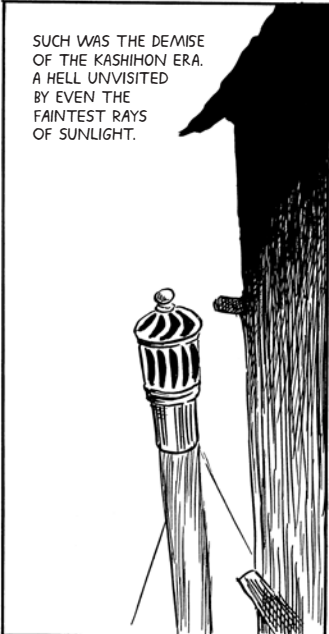
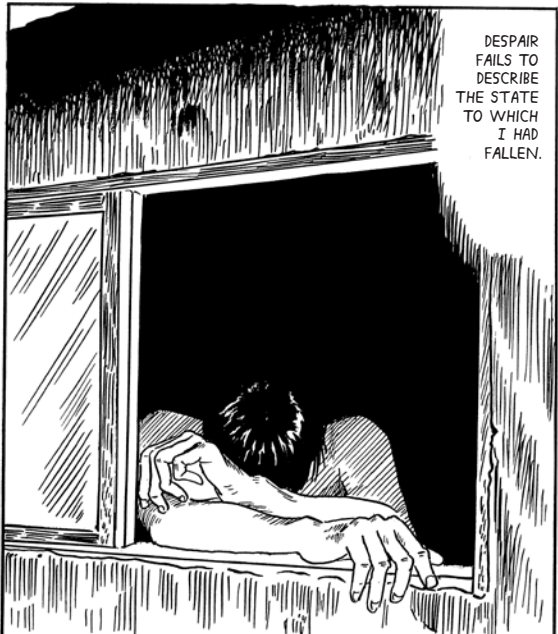


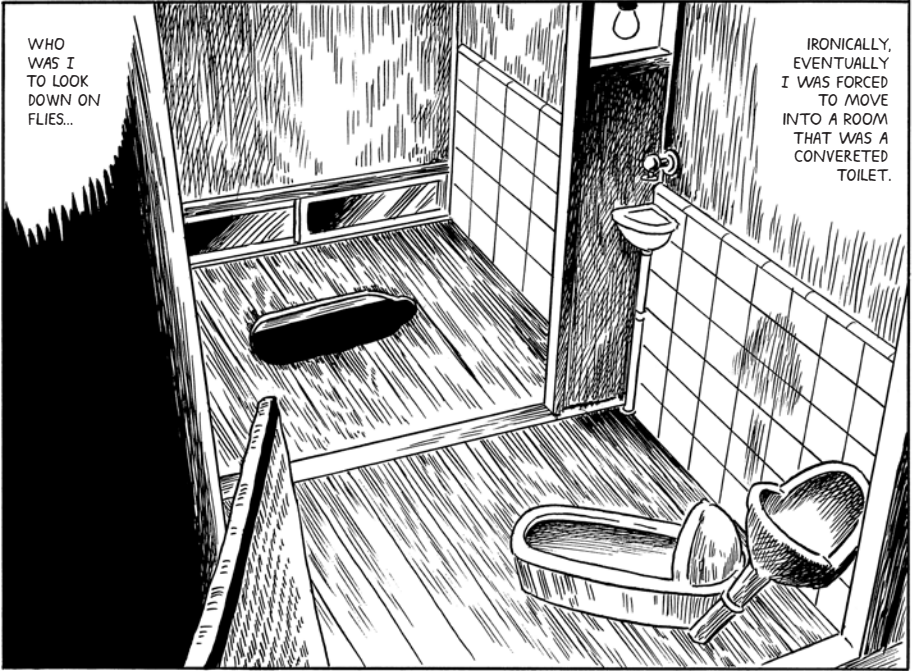
HAD I NOT
OWED THE
LANDLORD
TWO YEARS
OF RENT, HE
WOULD HAVE
SURELY KICKED
ME OUT.



