



THE PEOPLE'S HEARTS HAVE BEEN STOLEN AWAY FROM US!



NOT EVEN A SINGLE MAN HAS BEEN CAUGHT, THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF THE SERFS!



AND YOU SAY THE RED LILY HAS RETURNED ?

WHEN OUR OWN HOUSE BE IN SHAMBLES!

SUCH POOR TIMING FOR A WAR.



EVEN THREE DAYS PAST MY OWN ESTATE WAS VICTIM.

...RAN-SACKING OUR HOMES.

EACH DAY BRINGS NEWS OF ANOTHER RAID UPON OUR ESTATES...

IT MUST BE!



AND YET THE WAR CONTINUES ON AND ON... CANNOT WE END OUR BLOODY DISPUTE WITH HARLAND?

SUCH ABSURDITY IS OUR PRECARIOUS CONDITION! A TRUCE SHOULD WE ARRANGE!

YET SUCH AN ACT WOULD WAVE OUR WEAKNESS BEFORE OUR PEERS LIKE A BANNER, MAKING US PREY TO THEIR PREDATION

THIS WAR MUST BE WON AT ALL COST.



AND THEY MUST BE ARMED BY SOME FOREIGN AGENCY.

NOT ONLY IS THERE THE RED LILY LEAGUE, BUT MANY OPPOSE US...



AS THE WAR RAGES, EMBOLDENED ARE THEY.

ROAR



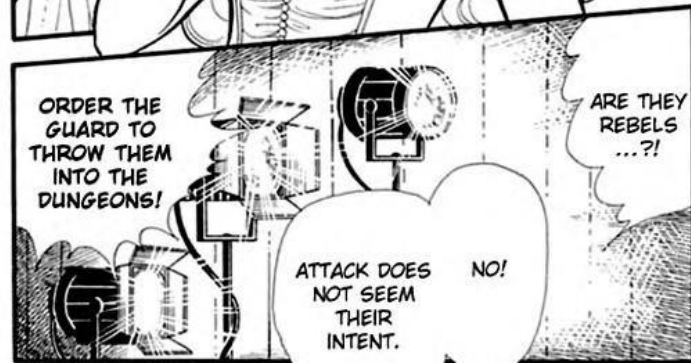
...AFORE THE
PALACE GATES HAVE
ISSUED DEMANDS
FOR AN AUDIENCE,
MILORD!

A MOB
OF
SERFS
...

WHAT SAY
YOU?!



EH?!



ORDER THE
GUARD TO
THROW THEM
INTO THE
DUNGEONS!

ARE THEY
REBELS
...?!

ATTACK DOES
NOT SEEM
THEIR
INTENT.

NO!



