

Strip 9: Endearing Heroes' Quest For Purity

Panel 1: Megmeg, Master Swordsmanship and Patty-hime approach a traditional japanese-style gate that separates the snow-covered mountain path from Kurenai's home village. Megmeg is still holding a KFC-style bucket of Chicken that she plans to give to the village elders. A large snowman, about 7 feet tall, holding a spear is guarding the gate by standing in front of it like a statue.

The gate looks like this, but with the gates and fencing especially high.

<https://muza-chan.net/japan/index.php/blog/japanese-traditional-gates-koraimon>

Panel 2: Megmeg continues walking while talking to her companions, too busy gloating to pay attention to where she's walking.

1. MEGMEG:
See? I didn't get us lost! This is the village, exactly where I left it.

Panel 3: Megmeg runs into the snowman's large, wall-like torso, embedding her face.

1. SFX:
BWUMP
2. MEGMEG:
Woah!

Panel 4: Megmeg pulls herself out of the snowman's torso while Swordsmanship pokes fun at her.

1. MEGMEG:
Hey, what gives????
2. SWORDSMANSHIP:
Did you leave that snowman there, too? BWAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

Panel 5: The snowman threateningly stamps the shaft of his spear on the ground. Patty-hime, not perceptive of the Snowman's authoritative gestures, lightly applauds the snowman as a spectacle.

1. SFX:
CLANG!
2. PATTY-HIME:
Amazing! The snowman moves on its own!

3. SNOWMAN:
The impure are not welcome.

Panel 6: Patty-hime is taken aback by the accusation of being impure.

1. PATTY-HIME:
Oh dear! I promise! I have taken a bath today.

Panel 7: The Snowman guard swings his spear horizontally at the group. Swordsmanship bounds out of the way while princess-carrying Patty-hime, who was too distracted to react to the attack. Megmeg jumps out of the way on her own, still carrying the KFC.

1. SNOWMAN:
The impure are not welcome. Leave.
2. MEGMEG:
Sheesh!!! What's with this thing? One day, I'm the will of the gods, the next I'm impure????

Panel 8: Megmeg regains her composure and displays the KFC for the Snowman to see.

1. MEGMEG:
Hey, don't be like that. It's me, Megmeg! I'm the girl from the shrine to help you train your new guardian. Look, I even brought a holiday present!

Panel 9: The Snowman continues to brandish its spear.

1. SNOWMAN:
I am aware of who you are. I have also noticed what you're holding. Food from the outside world corrupts, so it is unwelcome.

Panel 10: Megmeg hastily discards the KFC with the same energy as someone trying to sweep something under a rug. Swordsmanship catches the KFC bucket behind Megmeg, fully intent on eating the food.

1. MEGMEG:
O-oh! Uh, that's just...y'know. It's nothing!!!!
2. SWORDSMANSHIP:
Have no fear, Megmeg. I shall take care of the food.

Panel 11: Swordsmanship greedily devours all of the chicken. Megmeg stands, awkwardly scratching the back of her head. The Snowman is completely unimpressed by the group.

1. SNOWMAN:
You are still impure.

Panel 12: Patty-hime earnest, ashamed, and overly dramatic with a comical tear falling from her eye, admits that she lied earlier about having taken a bath. Megmeg, playing the straightman, assures Patty-hime that she isn't being judged for that.

1. PATTYHIME:
I'm sorry, guys. It's me. I hadn't bathed since last night. I don't sweat much since we haven't had any matches lately. I thought it would be okay.
2. MEGMEG:
Patty, I'm pretty sure that's not it...

Panel 13: The snowman finally retracts his spear to explain how Megmeg can prove her purity.

1. SNOWMAN:
If you want to enter the village, you may prove your purity by vanquishing the monster that has been plaguing the village. This will show that you carry the will of the gods within you, still.

Panel 14: Megmeg confidently answers for the group as if she were responding to a request for a favor.

1. MEGMEG:
Fine, we'll vanquish your monster.

END STRIP 9

Strip 10: Battle Against The Monster

Panel 1: Patty-hime marvels at the beast standing out of frame a short distance from the group. She is oblivious that it is the monster that they've been tasked to kill.

1. PATTY-HIME:
Oh my! What a fascinating creature...!

Panel 2: The massive beast is peacefully drinking water from a hole cut in a frozen pond.

1. SWORDSMANSHIP (Off):
My swordsmanship senses tell me our adversary is before us!

Panel 3: Patty-hime is disappointed, feeling sympathy for the monster.

1. PATTY-HIME:
Is it really?

Panel 4: Megmeg starts to charge a magic energy blast spell in her hand.

