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LARRY HAMA ★ PAOLO VILLANELLI



GIJDE

A REAL AMERICAN HERO!



COBRA RISING
PART 2



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G.I. JOE: A REAL AMERICAN HERO #217

COBRA RISING, PART 2

After an unsuccessful attack from Cobra's Night Creeper units, Sean Collins—the new Snake Eyes—infiltrates Cobra Commander's inner sanctum and sends a very direct message... while in Seattle, Fred 172 agrees to meet with Fred 191. At the Pit, Duke orders the underground hidden base to be sealed and classified until further notice. Meanwhile, Hawk assembles a coalition of international military specialists to start looking into Revanche and Cobra's business dealings.

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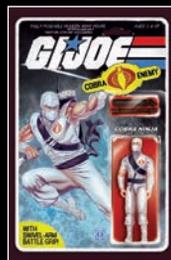
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"I WAKE UP IN THE NIGHT, AND THE SMELLS AND SOUNDS TELL ME I'M IN OBAKE 'BAACHAN'S' HOUSE BEFORE I OPEN MY EYES.

"THE NIGHT BREEZE IS TINGED WITH THE TANG OF PINE AND EUCALYPTUS.

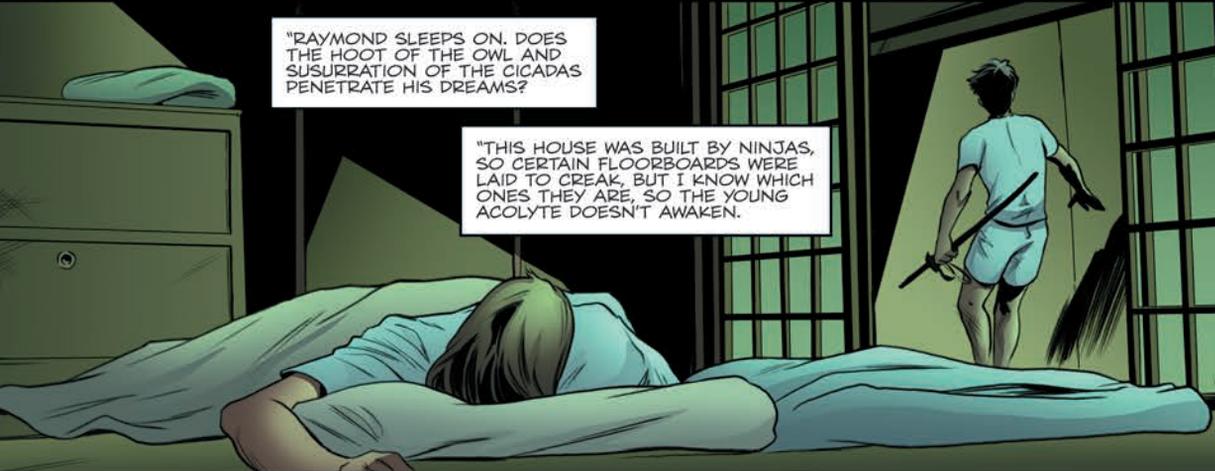
"I CATCH A WHIFF OF THE DAIKON AND CUCUMBERS PICKLING IN CROCKS UNDER 'BAACHAN'S' SINK; THE WOODEN LIDS WEIGHED DOWN WITH MOSSY ROCKS HAND-PICKED FROM THE WOODS WHERE FIDDLEHEADS GROW.



*GRANNY DEMON

"RAYMOND SLEEPS ON. DOES THE HOOT OF THE OWL AND SUSURRATION OF THE CICADAS PENETRATE HIS DREAMS?

"THIS HOUSE WAS BUILT BY NINJAS, SO CERTAIN FLOORBOARDS WERE LAID TO CREAK, BUT I KNOW WHICH ONES THEY ARE, SO THE YOUNG ACOLYTE DOESN'T AWAKEN.



"NOT WAKING MY GRANNY IS ANOTHER MATTER—BUT SHE HELPED TO TRAIN ME, SO I HAVE AN ADVANTAGE.

"JINX SLEEPS SOUNDLY, FEELING COMFORTED AND SECURE IN THIS HOUSE OF ANCESTRAL MEMORIES.



"BUT THIS IS NOT THE HOUSE THAT HOLDS THE DEEPEST MEMORIES FOR ME..."





"...THAT'S THE GATED MANOR ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WOODS.

"THE ABANDONED HOME OF THE ARASHIKAGE NINJA CLAN.



"AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I AM STILL DRAWN TO IT.

"THERE ARE GHOSTS THERE, CALLING TO ME.

"I REMEMBER WALKING THIS PATH WITH THE *HARD MASTER* FOR WHAT HE TERMED A "SYLVAN SEMINAR."

"HE TOLD THAT AS KEENLY AS WE OBSERVE WHAT IS THERE, WE MUST ALSO OBSERVE WHAT IS *NOT* THERE.



"I ASKED IF THAT WAS A ZEN KOAN—A RIDDLE TO BE PONDERED.



"HE SAID I SHOULD READ THE SHERLOCK HOLMES STORY ABOUT THE DOG BARKING IN THE NIGHT.

"THE POINT OF THE STORY BEING THAT THE DOG DIDN'T BARK IN THE NIGHT."