SUCH WAS THE DEMISE
OF THE KASHIMON ERA.
A HELL UNVISITED
BY EVEN THE
FAINTEST RAYS
OF SUNLIGHT.



DESPAIR FAILS TO
DESCRIBE
THE STATE
TO WHICH
I HAD
FALLEN.

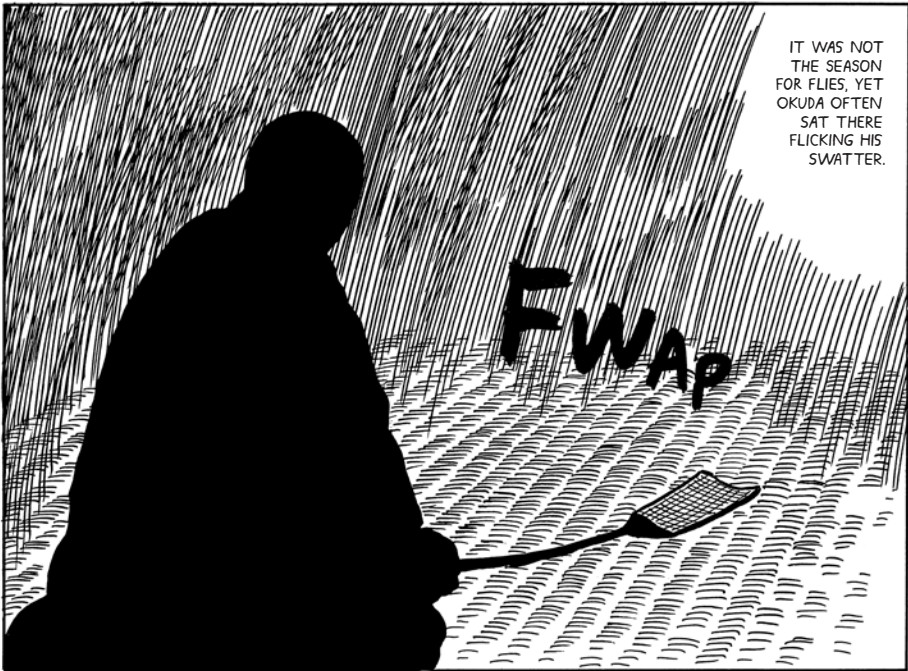


WHO
WAS I
TO LOOK
DOWN ON
FLIES...

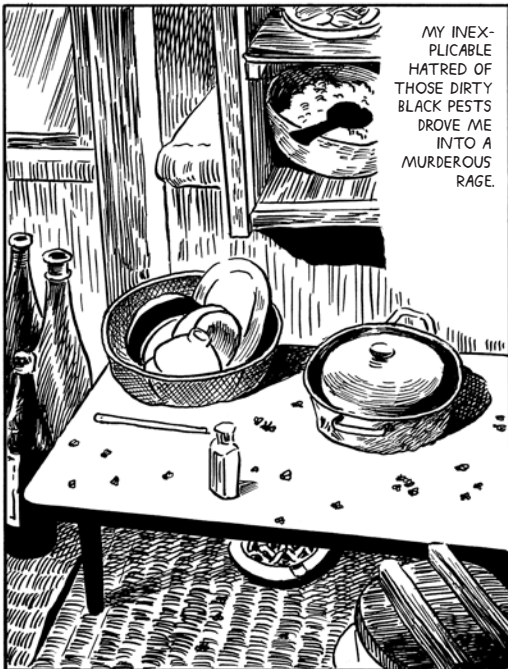
IRONICALLY,
EVENTUALLY
I WAS FORCED
TO MOVE
INTO A ROOM
THAT WAS A
CONVERTED
TOILET.



