



Hayami-san!



LOOK,  
ONODERA-SAN  
AND AKAME-SAN  
ARE ALREADY  
LEFT BEHIND.

YOU  
WALK SO  
FAST.

Ah!

WAIT  
UP...  
MASUMI!

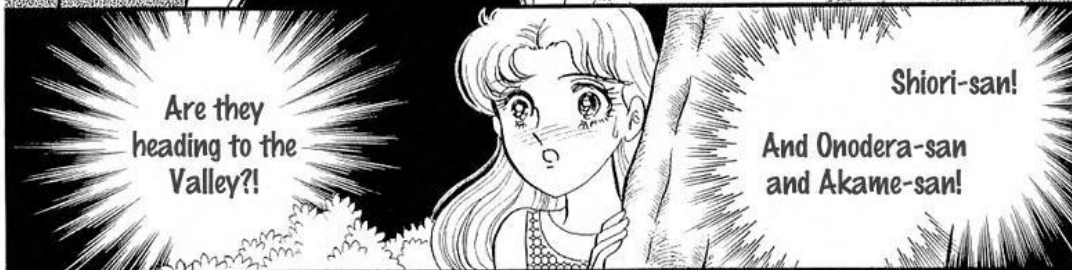


HA HA HA!  
WE'RE ALMOST THERE!

THE MOUNTAIN PATHS ARE HARD ON OUR OLD FEET.

MASUMI, HOW MUCH FARTHER UNTIL WE REACH THE VALLEY OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS?

WE'VE BEEN WALKING FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR.



Are they heading to the Valley?!

Shiori-san!  
And Onodera-san and Akame-san!



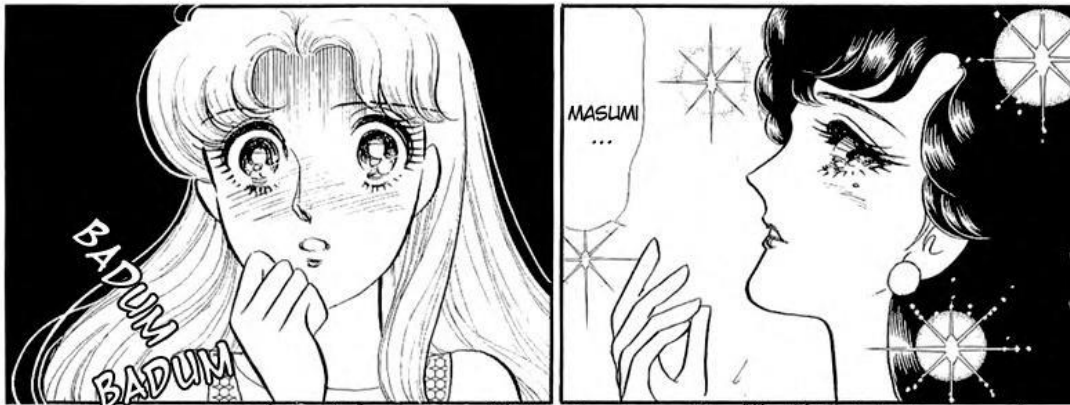
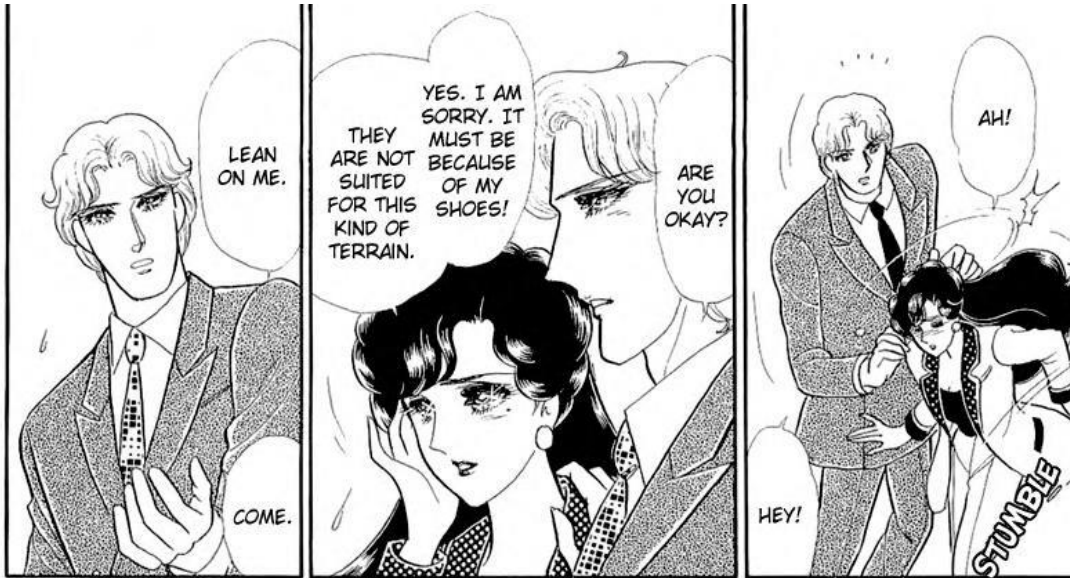
THE VALLEY OF THE PLUM TREES, WHERE THE CRIMSON GODDESS LIVES... IT MUST BE A REALLY WONDERFUL PLACE.

NO, I'M FINE!

ARE YOU TIRED, SHIORI?

I CAN'T BE TIRED!

