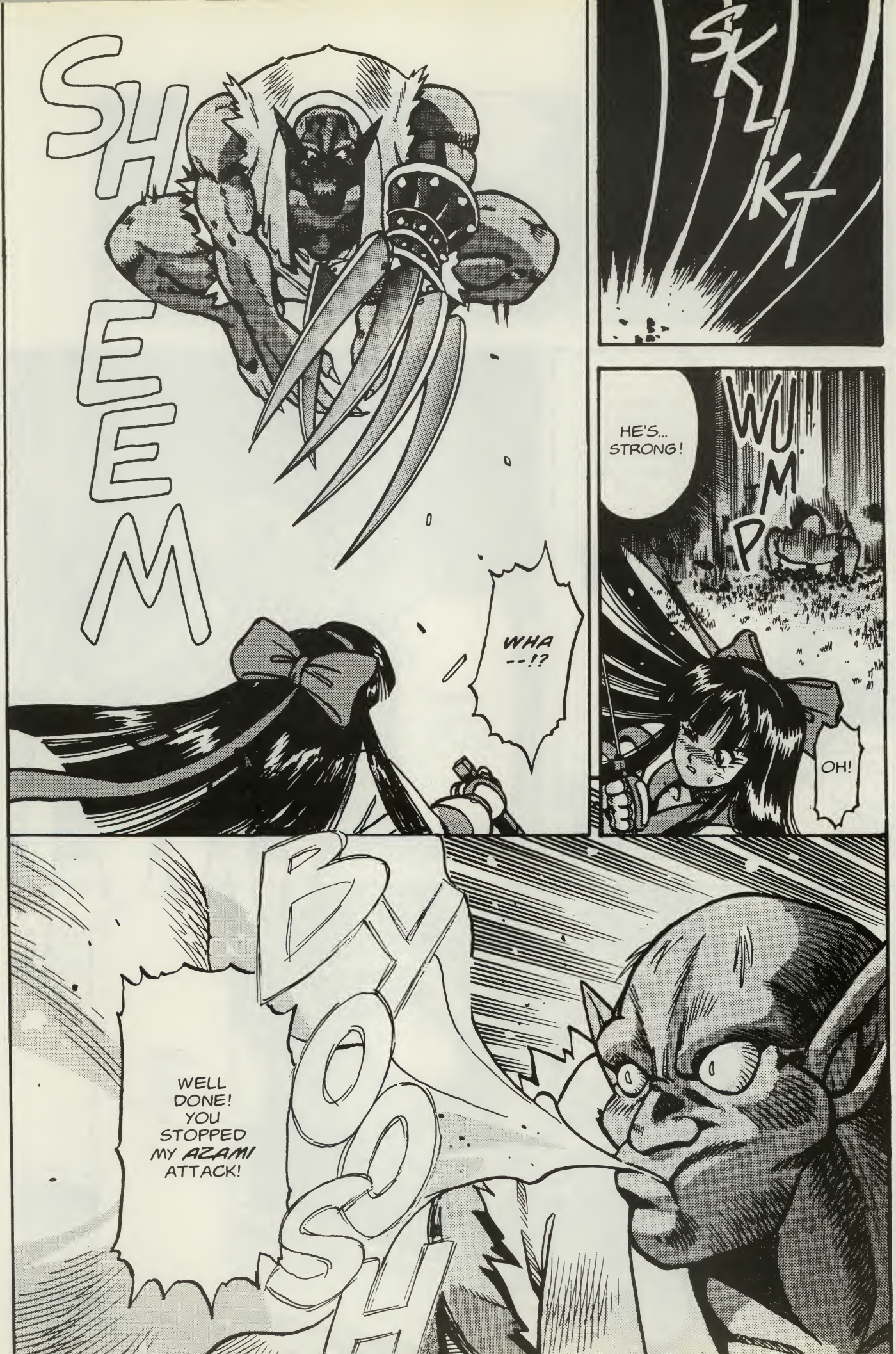
TH ONK
FOOL! EVEN IN THE AIR YOU'RE MY TARGET!
MY CROSS-BLADE SHURIKEN WILL TAKE YOU OUT!
FK FK FK
KATANGKA

