

HANA TO YUME COMICS

Glass Mask

Suzue Miuchi

40



花とゆめCOMICS



THE STORY SO FAR

The Crimson Goddess - a play known to all as an immortal theatrical masterpiece. It became a lost legend when Tsukikage Chigusa, who held its performing rights, retired from the world of acting, but now she has decided that either Himekawa Ayumi or Kitajima Maya will inherit the leading role and return the masterpiece to center stage.

The two girls took on the challenge of interpreting Wind, Fire, Water, and Earth to understand the nature of the Crimson Goddess. However, with the arrival of the final test, performing the role of the Crimson Goddess, Tsukikage collapsed!

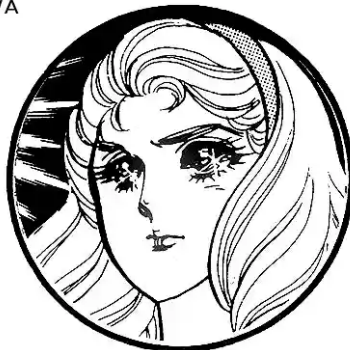
As Tsukikage straddled the border of life and death recalling the events of her life, Ozaki Ichiren, author of the Crimson Goddess and the other half of her soul, called her back from the brink.

Maya and Ayumi continued their harsh training in the valley of the plum trees. Ayumi, initially overwhelmed by Maya's natural genius, regained her self-confidence when she learned that Maya could not match her own expressive ability.

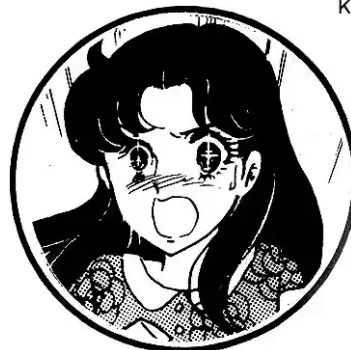
They finished their interpretations of the Crimson Goddess before long, and presented completely different, yet uniquely dazzling performances.

Now the curtain rises for the second act...

HIMEKAWA
AYUMI



KITAJIMA
MAYA



HAYAMI
MASUMI



TSUKIKAGE
CHIGUSA





FLASH

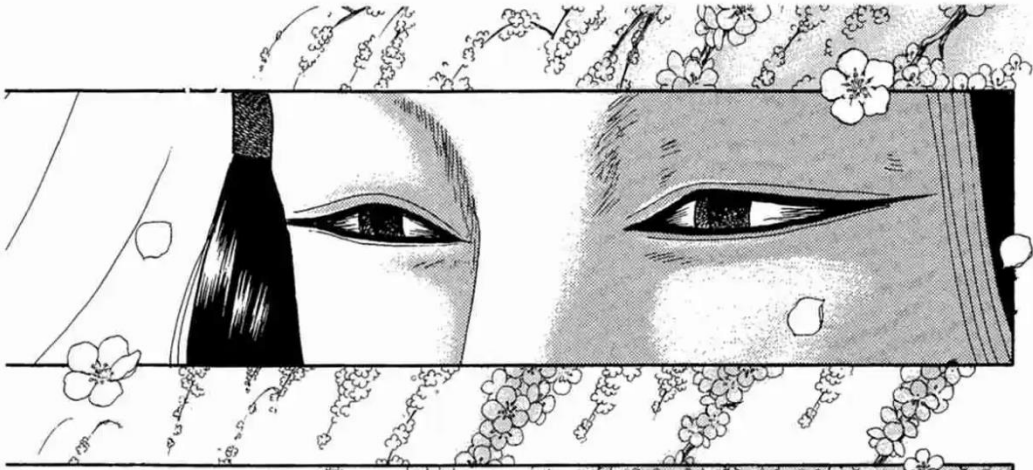
fwoosh

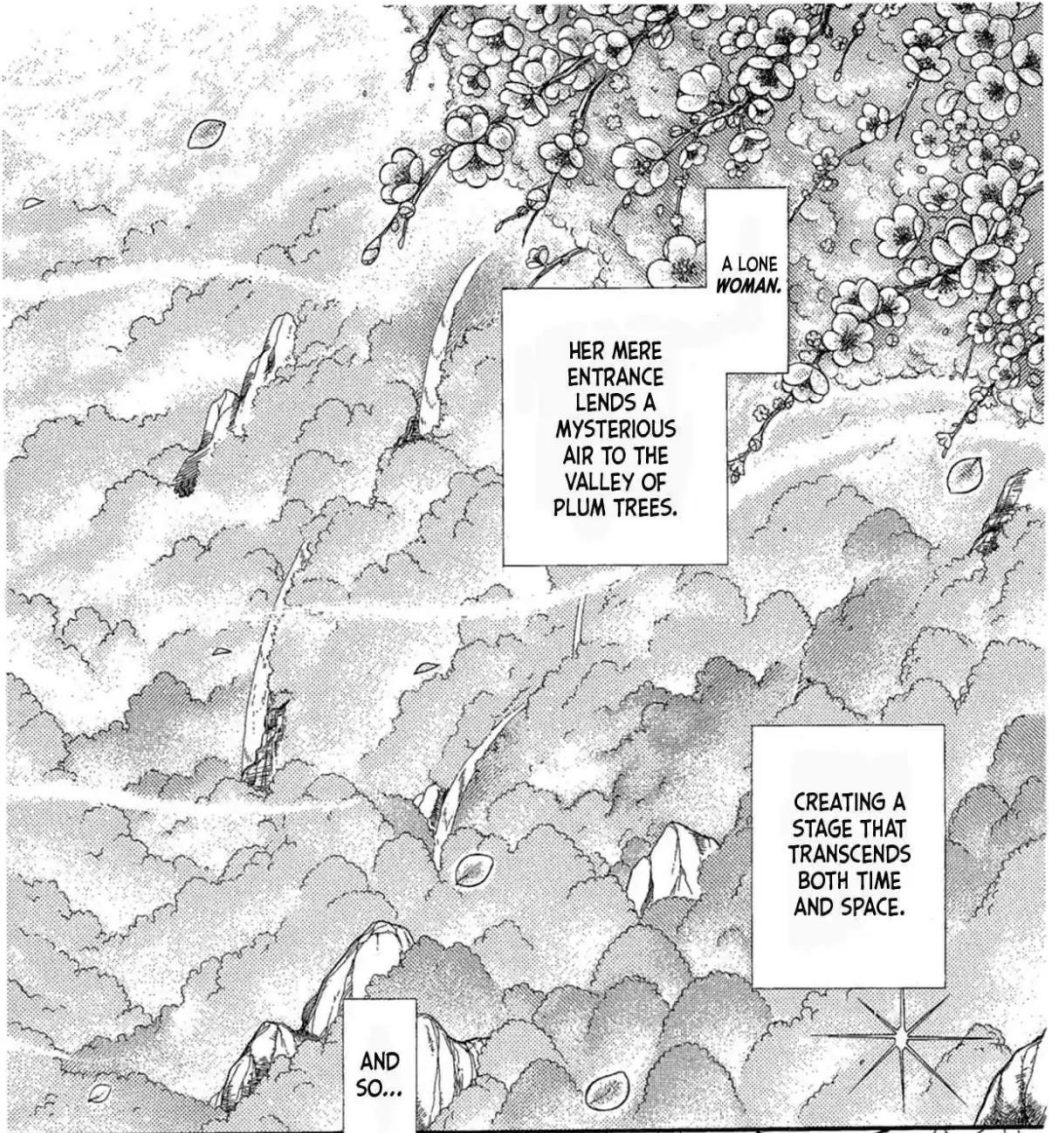
The Crimson Goddess takes the stage











A LONE
WOMAN.

