

FROM CASK TO CARTOON

A popular Japanese comic focusing on wine attracts new oenophiles.

When siblings Yuko and Shin Kibayashi created their comic series, *Kami no Shizuka* (*Drops of God*), they didn't imagine the effect it would have on wine drinking throughout Asia. Their popular *manga* (Japanese comic/print cartoon) chronicles the adventures of Kanzaki Shizuku, whose task is to find and taste 13 bottles of wine—a dozen of which are nicknamed "The 12 Apostles" in addition to the grail, or "Drops of God"—to claim his inheritance from his oenologist father.

As Shin recalls, "It was with the third volume that it really took off." That's where a 2001 Château Mont-Pélat from Bordeaux is lovingly described to be "like the voice of Queen's lead vocalist, sweet and husky, enveloped in thick guitar riffs and heavy drums." The *manga*-endorsed wines began flying off the shelves of wine shops throughout Asia. Yuko continues, "We got phone

calls from France asking 'What's going on in Japan?'"

Since then there have been more calls from well-heeled wine lovers to taste rare featured vintages and producers eager to have their wines highlighted in the pages of the comic. Last year a French translation was printed, and this year Japanese and Korean TV adaptations of the comic were produced. The authors hope to print an English version soon.

Drops of God isn't always going to be limited to the Old World, according to Shin. "We have many favorites from the USA: Heitz Cellar and Camus come to mind. Stags Leap Cask 23—it's very popular in Japan! And Oregon wines like Domaine Serene.

"In fact, the volume after next, due out in fall 2009, will highlight American wines," he adds. "But I can't tell you which ones. You'll just have to wait." —NICOLAS VROMAN



HEITZ WINE CELLARS Martha's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon



KAMI NO SHIZUKU

(Excerpt from July 2009)

The international market has always been an integral part of our success at Heitz Wine Cellars.

In Japan, novel wine narratives such as comic-book sensation "*Kami no Shizuku*" (translated as "The Drops of God") relate heroic journeys to find the best wines in the world.

A recent edition praised *Heitz Martha's Vineyard Cabernet*, describing the wine as "deep purple which is reminiscent of black darkness, eucalyptus and mint aromas with unusual notes, a mixture of west and east in the glass . . ."