WHA...!?
THE FOUR SHADOWS !?
SHA
AA

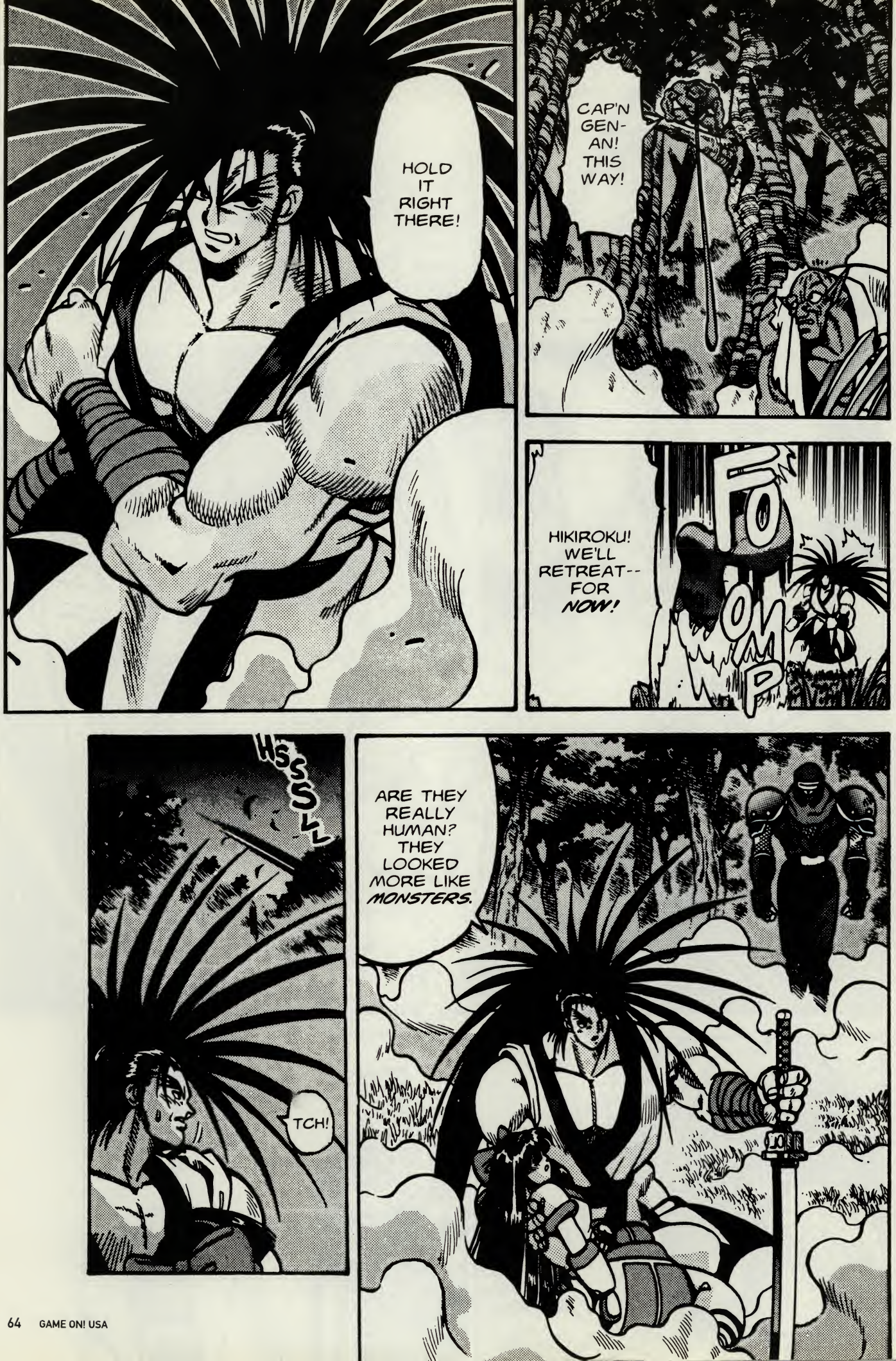

SPLANG
HERE COMES HATTORI HANZO OF IGA!
THUMP

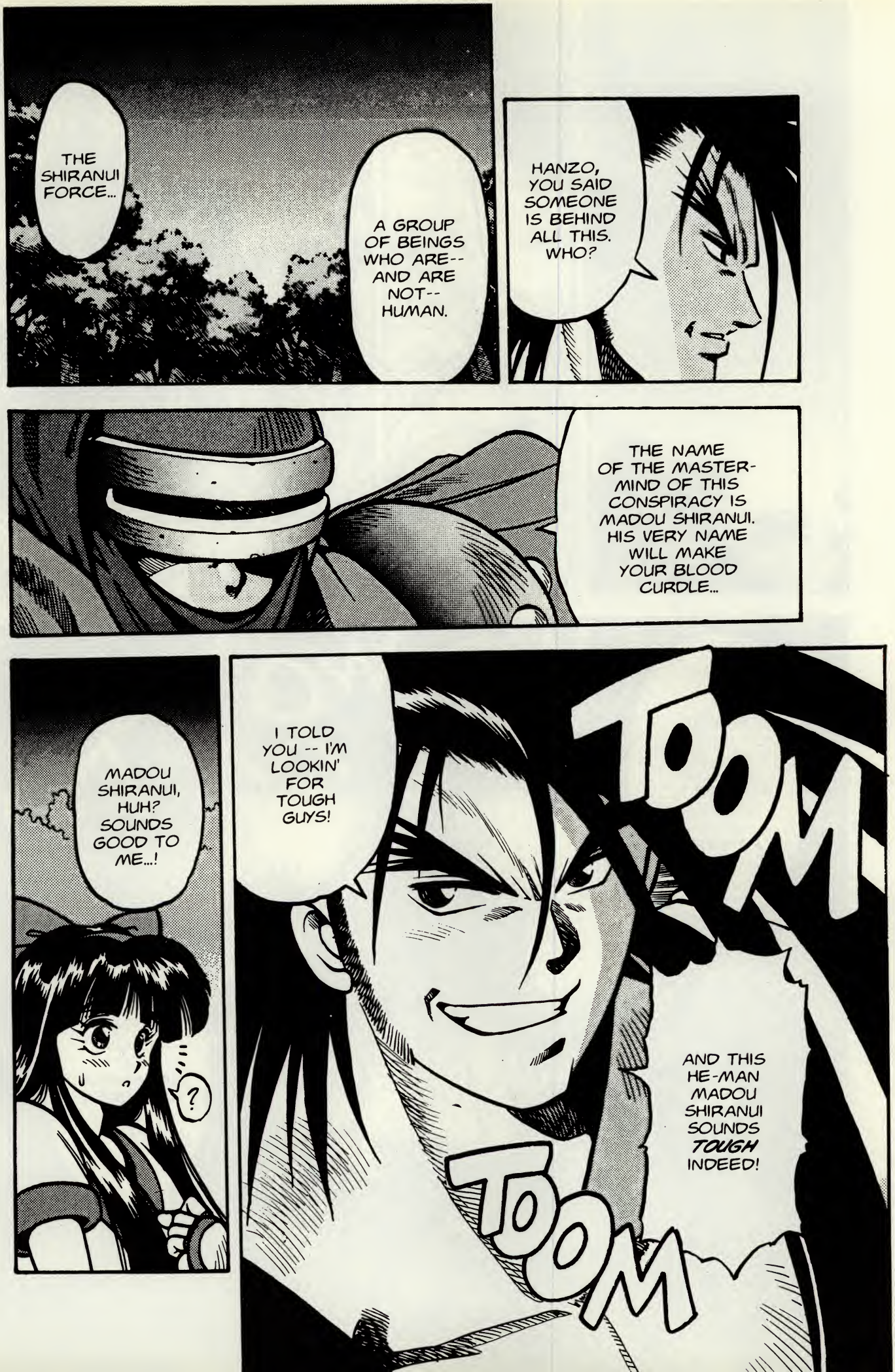
MOZU! IN THE NAME OF BENI-GUMO, I WILL AVENGE YOU!
HSSSSS
TUNK
AHA!
NINJA TELE-PORT!
GYAAH!
SKLOK

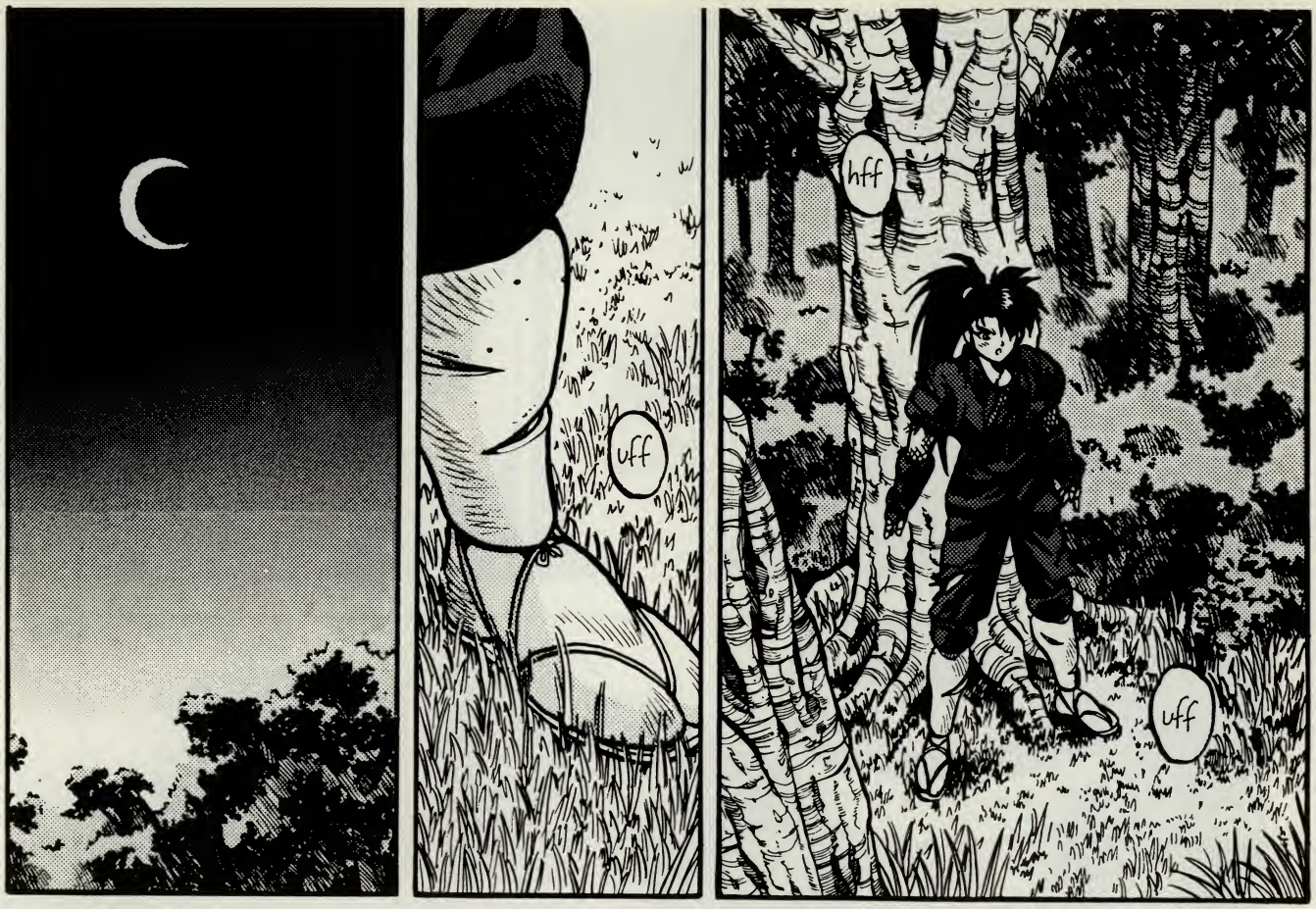
uff
hff
KA, KA, KA, KA, KA...
uff
I FEEL IT...! THIS IS THE SAME DARK SPIRIT THAT SURROUNDS EDO...
WHO ARE YOU!?
GEN-AN SHIRANUI !!

