

MANGAVERSE 5.0

Dec 2020 『マンガバース5.0』 =====

* MANGA * BD * US COMICS * ANIME * J FILM * J CULTURE *

Welcome to the new MANGAVERSE...

IN THIS ISH...



>> INTRO

>> MANGA MASTERS2
Overview of Shirato Sanpei's
early *kashihon* manga part 1

>> OVERSEAS OTAKU in JAPAN..5
"Summers in Shibuya"
by Jim Reddy

>> ON THE SHELF8
- Manga
- Japanese SF recommendations

>> Art by Yushi Tabara
- Cover "Cyborg with Gun"
- "Ku no Ichi don't care"8
- "Cyborg with Goldfish"11
> other art by patokon

>>OUTRO10



MANGAVERSE 5.0

Dec 2020 『マンガバース5.0』 =====

* MANGA * BD * US COMICS * ANIME * J FILM * J CULTURE *

>> WELCOME ABOARD!

Greetings and salutations to anyone brave enough to join us on the maiden voyage of *Mangaverse 5.0*!

If you like comics of any stripe from anywhere, if you want to learn about manga history, if you are interested in fan experiences in Japan, then you picked the right ship. **Glad to have you here!**

>> MESSAGE FROM THE CAPTAIN

Greetings, travelers!

I'm Patrick Ijima-Washburn and I'll be your captain for this trip and hopefully many more as we head out upon the open seas of Japanese and comic culture.

I am a southern US expat living in southwestern Japan--specifically the village of Hetami (once bombed to smithereens during the Pacific War) nestled in the City of Mifune (named after being visited by a Japanese emperor by boat [*fune*], nestled in the heart of Kumamoto prefecture (once called *Hi No Kuni* [country of fire] nestled right in the center of the island of Kyushu. That's a lot of nestling.

My interest in Japanese [pop]culture began quite early--kaiju monster movies at 4, Speed Racer at 6, ninja flicks at 12, Japanese women's pro-wrestling at 14, manga at 15, **Kurosawa** at 16, **Mishima** at 17, **OZAKI Yutaka** at 18, **Miyazaki** at 19 and so on. This interest was of course a factor in my moving to Japan.

I'm very glad to be allowed to take over editorial duties on *Mangaverse*. I've edited several zines over the years including *Fandomain*, which was in Japanese and English and mostly focused on introducing non-Japanese comics to Japanese fans. In *Mangaverse*, I hope to introduce people to Japanese content they might not otherwise have a chance to experience including stories about being a fan in Japan from an expat and Japanese perspective. Expect some history, some rare comics, and in the future, hopefully a wide variety of voices. If you have articles, reviews, art, comments, or questions, email me at patokon.com@gmail.com. I'm also reachable on FB, and on IG and Twitter as @patokon. I could talk about myself all damn day, but that's not what you're here for. I'll leave you in the capable hands of my alter-ego, second mate and all-around bilge-rat, Pat Rat. Let's jump right in!

Cheers and *YOROSHIKU!* ◆

Shirato Sanpei's early *kashihon* manga pt.1

Hey, y'all. Pat Rat here to introduce you to a very important creator in manga history, the man who made ninja the most popular subject of manga for years, SHIRATO Sanpei [白土三平]. He was born in Tokyo in 1932 as OKAMOTO Noboru and is known mostly for his still-unfinished ninja comic series *Kamui-den* [『カムイ伝』 Legend of Kamui], which focused on class struggle.

Shirato went from *kamishibai* artist to *kashihon* manga creator to mainstream comic magazine artist to publisher of alternative comics anthology magazine *Garō* [『ガロ』]. Below are some examples of his *kamishibai* work from OTSUKA Rei's YouTube channel. They are from the "Mr. Tomo-chan" series, episode "I caught a big one!" which he drew at 19 under the pen name Noboru.



kamishibai are 'paper theater' shows where a storyteller tells a short story accompanied by pictures. They are still in use today in kindergartens and nursery schools and there are even a few *kamishibai-ya* around like Gretchi (below) who I've had the pleasure to see perform a few times. Both adults and children are captivated by her funny stories.