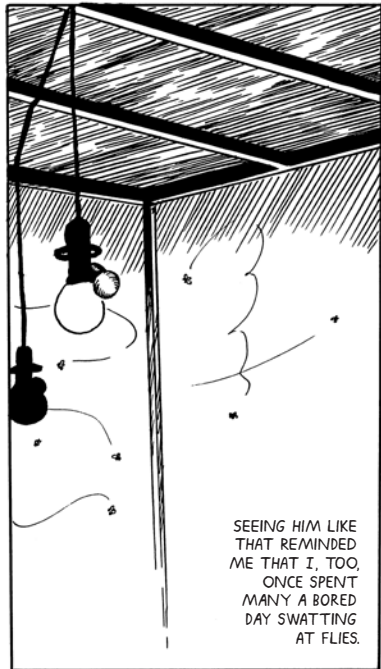
LIVING, AS
I DID, LIKE A
WRETCHED
MAGGOT?



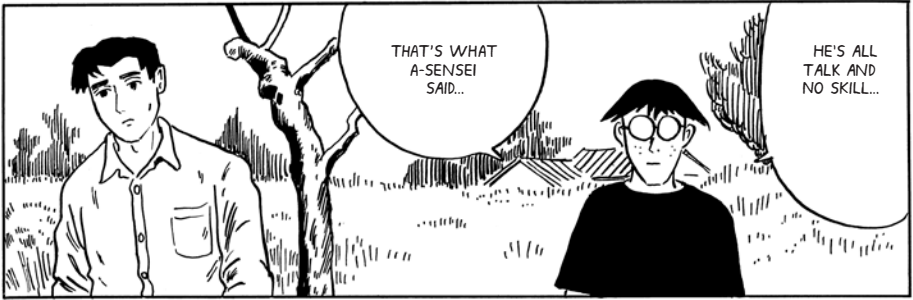
IT WAS NOT
THE SEASON
FOR FLIES, YET
OKUDA OFTEN
SAT THERE
FLICKING HIS
SWATTER.



MY INEX-
PLICABLE
HATRED OF
THOSE DIRTY
BLACK PESTS
DROVE ME
INTO A
MURDEROUS
RAGE.



SEEING HIM LIKE
THAT REMINDED
ME THAT I, TOO,
ONCE SPENT
MANY A BORED
DAY SWATTING
AT FLIES.

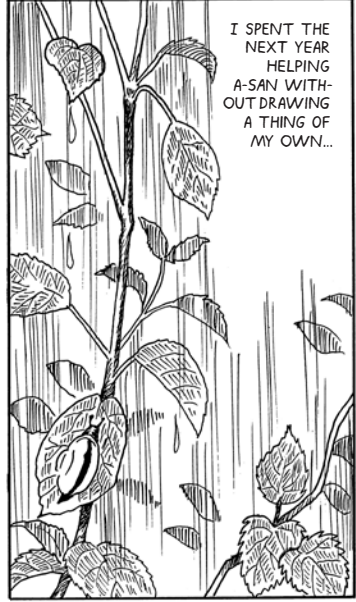


THAT'S WHAT
A-SENSEI
SAID...

HE'S ALL
TALK AND
NO SKILL...



BUT THE CREATIVE
BUG WOULDN'T
ALLOW ME TO
BE A MERE AS-
SISTANT, SO I
STARTED DRAWING
MY OWN
COMICS
AGAIN.



I SPENT THE
NEXT YEAR
HELPING
A-SAN WITH-
OUT DRAWING
A THING OF
MY OWN...



FROM TIME TO
TIME, I WOULD
CALL ON OKUDA
TO SEE HOW HE
WAS HOLDING UP..
WHICH WAS
NOT WELL.