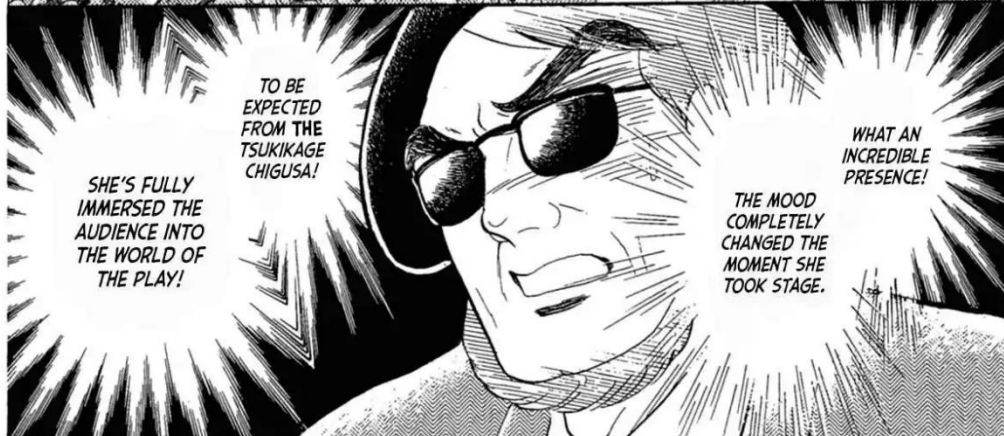
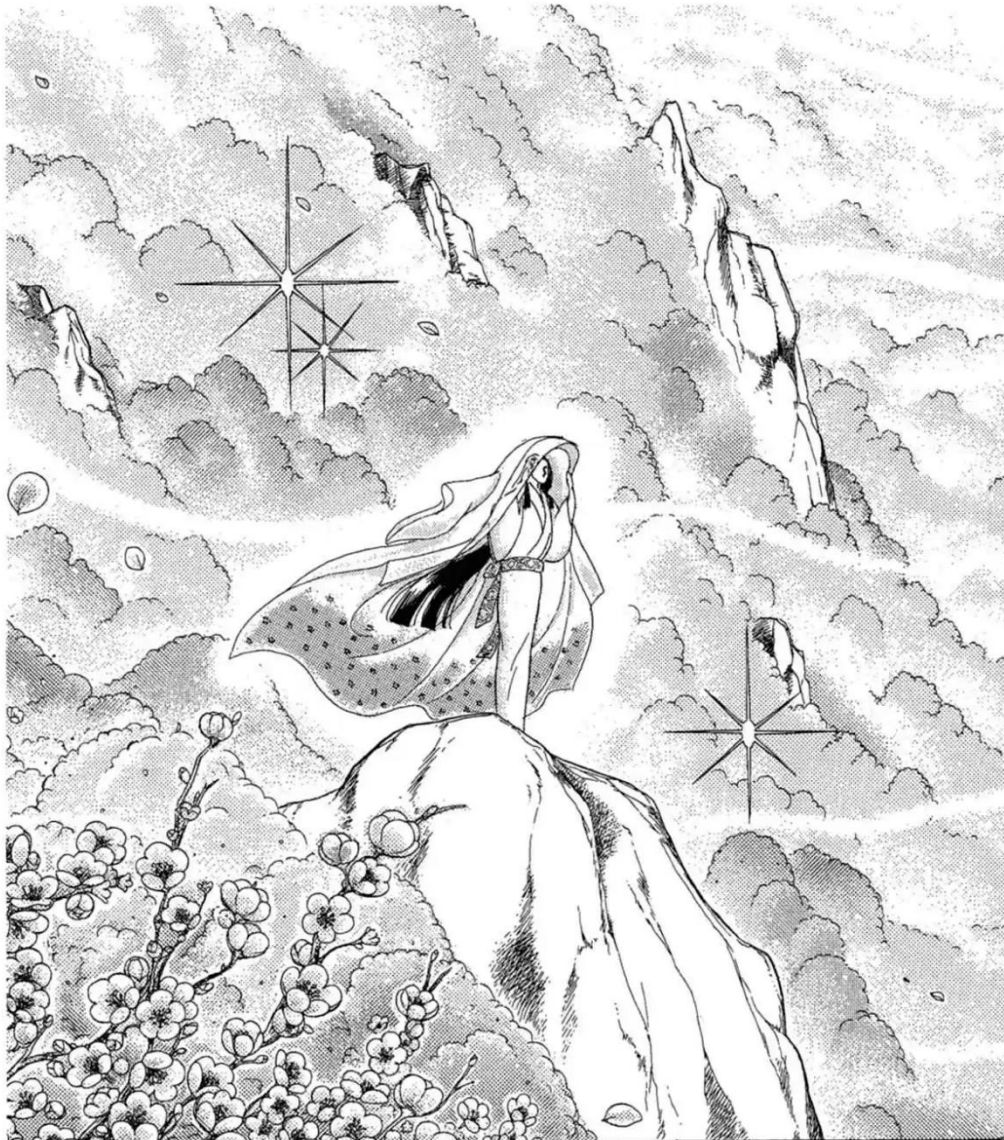
HER MERE
ENTRANCE
LEND A
MYSTERIOUS
AIR TO THE
VALLEY OF
PLUM TREES.

CREATING A
STAGE THAT
TRANSCENDS
BOTH TIME
AND SPACE.

AND
SO...



FROM THIS
MOMENT THE
AUDIENCE WILL
TRAVEL INTO A
DIFFERENT ERA.

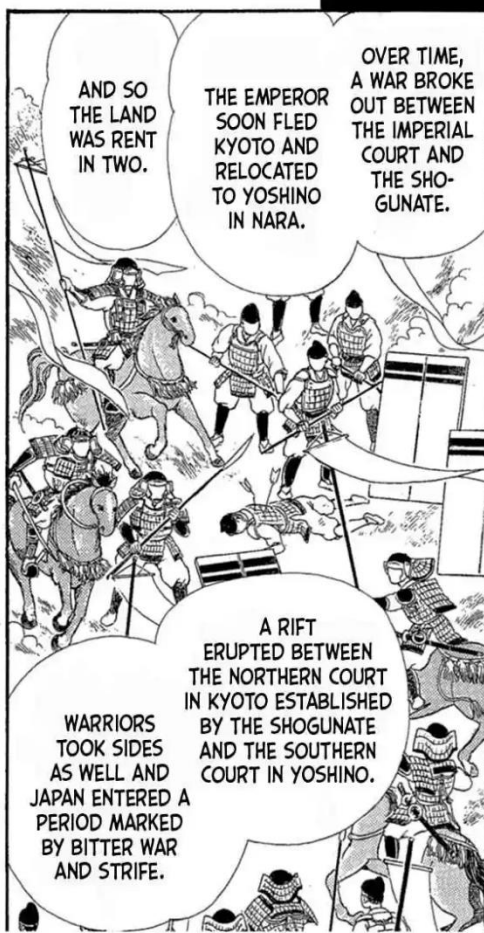


*SHE'S FULLY
IMMERSED THE
AUDIENCE INTO
THE WORLD OF
THE PLAY!*

*TO BE
EXPECTED
FROM THE
TSUKIKAGE
CHIGUSA!*

*THE MOOD
COMPLETELY
CHANGED THE
MOMENT SHE
TOOK STAGE.*

*WHAT AN
INCREDIBLE
PRESENCE!*





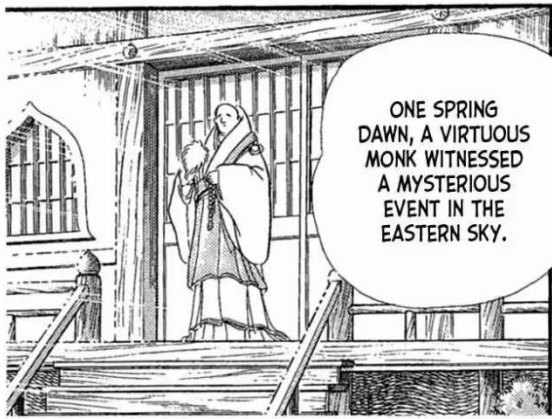
SOON THE GREAT TEMPLES OF NARA AND MOUNT HIEI WERE SET ABLAZE ONE AFTER THE OTHER,

EARTH-QUAKES DESTROYED THE MUD FLATS,



MOUNT FUJI ERUPTED AND LOST HUNDREDS OF METERS FROM ITS HEIGHT. GREAT CHANGES OCCURRED IN QUICK SUCCESSION...

PEOPLE TREMBLED AT THESE ILL OMENS.



ONE SPRING DAWN, A VIRTUOUS MONK WITNESSED A MYSTERIOUS EVENT IN THE EASTERN SKY.



IT WAS DURING THESE TIMES THAT...