Many of those who were to become the big names in Japanese comics from the 60s up to the 80s (and beyond) started out in the late 50's making *kashihon manga* which were usually B6-sized hardback comic volumes printed relatively cheaply and distributed through a rental comic network that criss-crossed Japan. These were comics made specifically for rental as many at the time couldn't afford to buy comics.

Even after the mainstream weekly and monthly anthology comics became popular, rental comics were still being produced until the mid-sixties. As *kamishibai* became less lucrative, several creators turned to the better *kashihon* page rates to eke out a living. Shirato's first *kashihon* work was *Kogarashi Kenshi* [『こがらし剣士』 (Cold Autumn Wind Swordsman) from July 1957 now selling for ¥750,000 (currently about \$7200) online.

The story: Boy samurai Kiritaro meets girl ninja Kasumi and they travel together in this Sengoku-era tale. Kiritaro is looking for his mother and Kasumi is looking for... DUN DUN DUN!! Revenge! As you can see from the panels above, Shirato is channeling early Tezuka's clean lines, proportions, and rubber-leg style. The action is dynamic. Compared to many *kashihon* creators, his skill level was quite high. This is likely due to his 10 years making *kamishibai* as well as his apprenticeship to popular *shojo manga* artist MAKI Kazuma.

The second work he released just a scant three months later in December 1957 was *kashihon* manga *Koga Bugeicho* [『甲賀武芸帳』 (Koga Martial Arts Scroll). This was his first series and continued well into 1958. Apparently Shirato was paid 150 yen per page at 128 pages per book which, according to his contemporary MIZUKI Shigeru, was a lot of dough.

Adjusting for inflation, it was about \$640 per book. As his wife was pregnant with his first son at the time, it's easy to imagine that it actually wasn't a whole lot. Shirato mentions in an interview that near the apartment that he was renting in Okachimachi, the river overflowed just as he was drawing a scene for *Koga Bugeicho* where a ninja was drowning. One final note on *Koga* – drawing over 1000 pages filling 8 volumes in less than a year is considered a testament



to his level of output.

Looking here at the characters from his 1958 work *Shiryou* 『死霊』 (Ghost) you can start to him develop some of his staple characters like the old mysterious wizard or shaman. This is one of his few works that takes place in the present day and apparently takes on the theme of war crimes. An advantage of kashihon media is that it was somewhat underground and thus not as subject to editorial oversight. In his *Ogonshoku no Hana* 『黄金色の花』 (The Golden Flower, 1958), two owls act as Greek chorus and let us know that someone is



approaching. It is Kageroand he seeks the Golden Flower which he needs to heal his sick mom. The detail on the owls foreshadows Shirato's interest in

animals which often are a big part of his stories throughout his career. His next work was a three-book series called *Arashi no Ninja* 『嵐の忍者』 (The Storm Ninja, 1958-9).

Between vol. 1 and vol. 2 of the same series, you can see Shirato start to develop a less “cartoony” style. The biggest difference will develop in his backgrounds which he continues to draw more and more realistically.

1959's *Karasu no Ko* 『カラスの子』 (Child of the Crow) is a departure from his usual stories set in the past and takes on the problem of *konketsuji* (混血児, mixed-blood children [outdated term; the more current term is *ha-fu* ハーフ as in half-Japanese though my daughter prefers to be called ‘mixed’ or ‘bi-racial’]). This theme was rediscovered in the seventies with several comics including characters based on the actual situation of kids with GI dads and Japanese moms who weren't accepted by either the US or Japanese government. Many of these kids lived in the Elizabeth Sanders Home, an orphanage established in 1948 specifically to deal with these kids abandoned by both parents and country. This is something I might come back to in a future article on mixed-race characters.

Also from 1959 is *Kieyuku Shoujo* 『消え行く少女』 (The Disappearing Girl) about a girl's whose mother who died from radiation poisoning from the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and who is

forced into servitude. This is considered only the second such comic to take on the topic of *hibakusha*, victims of the atomic bomb. Shirato often says he just wrote and drew his stories to make a living, but it is clear that he was sensitive about issues that his college-age contemporaries were focused on.