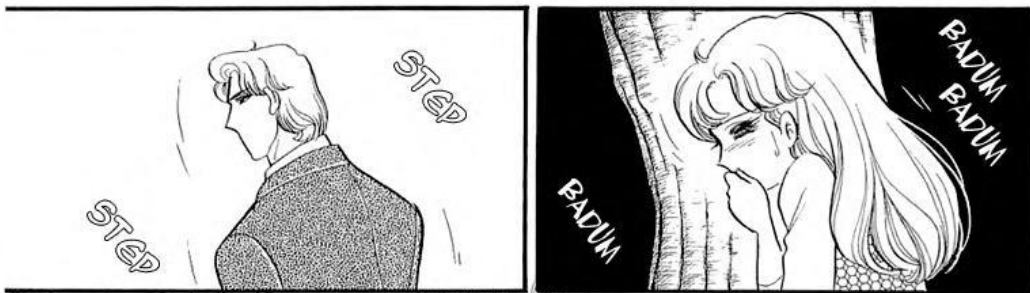
I WAS THE ONE WHO WANTED TO COME.

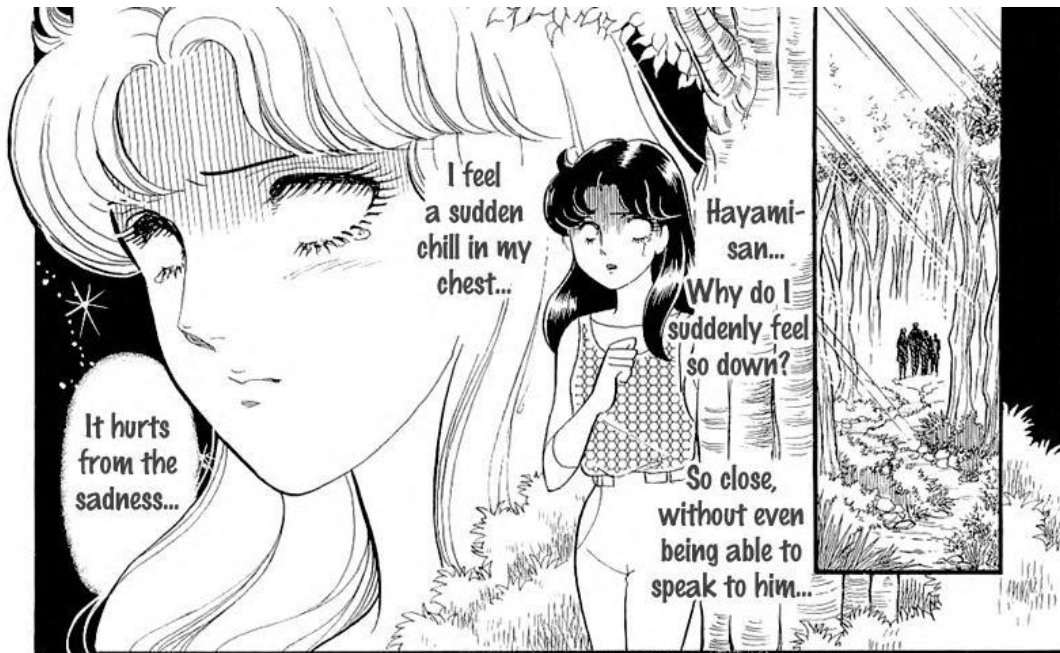












It hurts from the sadness...

I feel a sudden chill in my chest...

Hayami-san...  
Why do I suddenly feel so down?  
So close, without even being able to speak to him...



No matter how much she loved him, she couldn't make him see her!

She fell in love with a human, and yet she was invisible...

The Crimson Goddess?



Who knows how much she must have suffered!

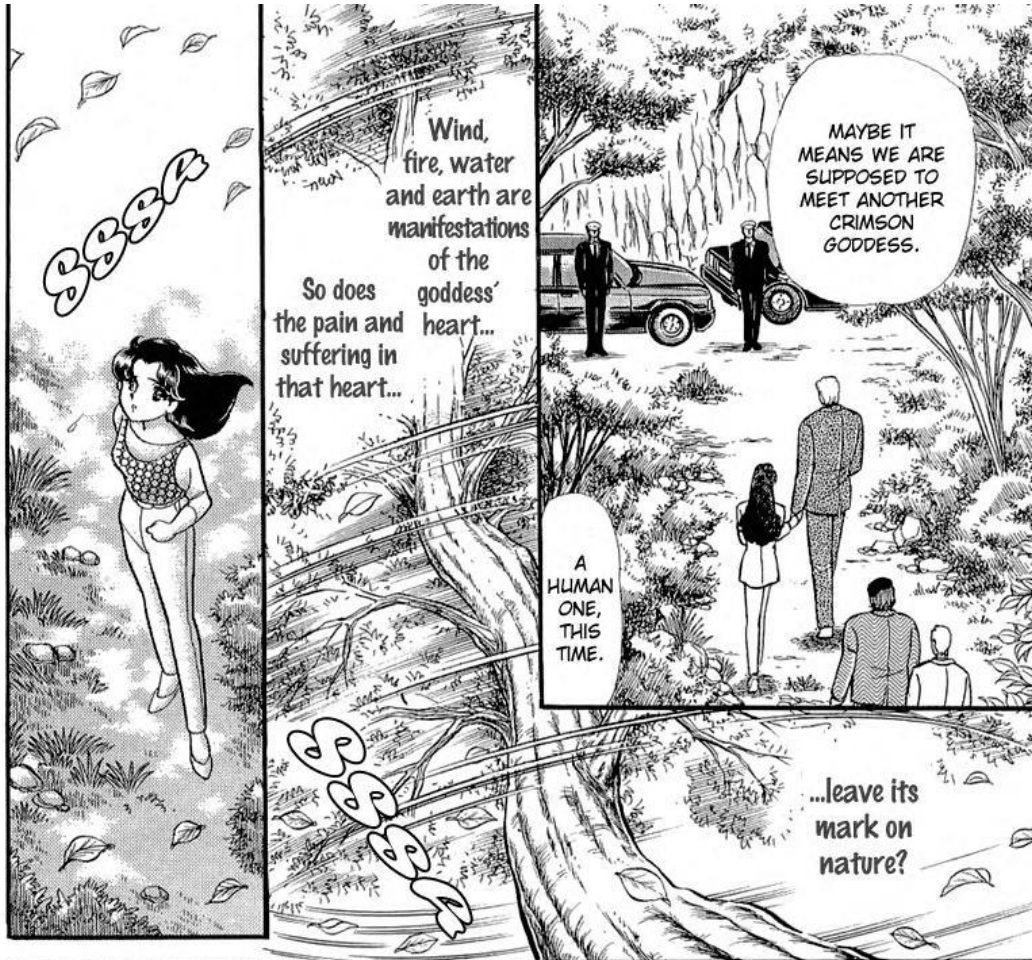
fell in love with a human!

