

# BAREFOOT GEN

A CARTOON STORY OF HIROSHIMA

VOLUME ONE



Keiji  
Nakazawa

All New Translation

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY ART SPIEGELMAN

# Barefoot Gen: Comics After the Bomb

An Introduction by Art Spiegelman

Gen haunts me. The first time I read it was in the late 1970s, shortly after I'd begun working on *Maus*, my own extended comic-book chronicle of the twentieth century's other central cataclysm. I had the flu at the time and read it while high on fever. Gen bumbed its way into my heated brain with all the intensity of a fever-dream. I've found myself remembering images and events from the Gen books with a clarity that made them seem like memories from my own life, rather than Nakazawa's. I will never forget the people dragging their own melted skin as they walk through the ruins of Hiroshima, the panic-stricken horse on fire galloping through the city, the maggots crawling out of the sores of a young girl's ruined face. Gen deals with the trauma of the atom bomb without flinching. There are no irradiated Godzillas or super-mutants, only tragic realities. I've just reread the books recently and I'm glad to discover that the vividness of Barefoot Gen emanates from the work itself and not simply from my fever. Or, more accurately, it emanates from something intrinsic to the comics medium itself and from the events Nakazawa lived through and depicted.

Comics are a highly charged medium, delivering densely concentrated information in relatively few words and simplified code-images. It seems to me that this is a model of how the brain formulates thoughts and remembers. We think in cartoons. Comics have often demonstrated how well suited they are to telling action adventure stories or jokes, but the small scale of the images and the directness of a medium that has something in common with handwriting allow comics a kind of intimacy that also make them surprisingly well suited to autobiography.

It's odd that, until the development of underground comics in the late 1960s, overtly autobiographical comics have not comprised an important "genre." Rarer still are works that overtly grapple with the intersection between personal history and world history. Perhaps it was necessary to have a concept of comics as suitable adult fare for the medium to move toward autobiography. Or so I thought until I became more aware of Keiji Nakazawa's career. In 1972 Nakazawa, then 33, wrote and drew a directly

autobiographical account of surviving the atomic blast at Hiroshima for a Japanese children's comic weekly. It was called, with chilling directness, "I Saw It." A year later he began his *Gen* series, a slightly fictionalized narrative also based on having seen "It," an adventure story of a boy caught in hell, a "Disasters of War" with speech balloons.

In Japan there is no stigma attached to reading comics; they're consumed in truly astonishing numbers (some comics weeklies have been known to sell over 3 million copies of a single issue) by all classes and ages. There are comics devoted to economic theory, mah jongg, and male homosexual love stories designed for pre-pubescent girls, as well as more familiar tales of samurai, robots and mutants. However, I should confess to a very limited knowledge of Japanese comics. They form a vast unexplored universe only tangentially connected to my own. Sometimes that seems true of everything about Japan, and *Gen* may be an ideal starting point for the twain to meet.

The modern comic book is a specifically Western form (making it all the more appropriate as a medium for reporting on the horrors brought to the East by the atom bomb), but Japanese comics have stylistic quirks and idioms that are quite different from ours, and these must be learned and accepted as part of the process of reading *Gen*. The stories are often quite long (the entire *Gen* saga reportedly runs to close on 2,000 pages), usually with rather few words on a page, allowing an entire 200-page book to be read during a short commuter ride. Overt symbolism is characteristic of Japanese comics; for Nakazawa it takes the form of a relentlessly reappearing sun that glares implacably through the pages. It is the marker of time passing, the giver of life, the flag of Japan, and a metronome that gives rhythm to *Gen*'s story.

The degree of casual violence in Japanese comics is typically far greater than in our homegrown products. *Gen*'s pacifist father freely wallops his kids with a frequency and force that we might easily perceive as criminal child abuse rather than the sign of affection that is intended. The sequence of *Gen* brawling with the chairman's son and literally biting his fingers off is (forgive me, I can't resist) especially hard to swallow. Yet these casual small-scale brutalities pale to naturalistic proportions when compared to the enormity of dropping a nuclear weapon on a civilian population.

The physiognomy of the characters often leans to the cloyingly cute, with special emphasis on Disney-like oversized Caucasian eyes and generally neotenic faces. Nakazawa is hardly the worst offender, though his cartoon style derives from that tradition. His draftsmanship is somewhat graceless, even home-

ly, and without much nuance, but it gets the job done. It is clear and efficient, and it performs the essential magic trick of all good narrative art: the characters come to living, breathing life. The drawing's greatest virtue is its straightforward, blunt sincerity. Its conviction and honesty allow you to believe in the unbelievable and impossible things that did, indeed, happen in Hiroshima. It is the inexorable art of the witness.

Although the strangeness of the unfamiliar idioms and conventions of Japanese comics language may set up a hurdle for the Western reader first confronted with this book, it also offers one of its central pleasures. Nakazawa is an exceptionally skillful storyteller who knows how to keep his reader's attention in order to tell the Grim Things That Must Be Told. He effortlessly communicates a wealth of information about day-to-day life in wartime Japan and the anatomy of survival without slowing down the trajectory of his narrative. There is a paradox inherent in talking about such pleasures in the context of a work that illuminates the reality of mass death, yet the exposure to another culture's frame of reference, the sympathetic identification one develops with the protagonists and the very nature of narrative itself are all intrinsically pleasurable. Arguably, by locating the causes of the bombings exclusively in the evils of Japanese militaristic nationalism rather than in the *Realpolitik* of Western racism and cold-war power-jockeying, Nakazawa may make the work a little too pleasurable for American and British readers.

Ultimately, *Gen* is a very optimistic work. Nakazawa believes that his story can have a cautionary effect, that mankind can be improved to the point of acting in its own genuine self-interest. Indeed, *Gen* is a plucky little hero, embodying such virtues as loyalty, bravery, and industriousness. Nakazawa's faith in the possibility for Goodness may mark the work in some cynical eyes as true Literature for Children, but the underlying fact is that the artist is reporting on his own survival — not simply on the events that he lived through, but on the philosophical/psychological basis for that survival. His work is humanistic and humane, demonstrating and stressing the necessity for empathy among humans if we're to survive into another century.

# A Note from the Author

Keiji Nakazawa

The atomic bomb exploded 600 meters above my hometown of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 at 8:15 a.m. I was a little over a kilometer away from the epicenter, standing at the back gate of Kanzaki Primary School, when I was hit by a terrible blast of wind and searing heat. I was six years old. I owe my life to the school's concrete wall. If I hadn't been standing in its shadow, I would have been burned to death instantly by the 5,000-degree heat flash. Instead, I found myself in a living hell, the details of which remain etched in my brain as if it happened yesterday.

My mother, Kimiyo, was eight months pregnant. She was on the second floor balcony of our house, had just finished hanging up the wash to dry, and was turning to go back inside when the bomb exploded. The blast blew the entire balcony, with my mother on it, into the alley behind our house. Miraculously, my mother survived without a scratch.

The blast blew our house flat. The second floor collapsed onto the first, trapping my father, my sister Eiko, and my brother Susumu under it. My brother had been sitting in the front doorway, playing with a toy ship. His head was caught under the rafter over the doorway. He frantically kicked his legs and cried out for my mother. My father, trapped inside the house, begged my mother to do something. My sister had been crushed by a rafter and killed instantly.

My mother frantically tried to lift the rafters off them, but she wasn't strong enough to do it by herself. She begged passersby to stop and help, but nobody would. In that atomic hell, people could only think of their own survival; they had no time for anyone else. My mother tried everything she could, but to no avail. Finally, in despair, she sat down in the doorway, clutching my crying brother and helplessly pushing at the rafter that was crushing him.