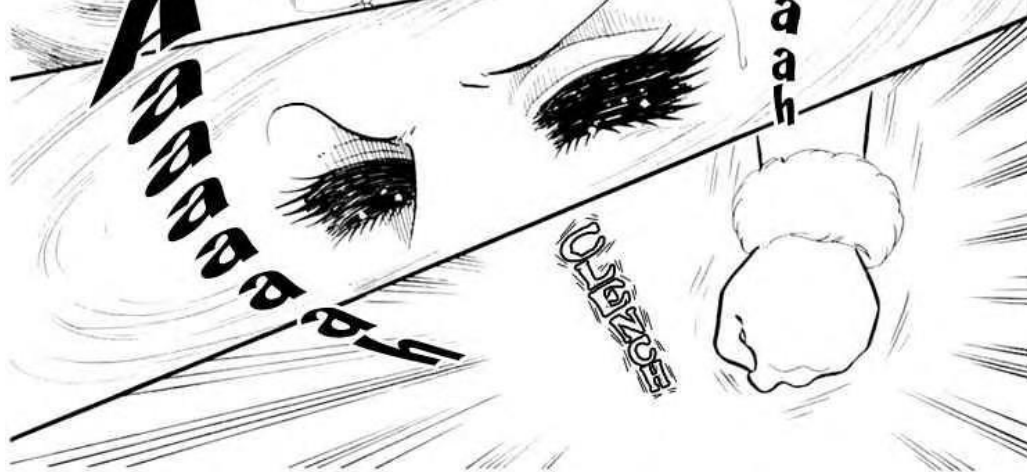


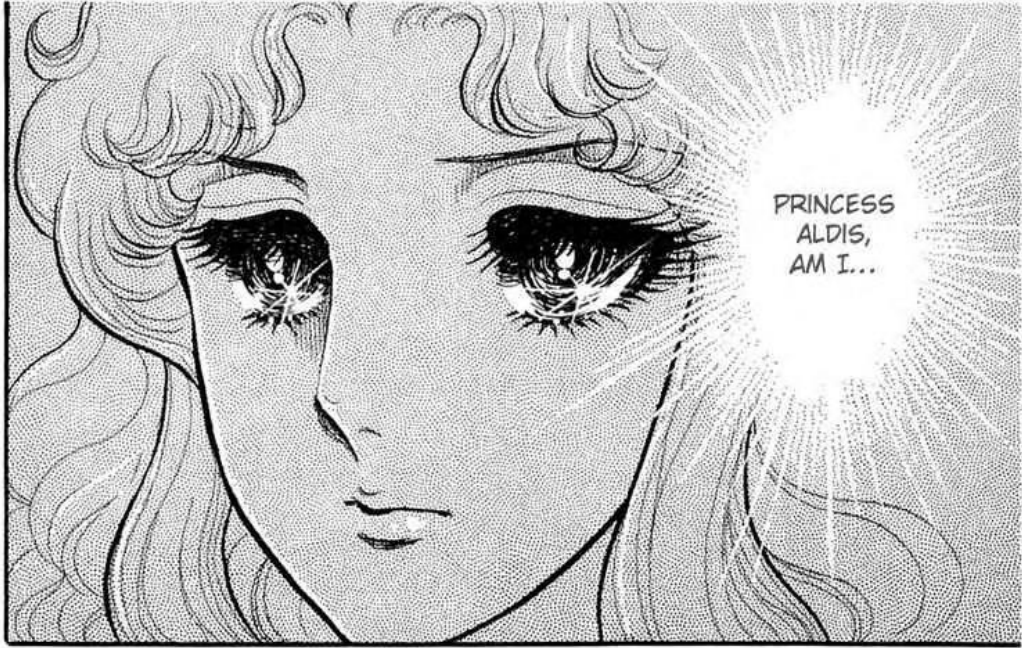


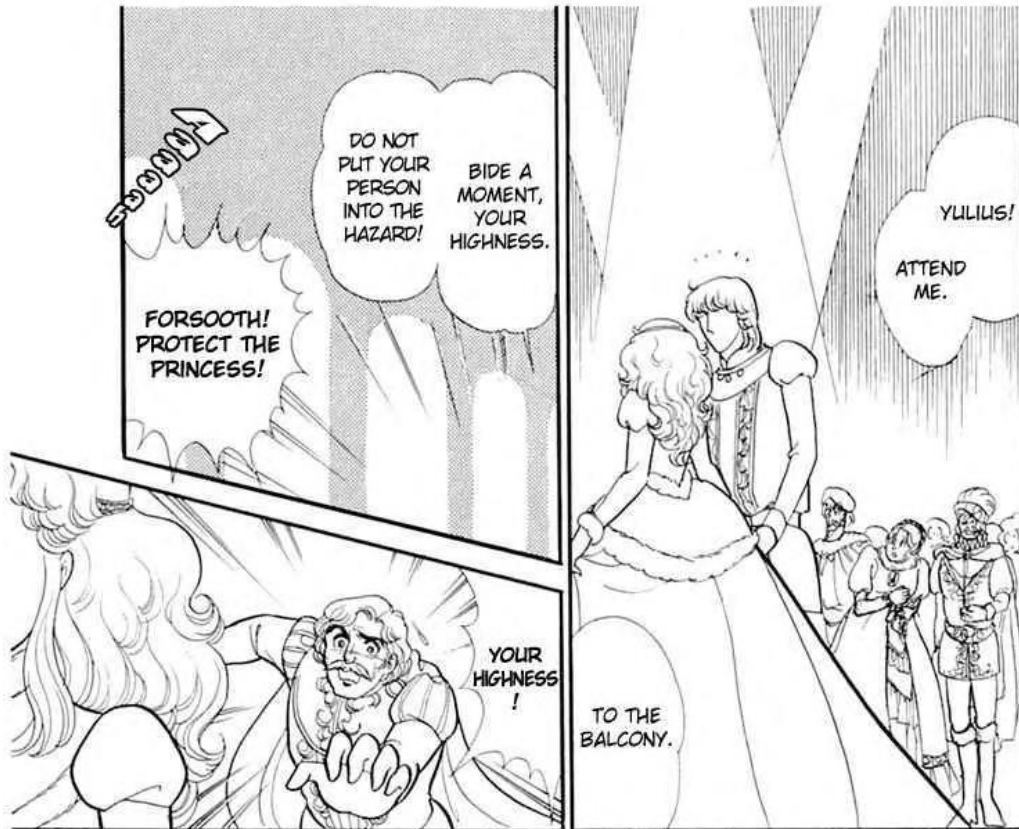
What a heat in my chest...!

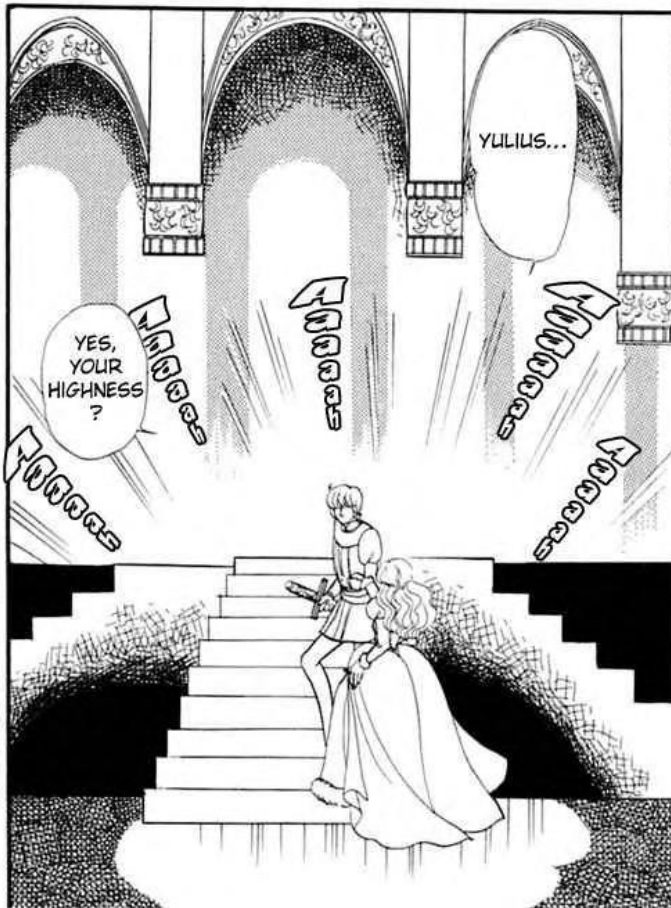
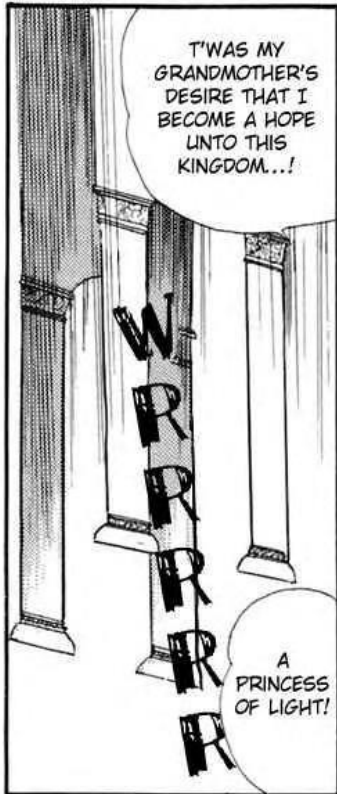
NAY ...