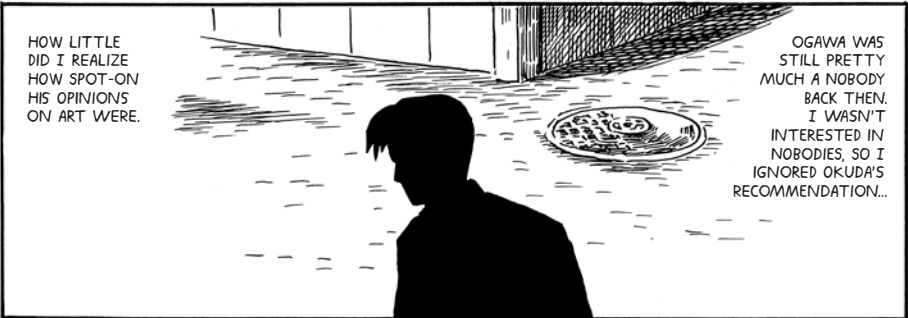


THAT REMINDS ME...
IT WAS DURING
THAT VISIT THAT
OKUDA RECOM-
MEND I READ
OGAWA KUNIO'S
NOVELS...



I WAS SURPRISED
TO HEAR OKUDA
FLATTER MY
WORK, SINCE
NO ONE ELSE
UNDERSTOOD
WHAT I'D BEEN
TRYING TO DO.

BOOK: ISLES OF APOLLO



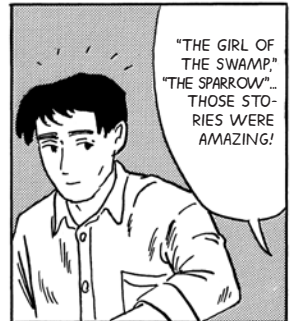
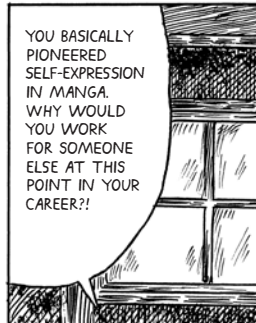
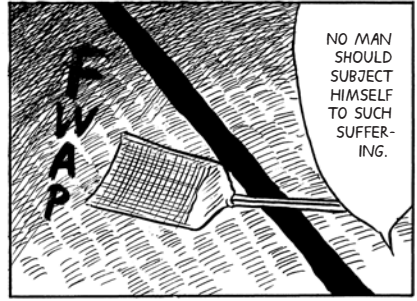
HOW LITTLE
DID I REALIZE
HOW SPOT-ON
HIS OPINIONS
ON ART WERE.

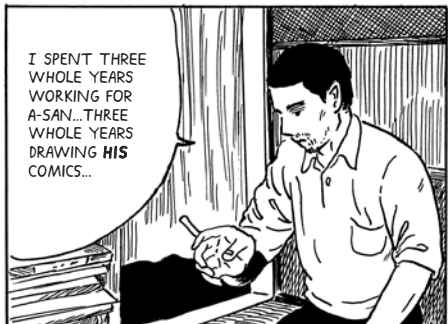
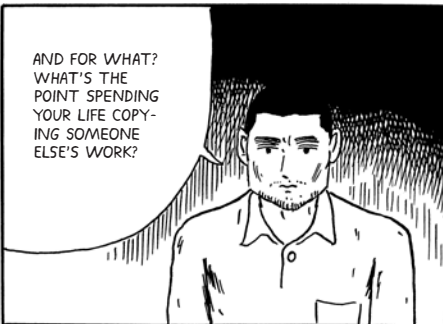
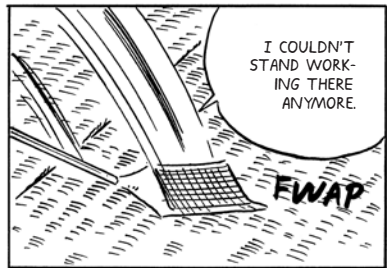
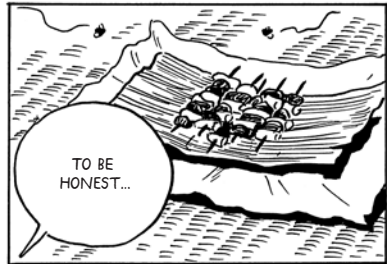
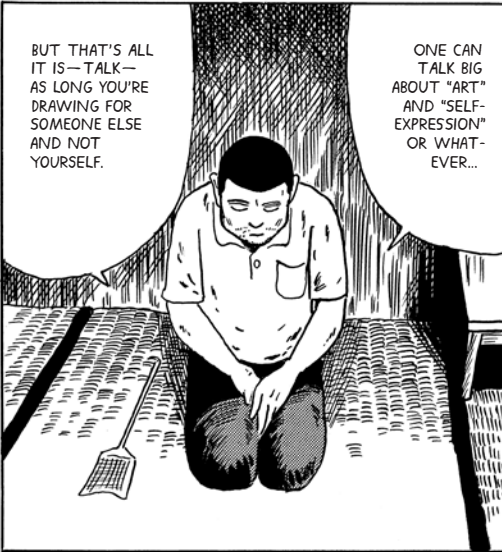
OGAWA WAS
STILL PRETTY
MUCH A NOBODY
BACK THEN.
I WASN'T
INTERESTED IN
NOBODIES, SO I
IGNORED OKUDA'S
RECOMMENDATION...

