



All-new, full-color Graphic Novel

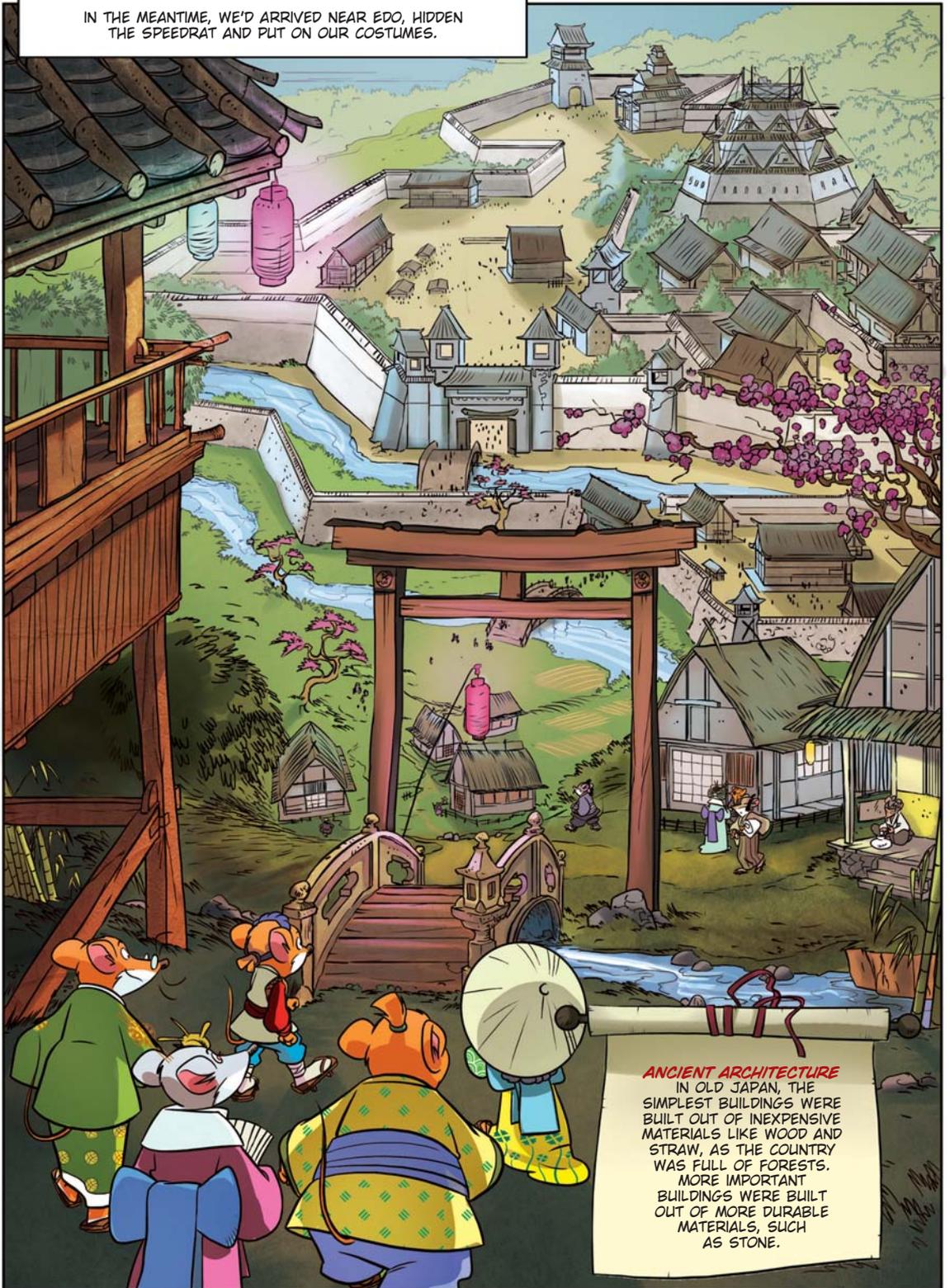


Geronimo Stilton

THE FIRST SAMURAI



IN THE MEANTIME, WE'D ARRIVED NEAR EDO, HIDDEN THE SPEEDRAT AND PUT ON OUR COSTUMES.