1959 was a big year for Shirato as he began work on two ninja series. The first is *Ninja Senpuu: Fuuma Ninpuu-den* 『忍者旋風・風間忍風伝』 (Ninja Whirlwind: Legend of Fuuma Ninja Gale). In these early kashihon works, you often found English on the cover as a design motif.



Above are the original cover (L) and the 1967 reprint (R). You can see that the faces here are still stylized, but are no longer Tezuka-esque. Gone also are the rubber-leg proportions. The story begins with a group of people living a nomadic existence, their homes having been burnt down by the constant fighting of the Sengoku Period. A mother watches over baby Kotaro when suddenly he is whisked away by a giant eagle. This sudden intrusion of nature is another common theme we see in Shirato's works. The child will usually survive, but will have been raised in the wilderness picking up special skills from his animal family.

In the second chapter we are introduced to *Shinigami Kozo* 死神小僧 (the Grim Reaper Kid), a vagabond who whenever he shows up at a *buraku* 部落 (untouchable) village it is soon somehow destroyed. Everyone runs and hides and 50 Koga ninjas arrive to kill him and take a doll from him. In the course of the fight, the village is burned to the ground. The Kid, who has taken out all the Koga ninjas, later remarks that another village has seen its last, but it's not his fault. In a later series that was abruptly cancelled, Shirato uses this same exact character, but with the name of Kim, in a Wild West setting. Kim also brings destruction wherever he roams, though it is often natural disasters that befall the towns he passes through. If I ever get a chance to meet the man, I will ask him about these harbingers of death.

Back to the story, we find that the Kid is actually Kotaro in disguise. The doll is hiding a scroll written in an unknown language and Kotaro betrays his father in order to keep the scroll for himself. We soon learn that the father kidnapped Kotaro using the eagle and that his mother is still searching for him. Kotaro then sets out to find the one man who can read the scroll.

The other ninja series Shirato began in 1959 was the one that ended up being his big break. *Ninja Bugeicho Kagemaru-den* 『忍者武芸帳 影丸伝』 (Ninja Martial Arts Scroll: Legend of Kagemaru) was a 17-book series that not only cemented Shirato's popularity, but touched off a huge interest in ninjas throughout Japan. Ninja comics were suddenly the next big thing.

Part 2 of this article will be in the next Mangaverse. Join us next time!





Above: Shibuya's Center Street (senta-gai)

=== Sundays in Shibuya ===

by Jim Reddy

Shibuya is one of the twenty-three city wards of Tokyo, Japan. For most people, Shibuya is for shopping and sightseeing. For me it was where I reconnected with American comics books after living in the Japanese countryside for two and half years.

In the early 90s I moved to Japan to teach English. I lived in Fukushima City, Fukushima prefecture. No internet, no laptop, and no cell phone back then. I received a few things in the mail from family and friends and I could get some books, but the selection was pretty slim. My new job and life in Japan kept me busy, but eventually I missed books and comics.

Eventually I took a trip to Tokyo. I had heard that there was a manga shop named Manga no Mori in Shibuya that carried *Ame-Comi*, American comics. I checked it out. The shop had two shelves of the latest comics. It was like discovering an old friend. I don't remember the comics I bought but I do remember a magazine, **Wizard** #42. It had two covers by Alex Ross, one with Marvel heroes and one with Marvel Villains. I think I got the one with the villains.

I remember when **Wizard** first came out when I was still in the States. I bought the first few issues but I quickly lost interest. The articles were fluff and the magazine focused on collector speculation. After

over a year in Japan my attitude changed. I was starved for anything comics related. While I still thought that it had fluff articles I ate them up. It also now had a 'how to draw' column every issue. These articles got me back into drawing, something I hadn't done in years.