The fires that followed the blast soon reached our house. It was quickly enveloped in flame. My brother yelled that he was burning; my father kept begging my mother to get some help. My mother, half-mad with grief and desperation, sobbed that she would stay and die with them. But our next-door neighbor found my mother just in time and dragged her away.

For the rest of her days, my mother never forgot the sound of the voices of her husband and son, crying out for her to save them. The shock sent my mother into labor, and she gave birth to

a daughter by the side of the road that day. She named the baby Tomoko. But Tomoko died only four months later – perhaps from malnutrition, perhaps from radiation sickness, we didn't know.

After escaping the flames near the school, I found my mother there by the roadside with her newborn baby. Together we sat and watched the scenes of hell unfolding around us.

My father had been a painter of lacquer work and traditional-style Japanese painting. He was also a member of an anti-war theater group that performed plays like Gorky's "The Lower Depths." Eventually the thought police arrested the entire troupe and put them in the Hiroshima Prefectural Prison. My father was held there for a year and a half. Even when I was a young child, my father constantly told me that Japan had been stupid and reckless to start the war.

Thanks, no doubt, to my father's influence, I enjoyed drawing from an early age. After the war I began reading Osamu Tezuka's comic magazine *Shin-Takarajima* (*New Treasure Island*); that had a huge impact on me. I began slavishly copying Tezuka's drawings and turned into a manga maniac. Hiroshima was an empty, burnt-out wasteland and we went hungry every day, but when I drew comics, I was happy and forgot everything else. I vowed early on to become a professional cartoonist when I grew up.

In 1961 I pursued my dream by moving to Tokyo. A year later I published my first cartoon serial in the manga monthly *Shonen Gaho* (*Boys' Pictorial*). From then on I was a full-time cartoonist.

In 1966, after seven years of illness, my mother died in the A-Bomb Victims Hospital in Hiroshima. When I went to the crematorium to collect her ashes, I was shocked. There were no bones left in my mother's ashes, as there normally are after a cremation. Radioactive cesium from the bomb had eaten away at her bones to the point that they disintegrated. The bomb had even deprived me of my mother's bones. I was overcome with rage. I vowed that I would never forgive the Japanese militarists who started the war, nor the Americans who had so casually dropped the bomb on us.

I began drawing comics about the A-bomb as a way to avenge my mother. I vented my anger through a "Black" series of six manga published in an adult manga magazine, starting with *Kuroi Ame ni Utarete* (*Struck by Black Rain*). Then I moved to *Shukan Shonen Jump* (*Weekly Boys' Jump*), where I began a series of works about the war and the A-bomb starting with *Aru Hi Totsuzen ni* (*One Day, Suddenly*). When the monthly edition of *Jump* launched a series of autobiographical works by its cartoonists, I was asked to lead off with my own story. My 45-page manga autobiography was titled *Ore wa Mita* (*I Saw It*). My editor at *Jump*, Tadasu Nagano, commenting that I must have more to say that

wouldn't fit in 45 pages, urged me to draw a longer series based on my personal experiences. I gratefully began the series right away. That was in 1972.

I named my new story *Hadashi no Gen* (*Barefoot Gen*). The young protagonist's name, Gen, has several meanings in Japanese. It can mean the "root" or "origin" of something, but also "elemental" in the sense of an atomic element, as well as a "source" of vitality and happiness. I envisioned Gen as barefoot, standing firmly atop the burnt-out rubble of Hiroshima, raising his voice against war and nuclear weapons. Gen is my alter ego, and his family is just like my own. The episodes in *Barefoot Gen* are all based on what really happened to me or to other people in Hiroshima.

Human beings are foolish. Thanks to bigotry, religious fanaticism, and the greed of those who traffic in war, the Earth is never at peace, and the specter of nuclear war is never far away. I hope that Gen's story conveys to its readers the preciousness of peace and the courage we need to live strongly, yet peacefully. In *Barefoot Gen*, wheat appears as a symbol of that strength and courage. Wheat pushes its shoots up through the winter frost, only to be trampled again and again. But the trampled wheat sends strong roots into the earth and grows straight and tall. And one day, that wheat bears fruit.



Wheat pushes its shoots up through the winter frost, only to be stepped on again and again.



The trampled wheat sends strong roots into the earth, endures frost, wind and snow, grows straight and tall... and one day bears fruit.



This wheat's grown tall 'couse we've taken good care of it, huh, Popol

Right!

Sign: Nokooko family field



We can eat this wheat real soon, Shiny! Isn't that great?

I wanna eat some right away, Gen!



I'll get Momo to bake bread with it!

I want noodles!



Boys, I want you to grow up just like this wheat grows.

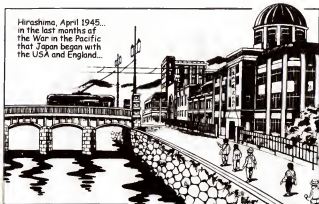
Yeesh, Popol I know, grow strong even if we're stepped on. You're always saying that!



You scamp!!



Hirashima, April 1945...  
in the last months of  
the War in the Pacific  
that Japan began with  
the USA and England...



Oh, it's 5:30 in the morning  
Daddy walks out the door  
With his lunchbox full of cheap  
noodles.. Yes, it's a hard life  
for poor folks.. Day in, day  
out, the fleas keep biting...



# WHOOEEEEEE

Oh no!  
It's an  
air raid!!

## WHOOEEEE

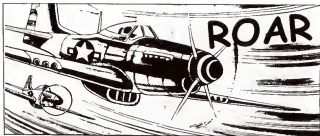


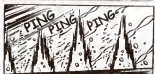
Papa...

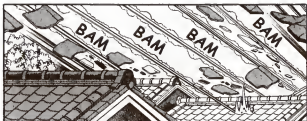
Hurry,  
get home  
quick!

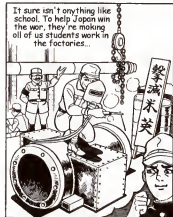




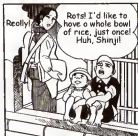








Sign: Destroy America and England





In anticipation of the final battle on our mainland against the American and British devils, we will now commence spear drill!



Banners: 100 million fiery spirits, charge! Destroy the American and British devils!



For the victory of the Great Japanese Empire, we here on the home front must be as steadfast as the soldiers on the front lines!

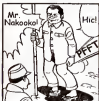
Be strong, men!



SNICKER  
SNICKER



Hic!  
GLARE  
Hic!



Mr. Nakaoka!





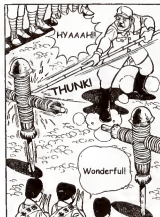
Con't help it...  
all I eat is potatoes.



Sorry, I'm just real gassy today.



Sorry, sir.





America has more resources than Japan does. A small country like Japan can only survive by foreign trade. We should keep peace with the rest of the world.

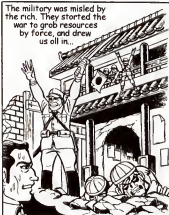


Japan has no business fighting a war!

W-what?!



The military was misled by the rich. They started the war to grab resources by force, and drew us all in...



You're all sick with war fever! This war is wrong!



Y-you won't get away with this, traitor!

Go to hell. I'm tired of war!



I'm through with all this!

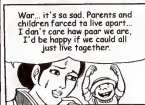
CRACK!



You'll see how stupid this war is soon enough. Try thinking for yourselves for a change!

Y-you TRAITOR!!