ANCIENT ARCHITECTURE

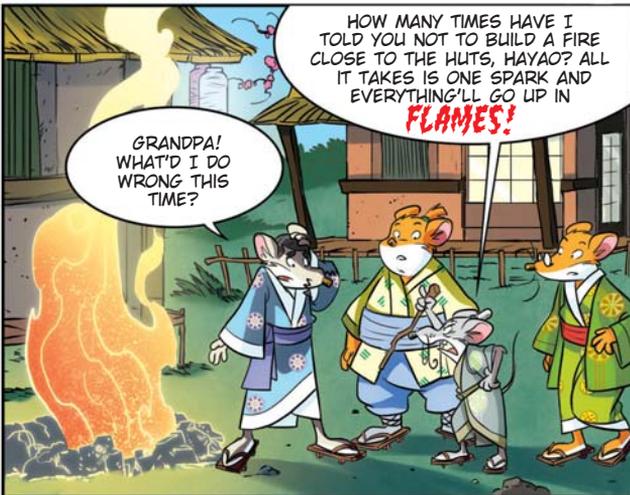
IN OLD JAPAN, THE SIMPLEST BUILDINGS WERE BUILT OUT OF INEXPENSIVE MATERIALS LIKE WOOD AND STRAW, AS THE COUNTRY WAS FULL OF FORESTS. MORE IMPORTANT BUILDINGS WERE BUILT OUT OF MORE DURABLE MATERIALS, SUCH AS STONE.



YUM! IT SEEMS RIGHT THAT WE ARRIVED IN TIME FOR DINNER!

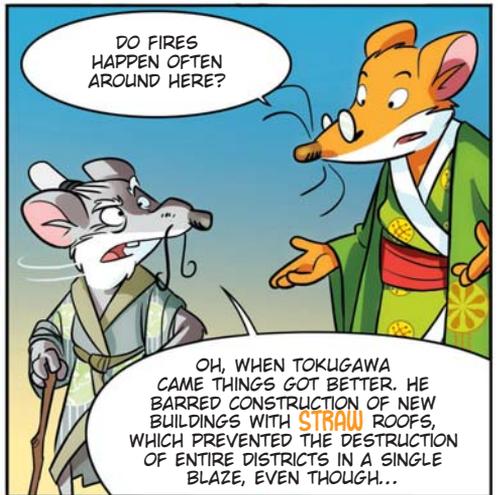


OUCH!



GRANDPA! WHAT'D I DO WRONG THIS TIME?

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO BUILD A FIRE CLOSE TO THE HUTS, HAYAO? ALL IT TAKES IS ONE SPARK AND EVERYTHING'LL GO UP IN **FLAMES!**



DO FIRES HAPPEN OFTEN AROUND HERE?

OH, WHEN TOKUGAWA CAME THINGS GOT BETTER. HE BARRED CONSTRUCTION OF NEW BUILDINGS WITH **STRAW** ROOFS, WHICH PREVENTED THE DESTRUCTION OF ENTIRE DISTRICTS IN A SINGLE BLAZE, EVEN THOUGH...



EVEN THOUGH...?

RECENTLY, THE FIRES HAVE RESUMED, BUT THIS TIME THEY'RE ALSO HAPPENING IN BUILDINGS MADE OF STONE. THEY SAY IT'S...

FOOLS, AND MY NEPHEW, SAY THAT THE GHOST OF THE OLD COMMANDER IS BEHIND THESE FIRES, THAT HE CAN'T FIND PEACE AFTER THE DEFEAT AT SEKIGAHARA.