The easiest way to travel to Tokyo from Fukushima is by bullet train. It's quick and comfortable but it's not cheap, so I didn't make many trips. That changed though. After two and a half years up north, I transferred to a branch school in Tsudanuma, Chiba prefecture. Chiba is located right next to Tokyo so this made getting to Shibuya much easier.

My visits to Shibuya became a weekly thing. Every Sunday I'd climb out of my futon, eat a late breakfast, and make my way to the train station. I'd take the Sobu line to Ochanomizu station, then the Chuo line to Shinjuku, and finally the Yamanote line to Shibuya. It took about an hour. I'd spend the time on the train reading a paperback.

Once I got to Shibuya I would head downstairs and take the Hachiko exit. I'd exit the gate with a swarm of people, all of us heading into another swarm, everyone moving in different directions. A big mass of people would head to the statue of Hachiko the dog, a popular meeting point. I would make my way with the other mass of people and head for Shibuya crossing, aka Shibuya Scramble. Large groups of people would be waiting at each of the four corners. Once the light changed waves of people would flow into the street then move through each other to get to the other side.

One time it was way more crowded than usual and there were policemen everywhere. A politician was giving a speech. One of the few politicians I could recognise. It was KOIZUMI Junichiro right

before he became prime minister in 2001.

Once I got to the other side I headed up Center Gai, the pedestrian shopping street. There'd be a steady flow of people moving up the street as well as a flow of people moving back towards the station. I'd pass all kinds of shops, bars, and restaurants, including western fast food. Arby's is gone. Shakey's Pizza is still there but temporarily closed.

Once I got to Shakey's I'd turn right, walk past the Koban (small neighborhood police station) and shop. From what I remember it had three floors. I'd head up the narrow stairs to the second floor where the American comics were first sold.

One of my regular purchases was **The Batman Adventures** and **The Batman and Robin Adventures**. I was a big fan of the **Batman the Animated Series** and I loved the fact that I could get a complete story every issue since the issues were done in one. I became a huge fan of artist Mike Parobeck through this comic. I was devastated when he passed away in 1996 at the age of 30.

I also started buying **Sensational Spider-Man** with #13 (1997). I fell in love with Mike Weirango's art. I also picked up his run on **Fantastic Four** and his creator owned series **Tellos**. Like Mike Parobeck, he drew in a cartoony style that I really liked. Once again though I was devastated when he passed away in 2007 at the age of 44.

There are a couple of things that I regret not picking up. My all time favorite artist is Jack Kirby. During one visit there was an ad for a Jack Kirby art portfolio from Dark Horse Comics on the wall. It included six plates of his interpretation of biblical scenes from the Old Testament. Didn't get it. Went back for it a week or so later. Sold out. They probably didn't have many copies. I found out later.



that it was limited to 500 and cost \$175. I'm sure that the price in Japan was even higher.

During another visit they had an art book by another one of my favorite artists, **Alex Toth: By Design**. It's a collection of Alex Toth's animation designs by Alex Toth and Darrel McNeil from Gold Medal publishing. It has his designs from shows like **Space Ghost**, **Johnny Quest**, and **Superfriends**. It was kind of expensive so I didn't get it.. After thinking about it though I went back the next week for it. It was sold out.

On top of that, they weren't getting any more copies in. It turns out that there were some copyright infringement claims from animation studios and the book was pulled from the shelves pretty quickly. Luckily IDW published **Alex Toth: Genius Animated** in 2014. I made sure to get a copy.

Once I made my purchases I would make my way to Tower Records. Back then they had a bookstore on the top floor. I got my science-fiction and crime paperbacks there. For a while their prices were cheaper than Kinokuniya, the big bookstore in Shinjuku. Tower Records in Japan lasted much longer than elsewhere. In fact the one in Shibuya is still there in 2020 minus the bookstore, which closed years ago.