Aah... what a heat...!

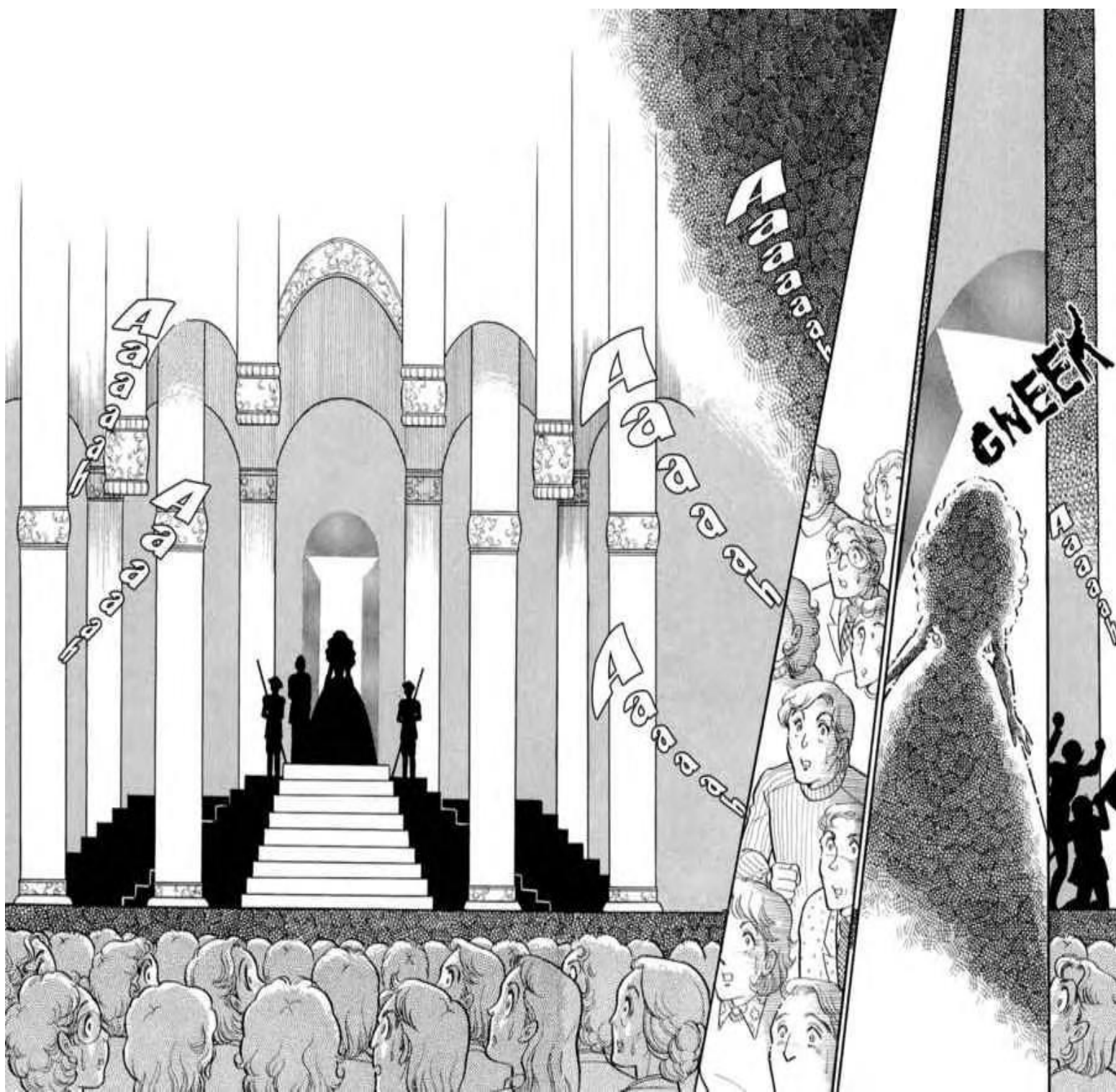


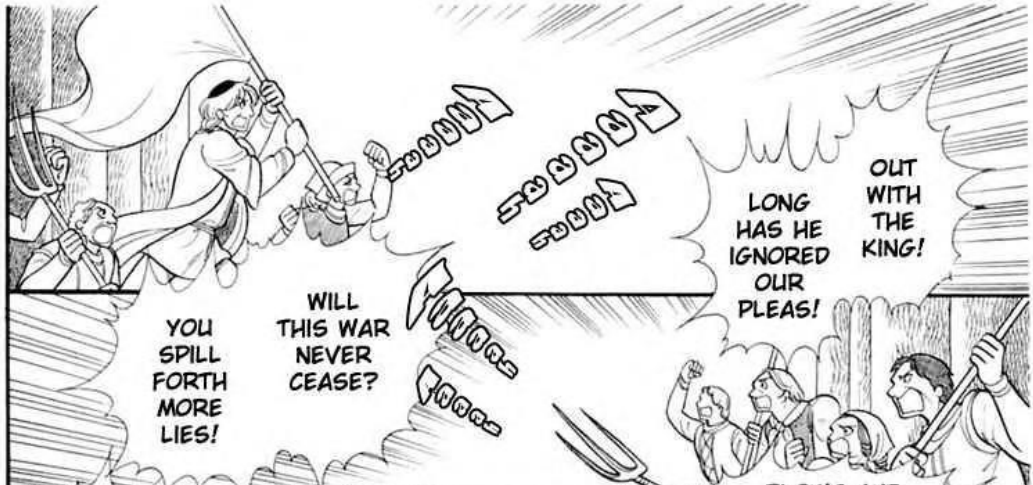












YOU SPILL FORTH MORE LIES!