Banner: Grade 3, Group 5



Banners: Kamiyama Primary School Group Evacuation



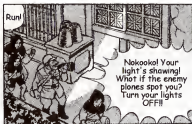


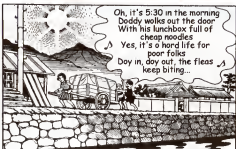




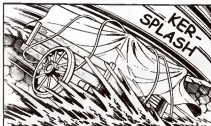








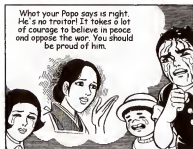










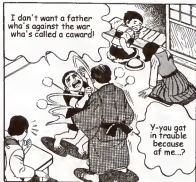




Wah! Papa, go to war  
and kill lots of  
enemies and get lots  
of medals... Please!



I don't want a father  
who's against the war,  
who's called a coward!



Y-you got  
in trouble  
because  
of me...?

B-but  
why?



Ryukichi, the Chairman's  
son, attacked us and  
called us traitors...  
Waaah!



Ahem!  
Is  
Daikichi  
Nakaaka  
home?!



A  
policeman?!

D-damn that Chairman! I made  
fun of spear drill, so he uses his  
son... What a dirty trick!

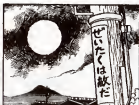


GLARE









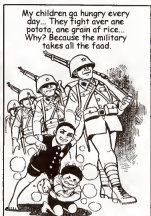
Sign: Luxury is our enemy



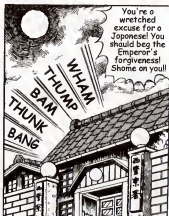
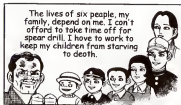
Sign: West Police Station

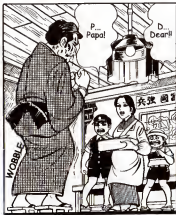






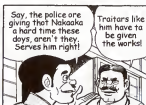






















Aargh! Ow! I'm losing my fingers! Help!!

Somebody, help me!



Huh?

What's going on?

??



GRRRR



Eyoahh! Help me! Owww!!

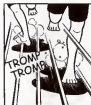
Mr. Chairman!



Hey, you...



Shinji, that's enough! Let's go!



TROM TROM

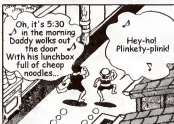


Ohh... My hands...

L-looks bad, Mr. Chairman. The bones are showing...



Aaagh... T-those Nokaoko brats are little animals! They're dangerous!















Sign: Sumido's Sake





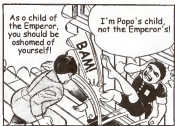




Sign: Kamiyama Primary School













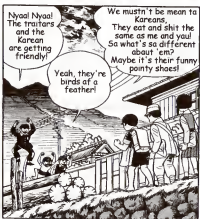
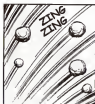
Signs: Bravery, Determination













Mmm...  
Something  
smells good,  
huh, Eiko.



Reets! I bet it tastes good  
too. Wish we could have  
some! Gee, I'm hungry...  
Let's go home, Eiko...



When Papa  
comes home,  
I'll tell him  
about those  
teachers!

No, Gen. Don't  
trouble Papa and  
Momo... Don't  
say anything.



If Momo sees us crying,  
she'll be worried. Let's  
sing a song and cheer  
ourselves up.

OK!



The evening sky  
is clearing,  
The autumn  
breeze blows...  
The moon shines  
down  
And the crickets  
start to call...



I-I  
remember  
the skies...



Above  
our home  
so f-for  
away...



Woooh!

Woooh!



I'm hungry, Momo, I'm huuungry!!

TING  
TING  
TING



Be quiet!

SLAP!



Wah!  
Mama  
hit me!



Woooh! Stupid Momo!  
I'll tell on you when  
Popo comes home!



Shinji, believe me, I want to feed you. But we can't get hold of any food now.



Your Popo's in jail, so we can't work and there's no money.

We've already borrowed all we can from the wholesaler. He won't give us any more...



Be patient. Tomorrow Momo will go ask our relatives for some rice and potatoes...

I'm hungry!  
I'm starving!!



Sob... Don't you understand, Shinji?

Woooh! Nooo! I'm hungry!!





Rats! All our neighbors are picking on us...



If only the wheat in our field was ready to eat...



Hey, Momo! Let's go catch some locusts and have them for supper!

Right! Locusts are good roasted. Let's go catch some!



At least we can fill our stomachs a bit...

There's lots of 'em out in the army rifle range!



Wheel! Come quick, Momo — there's loads of 'em!

Wheel! Loads of dinner! Let's get 'em!



THUMP THUMP

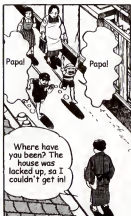


Got one!











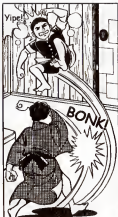




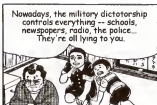












# WHOOEEE





Looks like they're bombing the Navy port in Kure.



Dear, isn't it strange that the B-29s have burned down most of the big cities in Japan, but they haven't attacked Hiroshima?



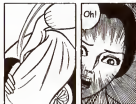
I have this feeling that something terrible is going to happen here in Hiroshima...



Eiko, get up! It's time to go to school.

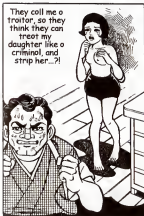


Eiko, are you ill?



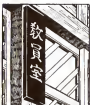
Oh!







Kamiyama Primary School



Faculty Room



Sign: Loyalty



I'll ask one more time, Mr. Numoto. You stripped and searched my daughter because you had some evidence she stole the money, right?

Uh, not exactly. It's just that one of the students told us...



Well, then, bring that student here.

B-but...



Shut up! Bring him here, I said!!

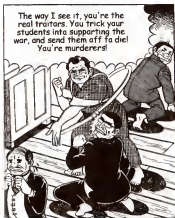


I want to know if the money was stolen or not. Now GO!!

R-right...

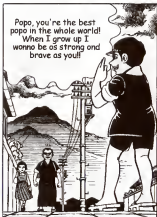














Papa! I love you, Papa!  
And I'll grow up to be  
strong like you too!



Gen,  
wait  
up!

Come on,  
Eiko! I'll  
race you!



Eiko...  
Gen...

Dommit,  
you're  
making  
me cry...



Mr.  
Pok!

Hello,  
Gen.



Uh, Mr. Pok, about  
the other day when  
I said I hated you  
'cause they were  
teasing me for being  
with a Korean...

I shouldn't have  
said those things...  
I'm sorry!

Gen...



And Mr. Pok, I hope  
the war ends soon so  
you can go see your  
family in Korea.  
Well, 'bye!

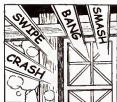
T-  
thank  
you.



He's a good kid.  
If only all the  
Japanese were  
like him...









You remember your cousin Gekichi? He joined the Navy and you know what he looked like when he come back?



He lost his sight, his arms and legs were torn off, all he could do was breathe. He looked like some kind of insect.



But his neighbors all praised him as a war hero. Easy for them to say...



Meanwhile, his parents have to watch their only son's suffering every day. They can barely make ends meet on the pitance they got from the government...

Kill me. Kill me, please!



You think you can go off to war and you alone can escape a bullet?!

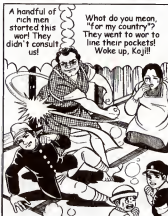
I'm joining the Navy. I don't come if I die!