THE BATTLE OF SEKIGAHARA IN 1600 CONFIRMED THE POWER OF GENERAL TOKUGAWA IEYASU, WHO WAS NAMED "SHOGUN" (IN OTHER WORDS, GRAND GENERAL) OF THE EMPEROR GO-YOZEI IN 1603, AT THE AGE OF 60. AFTERWARDS, HE ESTABLISHED EDO (THE FUTURE TOKYO) AS THE SEAT OF THE BAKUFU (THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SHOGUNATE), WHICH IN VERY LITTLE TIME BECAME THE BIGGEST CITY IN JAPAN.



YOU'RE NOT FROM AROUND HERE. WHO ARE YOU?

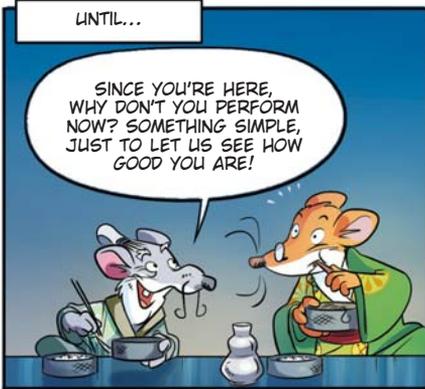


MY NAME IS GERO-NIMURA STIL-TAO AND THIS IS MY COUSIN TRAPOSHIRO. WE'RE ACTORS AND WE'VE COME TO EDO TO LOOK FOR WORK.

ACTORS THAT'S FANTASTIC! WELCOME, FRIENDS! I'LL GET THE FIRE READY FOR DINNER.



DINNER PROCEEDED CALMLY. WE HAD A MISSION TO CARRY OUT, BUT WE CERTAINLY COULDN'T REFUSE SUCH A WARM WELCOME!



UNTIL...

SINCE YOU'RE HERE, WHY DON'T YOU PERFORM NOW? SOMETHING SIMPLE, JUST TO LET US SEE HOW GOOD YOU ARE!



WHA...
->COUGH->...
->COUGH->...



YES, DEFINITELY! WE KNOW THE TASTES OF THE COURT VERY WELL! WE CAN TELL YOU IF YOU'LL BE SUCCESSFUL!



TRAPOSHIRO AND I REALLY SHOULD HAVE A LITTLE REHEARSAL FIRST...



I'LL GO RIGHT NOW AND GET AN OLD SAMURAI SUIT OF ARMOR, SO YOU CAN USE IT FOR THE PERFORMANCE!

LATER...

UNCLE, ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO DO THIS?

I'M A SCAREDY MOUSE, BUT WHAT ALTERNATIVE DO WE HAVE?



MAYBE THEY DON'T WANT GERONIMO TO SING?

NO, DEAR, THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT NOH THEATER.

NOH THEATER

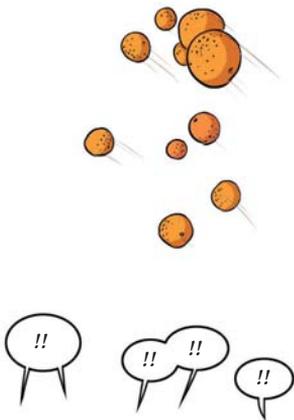
NOH DRAMA WAS A TYPE OF THEATER POPULAR IN 14TH CENTURY JAPAN, WHICH RETOLD STORIES OF HEROIC EVENTS FROM JAPANESE TRADITION THROUGH SONG, ACTING, AND DANCE. THE ACTORS WERE ALL MEN, EVEN IN WOMEN'S ROLES, AND THEY WORE DISTINCTIVE MASKS.

ALLOW ME TO PERFORM A DANCE BEFORE MY BROTHERS BEGIN THEIR PLAY...

?

?!?

A WOMAN WHO ACTS? WHAT KIND OF **STRANGENESS** IS THIS?





RONIN
 RONIN WERE SAMURAI WHO DIDN'T SERVE A SINGLE LORD, BUT RATHER WANDERING WARRIORS AVAILABLE TO WORK FOR PAY.