WILL THIS WAR NEVER CEASE?

LONG HAS HE IGNORED OUR PLEAS!

OUT WITH THE KING!



ONLY THE DEAD AND THE CRIPPLED RETURN!

PLOWS AND SHEARS LIE IDLE WHILE MEN ARE MARCHED TO WAR. NONE REMAIN BUT FOR THE SICK, THE ELDERLY AND CHILDREN!



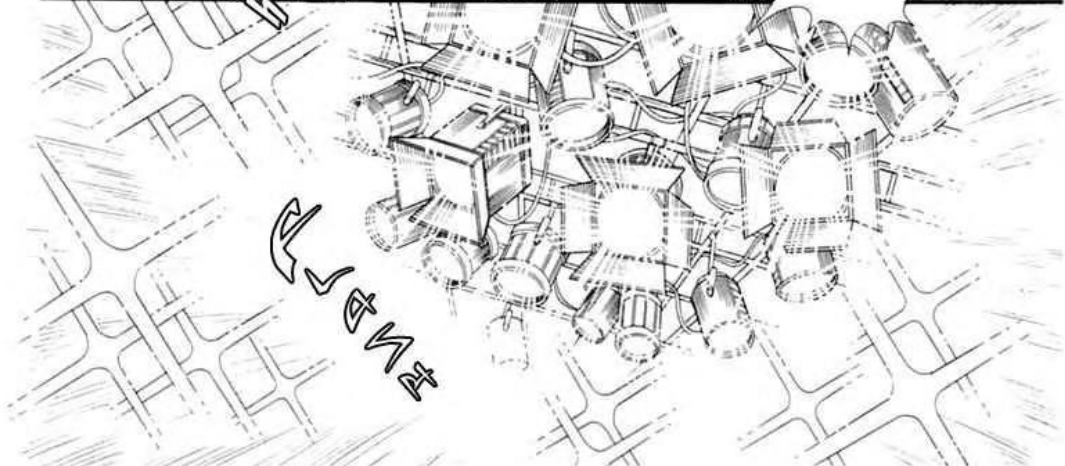
DOWN WITH THE TAXES!

SHALL YOU DRIVE US TO HADES IN YOUR VANITY?

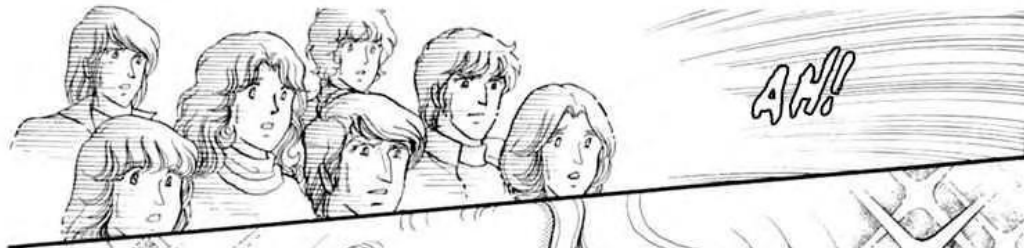
WITH NO WORK, WE CANNOT PAY TAXES!



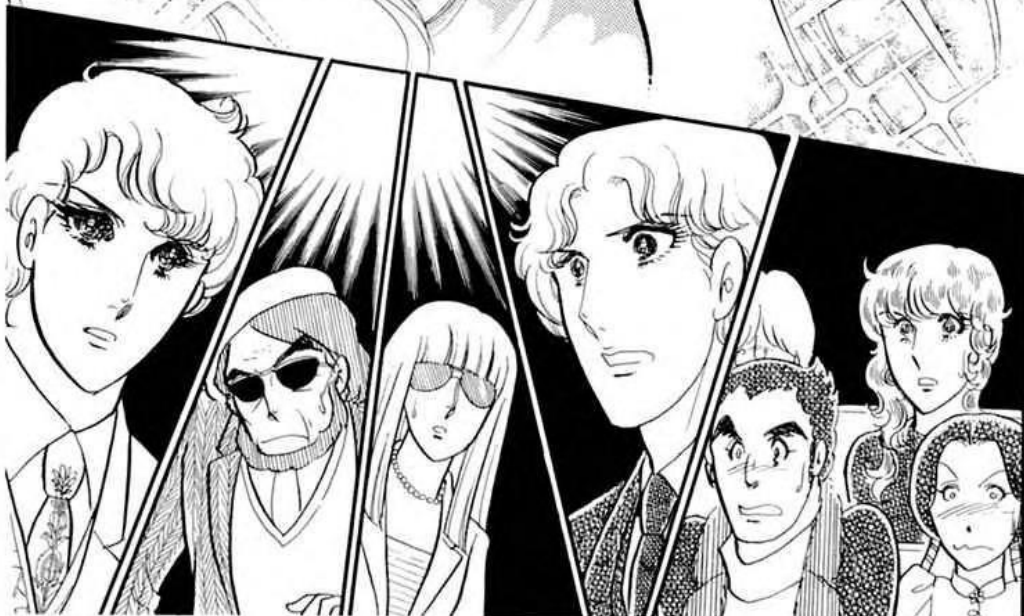
LET OUR LOVED ONES RETURN!



MONEY



AG!