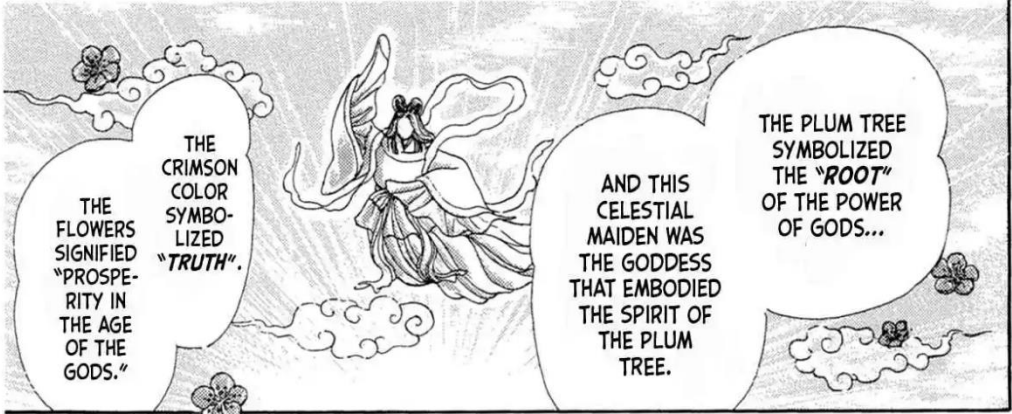
JUST AS
DAWN WAS
BREAKING,

A PLUM
TREE AP-
PEARED IN
THE CIRCLE
OF THE
SUN.

NO
SOONER
DID ITS
CRIMSON
FLOWERS
BLOS-
SOM...

THAN IT
ILLUMINATED
THE DARKNESS
AND TRANS-
FORMED INTO
A BEAUTIFUL
CELESTIAL
MAIDEN.

IN AN
INSTANT,
THE WORLD
WAS
ENVELOPED
IN LIGHT.

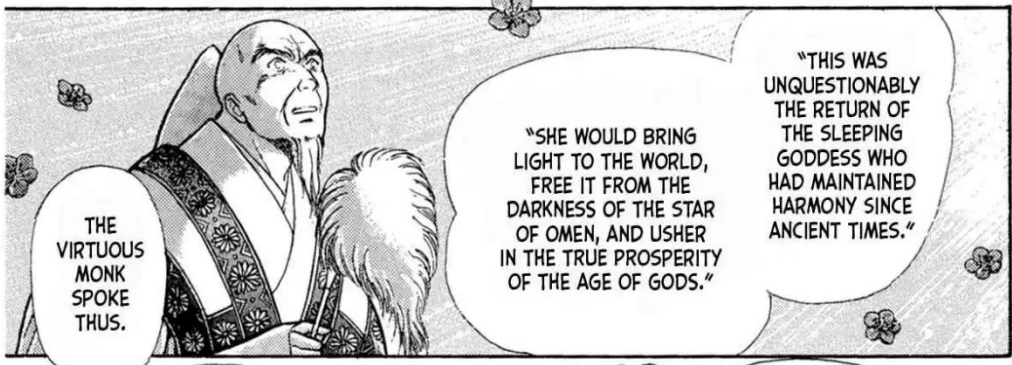


THE FLOWERS SIGNIFIED "PROSPERITY IN THE AGE OF THE GODS."

THE CRIMSON COLOR SYMBOLIZED "TRUTH".

THE PLUM TREE SYMBOLIZED THE "ROOT" OF THE POWER OF GODS...

AND THIS CELESTIAL MAIDEN WAS THE GODDESS THAT EMBODIED THE SPIRIT OF THE PLUM TREE.



THE VIRTUOUS MONK SPOKE THUS.

"SHE WOULD BRING LIGHT TO THE WORLD, FREE IT FROM THE DARKNESS OF THE STAR OF OMEN, AND USHER IN THE TRUE PROSPERITY OF THE AGE OF GODS."

"THIS WAS UNQUESTIONABLY THE RETURN OF THE SLEEPING GODDESS WHO HAD MAINTAINED HARMONY SINCE ANCIENT TIMES."



BUT THE FLAMES OF WAR GREW ONLY FIERCER... AND THEIR HEARTS GREW EVER MORE FRAYED.

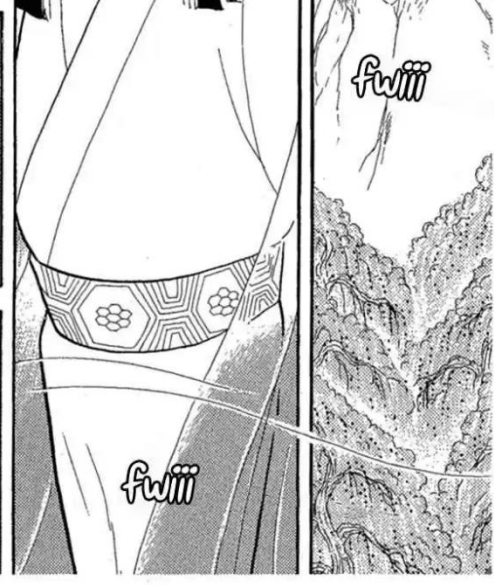
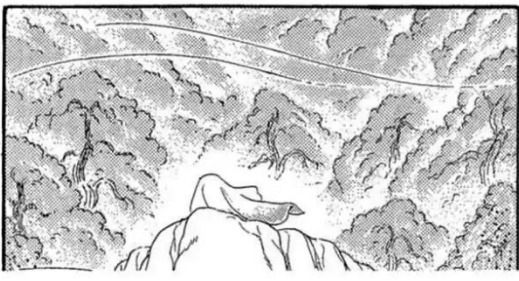
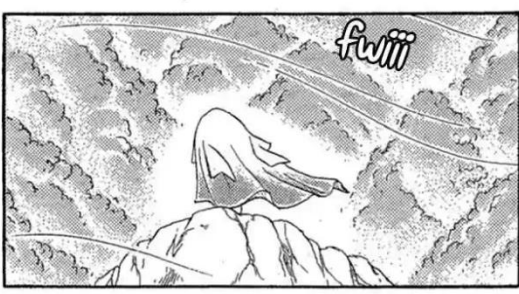
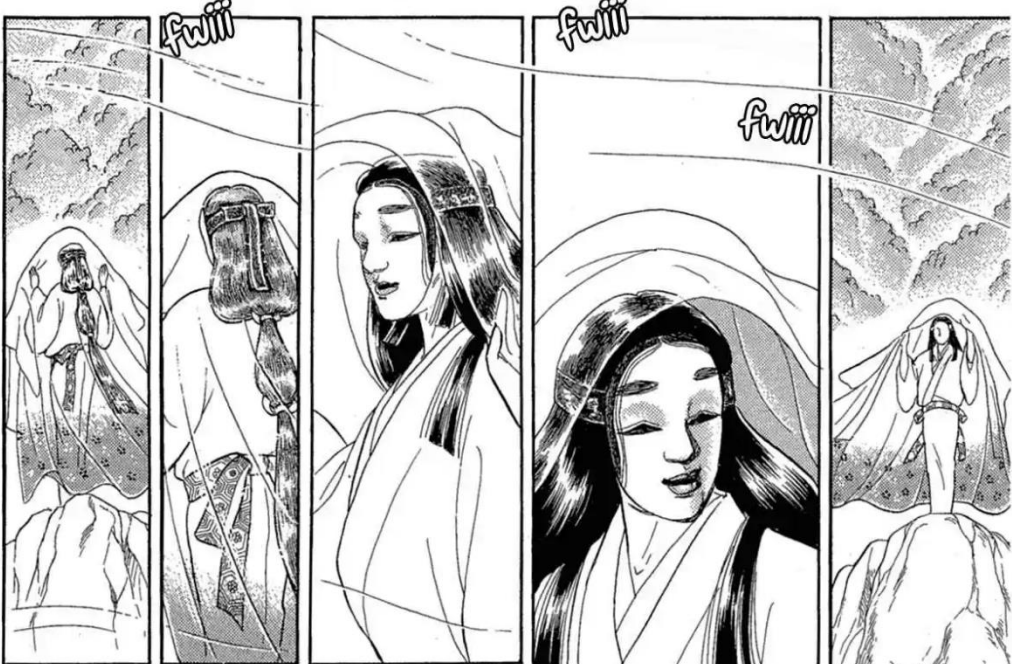
THE PEOPLE AWAITED THE RETURN OF THE GODDESS AND THE BLOSSOMING OF THE CRIMSON FLOWERS WHILE HOPING FOR PEACE,



fwi

DISAPPEARED FROM THE PEOPLE'S HEARTS.

AND SO, THROUGH THE MARCH OF TIME... BOTH THE STAR OF OMEN, AND THE CRIMSON FLOWERS OF THE GODDESS...