The Crimson Goddess who rules over nature...

How sad she must have been!







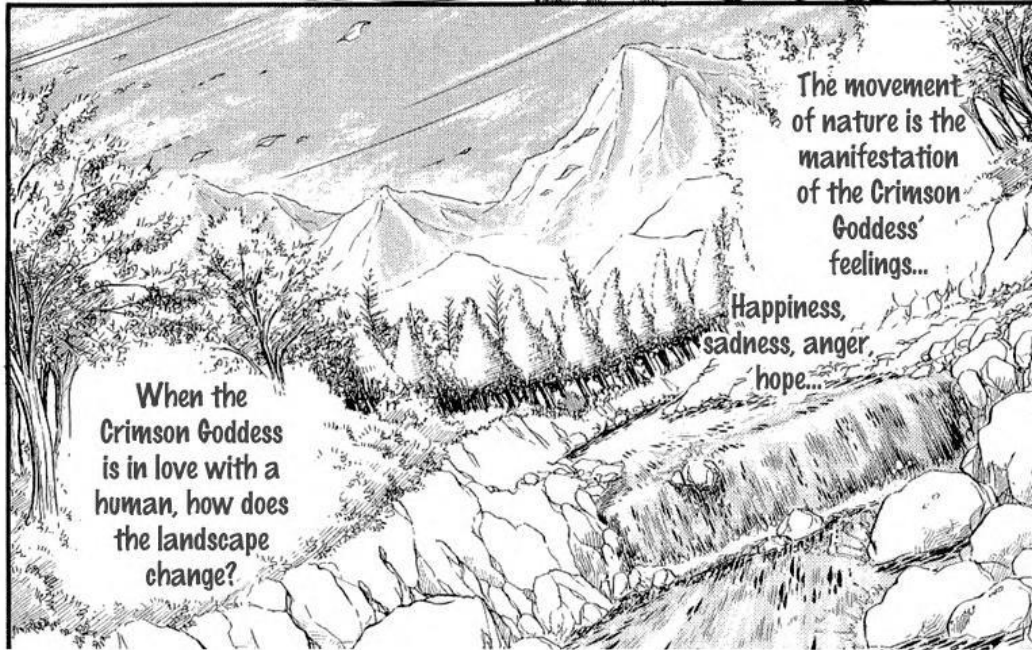
SSSS

Wind,  
fire, water  
and earth are  
manifestations  
of the  
goddess'  
heart...  
So does  
the pain and  
suffering in  
that heart...

MAYBE IT  
MEANS WE ARE  
SUPPOSED TO  
MEET ANOTHER  
CRIMSON  
GODDESS.

A  
HUMAN  
ONE,  
THIS  
TIME.

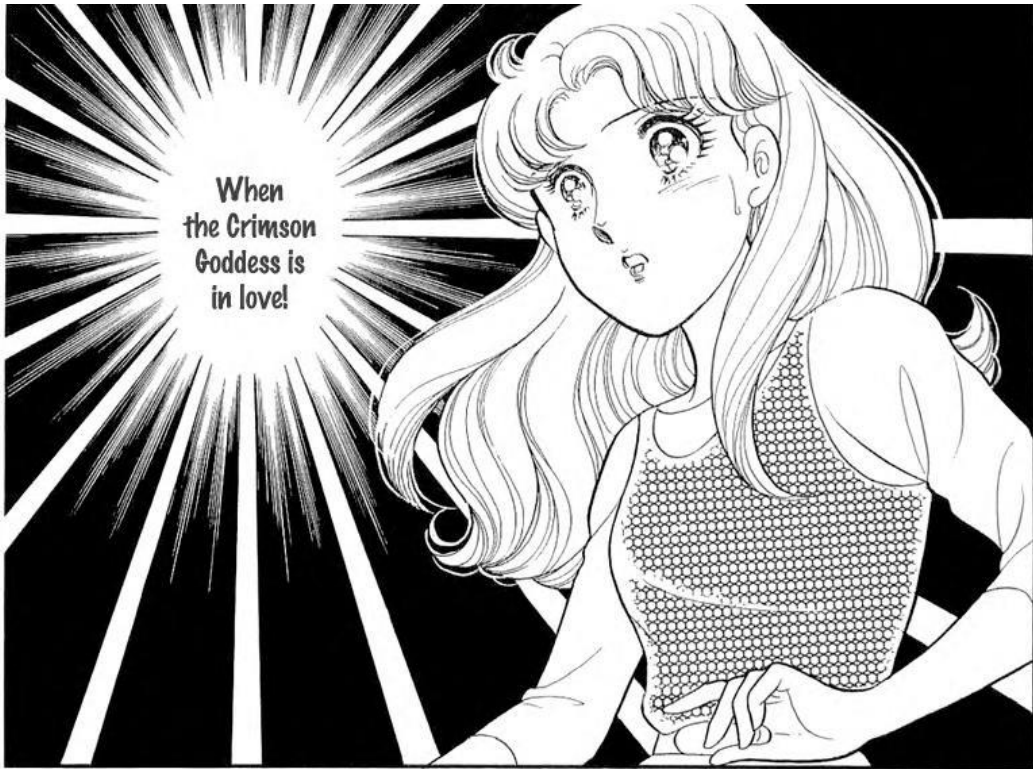
...leave its  
mark on  
nature?