"WHICH MAKES ME WONDER ABOUT THE FIELD MOUSE SCAMPERING AWAY, BLISSFULLY UNAWARE OF THE OWL IN THE RED MAPLE.



"AND I HAVE TO ASK MYSELF WHY THE OWL NEVER SWOOPED DOWN TO SNATCH SUCH EASY PREY.



"THE WIND SHIFTS. I CATCH THE BAREST HINT OF BEESWAX, RESIN, AND CLOVE OIL.

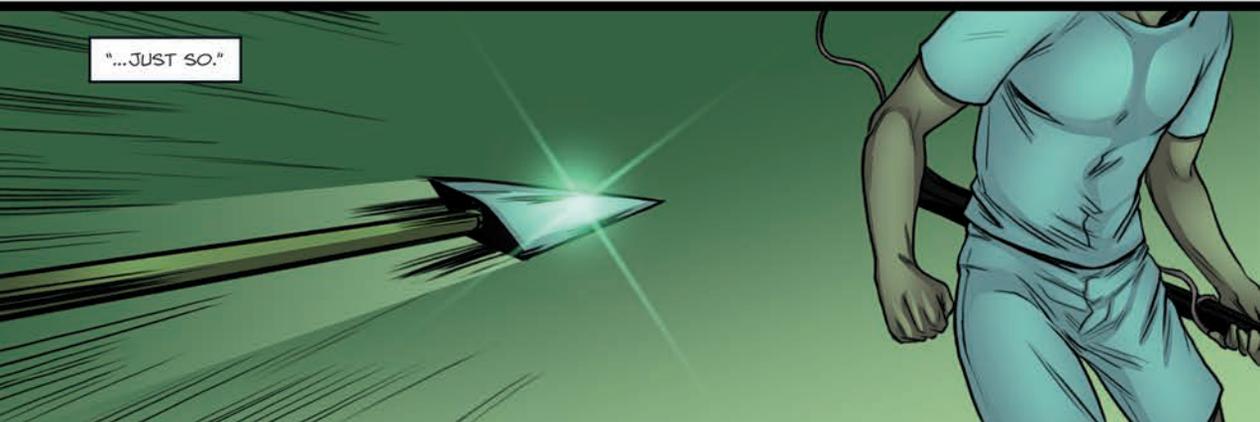
"IF I LISTEN CAREFULLY, I WILL HEAR THE RELEASE...



"THE SUCCESSION OF THOUGHT LEADS TO THE QUESTION OF WHY THE CICADAS ARE NO LONGER SINGING IN THAT PATCH OF WOODS ACROSS THE MEADOW.



"...JUST SO."





YOU'RE STILL AS GOOD AS YOU EVER WERE, **STORM SHADOW**.

I THOUGHT WE HAD ESTABLISHED THAT BEFORE, WHICH SIDE OF THE STREAM ARE YOU SWIMMING IN THESE DAYS, **ZARTAN**? OR ARE YOU STILL HEDGING ALL YOUR BETS?



I SPENT A LONG TIME DOING Penance IN THE GUISE OF THE **BLIND MASTER**. SOME SORT OF REVERSE STANISLAVSKI PHENOMENON OCCURRED—

—I STARTED TO **BECOME** THE **BLIND MASTER** INTERNALLY. I HAD TO, TO BE CONVINCING, SO I COULD TUTOR TYRONE IN THE MARTIAL ARTS.

BUT I NEVER FELT ABSOLVED.



"I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S POSSIBLE TO WIPE AWAY THE GUILT FOR SHOOTING THE ARROW THAT FELLEDED THE **HARD MASTER**...

"...OR FOR THE KNIFE THRUST THAT KILLED THE **BLIND MASTER**."

"IT IS A WRETCHED THING TO HAVE STARTED OUT SEEKING TRUTH IN THE ART OF THE BLADE, AND AT THIS LATE DATE TO FIND ONESELF MIRED IN DECEIT AND ILLUSION."



ABSOLUTION IS NOT MINE TO GIVE, AND YOU'VE BEEN STUDYING THE WAY OF THE SWORD FOR LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT THE ONLY TRUTH WORTH KNOWING IS THAT WHICH YOU FIND FOR YOURSELF.

I THOUGHT WE HAD REACHED A TENTATIVE RESOLUTION AND TRUCE BACK ON THAT MANHATTAN ROOFTOP...



THAT WAS WHEN YOU GAVE ME THE SWORD I CALL **EVENING SHADE**.

IT IS THE EXACT COPY MY MENTOR, THE MASTER SMITH **ONIHASHI**, MADE OF THE ARASHIKAGE HONOR SWORD KNOWN AS **MORNING LIGHT**.

*MORNING LIGHT RESIDES IN AN ART MUSEUM IN NEW YORK.



"HE WAS COMMISSIONED BY THE ARASHIKAGES TO FORGE THAT ONE SPECIAL BLADE, BUT HE WAS SO ENAMORED OF ITS UNIQUE BEAUTY THAT HE VIOLATED HIS COMMISSION TO MAKE A DUPLICATE TO KEEP FOR HIMSELF.



"TO TELL THEM APART, MORNING LIGHT HAD THE CHARACTER FOR **TRUTH** ETCHED ON THE BLADE IN SUCH A WAY THAT ONLY A HUMAN BREATH WOULD REVEAL IT.



"EVENING SHADE HAD **FORGIVENESS** ETCHED UPON IT."