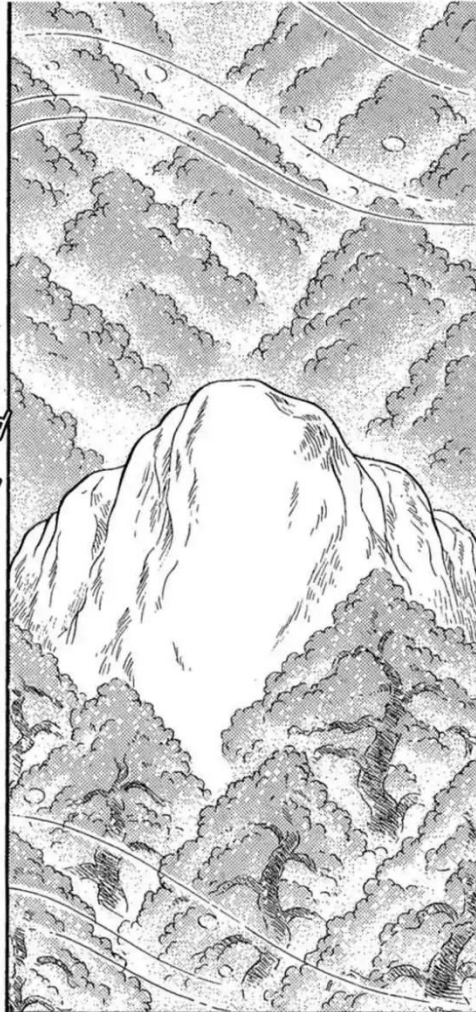
thud
thud



thud
thud
thud



thud



THE CROWD
IS CAPTIVATED
BY THE WORLD
OF THE PLAY!

HER
PRESENCE
REMAINS
EVEN AFTER
SHE HAS
LEFT...!

MAGNIFI-
CIENT...!

SHE HASN'T
SAID A WORD,
YET THE WAY SHE
STANDS ATOP THE
BOULDER LETS US
FEEL THE FLOW
OF TIME AND
FORESHADOWS
THE STORY!





COUNTLESS OTHERS LOST THEIR LIVES TO DISEASE.

PEOPLE STARVED AS FIELDS WITHERED FROM THE PROLONGED DROUGHT...

WHEN NIGHT FELL, BANDITS APPEARED... WHO ROBBED AND KILLED AS THEY PLEASED.



INDEED, A FIERCE STORM WAS OVERTAKING THE CAPITAL.



TWO EMPERORS."

"HERE, THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH SOW THE SEEDS OF STRIFE."
"THERE ARE TWO CAPITALS,"

LOOKING FROM ABOVE...
WERE TWO CROW TENGU WHO HAD RIDDEN THE WIND AND ARRIVED FROM AFAR.

"THIS LAND WILL NOT BE AT PEACE SO LONG AS IT IS SPLIT."

"KYOTO IN THE NORTH."
"YOSHINO IN THE SOUTH."

THEY DISCUSSED RUMORS OF THE CAPITAL.



KA-BANG



"I HEARD IT WAS A ZEN PRIEST FROM THE NIN-NA-JI TEMPLE."
"I HEARD IT WAS A HERMIT FROM MOUNT ATAKO."

"THERE ARE RUMORS THAT THE FORMER EMPEROR, THE ONE DRIVEN OUT FROM THE CAPITAL AND BURIED IN A MOSSY GRAVE IN THE SOUTHERN MOUNTAINS...

"THE NATION HAS BEEN BROKEN IN TWO AND EACH SIDE IS FUELLED WITH HATRED AS THEY GATHER STRENGTH TO FIGHT THE OTHER."

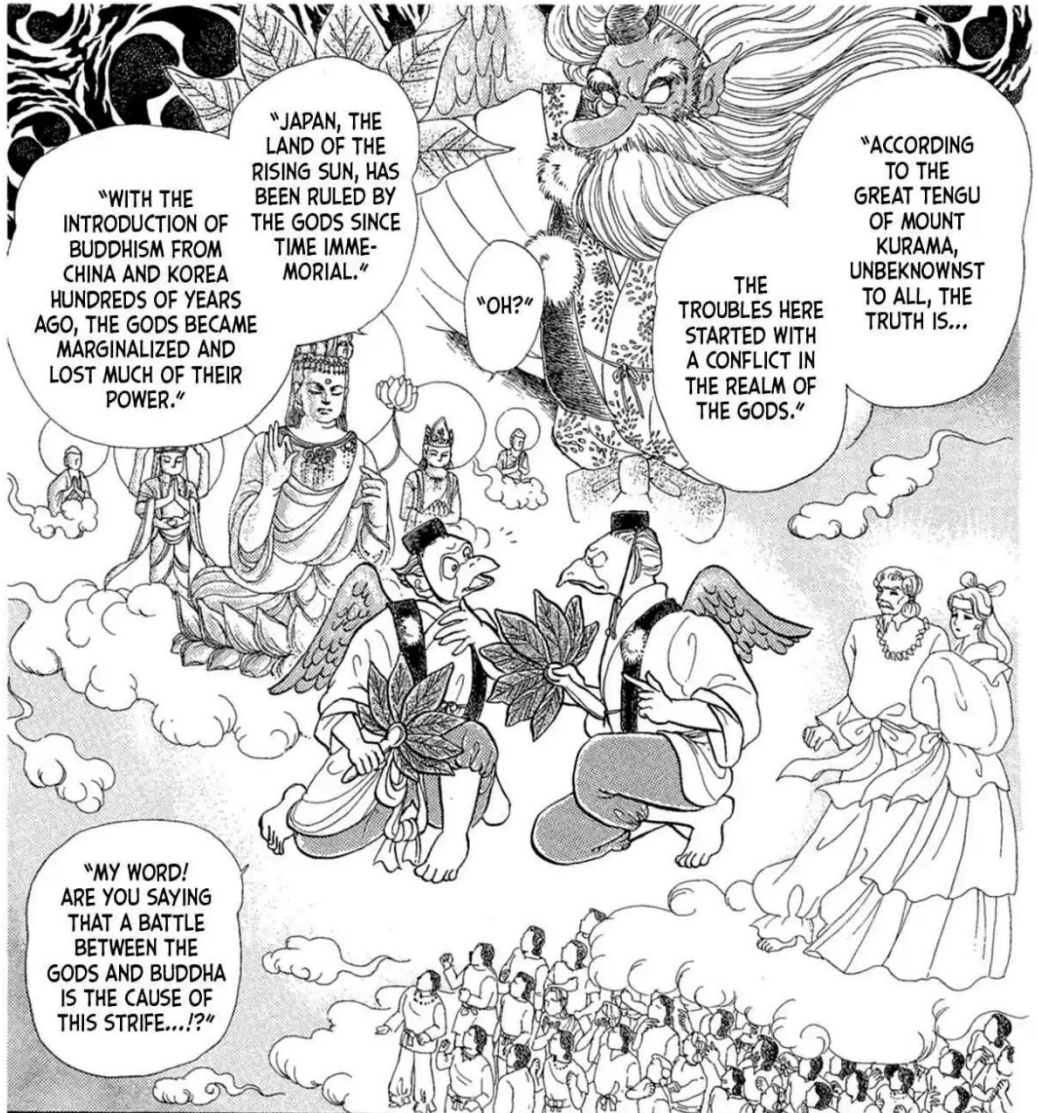
"BROTHER NOW FIGHTS BROTHER, PARENTS ATTACK THEIR CHILDREN, AND VASSALS EXPEL THE FAMILIES OF THEIR LORDS."

"THERE'S ALSO A RUMOR THAT THE PREVIOUS EMPEROR BECAME THE DEMON KING OF THE SIXTH HEAVEN...
AND TURNED GHOSTS OF THE DEAD INTO EVIL SPIRITS TO FURTHER SPREAD CHAOS IN THE LAND."

"BEGONE, EVIL SPIRITS!"

IS NOW A VENGEFUL SPIRIT DRIVING THE ENTIRE LAND INTO RUIN, STARTING WITH THE CAPITAL."

"SUCH IS THE STATE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF THE SHOGUN."



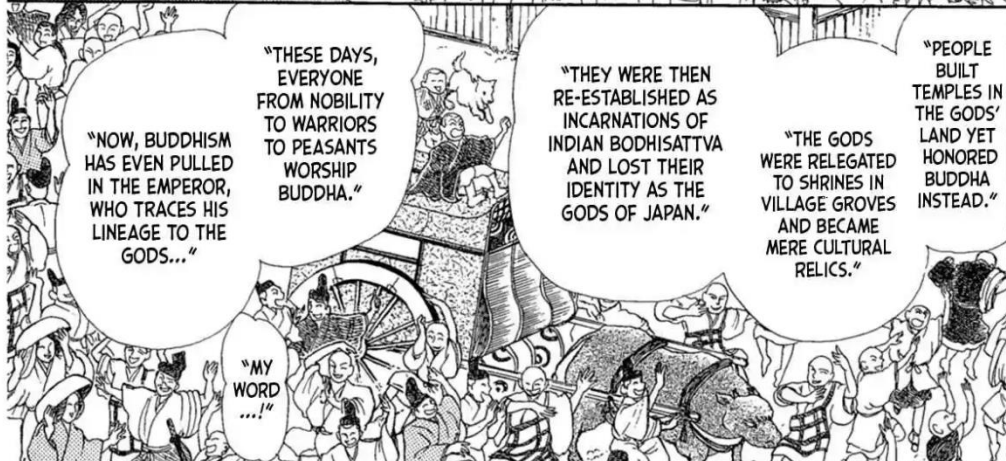
"WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF BUDDHISM FROM CHINA AND KOREA HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO, THE GODS BECAME MARGINALIZED AND LOST MUCH OF THEIR POWER."