When the  
Crimson Goddess  
is in love with a  
human, how does  
the landscape  
change?

The movement  
of nature is the  
manifestation  
of the Crimson  
Goddess'  
feelings...

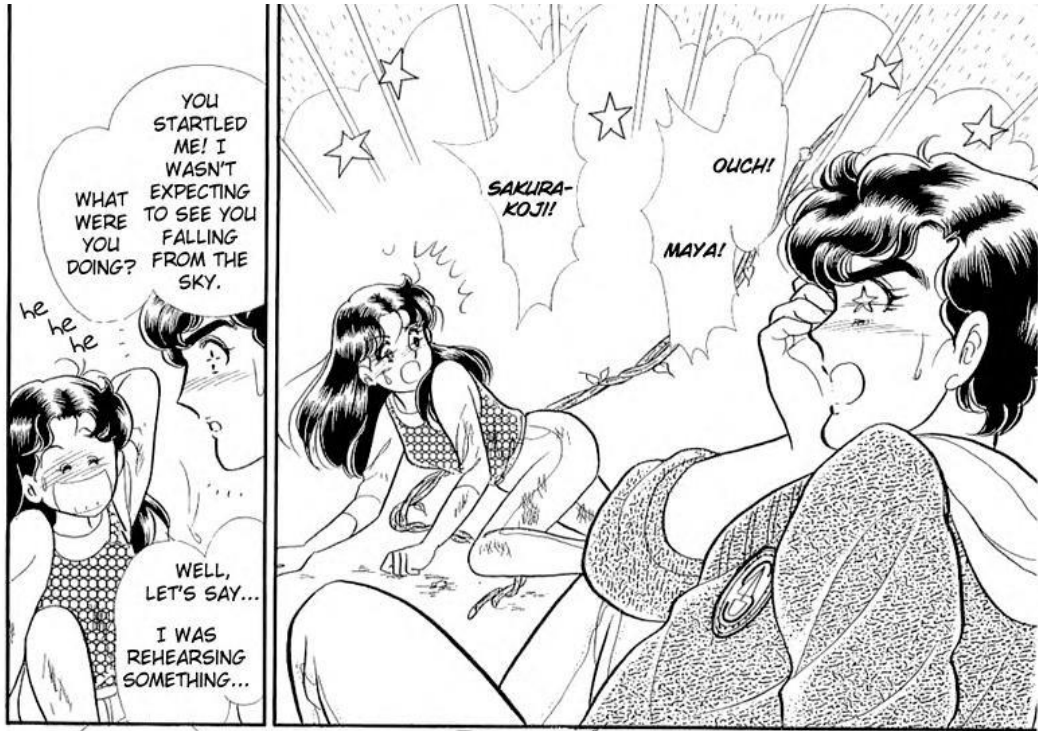
Happiness,  
sadness, anger,  
hope...