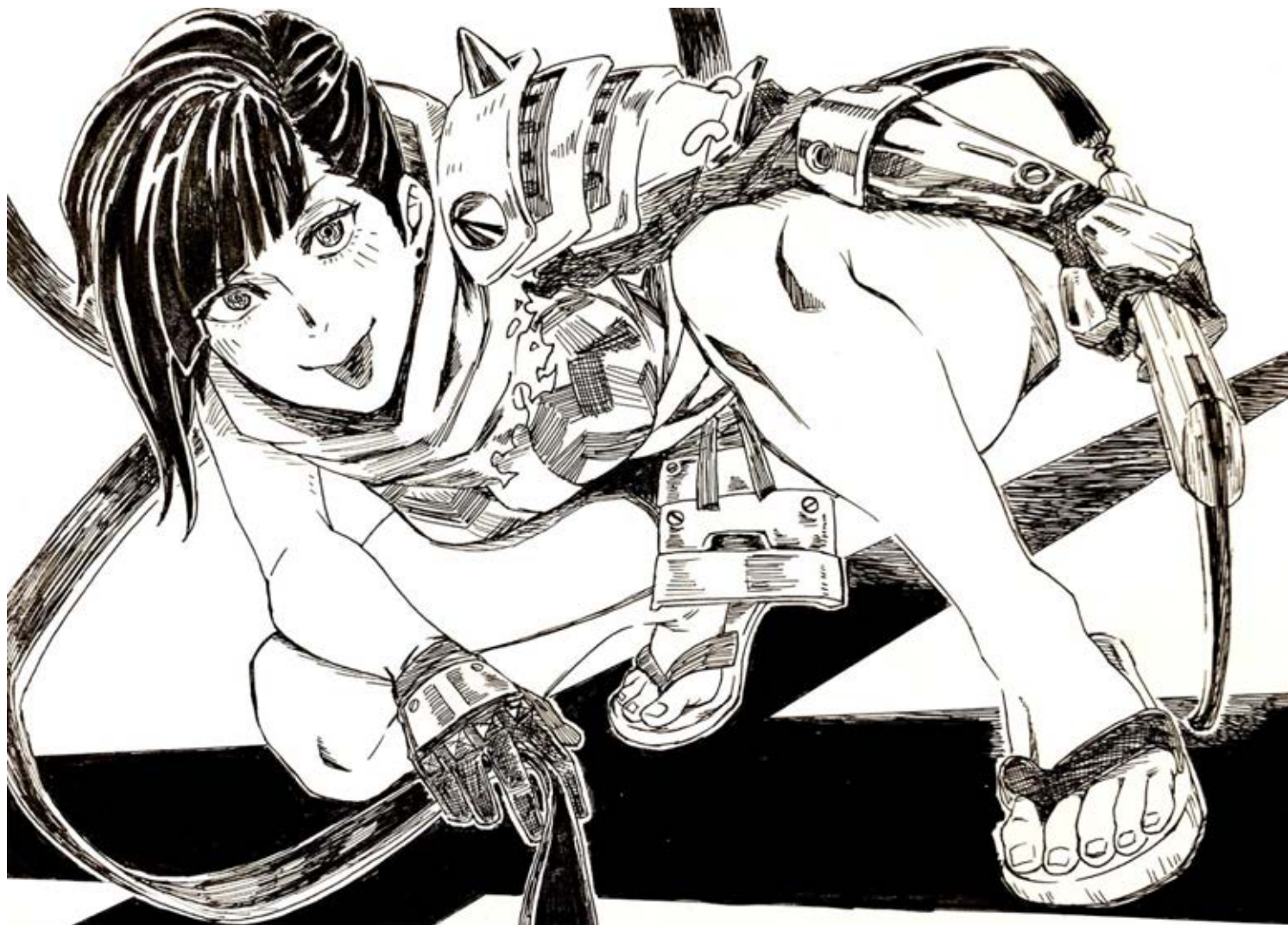
After browsing and making my purchases I headed back to Chiba. Once I got back to Tsudanuma I would go grocery shopping, head home, and cook dinner. During dinner I would watch video tapes of TV shows my family recorded for me. **X-Files**, **Hercules**, **Xena**, and more. The next day I'd usually read my comic book purchases in the afternoon before heading out somewhere.