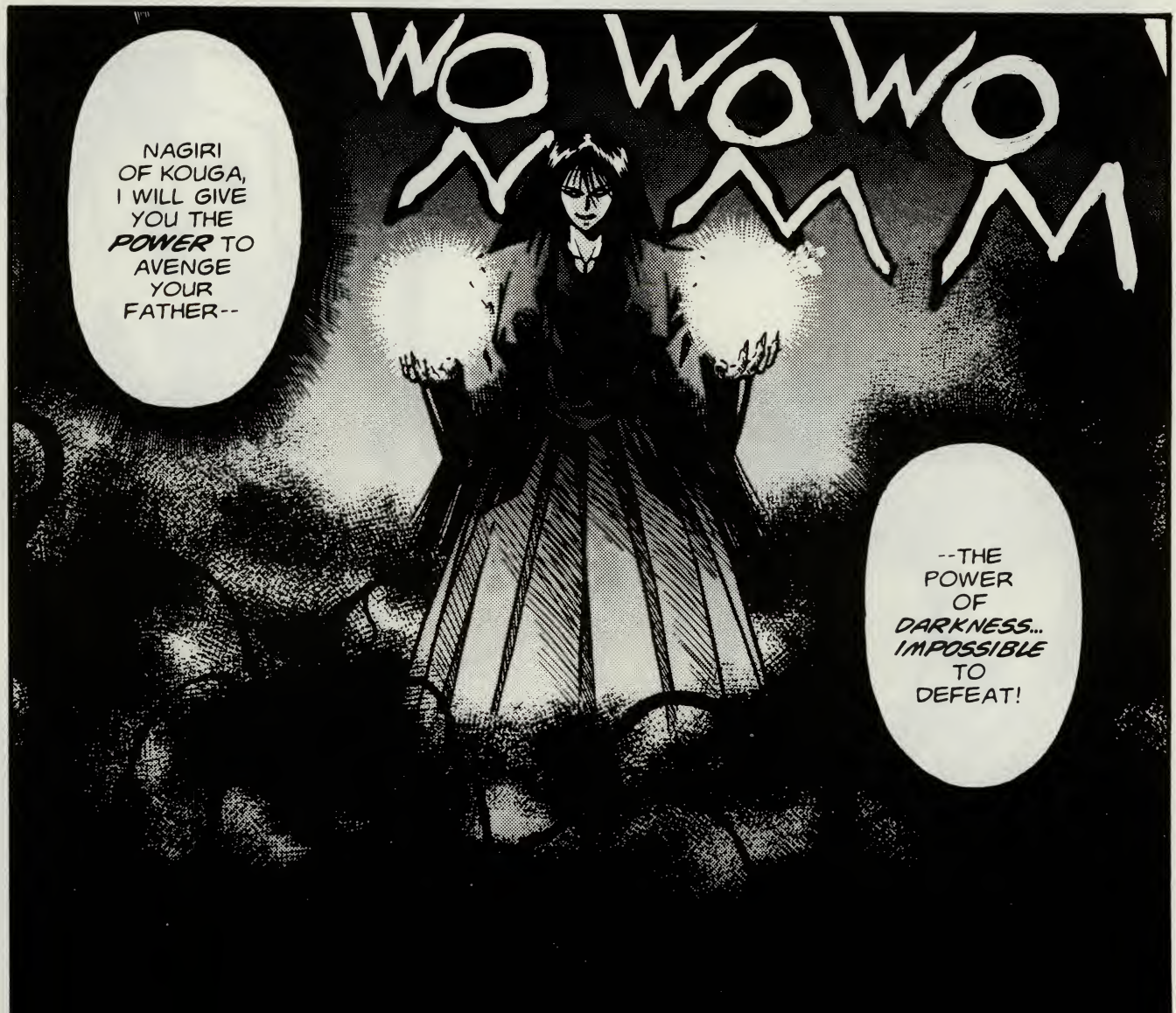

SHEEM
SKLIKT
HE'S... STRONG!
WUMP
OH!
WHA --!?
WELL DONE! YOU STOPPED MY AZAMI ATTACK!
BY OOSH!

POISON VAPOR! WHAT A DIRTY TRICK!
WSHH
YIKES!
KYEEEH!
DIRTY TRICK? THAT'S PRAISE TO ME!
FSH
FSH
DAMMIT!
THOK
!?

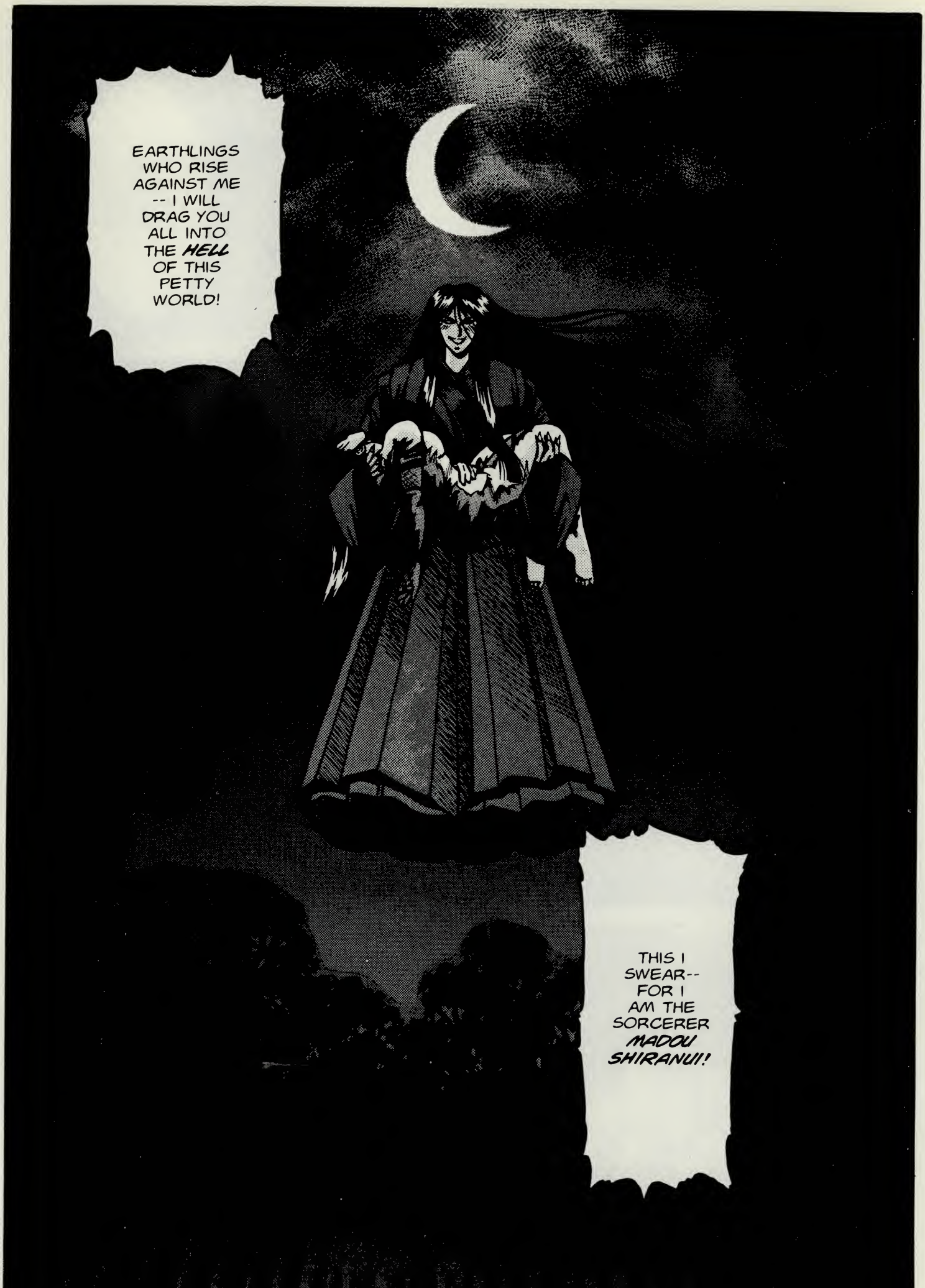

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
CAP'N GEN-AN! THIS WAY!
HIKIROKU! WE'LL RETREAT-- FOR NOW!
FO WOMP
HSSSLL
TCH!
ARE THEY REALLY HUMAN? THEY LOOKED MORE LIKE MONSTERS.