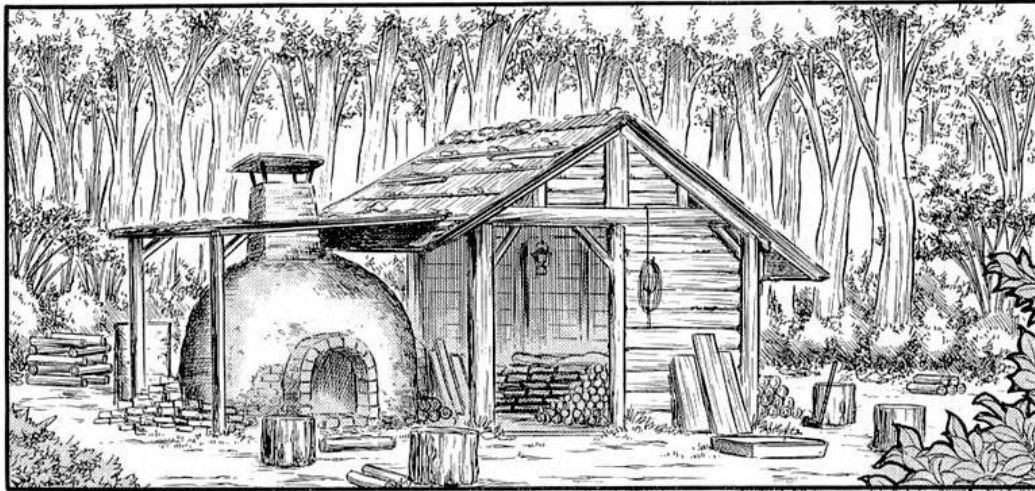


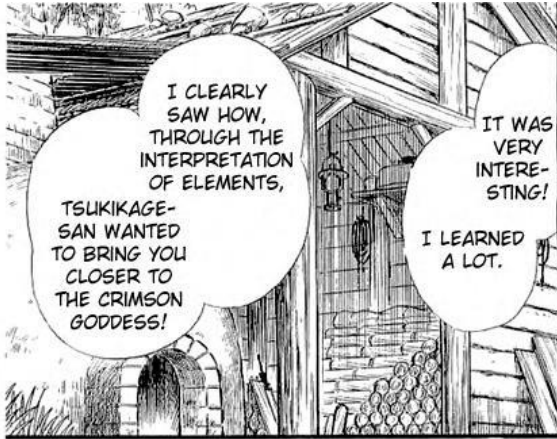












I CLEARLY SAW HOW, THROUGH THE INTERPRETATION OF ELEMENTS, TSUKIKAGE-SAN WANTED TO BRING YOU CLOSER TO THE CRIMSON GODDESS!

IT WAS VERY INTERESTING! I LEARNED A LOT.



AH! YOU SAW ME?!

I SOMETIMES WENT TO SPY ON YOUR AND AYUMI'S REHEARSALS, KITAJIMA.

YEAH.



HUMANS, ANIMALS, TREES, ROCKS... HUMAN'S DON'T REALLY STAND OUT. FOR MOTHER NATURE, ALL BEINGS ARE EQUAL.

IT'S SURPRISING HOW LIVING ALONE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NATURE... MADE ME UNDERSTAND HOW SUPERFICIAL SOME VALUES IMPOSED BY SOCIETY ARE.

EVERY CREATURE IS GIVEN LIFE BY A HIGHER EXISTENCE...

...THIS IS THE CONCLUSION I'VE REACHED...



AH...



SEEING THE VALLEY, I FELT LIKE I UNDERSTOOD SOMETHING ABOUT THE CRIMSON GODDESS...

THIS IS AN AMAZING PLACE. I'M GLAD I CAME HERE.







MY FATHER WAS VERY MOVED TO RECEIVE YOUR HELP.

PLEASE ACCEPT MY GRATITUDE.



THEN YOU SHOULD ACCEPT HIS HEARTFELT GIFT.

IF THE MAN YOU HELPED IS NOT EISUKE HAYAMI,

DON'T YOU THINK SO, TSLKIKAGE-SAN?

I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT SAY THAT.

BUT I KINDLY ASK YOU TO ACCEPT THIS AS A SINCERE SIGN OF GRATITUDE FROM AN ORDINARY INJURED MAN.

BUT AN ORDINARY MAN INJURED IN A MOUNTAIN PASS.

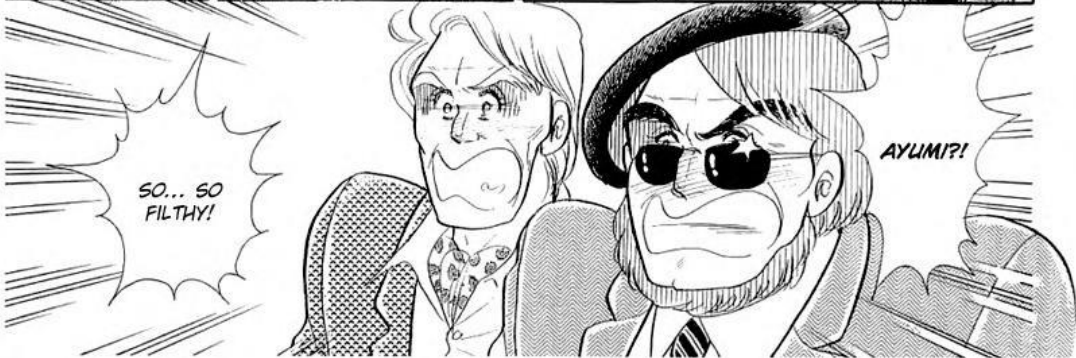
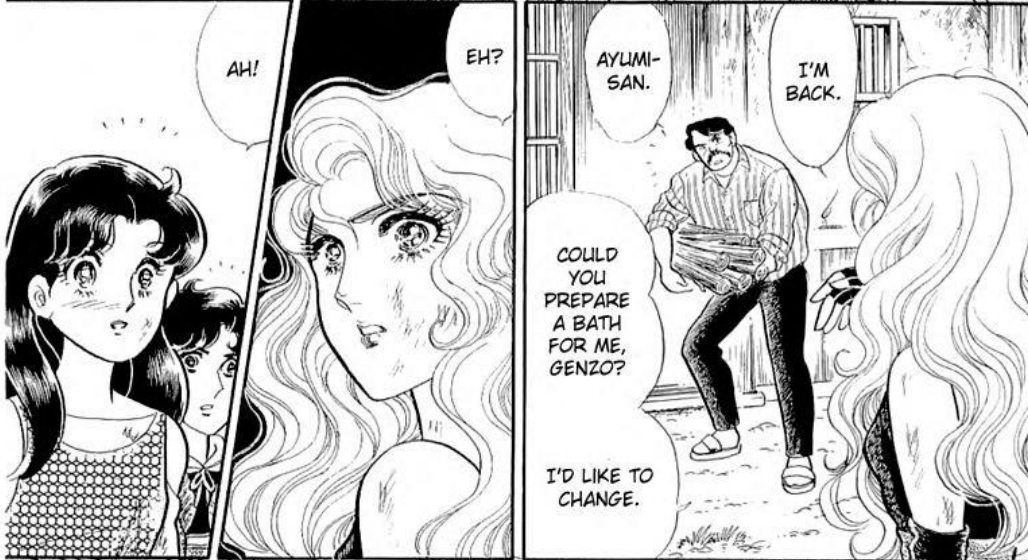
I WASN'T THINKING OF SAVING HAYAMI-SAN,

URK!

