



## Path Of The Assassin, Vol. 4 (v. 4)

*By Kazuo Koike*

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War! Ninjas! Love! Political Intrigue! It's all packed into Path of the Assassin. Drafted by classic samurai manga creators Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima of Lone Wolf and Cub fame, Path of the Assassin is the story of a young shogun on his way to unite Japan and the trusty ninja assigned to protect him. Be it in crafty maneuverings of war, political push and pull or bedroom adventures, young Hattori Hanzo will not be kept from his duties.

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## Editorial Review

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Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, has just won his first battle when his foster father is killed, which is sad but simplifies Ieyasu's next choice of an ally. Meanwhile, the fathers of Ieyasu's ninja Hanzo and his fiancée, Tsukumo, oppose the marriage because two families' lords are potential rivals. Later, Hanzo rescues Ieyasu's wife and children from a sadistic warlord, precipitating an attempt on Hanzo's life and, oddly, estrangement between him and Ieyasu. The greatest excitement in this volume of Koike and Kojima's historical epic occurs in close quarters, where Kojima shows himself as accomplished at subtle facial expressions as slashing action. *Ray Olson*

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### About the Author

Though widely respected as a powerful writer of graphic fiction, Kazuo Koike has spent a lifetime reaching beyond the bounds of the comics medium. Aside from co-creating and writing the successful Lone Wolf and Cub and Crying Freeman manga, Koike has hosted television programs; founded a golf magazine; produced movies; written popular fiction, poetry, and screenplays; and mentored some of Japan's best manga talent. Lone Wolf and Cub was first serialized in Japan in 1970 (under the title Kozure Okami) in Manga Action magazine and continued its hugely popular run for many years, being collected as the stories were published, and reprinted worldwide. Koike collected numerous awards for his work on the series throughout the next decade. Starting in 1972, Koike adapted the popular manga into a series of six films, the Baby Cart Assassin saga, garnering widespread commercial success and critical acclaim for his screenwriting.

This wasn't Koike's only foray into film and video. In 1996, Crying Freeman, the manga Koike created with artist Ryoichi Ikegami, was produced in Hollywood and released to commercial success in Europe and is currently awaiting release in America.

And to give something back to the medium that gave him so much, Koike started the Gekiga Sonjuku, a college course aimed at helping talented writers and artists - such as Ranma 1/2 creator Rumiko Takahashi - break into the comics field.

The driving focus of Koike's narrative is character development, and his commitment to character is clear: "Comics are carried by characters. If a character is well created, the comic becomes a hit." Kazuo Koike's continued success in comics and literature has proven this philosophy true.

Kojima is a self-taught painter who began painting advertising posters for movie theaters to pay his bills. In 1967, Kojima broke into the magazine market.

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