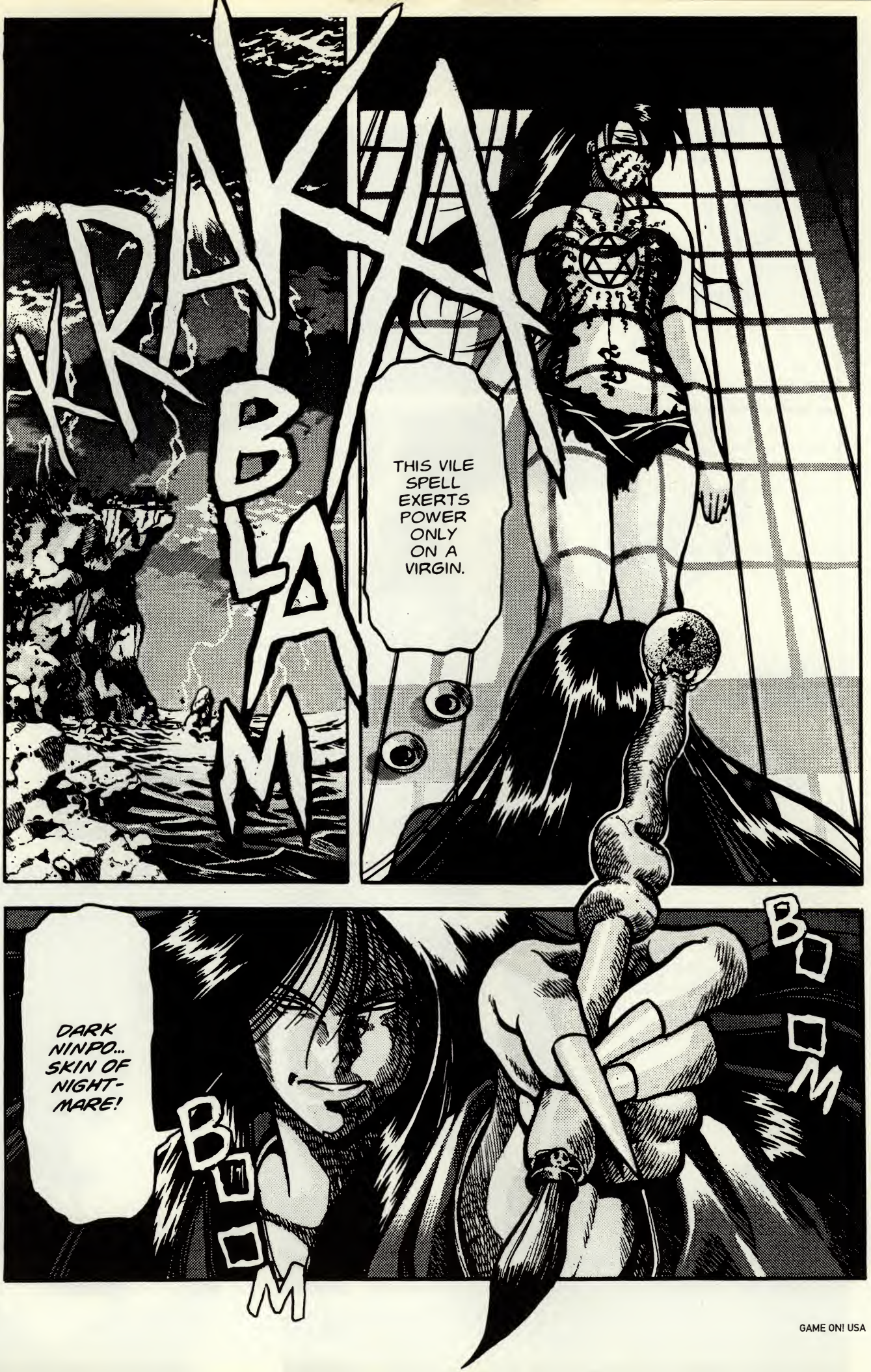

THE SHIRANUI FORCE...
A GROUP OF BEINGS WHO ARE-- AND ARE NOT-- HUMAN.
HANZO, YOU SAID SOMEONE IS BEHIND ALL THIS. WHO?
THE NAME OF THE MASTER-MIND OF THIS CONSPIRACY IS MADOU SHIRANUI. HIS VERY NAME WILL MAKE YOUR BLOOD CURDLE...
MADOU SHIRANUI, HUH? SOUNDS GOOD TO ME...!
?
I TOLD YOU -- I'M LOOKIN' FOR TOUGH GUYS!
TOOM
AND THIS HE-MAN MADOU SHIRANUI SOUNDS TOUGH INDEED!
TOOM