PLEASE TAKE BACK YOUR GIFT...

...I WILL NOT ACCEPT IT!







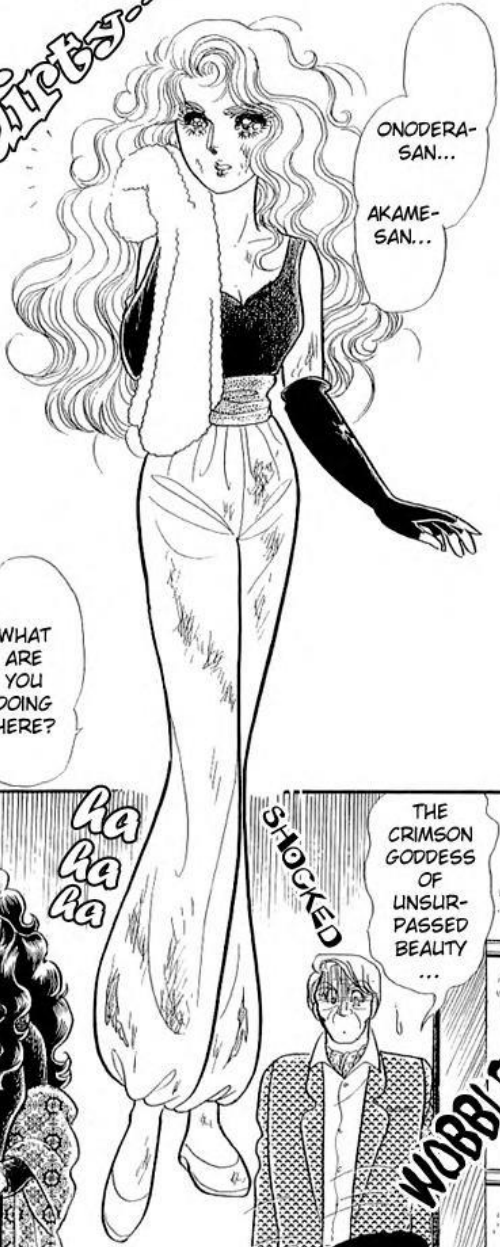


HI, AYUMI!

KURO-  
NUMA-  
SAN!  
SAKU-  
RAKOJI!

*toot toot*

WHAT  
ARE  
YOU  
DOING  
HERE?



ONODERA-  
SAN...  
AKAME-  
SAN...



WHAT A  
SURPRISE!  
YOU LOOK  
JUST LIKE A  
PEASANT.

BUT...  
YOU ARE  
KURONUMA!



IT WOULD  
SEEM  
WE ALL  
GATHERED  
HERE.

*ka  
ka  
ka*

IT MIGHT  
BE OKAY  
FOR THAT  
GIRL, BUT  
AYUMI...



*SHOCKED*

THE  
CRIMSON  
GODDESS  
OF  
UNSUR-  
PASSED  
BEAUTY  
...

*WOBBLE*





IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE REHEARSALS ARE ALSO GOING WELL.



I AM GLAD TO HEAR THAT.

I'VE BECOME A GOOD FISHERMAN. THE VEGETABLES, I GET FROM A NEARBY FARM.

SO IT'S EASY!



AKAME-SAN, WHO HAS THE SAME PART, RESENTS IT, TOO.

HOW UNFORTUNATE THAT THE BRIDGE IS UNUSABLE.



BUT I'VE COME TO SEE THE VALLEY.

AH... NO. OF COURSE, I'LL PASS BY TO GREET TSUKIKAGE-SAN, AS WELL...

I THOUGHT IT MIGHT HELP ME WITH THE ROLE OF ISSHIN...