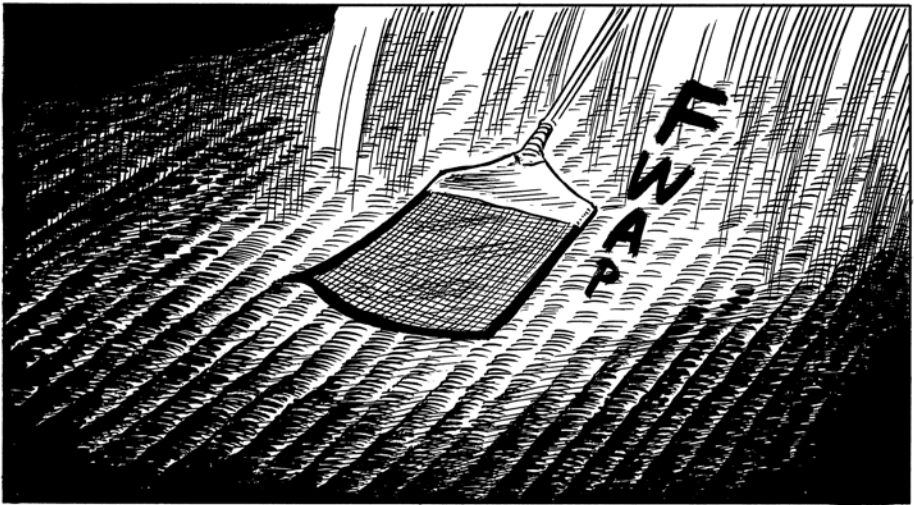


HE SAID HE
WANTED
TO TRY
WRITING.

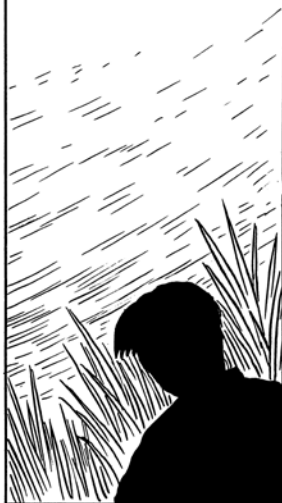
WHAT DO YOU
THINK HE'S
PLANNING ON
DOING FOR
MONEY?



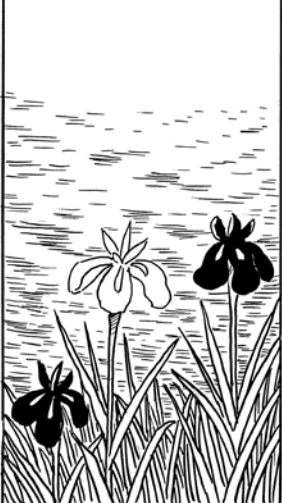




I HAD BEEN DRAWING FOR THE RENTAL KASHIHON MARKET FOR SOME TIME...