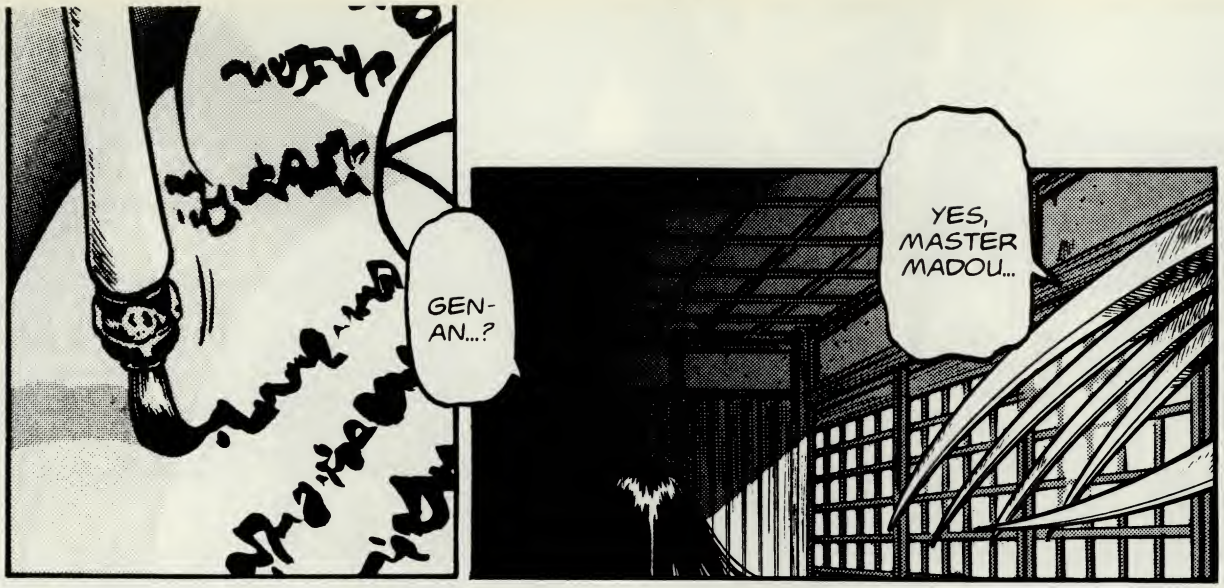

hff
uff
uff

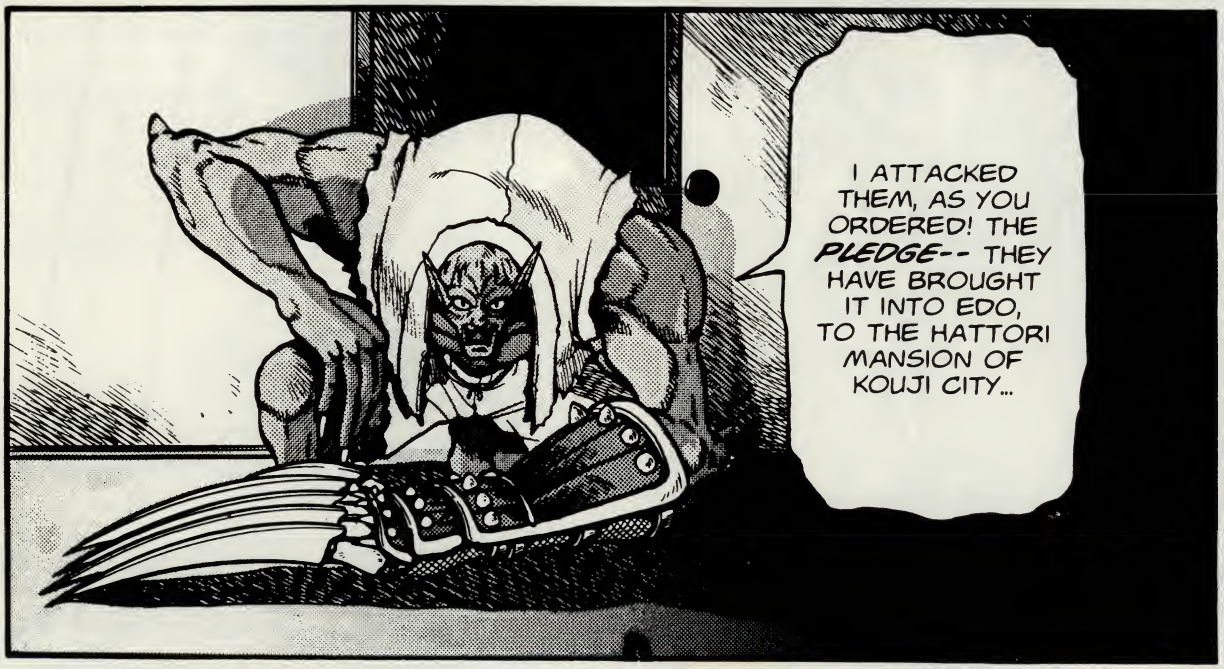

WO WO WO
NAGIRI OF KOUGA, I WILL GIVE YOU THE POWER TO AVENGE YOUR FATHER--
--THE POWER OF DARKNESS... IMPOSSIBLE TO DEFEAT!

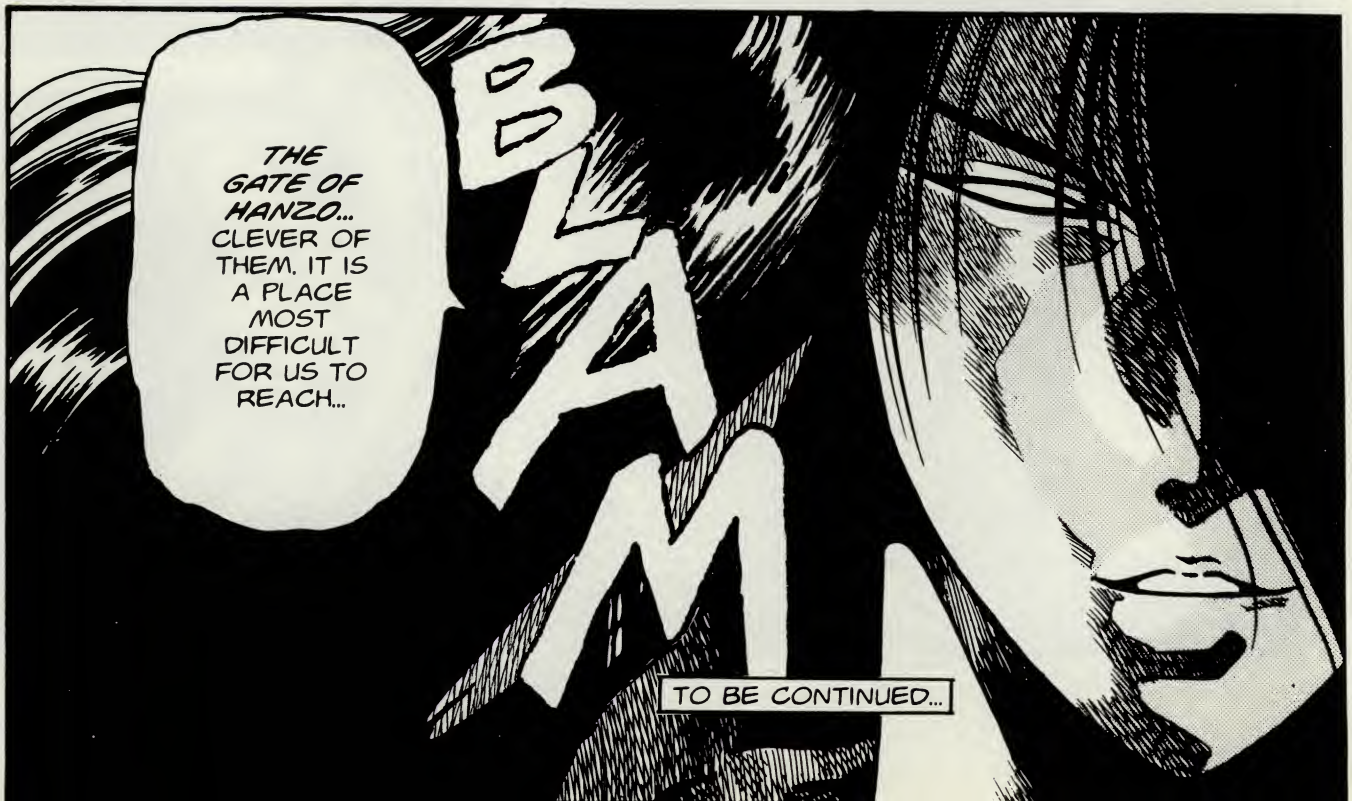
FWEEP
FWEEP
!?
MY NAME IS MADOU SHIRANUI!
RIP
NOOOOO!
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
I THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING... IT SOUNDED LIKE SOMEONE— PLEADING FOR HELP...!


EARTHLINGS WHO RISE AGAINST ME -- I WILL DRAG YOU ALL INTO THE HELL OF THIS PETTY WORLD!
THIS I SWEAR-- FOR I AM THE SORCERER MADOU SHIRANUI!


KRAKA
BLAM
THIS VILE SPELL EXERTS POWER ONLY ON A VIRGIN.
DARK NINPO... SKIN OF NIGHT-MARE!
BOOM
BOOM


GEN-AN...?
YES, MASTER MADOU...


I ATTACKED THEM, AS YOU ORDERED! THE *PLEDGE*-- THEY HAVE BROUGHT IT INTO EDO, TO THE HATTORI MANSION OF KOUJI CITY...


THE GATE OF HANZO... CLEVER OF THEM. IT IS A PLACE MOST DIFFICULT FOR US TO REACH...
BWAM
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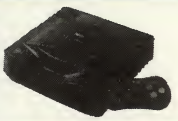

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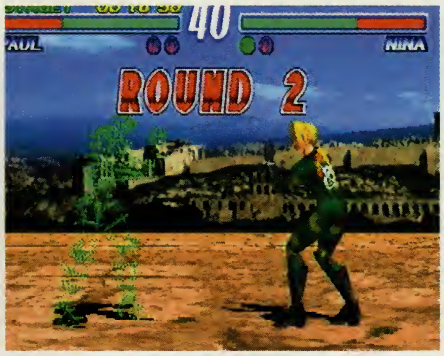
FULL MOTION

Tekken 2

System: Sony PlayStation
Developer: Namco
Publisher: Namco
Availability: Now (Japan); September 1996 (U.S.)

To play Roger or Alex:
Get to the third match on the third round, then let your health dwindle to around 5% and then beat your opponent. In the next round you'll be playing against either Roger or Alex. Beat either one and then you'll be able to select either of them. Press a punch button to select Roger, or a kick button to select Alex.