"JAPAN, THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN, HAS BEEN RULED BY THE GODS SINCE TIME IMMORTAL."

"OH?"

"ACCORDING TO THE GREAT TENGU OF MOUNT KURAMA, UNBEKNOWNST TO ALL, THE TRUTH IS... THE TROUBLES HERE STARTED WITH A CONFLICT IN THE REALM OF THE GODS."

"MY WORD! ARE YOU SAYING THAT A BATTLE BETWEEN THE GODS AND BUDDHA IS THE CAUSE OF THIS STRIFE...!?"



"NOW, BUDDHISM HAS EVEN PULLED IN THE EMPEROR, WHO TRACES HIS LINEAGE TO THE GODS..."

"THESE DAYS, EVERYONE FROM NOBILITY TO WARRIORS TO PEASANTS WORSHIP BUDDHA."

"THEY WERE THEN RE-ESTABLISHED AS INCARNATIONS OF INDIAN BODHISATTVA AND LOST THEIR IDENTITY AS THE GODS OF JAPAN."

"PEOPLE BUILT TEMPLES IN THE GODS' LAND YET HONORED BUDDHA INSTEAD." "THE GODS WERE RELEGATED TO SHRINES IN VILLAGE GROVES AND BECAME MERE CULTURAL RELICS."

"MY WORD ...!"



"COULD ANYONE BLAME THEM FOR THEIR GRIEF?"

"THIS WAS, IN EFFECT, PROOF THAT THE GODS' AUTHORITY IN JAPAN HAD FALLEN."

"TO THE EXTENT THAT PEOPLE TURNED TO BUDDHIST PRACTICES TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM THE WRATH OF THE GODS."

"THE LAWS OF THE GODS WERE FORGOTTEN, AND ALL THAT REMAINED WAS THE FEAR OF THEIR POWER."



"PRIESTS BECAME ARROGANT AND THOSE WHO WERE SUPPOSED TO SPREAD THE TEACHINGS OF BUDDHA... WIELDED SOLDIERS AND FOUGHT FOR PRIMACY."

"THEY TOOK OVER THE HEARTS OF BUDDHIST LEADERS AND USED THEIR AUTHORITY TO SEIZE RULE AND EXPAND THEIR INFLUENCE AND POWER."

"IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THIS OPPORTUNITY WAS SEIZED BY MONSTERS FROM THE DEMON REALM."



"THE POWER OF THE GODS AND THE VIRTUE OF THE BUDDHA WERE REDUCED TO MERE TOOLS."

"NEITHER THE HEART OF SHINTOISM, NOR THE NOBILITY OF BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS... HAD ANY VALUE IN THE EYES OF THOSE WHO LUSTED AFTER AUTHORITY AND WEALTH."



THE EMPEROR
IN KYOTO HAD A
STRANGE RECURRING
DREAM FOR SEVEN
NIGHTS.

BANG

KA

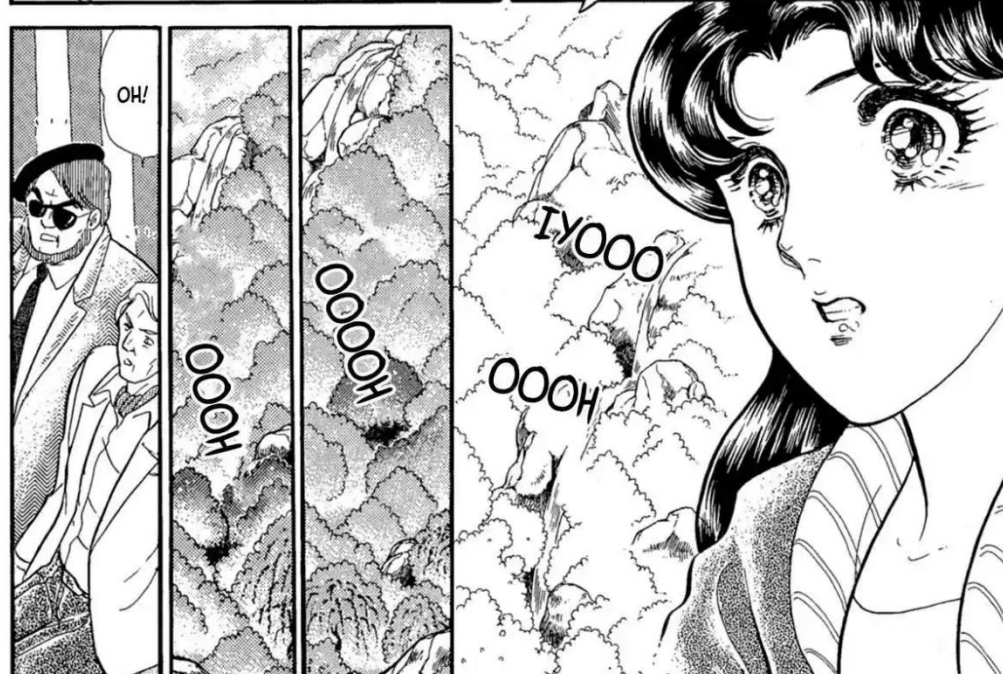
"THE
CHAOS
WILL
NEVER
CEASE."

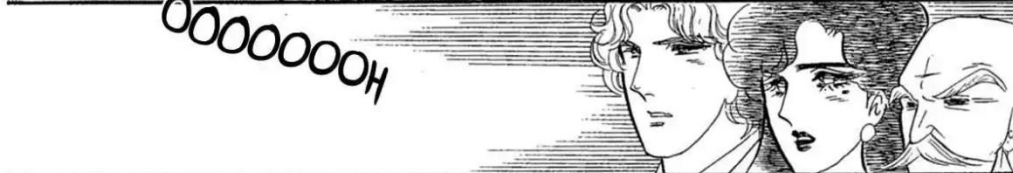
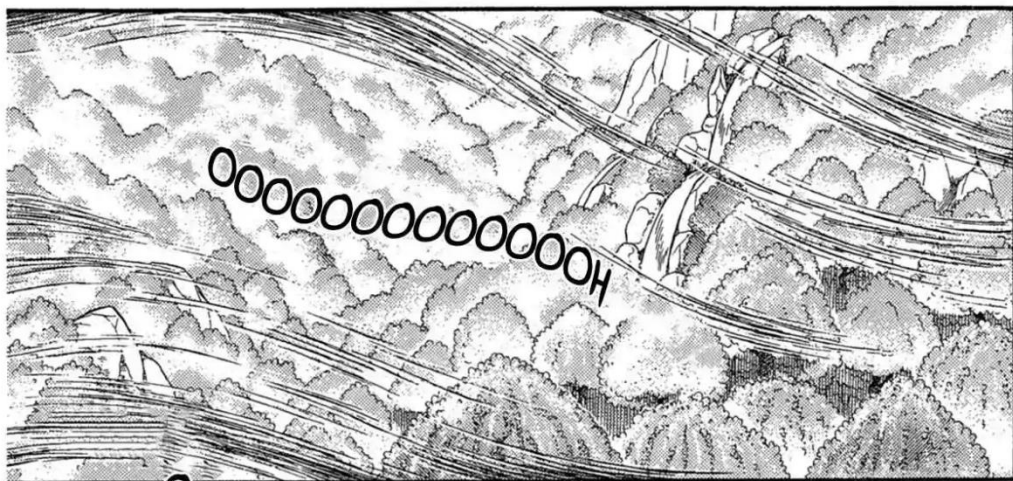
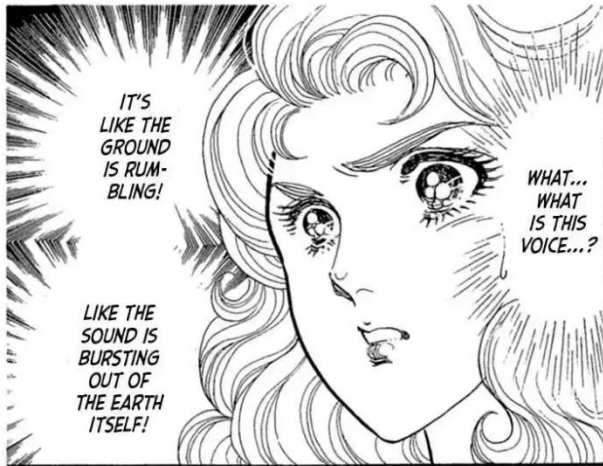
"THE
WORLD
WILL
NEVER
BE AT
PEACE
IF THIS
GOES
ON."