Idiot! I didn't raise you to become a murderer!







The fool! When he turns twenty his draft notice will come and he'll have to go anyway. Why's he in such a hurry to die?



Attagirl, Kimie! It's a boy!

Banzai! Banzai!



Kaji sure drinks a lot. Grow up fast, Kaji!

I'll teach him to draw so he can be an artist just like me!



Dear, if Kaji's cold gets any worse, he might die...

Let's take him to a hospital, Kimie.



Do you think we can find a doctor who will look at him this late at night, in this weather?

We'll find one even if we have to pull him out of bed!



Don't die, Kaji! You'll be all right!



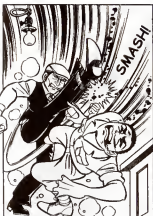


Dear God, please save our son, Kaji. You can take my life instead of his!











...So he went on beating me and demanding I confess...

These dirty Special Police!



Later they found out the explosion was caused by a short circuit.



They just assumed I was a criminal! I can't stand it!



Once they found out about Pa, even my best friends gave me the cold shoulder. Every day's been hell.



You too, huh, Kaji?



I'm going to join the Navy and show them I'm no traitor!



Gen! Shinji! I'll go to war and kill those American and British bastards! I'll kill 'em all!



You'll see! I'll come back covered with medals, so you can all walk around town with your heads high!



banners: Congratulations Goro Ohtake





You aren't fit to be in the presence of a fine young man like Ohtake.

You should be ashamed to be here at all. Go on home, you little traitors!



SHUT UP!!



My big brother is about to volunteer for the Navy! He's going to war!



So don't you dare call us traitors anymore!



C'mon! Say Banzai for my brother too!

Yeah! Say Banzai!!



You little fools! It's the natural duty of a Japanese to go to war. Stop bragging about it!



So you're not going to cheer, eh? Let's bite 'em, Shinji!

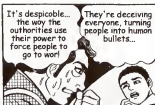
Yeah!



Ack!!









Yikes!  
An air  
raid!



Dear,  
that's  
an air  
raid  
alert!



CLATTER



YOU FOOL!!

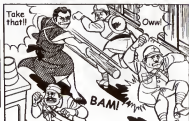


You're a bloody  
fool, Kajii! You  
hear me?!



Kajii! Don't  
die!  
Whatever  
happens,  
don't die!!

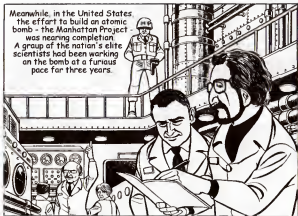
Let yourself be  
called a coward,  
a weakling! Just  
come back alive!!







Meanwhile, in the United States, the effort to build an atomic bomb - the Manhattan Project - was nearing completion. A group of the nation's elite scientists had been working on the bomb at a furious pace for three years.



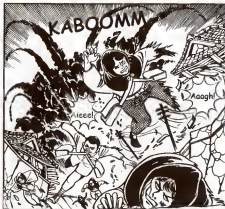
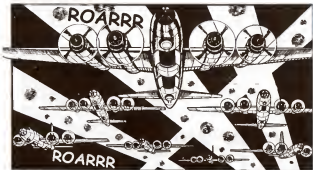
To explode a nuclear weapon with unimaginable powers of destruction over Japan would bring the war in the Pacific to a quick and advantageous end. The choice of a target for the bombing had narrowed down to four cities: Kyata, Niigato, Kakura, and Hirashima. Preparations proceeded smoothly.



When's the war gonna be over, Gen? I'm sick and tired of it...









Oh no!  
Fire-  
bombs!

Mama!  
Mama!



Aaagh!  
Help!  
Help!

ROARRR



Mama!  
I'm  
burning!

Aieee!



May, 1945.  
Relentless attacks by  
B-29 bombers soaked  
the Japanese mainland  
in blood, filling it with  
the moans of the  
wounded and dying...



In the battlefields  
to the south, Japanese  
forces sustained one  
"honorable defeat"  
after another. Corpses  
covered the islands of  
the west Pacific...

DEATH





Come on, now. If the American soldiers catch you, they'll do terrible things to you...

Woooh!  
I'm scared!  
I don't wanna die!

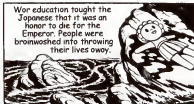


Forgive me, Hiroko...

Nooo...!



Long live the Emperor!



War education taught the Japanese that it was an honor to die for the Emperor. People were brainwashed into throwing their lives away.



♪  
Whether I die at sea or on land,  
My death is for the Emperor,  
I have nothing to regret...  
♪

Spurred by a fervent belief in victory at all costs, countless Japanese lost their lives at sea, on land and in the air.

April 1, 1945. American forces landed on the island of Okinawa, Japan's last line of defense. Fierce fighting engulfed the Okinawan people, nearly wiping them out.



College students were forced to join the Special Attack Corps. The Kamikaze pilots flew straight into enemy ships, scattering their young lives in the Okinawan seas.



By this time the lives of all Japanese were hanging by a thread. But the nation's leaders refused to stop the war, exhorting people to "fight to the last man!"



An announcement from the Navy Ministry: Before daybreak today, the Imperial Navy destroyed ten enemy cruisers, five heavy cruisers, and 120 enemy aircraft.





Spreading false information through newspapers and the radio, the war leaders devised strategies for manipulating the public from the comfort of their offices.



The real victims were ordinary citizens, constantly on the run from the bombs that now rained down on Japan every day.



Help us make a thousand-stitch belt!

Please help!



Will you add a stitch, Ma'am?

Why, of course!



Who's going to battle?

My brother is.



Tell him to fight bravely for all of us...



Here you are.

Thank you, Ma'am!



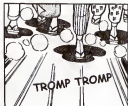
How many more stitches do we need, Eiko?

Fifteen -- then we'll have a thousand!

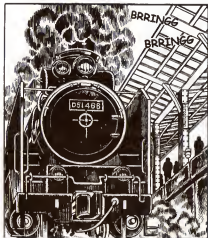






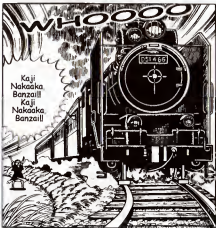
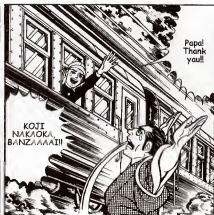


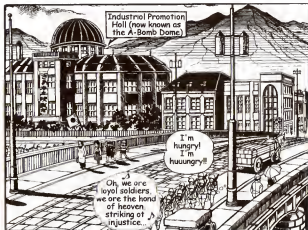














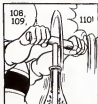
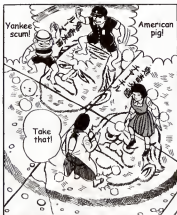
Badge: Military Police



Signs: American Devil Roosevelt, British Devil Churchill













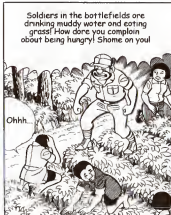
Buddhist prayer

















They're everywhere!



It's because we never get to change or wash our clothes.



SQUISHY SQUISH



We're better off than the girls, though. They get 'em in their hair!



SCRATCH SCRATCH



SCRATCH SCRATCH



These sores itch too.

They say the sores are from malnutrition, Tomura.



It's 'cause we never get enough to eat.

That's for sure.



ZING ZING



Oww!