First Person "Punch-Out" Perspective
Hold down L1 and L2 (first player) or R1 and R2 (second player) as you are selecting your character and keep holding down until the match starts. Your body will be a green grid and you'll play in the first person perspective.

Big Head Mode
Press and hold down *select* until the match starts when you pick your character. You should be bigger than the norm **(2)**. To be really big and grotesque-looking hold down select again while starting a new match with the same character **(3)**. *Kawaii!*

Tekken was one of the first 3D fighting games to come out in the arcades. The graphics for this game were phenomenal but it was not widely accepted by the 2D diehards. When *Tekken* came out for the PlayStation, it quickly became one of the top PlayStation games, fighting or otherwise. Now the much awaited sequel has finally arrived.

The opening sequence shows all the characters in the game, including Devil Kazuya and Angel. With an intro as good as ***Tekken 2***'s you know that the game itself should be nothing short of fantastic. How are the graphics different from *Tekken*? First of all, the different light sourcing and the texture mapped floors give the game a whole new appearance. A few of the sounds such as the "crunches" you hear as you do the multi-part throws have been modified from the arcade version. The only other thing is that the characters have a diminished polygon count, thus making them appear smaller than other versions. I wouldn't go so far as to call this a drawback because this diminished polygon count does not take anything away from gameplay although Kuma looks ridiculously small.

The layout of the game is radically different from its *Tekken* predecessors. It seems the programmers opted not to include the traditional ***Galaga*** game at loadup; I guess they figured that there's enough in the game itself to keep one occupied for hours. I remember the countless hours it took me trying to finish the *Galaga* game in the first *Tekken* just to get the blue uniformed Kazuya.

There are many different options to choose from: arcade mode, versus mode (you and your opponent can choose your health settings from 70% all the way to 130%), team battle mode, time attack mode, survival mode and practice mode. If you're looking for an excellent 3D fighting game then look no further.

Micah Furuyama

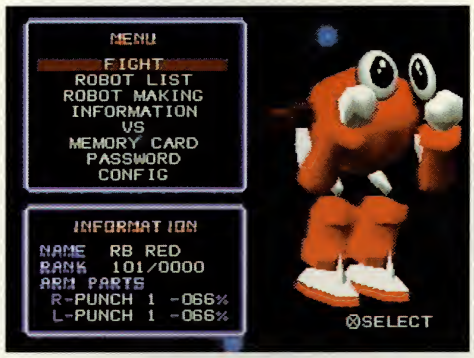
The Last Word: **In the past, there were very few games that could come close to being as good as their arcade counterparts. This game is actually an improvement on the arcade version. From its Full Motion Video endings for all the characters, to its improved light sourcing and sound, this game should not be overlooked by the serious fighting game fan.**

©1996 Namco Ltd.

PIT FIGHTER

Robo Pit

System: Sony PlayStation
Developer: Altron
Publisher: Altron (Japan); THQ (U.S.)
Availability: Now (Japan); 3rd Quarter 1996 (U.S.)



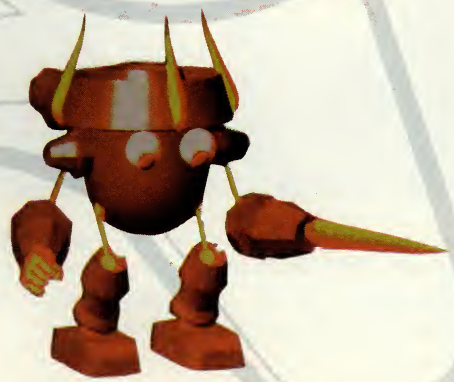
Robo Pit is a unique game developed by Altron. The game is best described as ***Jumping Flash*** meets ***Cybersled*** (oh, how I try to forget!). You start off the game by assembling your robot from an assortment of body parts and the choice of 2 basic weapons. After assembling a robot, it's ready to enter the fighting robot circuit. Your robot has to start at the bottom of the circuit and must battle your way up through the rankings by taking on the other 100 fighting robots. Each fight takes place in a 3D arena (yes, there are ring outs) with some of the arenas featuring multiple platforms you can jump on. There are 30 different weapons you can obtain throughout the game to add to your arsenal after you defeat each fighter. Once you get the first place ranking you must then take on the champion of the circuit to be crowned the new robot fighting champion.

Robo Pit has solid gameplay but the game is not very challenging. Once you obtain a powerful weapon it's pretty much a breeze throughout the game. The controls are tight, with a left and right attack along with a guard and jump button. Also, you can sidestep your robot with the right and left buttons. And what is a fighting game without super moves? The super moves are executed by pressing the 2 left or right buttons together. *Robo Pit* comes with a 2 player split screen mode where you and a friend can duke it out. The split screen mode shows no sign of slowdown and not that much loss in resolution.

On the graphic side, *Robo Pit* features decent looking arenas. Some of them look dithered and grainy while others are not so bad. The scaling is smooth. The game for the most part runs at a good frame rate, though after defeating your opponent there is some slight slowdown. As for the robots, they all have a cute "super-deformed" look to them which is one of the most appealing things in the game.

Joseph Mooney

Once you have beaten the circuit champion you will be able to play him in the 2 player mode.



The Last Word: Robo Pit is a fun game that I would recommend to people who like 3D shooter fighting games. While not the most challenging game I have ever played, it was still fun, especially because of all the different super deformed robots you can make.

©1995 Altron Corp.

STAGES OF GROWTH

Panzer Dragoon II Zwei

System: Sega Saturn
Developer: Andromeda
Publisher: Sega
Availability: Now (U.S.)

Many 3D shooter fans have probably played and liked ***Panzer Dragoon***, one of the most fantastic first generation Saturn games of 1995. The sequel has a lot to offer in terms of gameplay.

The game starts with a FMV intro showing how a little boy was forced to take vengeance upon the enemy organization. As soon as you start playing, you'll notice that you are on a baby dragon, running on the ground instead of flying! Unlike *Panzer Dragoon*, where you have a matured dragon all the time, you start with a baby dragon that grows as you progress through the game. There are total of 5 different stages of the dragon and how much it grows depends on your scores. Another addition to the gameplay is the Berserk mode for the dragon. On the screen, above the energy bar, there is a second bar that charges up as you destroy enemies. Whenever the bar turns green, you can press a button to turn your dragon into the berserk mode; the dragon will continuously lock and shoot whatever appears on the screen until the berserk bar is empty.

In later episodes, you can choose different routes to complete a stage. For instance, in the middle of episode two, you can either fight the enemies on the ground or in the air. Although the game is still on rails, the ability to choose routes and slightly more freedom of movement really adds to the enjoyment. Furthermore, if you complete the game with certain rankings, a "Pandora's Box" option will show up in the option menu. It is basically a debug mode which enable you to select levels or dragons, increase your energy or berserk bar, choose difficulty settings and more.

The graphics in this game are astounding, running at a solid 30fps, although there are some understandable slowdowns when a lot of objects with special effects appear on the screen at once. Everything is beautifully texture mapped; more colors are used and more details are drawn while there is less pixelization than *PD*. Furthermore, the bosses are amazingly large and well animated. The boss in the forest stage occupies almost the full screen when it is up close to you, yet moves smoothly at a very fast pace. One other thing worth noting is the water effect. It looks a lot more realistic than *PD*, especially when you see the boss moving under the water.

The best way to describe the effect and the overall graphics of ***Panzer Dragoon II Zwei*** is "You have to see it to believe it!" Unfortunately, the music is a letdown. Instead of fantasy music, there is a more warlike, upbeat style of music in *PDZ*. It's not terrible, but not quite as good as *PD* or as I expected.

Andy Chien

The Last Word: **Overall, this is a good sequel to a great game. The programmers very cleverly used both 2D and 3D power of the Saturn to create the awesome atmosphere in PDZ. They have focused on the gameplay to increase the replay value of this game and have succeeded.**

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STUCK IN SECOND GEAR

Tokyo Highway Battle

System: Sony PlayStation
Developer: Bullet Proof Software
Publisher: Jaleco
Availability: Now (U.S.)