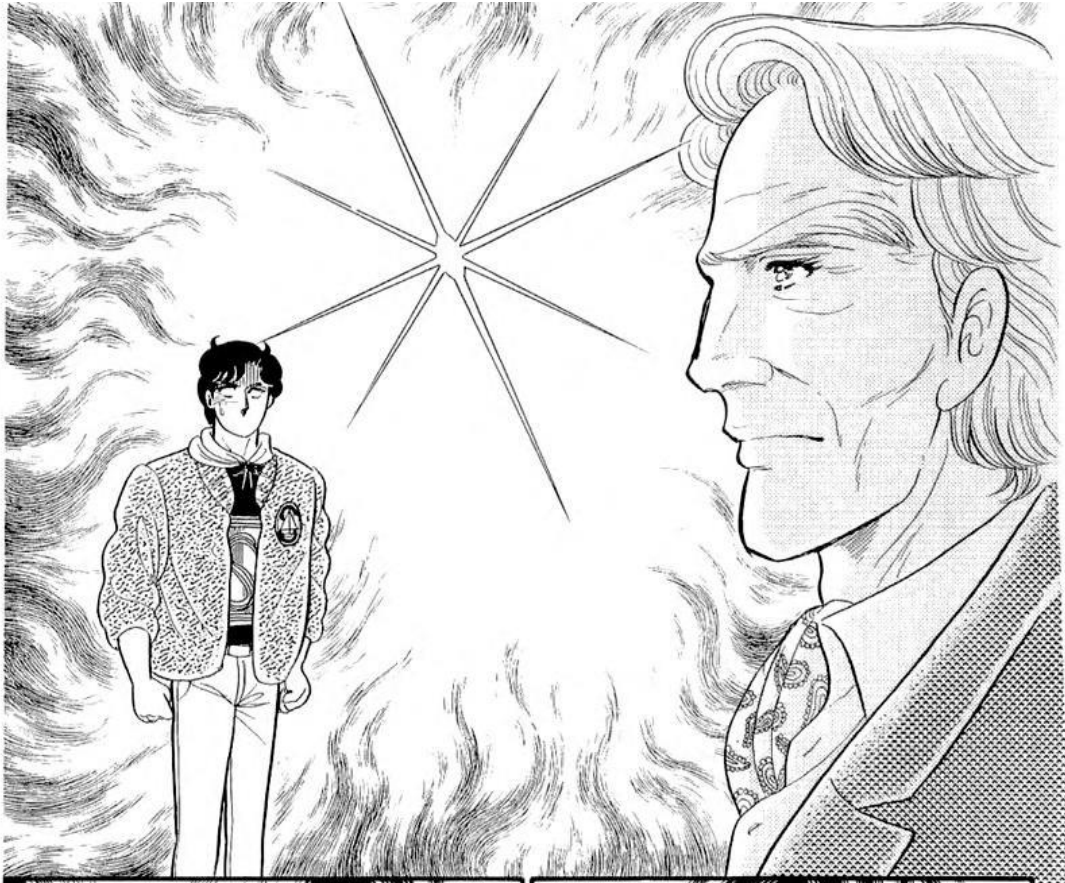


HELLO, SAKURAKOJI.

WHEN DID YOU ARRIVE?

TODAY, HAYAMI-SAN.

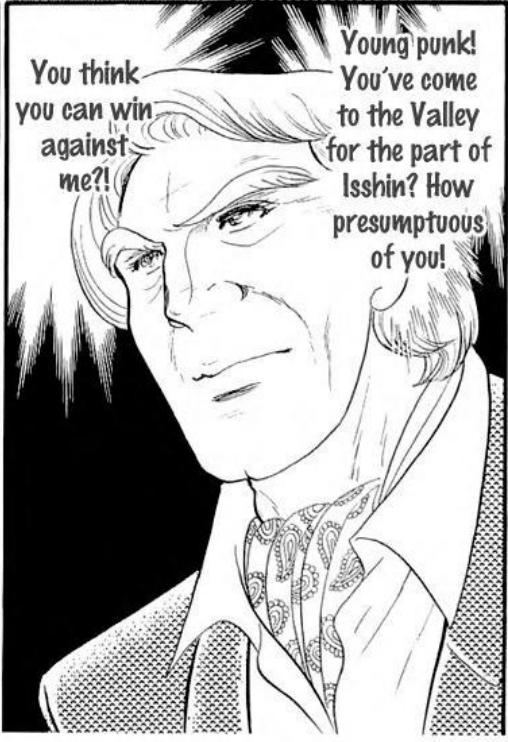
OFF TO SEE TSUKIKAGE-SAN?



My rival!

The veteran, Akame Kei!

I won't be defeated by him, no matter what!



You think you can win against me?!

Young punk! You've come to the Valley for the part of Isshin? How presumptuous of you!





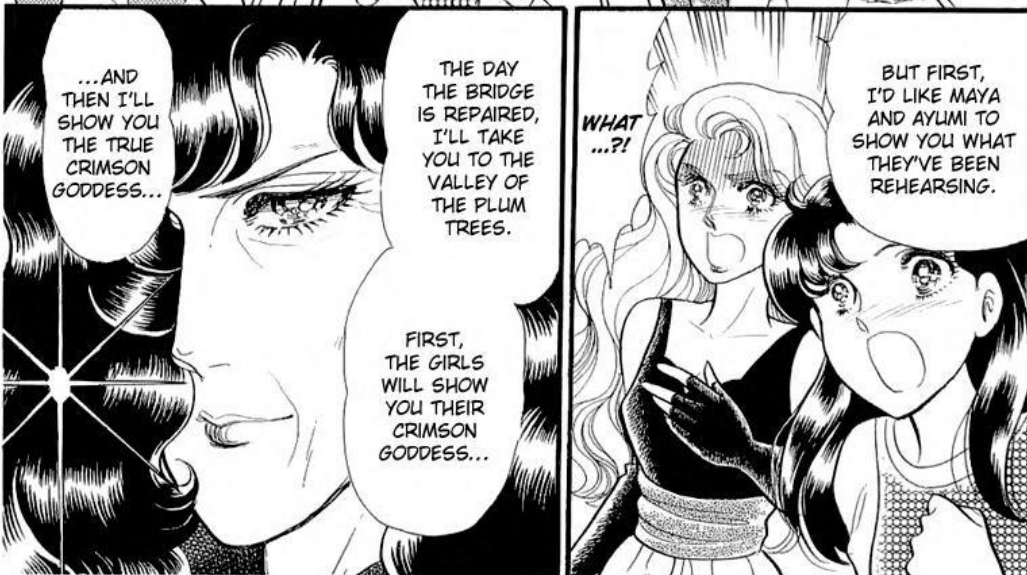


WHAT?!  
THE  
CRIMSON  
GODDESS?!

TWO  
CRIMSON  
GODESSES,  
TWO  
ISSHINS...