PRINCESS
ALDIS AM I!

WISE
PEOPLE OF
LASTONIA!

BECALM
YOURSELVES,
I BEG
THEE!



Maya!

HIS
MAJESTY'S
WAR WOUNDS
WILL NOT
ALLOW HIS
ATTENDANCE!



...
THIEVES AND
BANDITS THAT
NO LONGER
SKULK IN
DARKNESS
...

TOO WELL
DO WE KNOW,
YOUR INDUS-
TRIOUS HANDS
PLAGUED WITH
IDLENESS
...

THOU ART
NOT FAR
FROM THE
THOUGHTS OF
ROYALTY!

...
AND THE
HEAVY BURDEN
THAT HAS
COME FROM
TAXATION!



'T WAS HARLAND'S
CONQUERING
GREED THAT
TOOK OUR MINES,
BRINGING US TO
THIS STATE.

LASTONIA,
PROSPEROUS
AND CONTENT,
NOW IS LANCED
WITH WAR.



THE DAYS OF PARLIAMENT ARE RESOLVED TO ALLEVIATE THY PLIGHT AND THE WOES OF OUR KINGDOM!



ANON, PEACE AND GOOD FORTUNE SHALL RETURN TO US.

THUS, I ASK THEE, FOREBEAR FOR A LITTLE WHILE MORE!



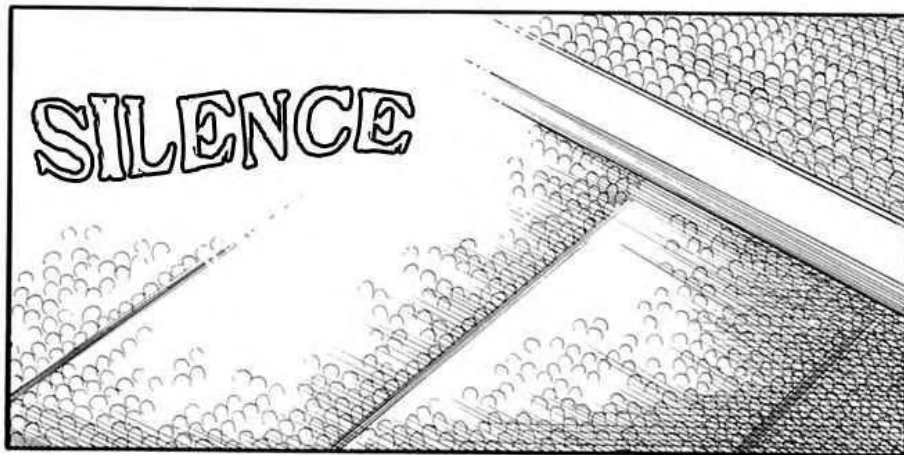
SUCH DISTRESS AND AFFLICTION ...

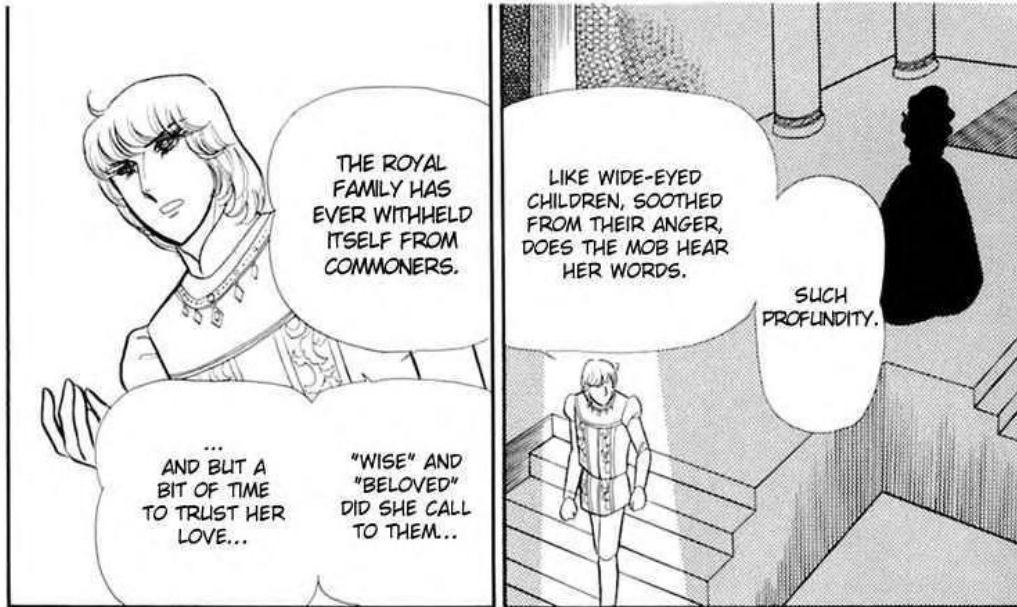
... IS NOT WHAT THE ROYAL FAMILY DESIRES FOR THEE.



BELOVED ARE THEE TO ME AND THE ROYAL FAMILY!

THIS BE MY TROTH!





THE ROYAL FAMILY HAS EVER WITHHELD ITSELF FROM COMMONERS.

... AND BUT A BIT OF TIME TO TRUST HER LOVE...

"WISE" AND "BELOVED" DID SHE CALL TO THEM...

LIKE WIDE-EYED CHILDREN, SOOTHED FROM THEIR ANGER, DOES THE MOB HEAR HER WORDS.

SUCH PROFUNDITY.



THE BEAUTEOUS ALDIS...

SHINING LIKE PERSEPHONE PERSONIFIED ...



BLESSINGS BE YOURS PRINCESS ALDIS!

LET US ALL ENJOY THAT PEACE AND PROSPERITY !!