Tokyo Highway Battle has a very interesting premise; it's a racing game with courses based on actual Japanese highways. Unfortunately, while that part of the game is at least different and impressive, it goes downhill from there.

THB includes three main modes of play: practice race, versus computer, and scenario (you against the computer on a busy highway). The problem comes in that vs. computer and scenario seem almost pointless. There's no on-screen indicator of what place you are in, and the computer opponent flies by you never to be seen again (except in the distance), so it ends up feeling more like a race against the clock, and not an opponent. Had *THB* been such a game, and been designed to be one long course instead of laps, it might have worked better. Also, the whole time you're racing, you have the strange feeling that you should really be going faster than you seem to be. I couldn't quite place my finger on why exactly, but it was definitely there (it also doesn't help to have both manual and automatic have the same top speed before modification).

Your car can be modified in ten different areas, each one providing a wide variety of different options you can mix and combine to attempt at the best possible performance. While this is a great feature and allows players to have much more control over their car, it will more than likely be intimidating for most players. Only certain parts will affect specific cars in positive ways, so it's a long game of trial and error. This feature seemed really out of place here, and would have been better left to games dealing with professional racing, such as ***Nascar*** or ***Indy 500***.

The graphics are, again, average. Some parts show a nice polish to them (little things like the heat joints in the road), while others seemed a tad unfinished, with a result of looking quite similar to many racers before it. Two views are presented, but the first person one rides so low to the ground that it's useless.

Shidoshi Naga

The Last Word: **I expect more from 32-bit racing games, and while Tokyo Highway Battle isn't totally bad, it's not really that good either. There is a wide variety of other racing games out there, many of which would be better choices for a purchase, save maybe for the die-hard racing fan.**

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Exclusive Interview

To Namco and Back

Namco's ***Tekken 2*** *has received a lot of publicity, and huge sales in Japan. But what inspired Kazuya's hellbound heart, the ten-hit combos, and the rest? The editors of* ***Game On!****, our Japanese sister magazine, recently visited Namco R&D at their headquarters for an afternoon of conversation.*

Game On! met with seven Namco developers: Saito, responsible for system programming; Mori, designer of household CD-ROMS; Abe, coordinator and planner for V.S.; Tsuchiya, motion division; Kobota, a former designer now in the movie division; and programmers Yamato and Ito. (Company secrecy prevents revealing their full names or faces.) All had input into what made *Tekken* a true "anything-goes" fighting game.

Game On!: Namco has one of the biggest development teams...which division created *Tekken*?

Namco: There's a single development division, which splits up for different projects...Regarding *Tekken*, the same division that started it up did the port to the home console unit. The team name is the "People who are working on *Tekken*," or "People of *Tekken*." *(laughs)*

Game On!: When did *Tekken* come out?

Namco: The idea came out November 1993, and the actual game came out in December of 1994. The board was finished around August, but other things took a lot of time including the hardware...we couldn't get it organized enough so it took another four months.

Game On!: That was really fast...how long did it take you to do *Tekken 2*?

Namco: *Tekken 2* took about seven months, being released in August of 1995, and in October *Ver. B* came out. It's probably one of the fastest in the industry, but we do have a lot of people here. About 20 or 23 people are working on it around the clock, and about 50 people work on it from time to time. I think we have about twice the amount of manpower of other companies.

Game On!: When and how was the idea of *Tekken* born?

Namco: Well, I could tell you, if it was off the record...but I guess that when it comes to combat video games, Namco is pretty much behind everybody. We had the hardware for polygons and the capability for home video games. It just took awhile for everything to fall into place so we could release one. We had a few polygon racing games before, but *Tekken* was the first time we used polygons to depict people

Tekken characters © Namco Ltd.

Game On!: Is *Tekken* the first game to use System 11?

Namco: We develop hardware at the same time as software, so even though we do run into hardships sometimes, we put out *Tekken* at the same time as System 11. System 11 itself was developed for miniaturization so it could be put into various systems, such as home units. Honestly, System 11 is two boards. All the calculations and displays are Sony's board, and input, memory and management are Namco's board. It's a joint collaboration with Sony's SCE. Sony made their board for home use, and we made ours for industry use.

Game On!: At the time of development, did you take into account other games?

Namco: Well, I guess you'd have to say we took notice of *Virtua Fighter*...in the steps of making *Tekken,* we took out the parts we didn't like in *Virtua Fighter*, such as falling out of the ring. Not "un-fun" parts, per se, but parts we would've done differently.

Game On!: Where would you say *Tekken*'s originality lies?

Namco: I think we would have to say "Jack." At the beginning, it was Nina or Kazuya who was the soul, the cool part, of the game, but once Jack came out, our ideas had changed. We thought to ourselves, "This is it!" At the beginning, Jack was going to be like King, but we thought it was a little unbalanced...it was just a weird character, so we were sort of at a loss. After this point, we decided to make all the characters very manga-like, keeping in mind that the characters are the most important thing.

The reason Jack's form is kind of strange is that the software technology couldn't keep up, so we couldn't really change his proportions. There were a couple of physical problems, so at the beginning people were going "Hey! Is that fair?" Basically, "anything goes" became the foundations of *Tekken.* Of course, some things that won't go just won't go.

Game On!: What was Namco's first 3D polygon game?

Namco: We started making it about ten years ago, but put it out in 1989. It was called System One or System Two. Something new like *Winning Run* is System 21. System One is something like *Dragon Spirit.*

Game On!: Why did you decide to go with the four-button control system for *Tekken*?

Namco: We went around and around about this. Six buttons were just too many, especially for hitting the buttons around at random. We decided to simplify. We thought, since we're doing 3D, why not just do a button corresponding to each limb? Right leg, left leg...We even had the idea "Hey, why not put sensors on the player's body for each limb?" Well, that went right out the window, but we stuck with the four-button controls.

We wanted to have a lot of different moves; something more complex than a standard two-button game, but something that's easy for beginners to use. The two-button systems, we think, require too much joystick use to make up for the lack of buttons. We thought with the four-button system that even if you pushed buttons together at random you could make combinations.

Game On!: The ten-hit combos are really hard to do. Is there a timing to that?

Namco: Oh, we're just being mean. *(laughs)* Actually, compared to other games, there's no basic "rule" to the timing. It's all rhythm.

Game On!: Did you use any actual existing martial arts for the basis of *Tekken*?

Namco: We took actual moves as reference and arranged them in a very gamelike way. We made sure of what was important *visually*, so we watched a lot of pro wrestling, boxing, kung fu action, aikido, swordfighting, ninjitsu, boxing, karate, pro wrestling, and manga.

Game On!: What's the favorite character of the development teams?

Namco: The most popular character with us is Jack. I guess with the unpopular characters, the number of their techniques doesn't increase. I mean, no one wants to play that character, so why give them more moves? Since popular characters' moves increase, you can tell which characters are popular in *Tekken 2*. For instance, Law had the really cool somersault, so somersaults are easier to do in *Tekken 2*. Paul is a "hit 'em hard with one blow" character, so he has moves where you strike really hard once. Nina would be the kind of character where you want to throw out a bunch of moves in combination.

In *Tekken,* Heihachi was the strongest character, but we couldn't have him be that powerful in *Tekken 2*. We kept him as strong as we could, while bringing the other characters up to his level with new techniques.

Game On!: Which character has the strongest fan response?

Namco: It'd have to be Kazuya. One person on the Internet who saw the ending of *Tekken 2* wrote back saying "How dare you do that to my *dear* Kazuya." *(laughs)* Otherwise, Law's popular, and Kuma. Oh yes, on Valentine's Day, several popular characters received Valentine's Day chocolates from girls. On "White Day" [*a March 15th Japanese holiday where men give presents to women—Ed.*], we sent them back CDs.

Game On!: How were the characters created in *Tekken*, and what kind of design techniques do you use?

Namco: Basically, we use models. We don't draw them, like with 2D games. The people who make the wireframes and models say "let's do this type of character," so we use their input ahead of time. There's no actual person who drew the characters. They just sort of took shape.