"INDEED,
THE THOU-
SAND-YEAR
CRIMSON
FLOWERS
OF LIFE...
WILL
SHINE
UPON THE
WORLD."

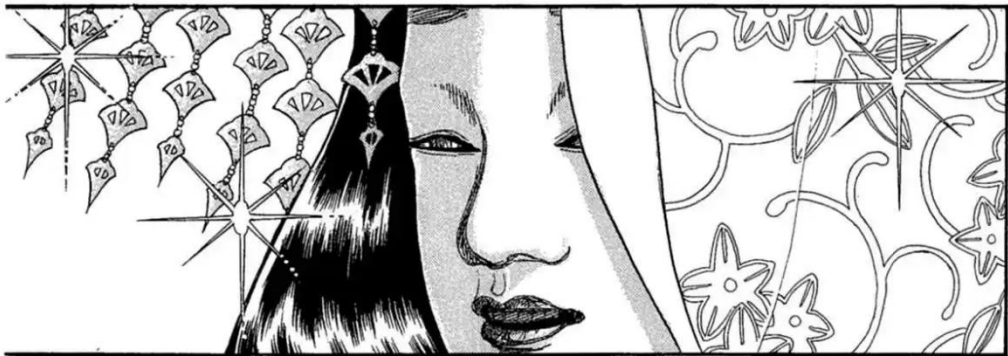
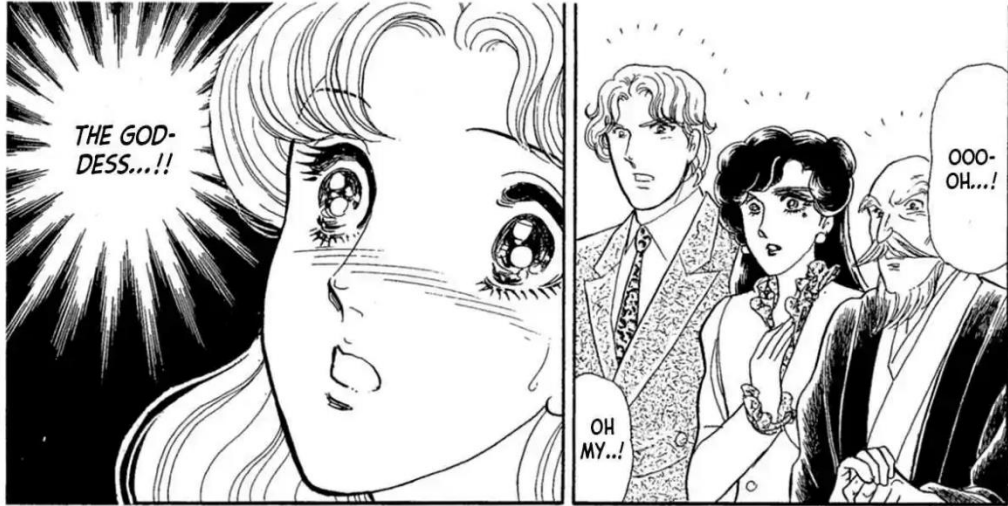
A RADIANT
GODDESS
DANCED...

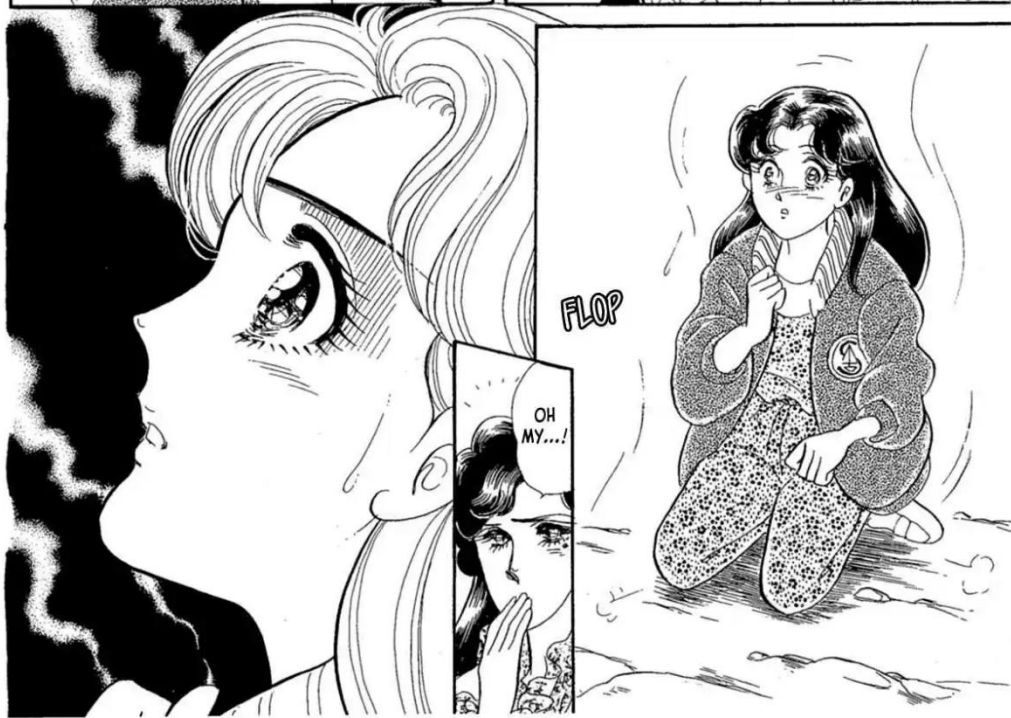
AND SAID
THAT ONLY AFTER
A STATUE IN HER
FORM WAS CARVED
AND ENSHRINED
WOULD THE
CHAOS END.







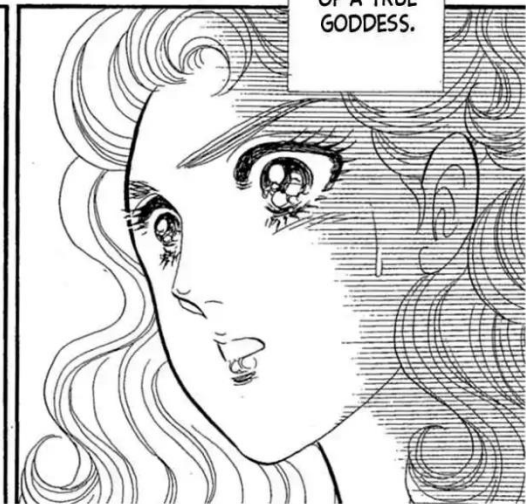
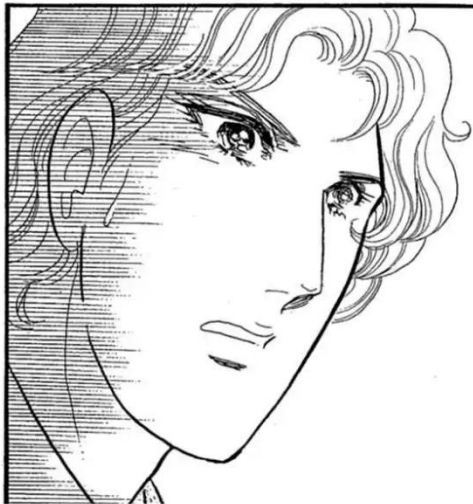








THIS
WAS THE
PRESENCE
OF A TRUE
GODDESS.



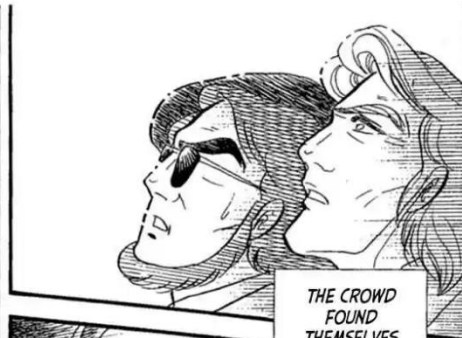


CHIGUSA...!

IT'S THE SAME AS THAT TIME!

SHE LOOKS DIFFERENT FROM BEFORE...

MORE ETHEREAL, SOMEHOW...