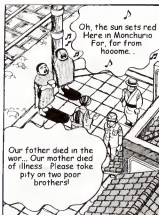












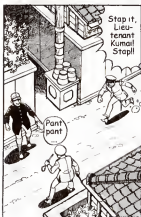


Kagoshima

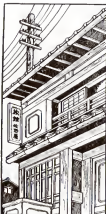












Sign: Sanaya Inn



Kumai!  
Don't  
hossle the  
inkeeper!

Hey! Innkeeper!  
Hurry up with  
the sake!



Hmph. He's a  
bad one, all  
right. Gets  
crazy when  
he's drunk...

Hey!  
Lady!!



If you don't bring that  
sake quick, you're asking  
for it! I'm a Komikaze  
pilot! I'm about to die  
and become a war hero!



A  
Komikaze  
pilot...?!

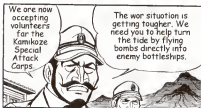
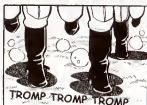


Me too. In five days,  
me and Kumai are  
going to die riding a  
bomb into an enemy  
battleship off  
Okinawa.

In five  
days...?!

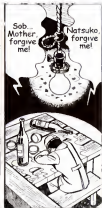




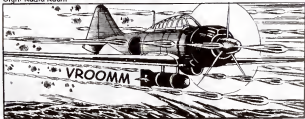








Sign: Radio Room





The Kamikaze Special Attack Corps began operations on October 29, 1944, when five men of the Shukishima Squadron flew their planes into American warships. By the end of the war the Navy had dispatched over 290 suicide attacks, taking the lives of 2,500 pilots.



Hmph. Thirty planes of the Kamikaze and Kenpu Squadrons last, and not one enemy ship sunk!

A zero success rate! They're not trying!



I'll be happy if the next squadron we send out boasts our average even a little. Heh heh!



B-bastards! Every one of those planes carries a living, breathing man to his death!

Is this a game to you? You think human beings are just parts in a machine?!





The Kamikaze planes were stripped of machine guns and all unnecessary equipment -- and they carried only enough fuel for a one-way trip! A heavy bomb was strapped to the bottom of the plane.

Good luck!

Y-yes, sir.



A parting toast! Is today really my last...?



Kenshin Squadron ready to depart, sir!



To your planes!

Go!



VROOMMM

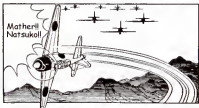
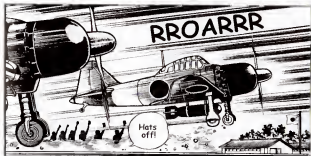


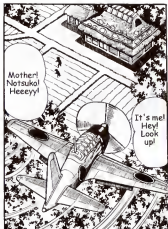
Mother, Natsuko! Goodbye! Forgive me!



Take off!







Mother!  
Natsuko!  
Heeyyl!

It's me!  
Hey!  
Look  
up!



VROOMM



Mother,  
it's me!  
Natsuko  
it's me!

Please  
look!  
Can't  
you  
see  
me?!



How strange. That  
plane keeps flying  
around and around  
over our house.

That is  
rather  
odd...



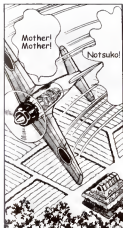
Lieutenant  
Kumoi! Return  
to formation!  
What the hell  
are you doing?!

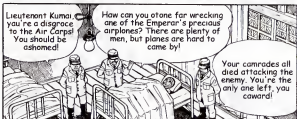
Groon...

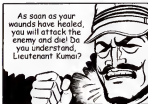


No! No! I don't  
want to die! I  
don't want to  
leave my mother!

I don't want to  
leave Natsuko!  
I want to live!  
I want to live!!













Sign: Kagoshima Naval Air Corps



Kaji Nakaoko reporting for the 24th class of the Preparatory Pilot Course, sir.

Very good!

The prep pilot courses, held at Naval Air Corps bases throughout Japan, recruited boys age 15 to 17 who dreamed of flying and wearing the smart seven-button uniform.



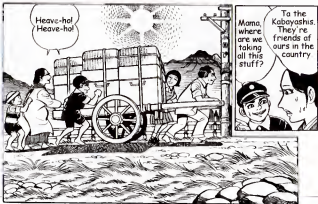
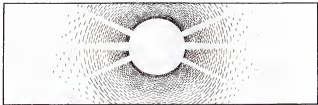
Poster: Young Eagles! Sign Up for Preparatory Pilot Training!

As the war neared its end, each class boasted nearly 3,000 volunteers. Used like so many human bullets, their young lives were snuffed out one after the other.



Father, Mother! Gen, Shinji, Akira, Eikal I'll do it! I'll show 'em we aren't traitors!





Heave-ho!  
Heave-ho!

Mama,  
where  
are we  
taking  
all this  
stuff?

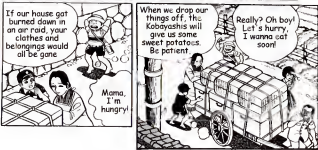
To the  
Kobayashis.  
They're  
friends of  
ours in the  
country.

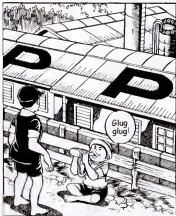
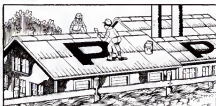
If our house got  
burned down in  
an air raid, your  
clothes and  
belongings would  
all be gone

Mama,  
I'm  
hungry!

When we drop our  
things off, the  
Kobayashis will  
give us some  
sweet potatoes.  
Be patient.

Really? Oh boy!  
Let's hurry,  
I wanna eat  
soon!











Take that, you scum!



Stop it!

Hey soldier! Hurry up and execute 'em all!

Yeah!



They'll be shot soon enough. Go on home.

Those bastards and their kind killed my son! They should pay for it!

Kill them! Kill them!



These Americans have families just like we do. War just makes people hate each other, kill each other...



Come on, let's go.

Gen, those Americans are scary! They have red faces like demons!

Yeah...



Mutter mutter

Grumble grumble



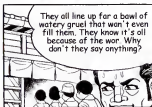
Hey, look! The chapsticks stand up in the gruel today!



Wow!

Great! Usually you can see your reflection, it's so watery...

Sign: Public Dining Hall









Hee hee hee!

Ha ha ha!

Great, huh, Shunji? They gave us all these sweet potatoes!

Oh bay ah bay!



Isn't it wonderful, dear! These potatoes should feed us for a month. We won't have to watch the children crying from hunger.

Mama, give me a sweet potato now. I can't wait any more.

Me too, Mama!



Oh, all right

Yippee!

MUNCH MUNCH  
CRUNCH CRUNCH

Ha ha! Yummy, huh, Shunji!

Mmf!

It's so tasty!



♪ Beggars from eight hundred provinces Stand with their bowls at the gate... Hey, Mister! Give us some food! Give us enough to fill our bellies!

I can't stand it, Kimie -- to see them carrying an like that over a few raw potatoes...





It's lawbreakers like you who keep us from winning the war! You should be ashamed! Ashamed!!



Our children are starving to death! Please let us go!

Shut up!



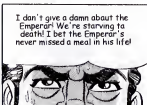
Actually, I should throw you in jail for this offense. But I'll just confiscate the potatoes and let you go -- this time.



Unload these sweet potatoes now!



Dirty no-good cop. He hides behind his badge, picks on defenseless people like us, and says it's all for the war effort or the Emperor...



I don't give a damn about the Emperor! We're starving to death! I bet the Emperor's never missed a meal in his life!



Gen, Shinji, Eiko! Eat these potatoes, as many as you can!

Y-you sure it's OK, Papa?