AS WE TALKED AIMLESSLY ABOUT THIS AND THAT, MEMORIES OF WHEN I FIRST MET OKUDA CAME RUSHING BACK TO ME.



HE'S GOTTEN QUITE FAMOUS...

I HAVEN'T SEEN A-SAN IN FOREVER, EITHER.



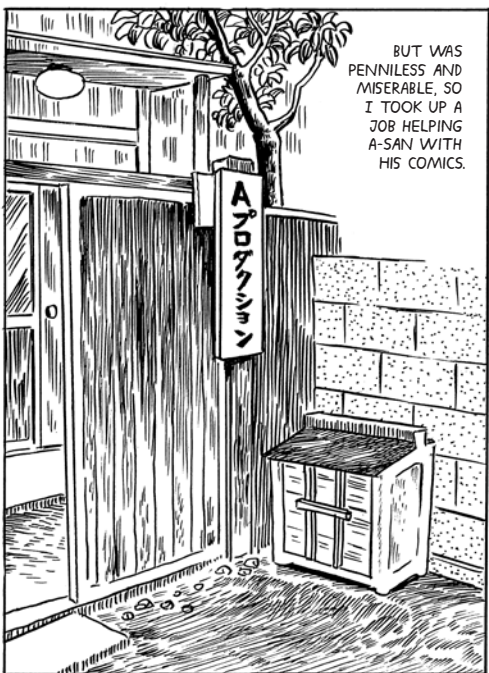
UNLIKE ME!



OKUDA WORKED THERE TOO, THOUGH MOST OF THE TIME HE SAT AT HIS DESK READING ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS.

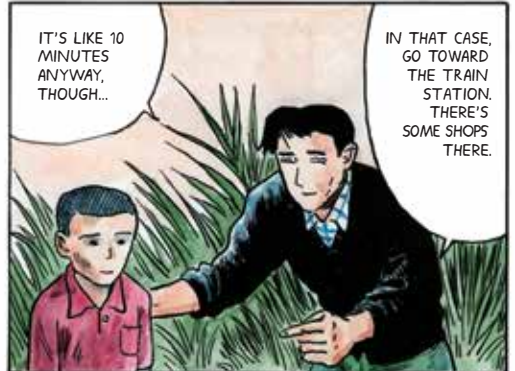


BUT WAS PENNILESS AND MISERABLE, SO I TOOK UP A JOB HELPING A-SAN WITH HIS COMICS.





TSUKUDANI: SIMMERED SEAWEED SNACK



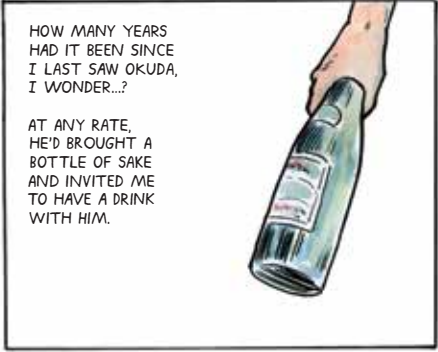


I WAS THINKING ABOUT YOU ALL OF A SUDDEN...

SIGN: FUJI VIEW APARTMENTS



SINCE THE WEATHER WAS NICE, WHY NOT? SO I TOOK HIM TO THE RIVER BANK.



HOW MANY YEARS HAD IT BEEN SINCE I LAST SAW OKUDA, I WONDER...?

AT ANY RATE, HE'D BROUGHT A BOTTLE OF SAKE AND INVITED ME TO HAVE A DRINK WITH HIM.



PLEASE READ BOOK FROM RIGHT TO LEFT