THE CROWD FOUND THEMSELVES AT A LOSS FOR WORDS. THEY COULDN'T TEAR THEIR EYES AWAY FROM THE STAGE...



HER UNEARTHLY PRESENCE TOOK THEIR BREATHS AWAY...



CHIGUSA!



THE SAME AS WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU ON STAGE...!



WHIRL

BE CAREFUL, SIR!



I SEE TWO EDDIES OPPOSING EACH OTHER... THE RED WHIRLPOOL AND THE WHITE WHIRLPOOL.

LIKE TWO SPINNING TOPS THAT WREAK HAVOC UPON THE WORLD...

THEY SPIN AND SPIN, COLLIDING OFF ONE ANOTHER, LEAVING DESTRUCTION IN THEIR WAKE, THEIR DANCE GROWING EVER FIERCER.

THE POWER OF THE GODS IS IN DISARRAY AND THE FLAMES OF WAR SPREAD.

I DO NOT UNDERSTAND. WHY DO HUMANS FIGHT ONE ANOTHER?

WHY DO THEY SPILL BLOOD AND WREAK DESTRUCTION?

FROM THE CENTER OF THE TWO TOPS SPREADS SADNESS AND HATRED... AND THE PEARLS OF LIFE ARE EXTINGUISHED ONE AFTER THE OTHER...



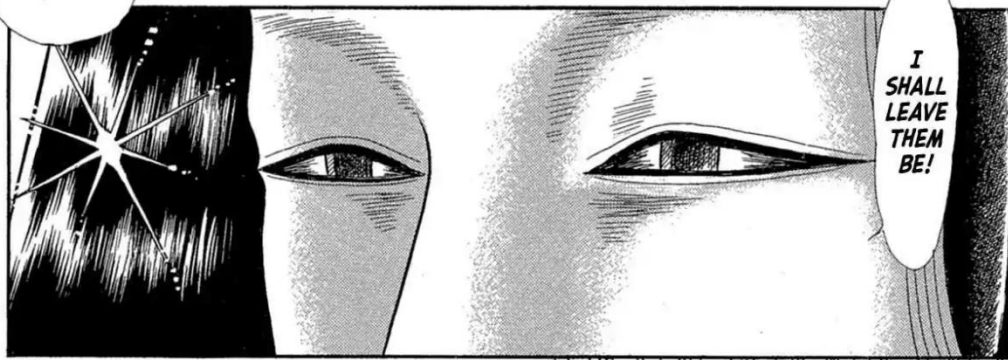
DO THEY NOT HEAR THE VOICE OF THE HEAVENS?
DO THEY NOT HEAR THE CRY OF THE EARTH?

DO THEY NOT HEAR THE SONG OF THE GODS WHO TEND TO LIFE'S PEARLS, BINDING TOGETHER HEAVEN AND EARTH?

WHY CAN THEY NOT SEE THAT THEIR WICKED DESIRES PAVE THE WAY FOR EVIL?



WHY CAN THEY NOT SEE?
IT IS ONLY HUMANITY THAT BRINGS EVIL INTO THE WORLD.



"FOR THE EARTH, IT MANIFESTS AS THE WRATH OF VOLCANOES AND TREMORS."

"FOR THE HEAVENS, IT MANIFESTS AS DROUGHTS AND TORRENTIAL RAINS."



"THE EVIL FEELINGS, RESENTMENTS, HATRED AND FEAR OF MAN COALESCE INTO A DARK FORCE."

"YET THE FORCE OF THIS FOUL CONFLICT IS UPSETTING THE NATURAL ORDER."



"THEIR IGNORANCE ITSELF IS A GREAT SIN..."

"THEY CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE THIS WAY."

"THE GODS WITHER AND DIE ONE BY ONE..."



"AS MAN LEADS THE WORLD ... DOWN THE PATH OF DESTRUCTION..."



"FOR THE PEOPLE, IT COMES IN THE FORM OF DISEASE, LEAVING CORPSES THAT INCREASINGLY DEFILE THE EARTH."

"FROM THE AIR, IT SWEEPS IN AS TORNADOES AND TYPHOONS."

"FOR THAT REASON, DISASTER STRIKES THE BIRDS IN THE AIR. IT STRIKES THE INSECTS OF THE EARTH."

IT STRIKES EVEN THE BOULDERS AND PLANTS, DOWN TO THE ROOTS OF THE TREES."



SNAP!



I WILL
ORDER MY
DRAGON
TO TEAR
THE EARTH
ASUNDER
WITH ITS
DIVINE
ROAR...

SHOULD
HUMANITY
REFUSE TO
SEE THEIR
OWN SIN...

AND
FLOOD
THE EARTH
WITH
WATER.

HA
HA
!!

TO RID
THIS
LAND
OF IM-
PURITY.
TO RID
THE LAND
OF HU-
MANITY.



WE'RE
IN THE
PRESENCE
OF A GOD-
DESS...!

WE ARE
NO LONGER
MERE AUDIENCE
MEMBERS...!

HER
EVERY WORD
REVERBERATES
IN OUR HEARTS.
WE CAN HARDLY
SPEAK!

THE
OTHERS
ALL
FEEL IT
TOO...!



THE
HUMANS
OF THE
PLAY!

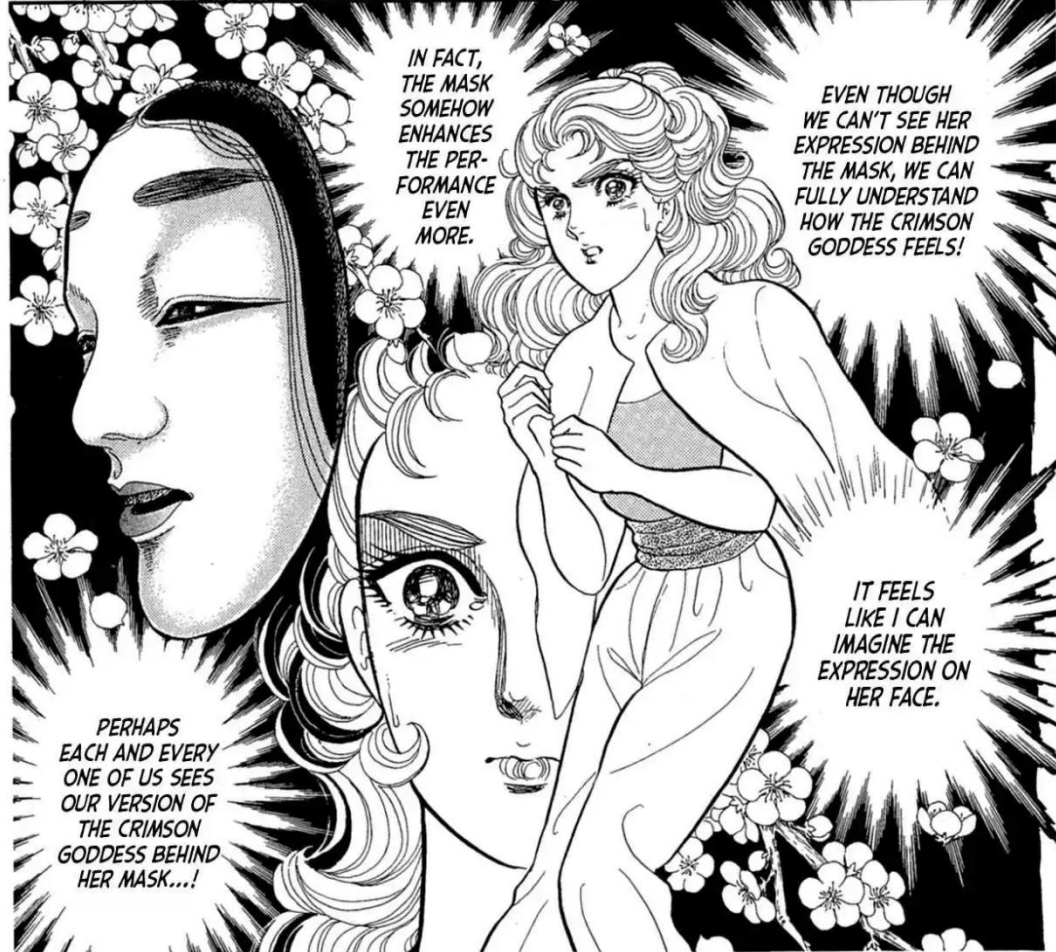
WE ARE
"HUMANITY"
...!



HOW
TERRIFYING...!
WHAT IS THIS
PRESSURE!?

HOW..?

HER
ACTING IS SO
RESTRAINED,
YET THAT ONLY
ADDS TO
THE AWE IT
INSPIRES.