AND  
TWO  
DIREC-  
TORS.

SINCE YOU ARE  
HERE, THREE PAIRS  
OF COMPETITORS,  
I'LL SHOW YOU THE  
CRIMSON GODDESS.



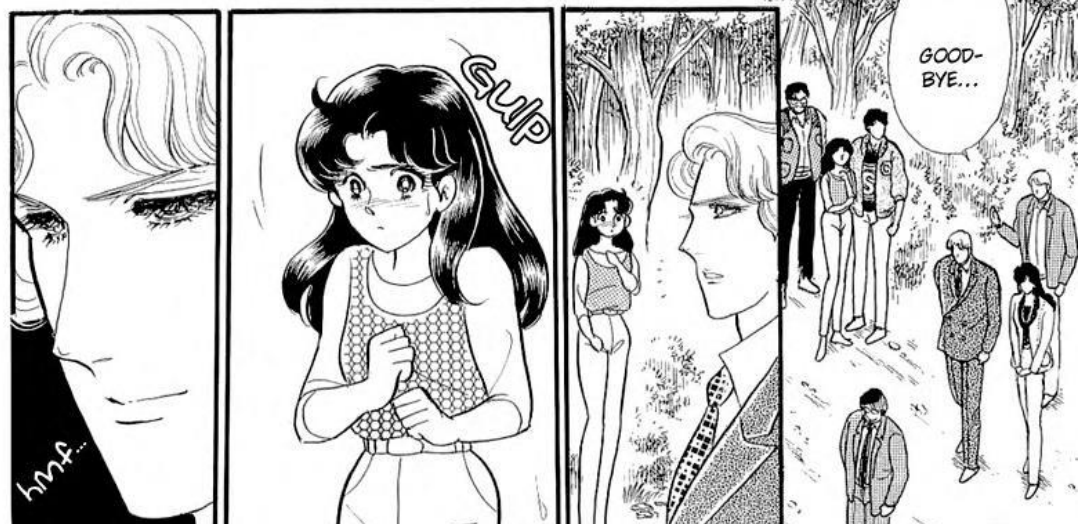
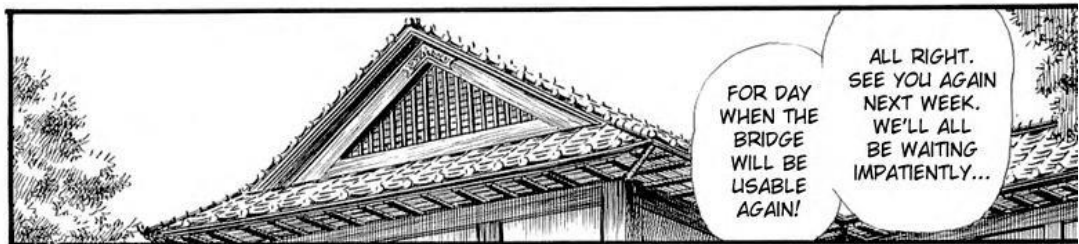
...AND  
THEN I'LL  
SHOW YOU  
THE TRUE  
CRIMSON  
GODDESS...

THE DAY  
THE BRIDGE  
IS REPAIRED,  
I'LL TAKE  
YOU TO THE  
VALLEY OF  
THE PLUM  
TREES.

FIRST,  
THE GIRLS  
WILL SHOW  
YOU THEIR  
CRIMSON  
GODDESS...

WHAT  
...?!

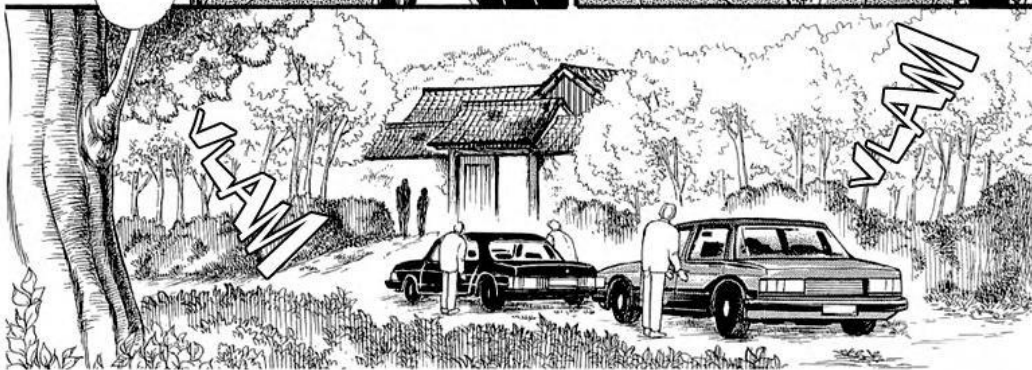
BUT FIRST,  
I'D LIKE MAYA  
AND AYUMI TO  
SHOW YOU WHAT  
THEY'VE BEEN  
REHEARSING.













Shiori-san!

Compared  
to her, I...

I..!



vroon

He  
shouldn't  
have said  
that!

He shouldn't  
have said  
those things  
in front of  
that beautiful  
woman!

Even if I  
am small  
and silly!



Maya...



NO...  
NOTHING!

YOU HAVEN'T SAID A WORD...  
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?



WHAT IS IT, MASUMI?

Ah!

YOU ARE SO SERIOUS ...



THEY MAKE A NICE COUPLE, MAYA KITAJIMA AND THAT BOY SAKURAKOJI, DON'T THEY?



...  
OF COURSE.

YEAH ...