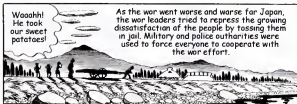
You! You dare to defy a police officer?!

You expect me to keep quiet and let my kids starve?





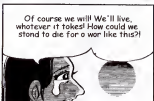












June 23, 1945. Weeks of fierce battle had turned Okinawa, Japan's last bastion, into an island of blood..



Students were drafted and forced to leap into the path of American tanks, bombs strapped to their backs.



Others were burnt to death by flame throwers



...or riddled by machine gun bullets.



To protect the Japanese mainland they fought the Americans like madmen... but all in vain.



With no place left to flee from advancing U.S. troops, Okinawan civilians began taking their own lives.

Chasing rabbits on the mountain,  
Catching fish in the river...

Good-bye, children,  
We'll meet in heaven

Good-bye, Teacher!

Good-bye!

GULP

GASPI

Banzai for the Emperor...

Aagh...

Gather in class, everyone.  
Ready?  
Here goes.

Banzai for the Japanese Empire...

Graan...

CLICK

BLAM



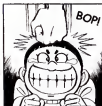


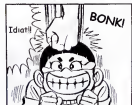


















No, it wasn't.



It really wasn't me.



Hmm. Then who in the world...?



It couldn't be anyone in this neighborhood. They all hate me and call me a traitor.



Hmm...

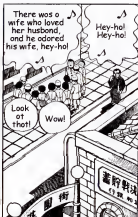


Huh! I hear Nakaako's wife is sick in bed. Serves 'em right for opposing the war! They deserve to suffer!



We went and messed up their nice little wheat field in the middle of the night... The more trouble we make for these traitors, the better!





Sign: Prepare for the final battle!







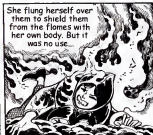
My grandchildren were burned to death in an air raid on Tokyo.



Surrounded by fire, with no place to flee...



My daughter dug frantically in the road, hoping to save at least her children...



She flung herself over them to shield them from the flames with her own body. But it was no use...



My poor, poor grandchildren...



Sob... Whenever I remember that they're no longer alive, the pain is too much to bear...



I'll think of you as my two grandsons and fake good care of you. Come along, now...

Uh oh! We're in trouble!



Gen! What're we gonna do?

I feel sorry for her, but we better make o run for it!



Ack! Sorry, lady, but we're not orphans!

We have a mother and father we like just fine!

W- what?!



You little brats! How dare you make fun of a lonely old woman!

Run!



That fool Gen... skipping school and begging in the streets...



They figured I'd punish them if I found out they were begging, so they threw the money over the fence...



You little idiots!



Puff puff... Hey Gen, it wasn't nice of us to fool that old lady like that, huh.

We had no choice. We've got to help Momo get well.

Buzz buzz



Gab gab

Mr. Kumo's so sick, he's about to die. Isn't there anything we can do?

Buzz buzz



The best thing for a serious illness is fresh corp's blood! Somebody go get a corp, quick!

Right!



Gen, did you hear that?

Yeah. So corp's blood is good for sick people...















Boo hoo...  
I'm so lucky  
to have boys  
like you two...



You guys are pretty  
good with that song  
and dance routine.  
Why don't you do a  
little performance  
for your mother?

Aw,  
shucks...

Come  
an,  
Gen!



Hey-ho!  
Plinkety-plink!

Ahem!  
Here we  
go, ladies  
and  
gents...



Hey-ho!  
Hey-ho!

There was a  
wife who loved  
her husband,  
and he adored  
his wife...



Now one fine day  
in the middle of  
June...  
It was hot way  
out in the  
countryside...



For a brief  
moment, there  
was peace and  
happiness in  
the Nakaoka  
home...

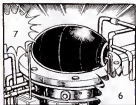


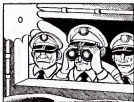
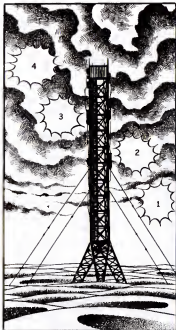
But in the New Mexican  
desert of the American  
southwest, the world's  
first atomic bomb was  
about to be tested.

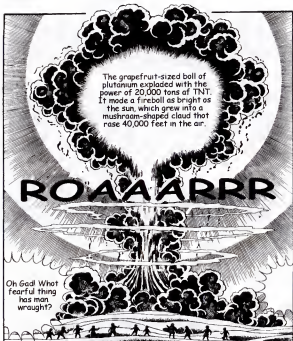
Atop a 100-foot steel tower,  
a grapefruit-sized chunk of  
plutonium waited to unleash its  
fearsome power on the world.  
The deadly atomic age was  
about to dawn.



At the top-secret  
testing ground, the  
countdown began.  
It was 5:30 a.m.,  
July 16, 1945.







July 26, 1945. The United States, Great Britain and China issued the Potsdam Declaration, demanding a ceasefire and unconditional surrender from Japan. They warned that further resistance would result in the annihilation of the Japanese Army and the destruction of the country.



But Japan's war leaders rejected the demand, vowing that the Japanese would fight to the last man...



Banner: Final battle for the homeland! Destroy the American and British devils!

The U.S. now moved forward with plans to drop an atomic bomb on Japan. A special bombing squadron, the 509th Composite Group, had already been formed in secret.



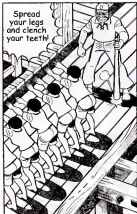
B-29 bombers began practice runs between Mexico and the Caribbean, carrying a dummy bomb shaped like a pumpkin.



The special B-29s also joined in actual air raids on Japanese cities to prepare for the atomic bombing.







Navy spirit stick





Well? Did that teach you anything?

Thank you, Squad Leader Ogowaroll!



Starting tomorrow, I'll drill you even harder!

Dismissed!



.....  
Groan... My butt is bleeding. Man, it hurts...

Oww... I think he broke a bone or something.



Why did I ever come here?

I never should've volunteered for pilot training...



It all sounded so cool. I never thought I'd just get beaten all the time. I can't take it anymore...



Honodo, you loser! Why don't you just drop dead!

Cut it out, Konno. Honodo's doing the best he can.



Buck up, Honodo.

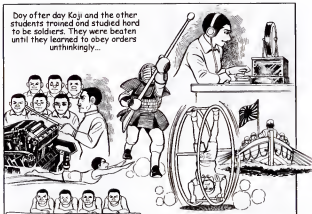
I wanna go home, Nakaoka.



Maan... I can't sleep tonight, it hurts too much.

Groan... My butt's all swelled up. Feels like it's an fire...

Day after day Koji and the other students trained and studied hard to be soldiers. They were beaten until they learned to obey orders unthinkingly...

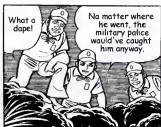


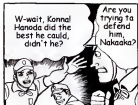
Honodo! You've got all the guts of a cockroach! How do you expect to defeat the enemy?









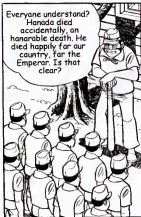














Dear Koji,  
How are you doing there?  
We're fine.

Mama got sick and  
we were worried,  
but she's better  
now.



Hang in there, Koji!  
Prep pilot school  
sounds real cool.  
Me and Shinji brag  
about you all the  
time!

When I grow  
up, I'm going  
to go to prep  
pilot school  
too! Well, bye  
for now.



Gen...  
Prep pilot  
training,  
the entire  
military --  
it's hell!

It's not  
something you  
should join just  
because you  
think it's cool.