Game On!: What can you tell us about *Tekken 3*?

Namco: We're thinking, "if we could do this, it'd be cool...if we could do that, it'd be better." That's about it. *(laughs)*

Game On!: What do you see for the future of 3D games for Namco?

Namco: We'd like to incorporate a lot of things. Martial arts itself is a varying field, so you can almost have anything; it really is "anything goes." We want to get to the point where you say "God, is that fair?" or "That's really foul!" We want to make something that's almost unbelievable. Of course, it might actually happen...

Oh yeah, and we want to add Pepsi-Man [*a Japanese advertising character—Ed.*] to our games. Of course, we might have a hard time getting the rights. *(laughs)*

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Overexposed!

Women In Video Games

Yuko Aso, Chun Li, Mai Shiranui, Michelle Chang and Jill Valentine… all are video game characters who have marked the near absurd level of popularity of females in video games. There's no denying how significant these characters have become since the bygone days when their roles were relegated to the "princess in need of rescuing."

But the truth is, women don't often receive the type of "exposure" they deserve. No, instead the "babe in video games" has become a tired cliché, with no visible end in sight. With the typical "video babe character" mired in fantasy and almost laughable roles, it's little wonder that there are probably fewer girls playing video games than those featured as characters in the games themselves. Since it's a tough job in itself to track down the limited numbers of the females in the game playing community, we've taken this opportunity to talk to a select few of these female video game characters instead.

We've opted to start with one of the all time most endeared female characters in video games. In fact, she was the first—none other than *Street Fighter II*'s Chun Li. We managed to get a few words from her following her work in *Alpha 2*.

Game On!: It's widely acknowledged that your role in *Street Fighter II* really opened the flood gates for female roles in video games. How does it feel to be the original in a manner of speaking?

Chun Li: Well first of all, I'd like to ask you whether you find the slightest thing wrong with my attire…

Game On!: Uhhh. No, actually…

Chun Li: Oh, so then I suppose the common belief is that *all* Interpol agents dress like this then?

Game On!: Not at all! But it is the general impression that most players have always liked your original costume. It's something of a trademark signature.

Chun Li: I'm sure they did! So what happened the moment I changed into something a little more practical as sparring attire?

Game On!: Well…

Chun Li: That's right! Most of them complained. Something about not being cute enough. Well, they fixed that up didn't they! Made me re-record my voice overs (make them "cuter" they said) and even made me re-shoot all that footage in my original "Chinese acrobat" costume for *Street Fighter Alpha 2*. It wasn't something they could do with a simple palette swap, after all.

Game On!: I see your point, but it was your popularity, due partially to your appearance, that set things in motion for all those others: Mai, Michelle, Sarah, Cammy and Rose to name just a few. Currently, no fighting game is complete without a female fighter or two.

Chun Li: I'd like to have a word with Rose's agent. How she managed to negotiate a contract that allowed her to wear such a stylish albeit impractical costume (have you ever tried fighting in heels?) is beyond me. Either the heads at Capcom make a few changes in my contract or you won't be seeing me in *Street Fighter III*! I still can't believe how many female fighters out there are wearing G-strings as a direct result of my influence. Unbelievable!

We've included a segment from the action platform genre character, Yuko Aso, of the *Valis* series. Inevitably, the inflammatory issue of costumes came up once again, yet she met it with the grace one would expect of a veteran video game character.

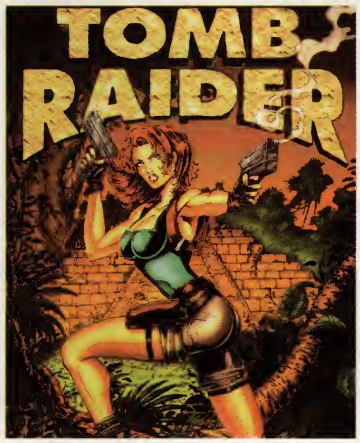
Game On!: Yuko, you successfully managed to carve yourself a niche in the traditionally male-dominated area of action platform games. Regarding your choice of well-known outfits; how do you feel about this trend you started so long ago, that refuses to surrender its popularity?

Yuko: Well, I wore an armored brassiere and a mini-skirt; not exactly the most protective of fighting gear in a hack-and-slash world populated by demons and other sword wielding villains. Perhaps the only "protection" those costumes gave me was their distraction value, which tended to have more of an effect on the players than it did on my foes. I might add that I originally started with the traditional school girl's "sailor" outfit, which worked for me at the time…but I shudder to think about the trend I started.

Game On!: Even so, there's no denying you paved the way for a tradition of strong female characters in video games.

Yuko: Yes, it's good to know when you've had a positive influence. Unfortunately, those same roles have lapsed a bit, but with new characters such as Jill Valentine of *Resident Evil* and Lara Croft of *Tomb Raider*, they're becoming a bit more admirable and respectable. I can only hope that

Street Fighter II ©Capcom Co. Ltd.



this current trend continues, even if it means moving from women with swords to gals with guns.

Speaking of Jill Valentine, we managed to track her down in the wake of her success in *Resident Evil*.

Game On!: *Resident Evil* has enjoyed a huge amount of popularity. As a new idol of millions of gamers, is there anything you'd like to add regarding the current role of female characters in video games?

Jill: (*Groans*) All right, I'll admit my presence may have had a positive effect on the world of video games, but some of the lines those writers drafted for me were utter dogs! Does anyone have an idea as to how many times I had to say things along the lines of "I don't know anything!", "I don't know what's happening," or "What's going on? I don't understand?" Well, neither do I. I'm amazed I never had to say anything like, "What do I know? I'm just a girl! Teehee!" It's amazing that despite all this alleged "progress," we are still depicted as being known more for our appearances than our abilities and strengths.

Game On!: A valid point, but at least you were depicted as having a high level of competence. Now Chris on the other hand...

Jill: (*Laughs*) True! Chris was completely clueless at times, even though he never had to say anything particularly stupid. But then, how many times did he have to be rescued?

Game On!: Well, twice actually. About the same number of times you had to be rescued by Barry.

Jill: And there you have it folks; *Resident Evil*, the game for equal opportunity gamers (*laughs*). So long as you allow my actions to speak in place of my words—and yes, you can make fun of my lines (I didn't write them)—it's quite evident that I'm one task force gal you don't want to mix it up with!

That's all the time we have for this segment of Game Over! But we'll be back in thirty with more commentary both on and from the women in video games you know and love. GO

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roughly 2 and a half steps beyond...

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IN OUR NEXT ISSUE...!

*You asked for it, and here it is...**Game On! USA** introduces its codes & tips section, ON! Command! **Game On! USA** also looks back at E3, the year's biggest gaming convention, where Japan's **Game On!** and your own editors meet to look at the next year in manga gaming. We schmooze with Japanese developers and present an interview with Glams, whose space simulations are on their way to the U.S. High tech and hot tips in Issue #4!*

Feature Presentation

IT'S HIP TO BE SQUARE

*They started with Nintendo, and now the PlayStation is about to see their next efforts—when people think Japanese RPGs, more often than not they think of developer/publisher Square. With the backing of popular artists, and expert programmers, Square's **Final Fantasy** has been the top-selling 16-bit RPG—but why aren't titles just as popular being ported to the States? Visit the new offices of Square L.A. and find out how Hollywood technology is being used in **Final Fantasy VII** ...and new games developed just for the U.S.!*

32-bit Manga

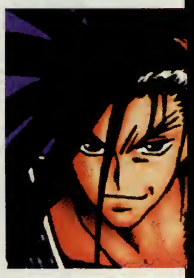
What began in mystery ends in blood...

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN

The most secret fighting tournament ever begins! Blood-specked samurai Eiji, whip-wielding Sofia, and the rest are dragged in by the Organization's claws.

SAMURAI SHODOWN

Galford, Haohmaru and Nakoruru have briefly thwarted the Dark Kingdom. But Tenmei Era Japan is about to become the Era of Darkness as Madou Shiranui's magic leads to a fight from which one of them will not return!



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