1. MEGMEG:
It certainly doesn't come off as something that would get along with that snowman.

Panel 5: The team charges forward to rush down the monster. Swordsmanship's sword is held, poised to cut the monster down, Megmeg runs, thrusting the hand with the magic energy blast forward. Patty-hime reluctantly follows behind.

1. MEGMEG:
Let's take it down!!!!

Panel 6: The monster hears the group coming and roars as it lashes out at the group.

1. SFX:
GROOOOWRRR!!!!

Panel 7: Megmeg fires 3 magic energy blasts at the monster.

Panel 8: The blasts hit their target, but they don't phase the monster.

Panel 9: Swordsmanship readies his sword in a high stance. Megmeg is disappointed in how ineffective her attack was.

1. MEGMEG:
Cripes, this thing's pretty tough!
2. SWORDSMANSHIP:
You gotta put your back into it! Let me show you!

Panel 10: Swordsmanship charges in to strike the monster with his sword.

Panel 11: The monster intercepts Swordsmanship with a magical energy blast of its own.

1. SFX:
BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZTTT

Panel 12: Swordsmanship is blasted right back to where Megmeg is standing. Megmeg has a magical barrier up, blocking her from the blast.

Panel 13: Master Swordsmanship lies on the ground, sizzling from the blast he took but isn't so defeated that he can't make a joke. Megmeg continues to block incoming blasts from the monster.

1. SWORDSMANSHIP:
That was a pretty good shot. You could learn a thing or two from him.
2. MEGMEG:
Oh, shut up.
3. SWORDSMANSHIP:
BWAHAHAHAHAHA!

Panel 14: Megmeg, starting to sweat, keeps her barrier up as she tries to hatch up a plan.

1. MEGMEG:
Maybe attacking it head-on wasn't a great idea. We need a way to let you get a clean hit, Master Swordsmanship.

Panel 15: Swordsmanship is back on his feet, impressed with Megmeg's observation. Patty-hime's head isn't quite in the game as she contemplates the meaning of life with a furrowed brow.

1. SWORDSMANSHIP:

Yes! Our foe isn't quite the sitting duck I would like it to be.

2. PATTY-HIME:

I wonder if ducks used to enjoy spending time at this pond, too...

Panel 16: Megmeg gets an epiphany inspired by Patty-hime's musings.

1. MEGMEG:

That's it! We'll use the pond. Everyone, follow my lead!

END STRIP 10

Strip 11: The Battle Concludes

Panel 1: Megmeg fires more magic energy blasts while taunting the monster to cause a distraction.

1. MEGMEG:
Look over here, big guy! Can you handle this?
2. SFX:
BLAM BLAM BLAM

Panel 2: The blasts explode as they hit the monster, making it angry and fully distracted.

1. SFX:
GWOOOOOOOOOAR

Panel 3: While the monster roars and shoots energy blasts back at Megmeg, Patty-hime is melting the ice in the pond with a magic fire spell from behind the monster.

1. SFX:
GWOOOOOOOOOAR
2. PATTY-HIME:
Excuse me. Please don't notice me.
3. SFX:
FWOOOOSH

Panel 4: Megmeg is working up a sweat from firing her distraction blasts and blocking the returning fire from the monster.

1. MEGMEG:
Are you about done there, m'lady?

Panel 5: Patty-hime signals that her part is done by giving Megmeg a thumbs-up.

Panel 6: Megmeg fires off one of her signature magic spells to push the monster into the pond

1. MEGMEG:
Alright! How do you like this one?
2. MEGMEG:
Maho Mega Megmeg BUSTER!!!!

Panel 7: The attack hits the monster and the monster bellows as it is forced backward.

1. SFX:
BWOOOOOSH
2. SFX:
GWOOOOOOOOOAR

Panel 8: The monster crashes into the pond.

Panel 9: Megmeg urgently signals Master Swordsmanship to strike the monster while it can't fend for itself.

1. MEGMEG:
Now, Master Swordsmanship!

Panel 10: Swordsmanship drops from above with a glorious, explosive downward slash that crashes him into the water as well. He delivers this finishing blow with his battlecry.

1. SWORDSMANSHIP:
SWORDSMANSHIP!!!!

Panel 11: Patty-hime and Megmeg watch the water in anticipation, waiting for either Swordsmanship or the monster to float back up.

Panel 12: Master Swordsmanship returns to the surface of the water and gives a thumbs-up.

Panel 13: Back on solid ground, a soggy sack full of proof of their victory is held up by Master Swordsmanship.

1. PATTY-HIME:
Poor thing...

Panel 14: Patty-hime sadly hangs her head as she continues to feel sympathy for the monster.