Excuse me...  
but are you  
Hanoda's  
parents?

Yes.



I'm  
Nakooka.  
I was a  
classmate of  
Hanoda's...

Oh, thank you  
for looking  
after him.

Terukichi was a lucky boy. Even if it was an accident, he died serving his country and the Emperor.

We can go back to our village with our heads held high.

Terukichi is the pride of the Hanada family. We're so grateful.

Actually sir, your son's death...

W-what?!

T-Terukichi couldn't take the training, ran away -- and finally hanged himself...?!

H-how can you say such things?!

Terukichi died honorably in an accident during training! The commander himself said so!

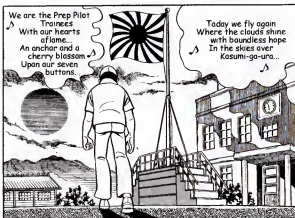
I-I just wanted you to know the truth...

Shut up! Terukichi died for his country! Don't stain his honor! Don't destroy our dream!

D-dream...?

Yes! Our dream that Terukichi would die in battle for his country!













































Gen! My battleship's sailing down the river -- look at it gal Mumble mumble...



Shinji's so happy with that boat. He's going to take it down to the river tomorrow!



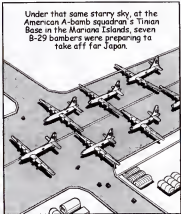
Gen's growing up. That was big of him to give his little brother that battleship...

\*Sunday, August 5, 1945



Look, dear -- the stars are lovely tonight!

It'll be a fine, hot day tomorrow.



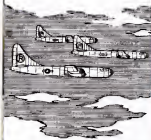
Under that same starry sky, at the American A-bomb squadron's Tinian Base in the Mariana Islands, seven B-29 bombers were preparing to take off for Japan.



One of the bombers, named Enola Gay after the pilot's mother, was loaded with an atomic bomb nicknamed Little Boy.

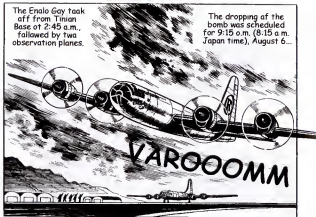


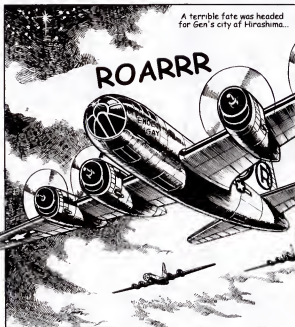
At 1:35 a.m. on August 6, three weather planes took off for Hiroshima, the primary target. They reported clear skies. It was decided then to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.



The Enola Gay took off from Tinian Base at 2:45 a.m., followed by two observation planes.

The dropping of the bomb was scheduled for 9:15 a.m. (8:15 a.m. Japan time), August 6...







\*Monday, August 6, 1945





Oh, no!  
Air raid!  
Air raid!



The enemy planes sure  
got here  
early today!

Dear...



Air  
raid!  
Air  
raid!

Quick!

Hurry!



Don't worry, Mama, they're  
just scout planes -- they'll  
be gone real soon. Anyway,  
there's a 'P' on our roof,  
so we're safe!

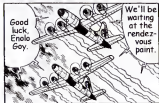
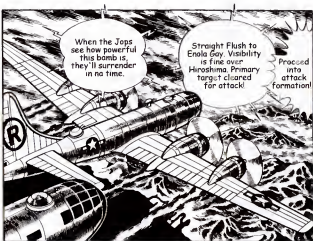
I hope  
you're  
right...



We're over  
Hirashimo  
now.

**ROARRR**

We can drop  
the bomb  
right on  
schedule --  
08:15 Japan  
time.





If the bomb had been dropped at the time of this first air raid warning, people in the shelters might have survived.

But they all came out, relieved that the enemy planes were gone..



Hurry, children -- you'll be late for school.

Yes, Mama.



I'm going on ahead, Eika.

OK.



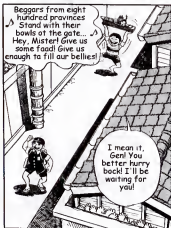
Bye, Mama!

Be careful, Gen!



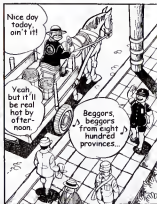
Hurry back from school, Gen, so we can sail the ship on the river!

Sure thing!



Beggars from eight hundred provinces Stand with their bowls at the gate... Hey, Mister! Give us some food! Give us enough to fill our bellies!

I mean it, Gen! You better hurry back! I'll be waiting for you!



Unaware of the holocaust that was approaching from the sky, the citizens of Hiroshima began their day as usual...



Excuse me, young man...

Yes, ma'am?

Sign: Kaniyama Primary School

Is the first grade class held at the school or the temple today?

Gee, I don't know. You'll have to ask the teacher...

Hey!



It's a B-29!

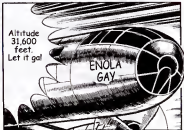
When did it get here?!



That's strange -- the sirens didn't even go off.



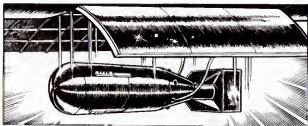
Look how it shines in the sun...



Altitude 31,600 feet. Let it go!

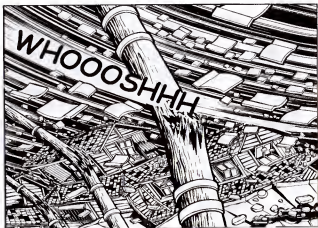
ENOLA GAY





Forty-three seconds later, 1,800 feet over Hiroshima, the atomic bomb named Little Boy exploded with a white-hot light. It was like a million flashbulbs going off at once...







Like an eruption from the pit of Hell, the atomic cloud roared up six miles into the sky over Hiroshima...



In Hiroshima time stopped.



Groan



W-who-?..  
What happened?  
It's pitch dark!

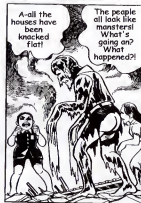
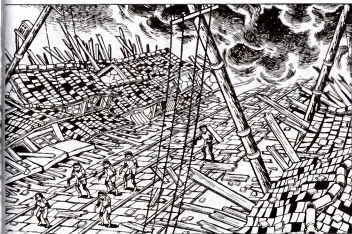
Is it night already?  
But I was on my way to school..!



W-why am I under this wall?

Something flashed..  
After that I don't remember a thing..





A-all the houses have been knocked flat!

The people all look like monsters! What's going on? What happened?!



Papa! Mama! Eikai Shinjin!!



GRAB!



W-water, sorry... Bring me water...

Ack! What're you doing? Let go of me!



P-please. My throat is burning. Water... give me water...

A-all right!



H-hurry... please...

Hang on, mister, I'll be right back!

The heat from the blast melted the skin of all who weren't sheltered from the roys. Those wearing dark clothing, which absorbed the heat, suffered the worst burns. Most people were left naked, their clothes ripped away by the force of the blast...

WHINNIEEE

Yikes!  
That horse  
is on fire!





















It's no use, Mama --  
I can't get anybody  
to help us. What'll  
we do?!

Sab... I don't  
know, Gen, I  
don't know!  
What CAN  
we do??



Owwww! Gen!  
Get me outta  
here!

Shinji!  
Shinji!  
Sab...



Damn!

Damn  
this  
roof!



Ungghhh...



ROARRR

The fire's  
coming  
this way!



Mama!  
T-the  
fire...!

Maan... Darkichi,  
Shinji, Eika...  
It's no use, I  
can't do  
anything...