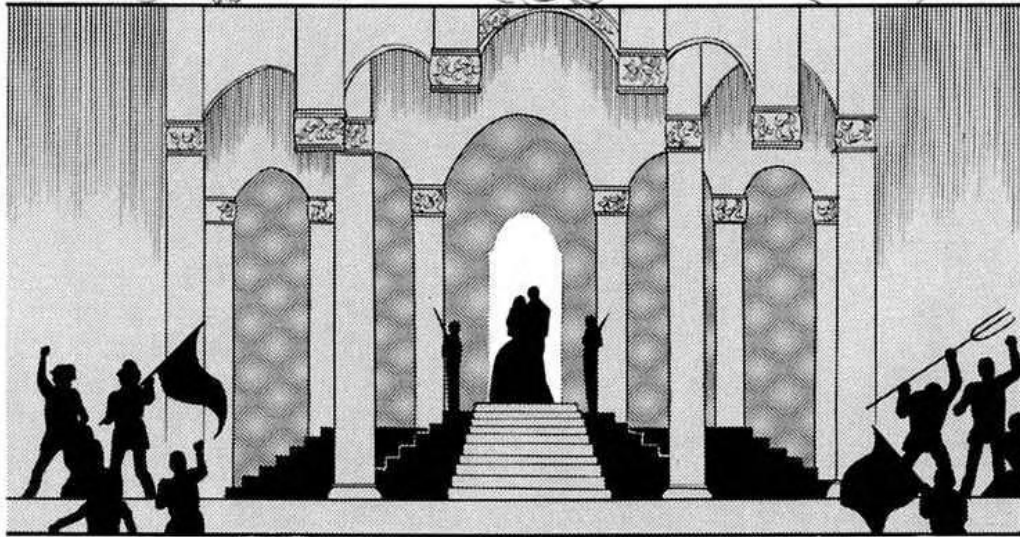
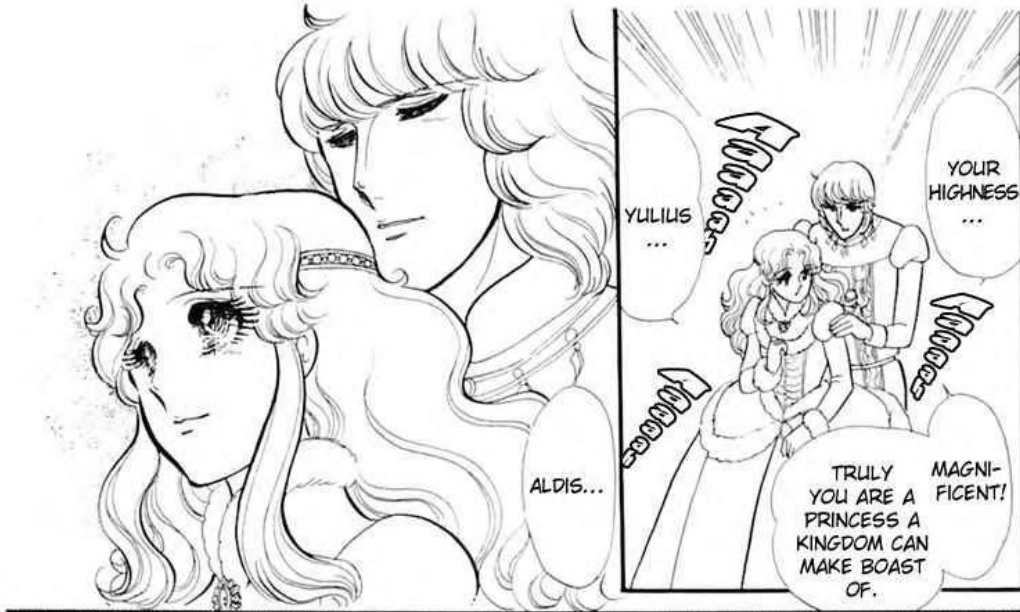
THAT YOU BRING BACK PEACE TO LASTONIA, ANON!

SO SHALL WE HOLD TO YOU, YOUR HIGHNESS!

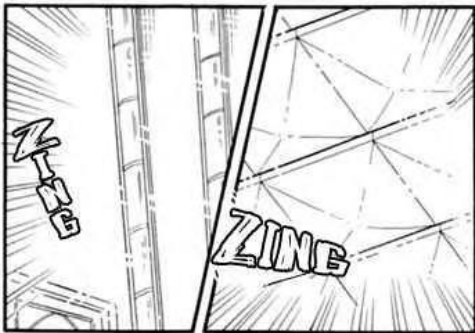
HURRAH FOR PRINCESS ALDIS!

... HAS MADE WEEDS OF DISCONTENT INTO GARLANDS OF HOPE.

ooooooooo...



ZING



I'M GOING TO BUY SOME JUICE AND SANDWICHES.

Blah

AH! I'LL GO TOO!



I FEEL LIKE I'M WAKING FROM A LONG, DEEP DREAM...

THE FIRST ACT IS OVER ?!

