In The Eye of The Tiger

A Shotokan Tragicomic

2019

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This story is based on true events.

Well, sort of. Some creative license has been taken. Actually, a lot has. There's a ton of things here that are totally fabricated out of my fertile imagination. So it's not totally reliable. But Jairo Blanco, Marcia Blanco, and Kevin Racek were there, and they're much more reliable. At least I think so... This comic is dedicated to them.

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Burlington, VT
This is the story of how a great warrior, 
The Samurai Criollo,*

faced certain death... and survived.

* Criollo [cre-yojo-columbia]: native, connotations of racial mixing
His origins are mysterious. Some say he was a **ronin**—a leaderless, roving Samurai...

... from a remote Andean plateau.

But with his companion, M.—a formidable Samurai herself—he settled in Vermont,

serving as a **hata moto** (official) under the **daimyo** (feudal lord) of New York City.
Every summer, the daimyo invites all the Samurai in his domain to spend several days together, participating in...

Intensive training...

Welcome to Summer Camp

HI-YA!!...yna?

...Joyful combat between friends

Who let in the white belt?

...and rituals of promotion in rank.
The Samurai Criollo was well-liked and respected by the other Samurai and karatekas at camp...

...but he was suspicious by nature and always prepared for betrayal and danger.
So he traveled with his bodyguards, the ever-loyal "Brigada de los Cinturones Blancos," or "White Belt Brigade." Among the most fierce were:

**Panchito, the (Over) Confident**

- Life-long white belt, will only become 'black' belt due to accumulation of dirt and stains on his belt.

- and-

**Diego, the (Semi) Capable**

- Both widely feared and very fearful, he destroys foes due to lack of control and only by accident.
Their duties to the Sensei were varied, from...

Polishing his car...

Wax on, wax off

Wax on, wax off

... and his prized llama-skin machete scabbard.

... to tasting his food in case of attempted poisoning!

Here you go, sir. It all checks out.

Gross!
But their most sacred duty was to protect their Sensei at all costs, even sacrificing their own lives to ensure his survival.

White belts die first. Go die.
During that fateful summer, the Samurai Criollo was proud to train with some of the most renowned Samurai-Karatekas, who traveled from Japan to lead the summer training, including:

**The Humble Master**

- 8th Dan
- Due to many decades of hammering on the makiwara with his fists, he must tie his swollen hands with tape. Total bad-ass.
- Like the black panther, he is reserved and stealthy. Before you know it, he is on you with ferocious power and speed, tearing at your throat.
The Genial Teacher

- 7th Dan
- Friendly and approachable, but, at the same time, deadly serious in training.
- Like the hippopotamus, he moves his mass with astonishing—and lethal—speed.

The Fervent Young Warrior

- 5th Dan
- Handsome and charismatic, often seen posing for photos with the young ladies.
- Like the tiger, his ferocity is camouflaged by an agreeable exterior.
All day long, the masters worked the karatekas, producing great suffering and exhaustion.

But during dinner, their spirits began to lift, as their thoughts turned to the evening's revelries.
Libations flowed freely!

Things got so lively that the Fervent Young Warrior decided to join the party, which added to the merriment, since he had already consumed generous quantities of libation on his own!

*Party, he speaks little English.*
With the arrival of the Fervent Young Warrior, the Samurai Criollo relaxed. Not even his boldest enemy would dare to try anything. He released his body guards for the night.

Rest well. Tomorrow you may need to die for me.

OSSUU!

It would be a pleasure Sir! To rest, er, I mean to die for you!

It was a fateful decision!
The Fervent Young Warrior, now quite drunk, began to make inappropriate advances on the single young ladies...

...making everybody uncomfortable.

The women cleverly resisted and escaped...

#MeToo!

The Samurai Criollo stepped in...

Excuse me, Master, may I sit with you?

driven by a sense of honor.
The interruption made the Warrior livid. He slammed a beer bottle on the table, cutting his hand.

**NO!!**
Bad man! Why do you do that?!! Huh? HUH?*

*English better in anger.

The tiger... unleashed!
The party cleared out immediately.

Black belts move very fast when they need to!

And the Samurai Criollo found himself in the eye of the tiger...

*kill*

...contemplating his own death.
Where are my bodyguards when I really need them?!
On second thought... last time we were in a fight, they didn't die for me...

Help!

Uh... guys?

I'm on my own here... I will have to rely on my training to get out of this one.
Ah! I know the answer here...

- **Seek Perfection of Character.** I cannot do that if I am dead.
- **Be Faithful.** I am faithful to staying alive.
- **Endeavor.** Not just to save myself from mortal injury, but to do it in the most excellent way possible.
- **Respect Others.** Especially this tiger.
- **Refrain From Violent Behavior.** Because if I don’t, he’ll tear me apart. The wise course here is to back away slowly...
The Samurai Criollo averted his gaze, stood up, bowed...

...and took off running!

The tiger went on a rampage. The Samurai Criollo hid in the room where his bodyguards slept.
Diego and Panchito were unimpressed...

Sounds like a typical Saturday night during college to me...

Yeah. He'll eventually just pass out in a pool of his own vomit...

... by the apparent danger.

Meanwhile, Helen of Troy Albany, took control of the situation out in the hall.

Now, cut the shit. I'm a mom. Go to bed and sleep it off.

Meow?
SIX MONTHS LATER...

Sensei, whatever happened to that tiger?

I hope all those push-ups I made you do taught you a lesson about being ready to die for me...

OSSUU!! ... and the tiger?

They put him in the zoo for a while, and I understand a tiger has its eye on him...

THE END