Damn  
you,  
fire!

Get back!  
Go away!





Waaahh!  
Shinji!  
Shinji!

Eikal! Eikal!  
Papa! Papa!



Stop  
crying,  
Gen! Go  
with your  
mama!

Don't make it  
harder than it is  
already! You've  
got to go!



Gen, why wan't  
you listen to me?  
Take your mather  
and run!



CRACKLE

CRACKLE



Hurry, Gen,  
or you'll be  
caught in the  
flames!

Buck up,  
Gen! Be  
strang!



Sab...  
A-all  
right,  
Papa...

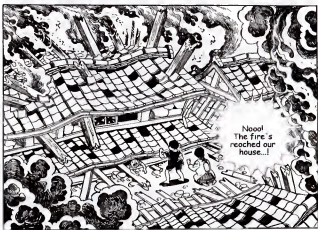
I...I'll  
go...



Gen! Are you  
running away?  
You rat!  
You rat!

Shinji!











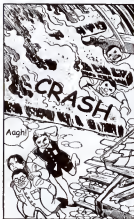




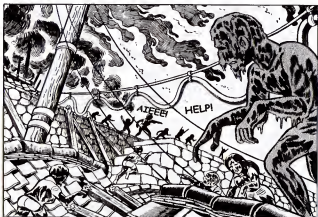








\*Buddhist prayer



I can't go on, sir!  
I'm all burned and  
I've got cramps...  
I can't swim...

Hang on,  
everyone!  
Swim! Swim!

Sing,  
everybody,  
raise your  
voices and  
sing!!

We're children of  
the sea...  
Born by the tide...

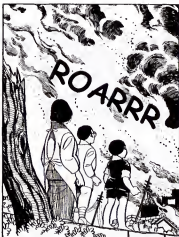
GURGLE

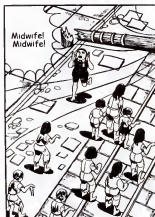
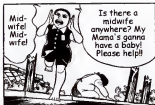
GLUB GLUB

Yashida  
Matsukawa  
Onal

Natsukawa  
Kawada!

As flame reached out  
the inferno  
swirled higher. The city  
of Hiroshima, home to  
400,000 people, was  
reduced to ashes...



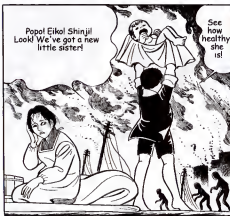














# About Project Gen

Namie Asazuma  
Coordinator, Project Gen

In the pages of *Barefoot Gen*, Keiji Nakazawa brings to life a tragedy unlike any that had ever befallen the human race before. He does not simply depict the destructive horror of nuclear weapons, but tells of the cruel fate they visited upon victims and survivors in the years to come. Yet *Gen*, the young hero of this story, somehow manages to overcome one hardship after another, always with courage and humor. *Barefoot Gen's* tale of hope and human triumph in the face of nuclear holocaust has inspired volunteer translators around the world, as well as people working in a variety of other media. Over the years *Gen* has been made into a three-part live-action film, a feature-length animation film, an opera, and a musical.

The first effort to translate *Barefoot Gen* from the original Japanese into other languages began in 1976, when Japanese peace activists Masahiro Oshima and Yukio Aki walked across the United States as part of that year's Transcontinental Walk for Peace and Social Justice. Their fellow walkers frequently asked them about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and one of them happened to have a copy of *Hadashi no Gen* in his backpack. The Americans on the walk, astonished that an atomic bomb survivor had written about it in cartoon form, urged their Japanese friends to translate it into English. Upon returning to Japan, Oshima and Aki founded Project Gen, a non-profit, all-volunteer group of young Japanese and Americans living in Tokyo, to do just that. Project Gen went on to translate the first four volumes of *Barefoot Gen* into English. One or more of these volumes have also been published in French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Swedish, Norwegian, Indonesian, Tagalog, and Esperanto.

By the 1990s Project Gen was no longer active. In the meantime, author Keiji Nakazawa had gone on to complete ten volumes of *Gen*, and expressed his wish to see the entire story made available to non-Japanese readers. Parts of the first four volumes had also been abridged in translation. A new generation of volunteers responded by reviving Project Gen and producing a new, complete and unabridged translation of the entire *Gen* series.

The second incarnation of Project Gen got its start in Moscow in 1994, when a Japanese student, Minako Tanabe, launched "Project Gen in Russia" to translate *Gen* into Russian. After pub-

lishing the first three volumes in Moscow, the project relocated to Kanazawa, Japan, where volunteers Yulia Tachino and Namie Asazuma had become acquainted with Gen while translating a story about Hiroshima into Russian. The Kanazawa volunteers, together with Takako Kanekura in Russia, completed Russian volumes 4 through 10 between 1999 and 2001.

In the spring of 2000, the Kanazawa group formally established a new Project Gen in Japan. Nine volunteers spent the next three years translating all ten volumes of Gen into English. The translators are Kazuko Futakuchi, Michael Gordon, Kyoko Honda, Yukari Kimura, Nobutoshi Kohara, Kiyoko Nishita, George Stenson, Michiko Tanaka, and Kazuko Yamada.

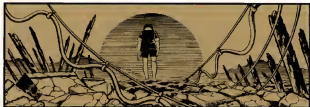
In 2002, author Keiji Nakazawa put the Kanazawa team in contact with Alan Gleason, a member of the first Project Gen, who introduced them to Last Gasp of San Francisco, publisher of the original English translation of Gen. Last Gasp agreed to publish the new, unabridged translation of all ten volumes, of which this book is one.

In the hope that humanity will never repeat the terrible tragedy of the atomic bombing, the volunteers of Project Gen want children and adults all over the world to hear Gen's story. Through translations like this one, we want to help Gen speak to people in different countries in their own languages. Our prayer is that *Barefoot Gen* will contribute in some small way to the abolition of nuclear weapons before this new century is over.

Write to Project Gen c/o Asazuma, Nagasaki 3-10-20, Kanazawa 921-8112, Japan



Keiji Nakazawa lives with his wife in the suburbs of Tokyo, and remains actively involved in the work of the Project Gen volunteers. Now retired from cartooning, his most recent project was a live action film he wrote and directed about young people growing up in postwar Hiroshima. He is currently working on another film scenario.



*Barefoot Gen* is the powerful, tragic, autobiographical story of the bombing of Hiroshima and its aftermath, seen through the eyes of the artist as a young boy growing up in Japan. The honest portrayal of emotions and experiences speaks to children and adults everywhere. *Barefoot Gen* serves as a reminder of the suffering war brings to innocent people, and as a unique documentation of an especially horrible source of suffering, the atomic bomb. This is part one of a ten-part series.

"*Gen* effectively bears witness to one of the central horrors of our time. Give yourself over to... this extraordinary book; get used to those dewy-eyed faces and the unfamiliar story-telling conventions of Japanese manga (comix to us). This vivid and harrowing story will then burn a radioactive crater in your memory that will never let you forget it. *Gen* is one of those very few comix that actually pulls off the essential magic trick... those little marks on paper come to fully realized life."

Art Spiegelman, cartoonist

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for *Maus*

"...some of the best comics ever done... Nakazawa, I'm sure, will be considered one of the great comic artists of this century, because he tells the truth in a plain, straightforward way, filled with real human feelings."

R. Crumb, cartoonist

"Nakazawa's graphic presentation of the bombing of Hiroshima starts beginning with the President stop such madness."



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USED

NAKAZAWA  
GEN VOL ONE

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