When I first got into manga I was in college. I was buying manga from a Japanese grocery store in

Atlanta. There were no translated comics back then. I was buying tons of comics that I couldn't read even after studying Japanese for awhile. But I bought them anyway. I loved the art and it was fun trying to figure out the stories. I guess I was a hardcore fan. Manga and anime were nowhere near as popular in the US back then as they are now. More and more manga started getting translated around the time I moved to Japan to teach. Once I was able to visit Shibuya, it was interesting seeing comic book culture from the other side. I would see Japanese customers buying stacks of American comics even though they probably weren't able to read them. Ame-comi was becoming a subculture in Japan just as manga was in the US in the 80s and 90s. As the years passed more and more American comics started getting translated into English. Japanese fans started dressing up in Ame-comi costumes at **Comic Market**, the massive, twice a year, Japanese doujinshi (self-published manga, novels, and fanzines) convention.

I have fond memories of my trips to Shibuya. Those trips helped me to reconnect with my love of comic books and paperbacks. I'm back in the US now. I can get to comic books shops or order things online easily. It's not as much fun though.

The Manga no Mori shop in Shibuya changed its name to The Comix in 2002. It finally closed in 2007. A couple of other shops have taken its place, Blister Comics in Akihabara and Verse Comics in Ikebukuro. These days all the main storylines from Marvel, DC, and Dark Horse get translations. In paperback form though. But there are Japanese fans, whether they can read English or not, who still buy the imported single issues. I guess they're hardcore fans. *[First in a series. Stay tuned!]* ◆◆◆



=== ON THE SHELF ===

Reviews, Previews, Rants, and Rumors

MANGA 漫画

Lone Wolf and Cub Omnibus Volume 1

(Dark Horse Comics)

Lone Wolf and Cub is a samurai adventure manga created by writer KOIKE Kazuo and artist KOJIMA Goseki. It originally ran from 1970 to 1976. After being betrayed by the Yagyū clan, Ogami Ittō, former executioner for the shōgun, travels across Japan with his three year old child Daigoro.



They travel the meifumadō ("The Road to Hell") as Lone Wolf and Cub, an assassin for hire with a child. Ogami travels with Daigoro in a wooden baby cart.

The first omnibus is 712 pages and collects 16 stories. The first five stories were enjoyable but from the sixth story on, the stories became more powerful and every character became more alive. Dialogue and art working together in almost perfect harmony. Wordless panels that convey feeling. Action scenes of brutal chaos. Double page spreads that literally put things in a wider perspective. In the end though, it's all about the characters and the choices they make, have to live with, and sometimes die with.



The manga was quite popular and spawned a six film series, a tv series, and four plays. There is also an English dubbed film titled **Shogun Assassin**. It has twelve minutes from the first film with the rest being from the second film. It also has a wild soundtrack composed on a Moog Modular Synthesizer. Very different from the original soundtrack but somehow it fits. Currently the tracks are available on YouTube.

Lone Wolf and Cub was first published in the United States by First Comics in 1987. They were published in American prestige comic book format with card stock covers. A number of well known comic book artists drew the covers. Frank Miller drew the covers for issues 1-12. Bill Sienkiewicz drew the covers for issues 13-24. Matt Wagner drew the covers for issues 24-36. Mike Ploog drew the covers for issues 37-43. Pat Boyette drew the cover for issue 44. Finally Ray Lago drew the cover for issue 45, the last issue published by First Comics. They were not able to complete the series and on top of that they skipped some stories from the original Japanese run.

Dark Horse comics released the series in trade paperback form and completed the series in 2002. There are 28 volumes. In 2013 Dark Horse Comics published the series in omnibus format. There are 12 omnibus volumes. Volume 1 of the omnibus contains the original Volume 1, 2, plus some stories from volume 3. ★★★★★

– Jim Reddy

----- Chainsaw Man 1

(Shueisha)

Chainsaw Man is a darkly-comedic fantasy-action series by FUJIMOTO Tatsuki about Denji, a tragic dude who hunts devils with the help of his little devil chainsaw dog, Pochita.