Ahhhh

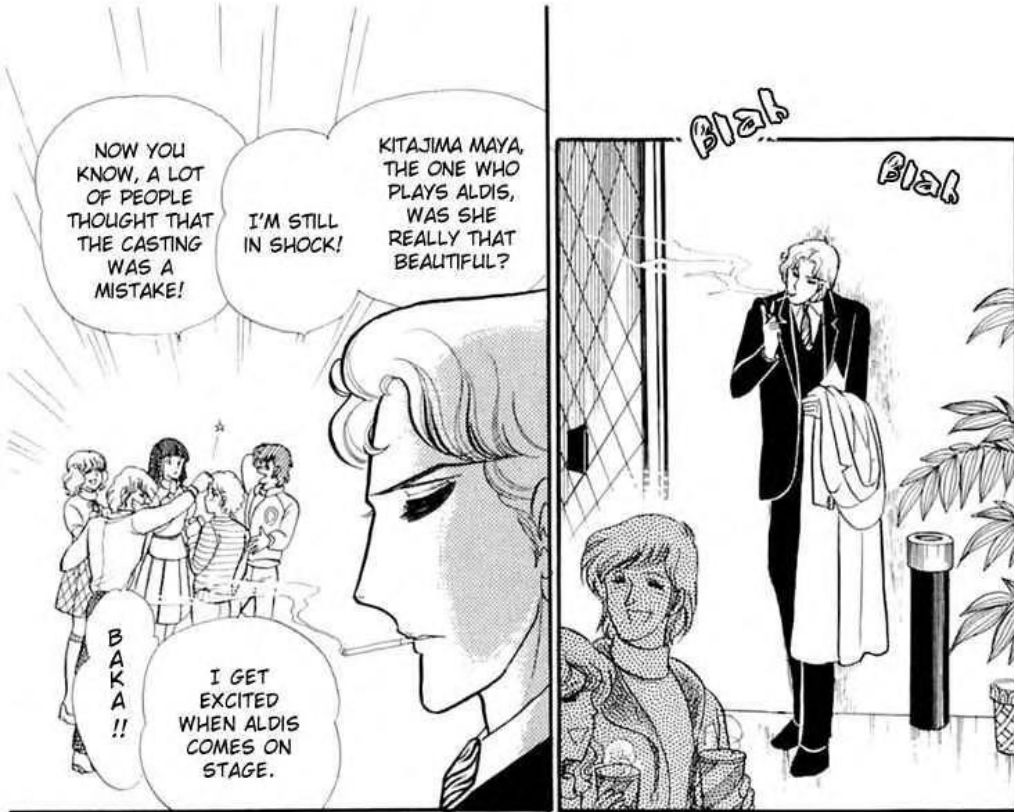
ME TOO...



The intermission will be 20 minutes long.

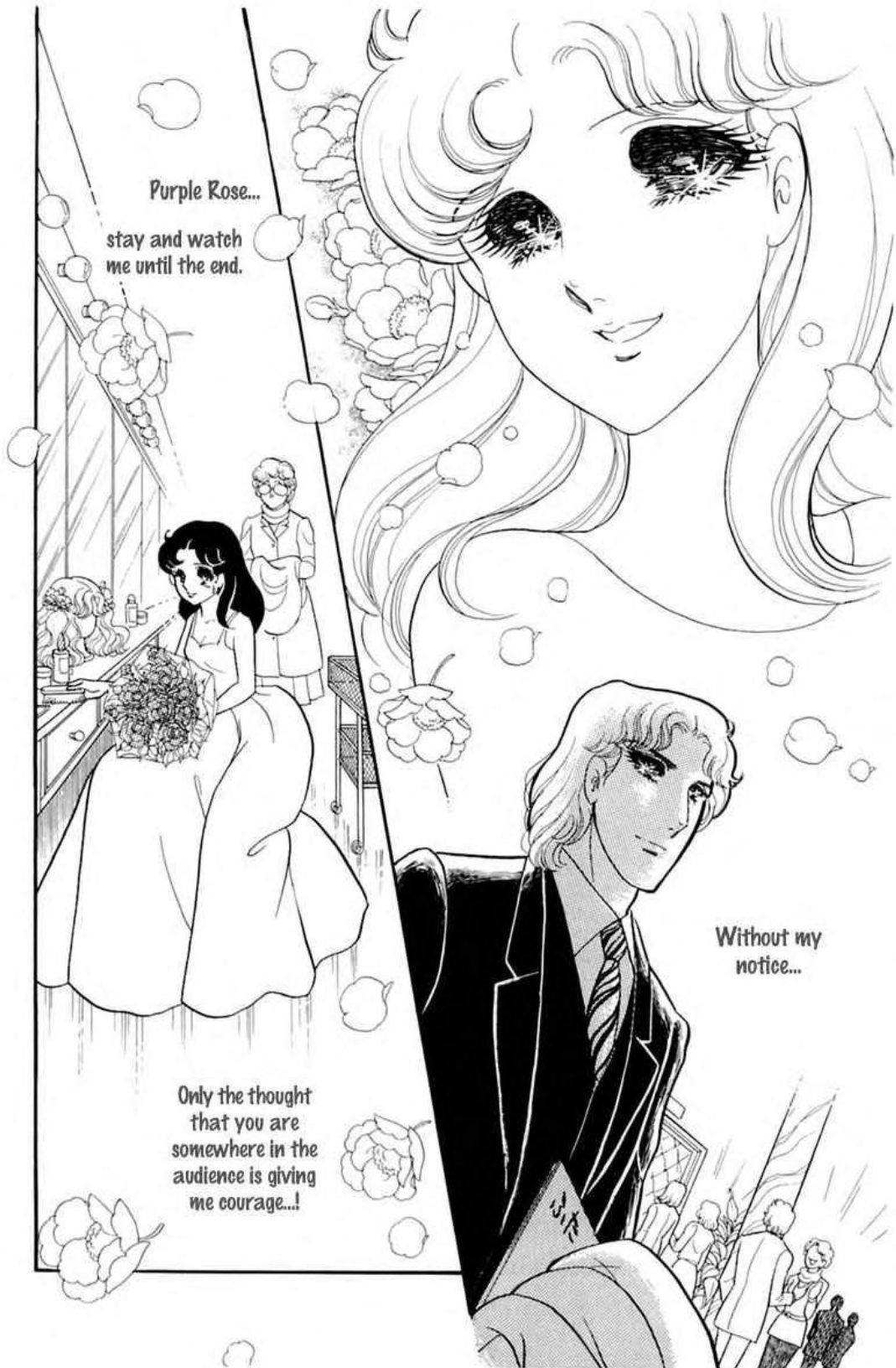
Blah

Blah









Purple Rose...

stay and watch
me until the end.