1. PATTY-HIME:
The villagers call it a monster, but what do you suppose it called itself?

Panel 15: Master Swordsmanship offers his condolences the way a battle-hardened older fellow would to a forlorn child.

1. SWORDSMANSHIP:

All it cared about was seeing another day. I imagine it didn't need to worry about identifying as anything but alive and was content in being such.

Panel 16: Patty-hime wipes her tears.

1. PATTY-HIME:

It certainly was...

END STRIP 11

Strip 12: Here Comes Whimsy

Panel 1: Megmeg raises the bag of proof of their victory at the snowman in front of the village gates.

1. MEGMEG:
Alright, we did it. We vanquished your monster.

Panel 2: The snowman eyeballs the soggy bag before him.

1. SNOWMAN:
I confirm. I no longer sense its presence.
2. SNOWMAN (Aside):
The bag is unnecessary.

Panel 3: Megmeg tosses the bag aside. Patty-hime watches where the bag lands in the background.

1. MEGMEG:
Are we “pure” enough now?

Panel 4: The snowman is very matter-of-fact.

1. SNOWMAN:
You are, indeed, the will of the gods.

Panel 5: The snowman looks over at Swordsmanship and Patty-hime. Swordsmanship is picking his teeth with his sword. Patty-hime is making a makeshift grave for the monster, burying the bag of proof of victory.

1. SNOWMAN:
Your companions, however...

Panel 6: Master Swordsmanship thrusts sword toward the sky with the pride of a Musketeer.

1. SWORDSMANSHIP:
I assure you! There is nothing more pure than SWORDSMANSHIP!

Panel 7: The snowman is unconvinced by Swordsmanship's argument. Swordsmanship commits to his stance, answering with what he considers poetic verse.

1. SNOWMAN:
I saw what you did with the impure food.
2. SWORDSMANSHIP:
You say the food was impure, but the deliciousness was like the freshly-fallen snow...BWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAH!

Panel 8: Patty-hime starts to feel like a burden and offers a solution.

1. PATTY-HIME:
Perhaps you should leave us for now, Megmeg.

Panel 9: Megmeg is taken aback by the idea of leaving her companions behind. Patty-hime is still conflicted, head tilted, with furrowed brow. Swordsmanship wants to be included in the conversation and pokes his head into the frame.

1. MEGMEG:
What?????? No way!!!! We're in this together. Besides, AppleII probably wouldn't like for you to be left out here.
2. SWORDSMANSHIP:
Swordsmanship!
3. MEGMEG:
You know what I mean. I'm not going to leave you two out in the snow.

Panel 10: The snowman's stoicism is almost broken by his feeling offended.

1. SNOWMAN:
What's wrong with snow?

Panel 11: Megmeg throws a silent glare at the snowman as if to say "Shut up, don't start something else with me!" The snowman, sensing the threat, drops the conversation.

Panel 12: Megmeg addresses her two companions again, forcing a positive smile.

1. MEGMEG:
We just need to show this guy that you two are pure enough to enter.

Panel 13: Patty-hime is puzzled, unable to come up with a new answer.

1. PATTY-HIME:
I'm afraid I wouldn't even know how to qualify...

Panel 14: Patty-hime clasps her hands together over her heart, the perfect picture of a lonely maiden missing her lover. As she thinks this, jingle bells can be heard faintly approaching from the distance as if to answer her prayers.

1. PATTY-HIME:
If he were here, I'm sure he'd be able to explain it to me...
2. SFX:
Jingle Jangle Jingle Jangle

Panel 15: The sound of jingle bells start to reverberate through the air, getting closer. Patty-hime is completely unfamiliar with the sound and is curious about it. Megmeg is confused about it. The Snowman readies his spear, alarmed by it. Swordsmanship fingers his ear, thinking it's tinnitus.

1. SFX:
Jingle Jangle Jingle Jangle

Panel 16: Megmeg baffled and a little bit alarmed by the serendipitous bells. Patty-hime gazes out of frame and sees the source of the jingle bells approaching in the distances and her heart flutters

1. MEGMEG:
Why do I hear jingle bells????
2. PATTY-HIME:
Could it be...!

Panel 17: Everyone looks where Patty-hime is watching to find Apple II, Patty-hime's beloved knight in shining sweatshirt, descending from the sky, guiding a jolly, gift-filled sleigh alongside a handful of reindeer. The reindeer trot as they fly the sleigh and Apple II runs with them to similar effect.

1. SFX:
Jingle Jangle Jingle Jangle
2. MEGMEG:
Apple II?!