Denji sells parts of his body (an eye, a testicle, a kidney, etc.) and

fights devils for money as a freelance (unofficial) to pay back his deceased father's debt to the yakuza. The yakuza concerned lead Denji into a trap so that the poor kid can be murdered by devils, but the yakuza themselves have been turned into demon zombies. Denji attempts to fight off the demon zombie yakuza but is killed and Pochita is mortally wounded. **The end.** Nope, it's not the end because Pochita rejoins Denji's cut up body and brings him back to life agreeing to be his heart in exchange for the promise that Denji fulfills his dream of living a "normal" life which to Denji is having jam on his daily piece of white bread (his only meal sometimes which he shared with Pochita) and having someone to make love to (which he sees as impossible as he lives in a crappy hole in the wall and has no money and no shower and is basically indentured to the yakuza for life).

Readers very quickly get to know how Denji is completely destitute and desperate, but is also compassionate and resourceful. Stupidly brave and obedient, he just wants to live a better life than the absolute hell he lives in. Now that a promise is made, the new Denji (with restored eye and, we can assume, testicle and such) will do anything to keep it. Pochita's pull-cord which allowed Denji to use him as a chainsaw is now protruding from his own chest and one pull turns him into the devil-human hybrid Chainsaw Man.

After dispatching zombie yakuza and zombie devil, Denji is approached by official state-sanctioned devil hunter Makima, a young and ambitious leader of devil hunters in Tokyo. She offers Denji a job as a devil hunter, otherwise she'll have to hunt him down and kill him. Denji is excited about the prospect of eating bread with actual butter and jam, and also working closely with Makima. He is teamed up with HAYAKAWA Aki, a serious devil hunter whose family was killed by devils and then Power, a *majin* which is a devil that has possessed a dead human. After a dressing down from HAYAKAWA, Denji realizes that since most



of his initial dreams have come true, he might need a better goal to set his sights on. Denji has had zero actual human relationships, so of course the goal he thinks of is 'get to second base.' The last quarter of the book has him on a mission that just might lead to the fulfilment of that dream, and I'll just say that it's not nearly as 80's teen 'gotta get laid no matter what' comedy creepy as you might think. This comic that apparently ended it's run this month in **Shonen Weekly Jump**, has been reprinted in 9 volumes so far (with 10 probably being the last) and has been adapted into animation. Generally clean layouts contribute to the brisk pacing. Seems like we're just scratching the surface regarding the characters, but I have to admit that Denji is pretty likeable for a deranged take on the typical Jump-type hero. The art is kinetic and frenetic thanks to the somewhat sketchy and loose yet still somehow detailed line-work. It's obvious that FUJIMOTO is a fan of SAMURA Hiroaki's **Blade of the Immortal** manga series. The cliffhanger at the end of Book 1 had me

curious enough to pick up Book 2 which I will probably start reading after I type this up. I've heard many good things about the series and it's on the top of the Guys Comics list in the annual **These Manga Are Awesome 2021** book that just came out this week (I'll probably share more from the book in the next ish). If you don't like Denji after the first 16 pages of the first chapter, it's probably not for you. I think I'll stick with it for a while and I may even check out the anime. ★★☆☆☆

– PIW

ANIME アニメ

No reviews this time, but expect some reviews of new and old animation next time. Meanwhile, enjoy some fanart of the Fire Wolf Pup and the Snow Golem from one of my favorite episodes of **Adventure Time** (which I'm watching a few eps a day of), "Thank You".

-PIW

=== OUTRO ===

If you made it to the end, thanks for giving us a look-see!

Contact Patrick at patokon.com@gmail.com with any comments or questions, especially about what you'd like to see in future issues. Thanks for joining me and the Mangaverse crew on the maiden voyage of this new iteration of **Mangaverse**. We're still feeling our way around, but I hope we can provide everyone with some news, some reviews, some history, and some direct insight into Japanese culture and what it's like to be a fan in Japan.

See you in the funny papers!

– PIW