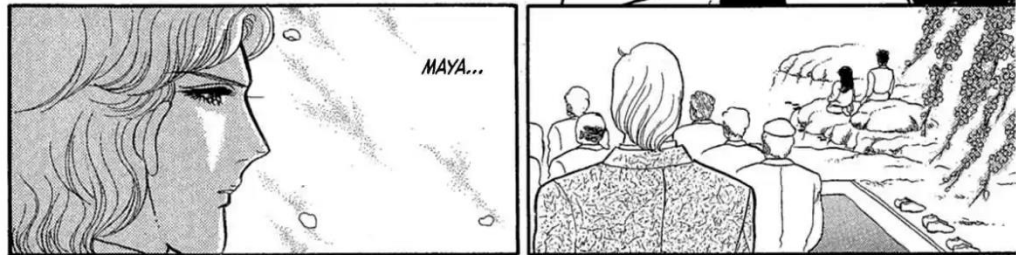
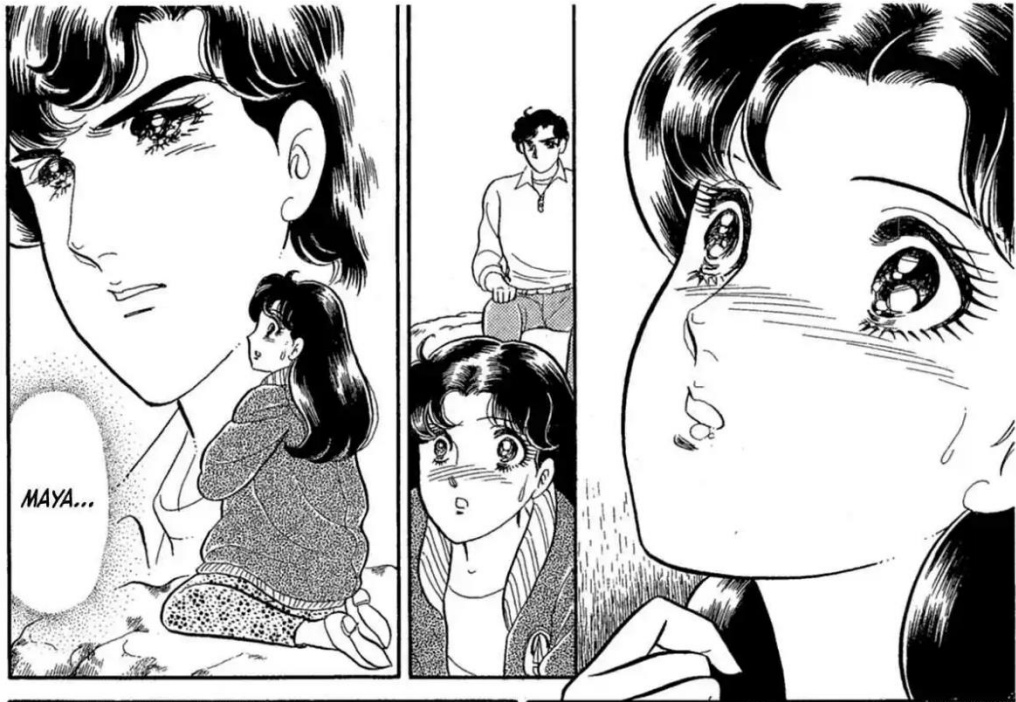


IN FACT,
THE MASK
SOMEHOW
ENHANCES
THE PER-
FORMANCE
EVEN
MORE.

EVEN THOUGH
WE CAN'T SEE HER
EXPRESSION BEHIND
THE MASK, WE CAN
FULLY UNDERSTAND
HOW THE CRIMSON
GODDESS FEELS!

IT FEELS
LIKE I CAN
IMAGINE THE
EXPRESSION ON
HER FACE.

PERHAPS
EACH AND EVERY
ONE OF US SEES
OUR VERSION OF
THE CRIMSON
GODDESS BEHIND
HER MASK...!





I HAVE NEVER FELT LIKE THIS BEFORE!

OOOH! WHAT IS THIS!?

YET AT THE SAME TIME, ANXIETY AND A SWEET PAIN...

JOY, AND A DEEP SADNESS THAT TEARS AT MY HEART...

PASSION... MADNESS,



I DO NOT KNOW ...!

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THIS BODY WHEN THE TIME COMES?

IT IS DANGEROUS!
I MUST STAY AWAY!

SOME-THING WILL HAPPEN TO MY BODY BEFORE LONG.

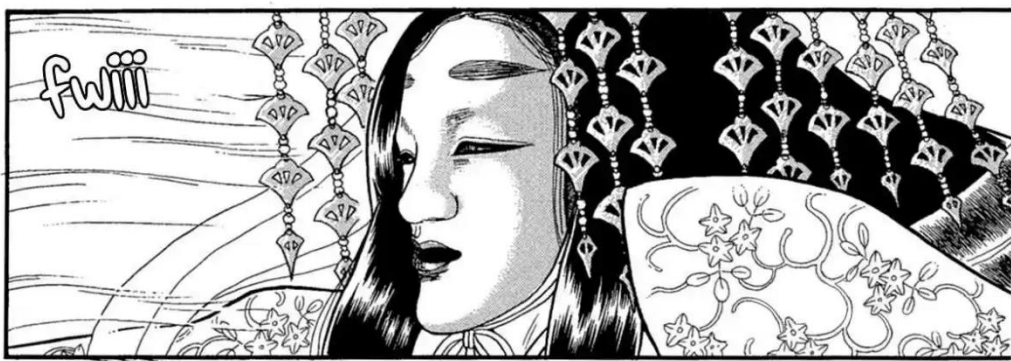
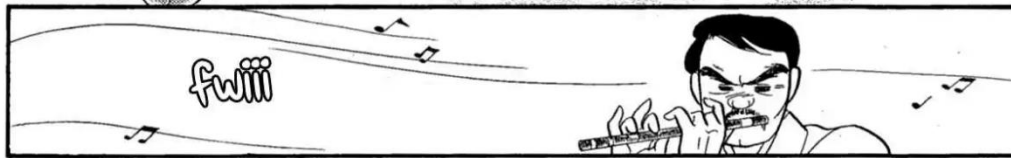
WILL I RISE TO THE HEAVENS...

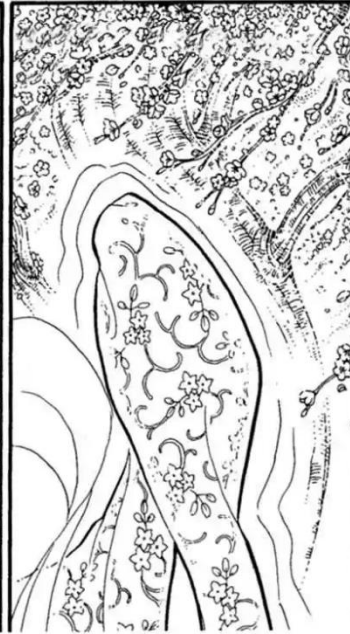
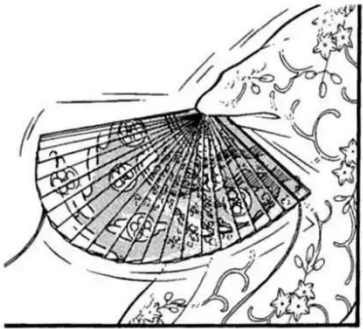
OR CRASH INTO THE EARTH?

YET I CANNOT RESIST ITS SWEETNESS.



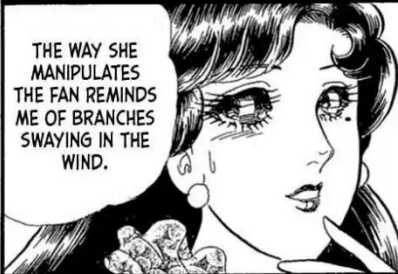








THE WAY SHE
MANIPULATES
THE FAN REMINDS
ME OF BRANCHES
SWAYING IN THE
WIND.



THE
MOTION
OF HER
CLO-
THES.
THE
MOVE-
MENT
OF HER
BODY...

SHE IS
WITHOUT A
DOUBT, THE
GODDESS AND
THE SPIRIT OF
THE PLUM
TREE.



IT'S A
PLUM
TREE.

SHE
TRULY
IS THE
GOD-
DESS!

THAT
MYSTE-
RIOUS
NOBI-
LITY,
THAT UN-
APPRO-
CHABLE
DREAD.



NOT JUST THAT...
HER ENTIRE BODY
EXUDES THE AIR OF
THE GODDESS.



