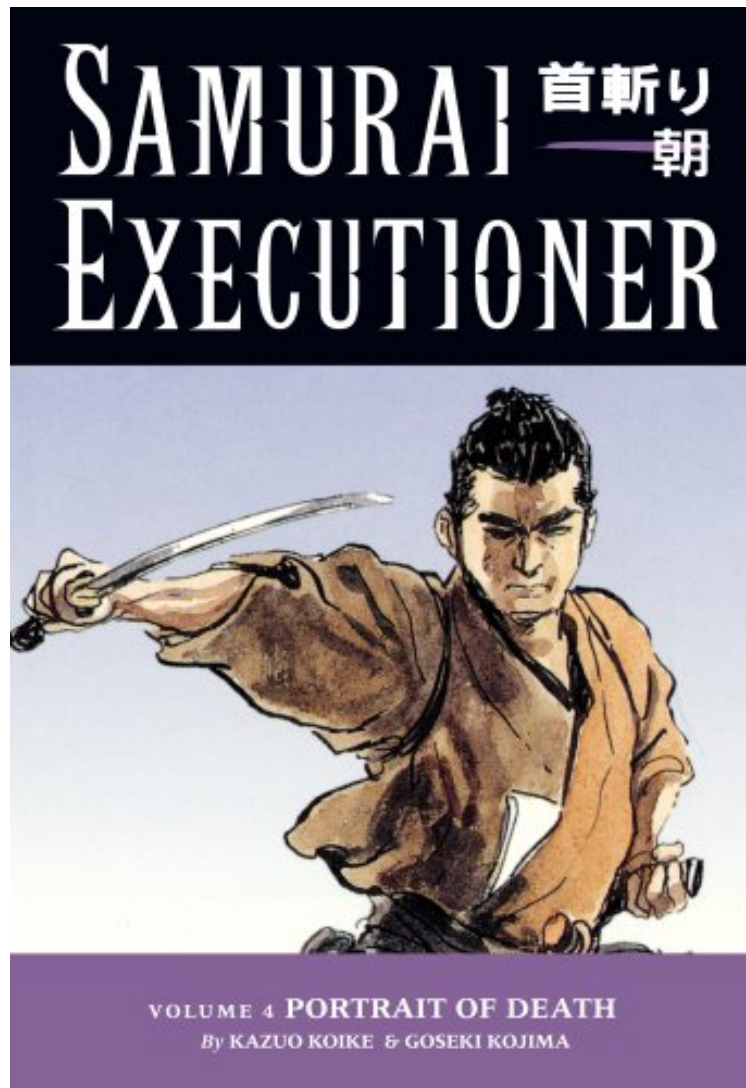


Samurai Executioner Volume 4: Portrait of Death

Von Kazuo Koike, Goseki Kojima
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Von Kazuo Koike, Goseki Kojima : Samurai Executioner Volume 4: Portrait of Death before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Samurai Executioner Volume 4: Portrait of Death:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Capital punishment, deterrence and art in feudal JapanVon Lawrance Bernabo"Portrait of Death," Volume 4 in the "Samurai Executioner" series, is quite unusual in that we end up getting about three-fourths of the way through its pages become Yamada Asaemon performs the sole execution in these four stories. But then writer Kazuo Koike and artist Goseki

Kojima are obviously more interested in re-creating the Edo period in Japan and weaving stories out of things as simple as the first new straw of the season than in providing graphic depiction of sex and death. The latter are why a Parental Advisory is slapped on the cover of these manga before they are wrapped in plastic, but it is the former that makes these episodic stories as interesting in their own way as the epic saga of "Lone Wolf Cub." Each story seems to draw out even further the contrast between the brutal world of the shogunate and the nobility of the title character:(12) "An Offering of Cut Mochi" begins with a group of samurai doing the horaku drill, in which they place plain unglazed swallow earthen pans on their foreheads and attack each other to determine who is best: break a horaku and the wearer is treated as if he were dead. Yamada Asaemon is invited to dine with the samurai and we are told that this encounter would lead to the one and only tragic friendship that the Executioner would ever make. This is something of a path-not-taken story for the title character, although what is more important are the politics of the time and the economic realities of employing samurai. Notice where Koike and Kojima choose to end this tale, which is a nice way of underscoring the point being made.(13) "Portrait of Death" has Asaemon refusing to allow a woman to witness the executions he performs. She is an artist who has created realistic pictures of sword testing. When she makes a personal plea, Asaemon discovers the secret of why it is that she knows so much about the intimate art of sword testing and why she is driven to make such pictures. However, neither the young woman nor the reader would suspect the counter-proposal that Asaemon has to make once he learns the truth. What I especially liked about this story is that the mystery that sets the chain of events into motion is not resolved, which is a strong indication that the point being made relates to something else. This is another story where Asaemon discusses the philosophical aspects of his job and the right way of doing it.(14) "The Season of New Straw" is a very short story of only 16 pages. A young girl comes into town selling new straw, which she explains to Asaemon young women put into their hair because they believe it improves their circulation. Even though there are no women in his house, the Decapitator asks if he may have some new straw and there is a reason for his strange request. A simple story that offers a link between beauty and death.(15) "The Set-up" begins with an interesting discussion of capital punishment in that time and place. Both the economics of beheadings and its efficacy as a deterrent are discussed. But when a moratorium is placed on executions and the prison becomes overcrowded, the prisoners take matters into their own hands, keeping the population level the same by "setting-up" new prisoners for death. This, in turn, leads to a prison riot, at which point is it time for Decapitator Asaemon to restore order. But he is a minor character in this story and really functions as a deus ex machina device to quickly end the story.

KurzbeschreibungA frenetic mix of samurai honor, base violence, and the blood of beheading, Samurai Executioner, is not for the faint of heart. For those who love blood and guts crime drama, historical fiction, and brutal action, this is right up your alley. The men who brought you Lone Wolf Cub also created Kubikiri Asa, a young ronin samurai who helps keep the peace by putting the fear of beheading into Edo's criminals. But it doesn't always work, and so he has to. Full of squirting blood, fast-paced samurai swordwork, and the drama that comes from human corruption, Samurai Executioner is like no other classic manga. Never before published in America, Samurai Executioner was the companion to one of the most seminal works of manga, Lone Wolf Cub! FOR MATURE

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