Without my
notice...

Only the thought
that you are
somewhere in the
audience is giving
me courage...!

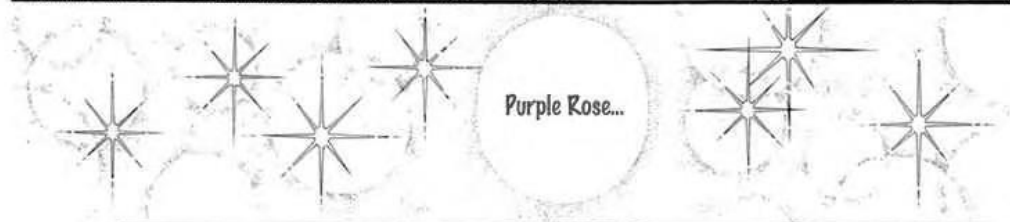


You're the one who I most wish to see me in this play!

Purple Rose

...
I don't know anything about you: your name, your age...

You've always supported me from the shadows...



Purple Rose...



AND IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN OTHERWISE, SINCE SHE IS THE WINNER OF THE ACADEMIC ARTS AWARD.

MAYA KITAJIMA'S ALDIS WAS RATHER GOOD BUT...

...THE TWO CANDIDATES FOR THE LEADING ROLE OF THE MASTERPIECE "THE CRIMSON GODDESS".

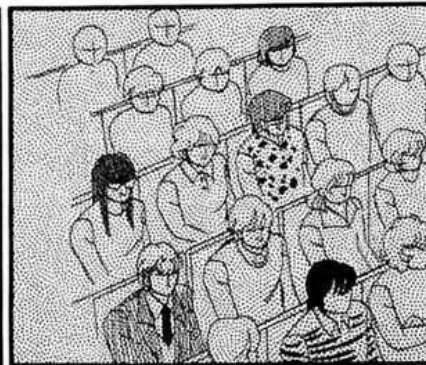
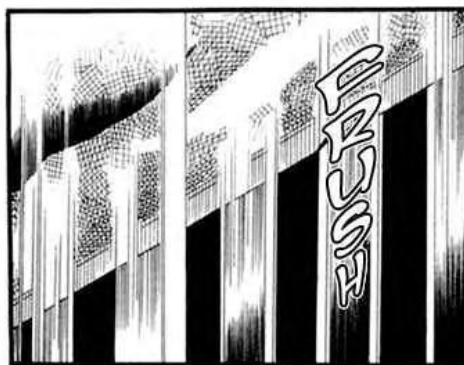
THE ORIGELD OF AYUMI HIMEKAWA AND THE ALDIS OF MAYA KITAJIMA ...

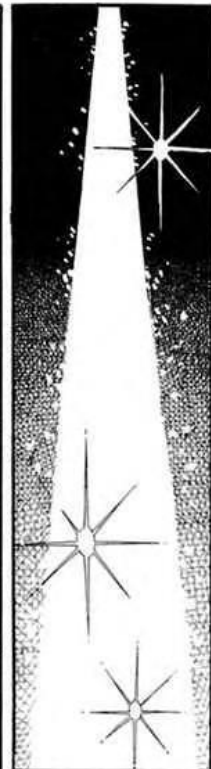
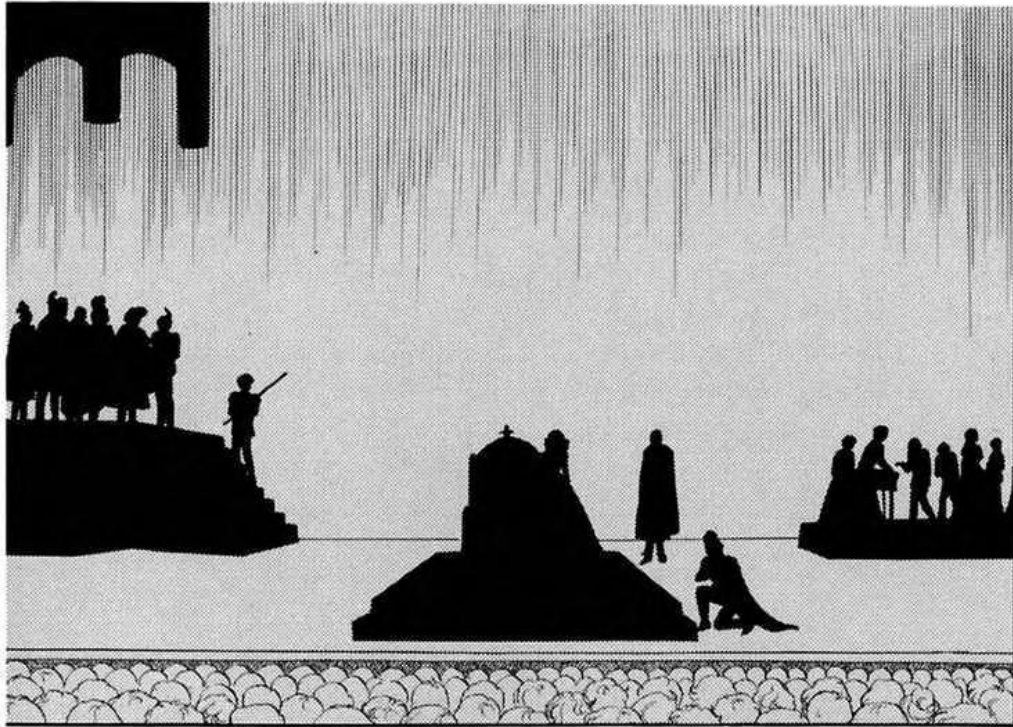
HA HA HA

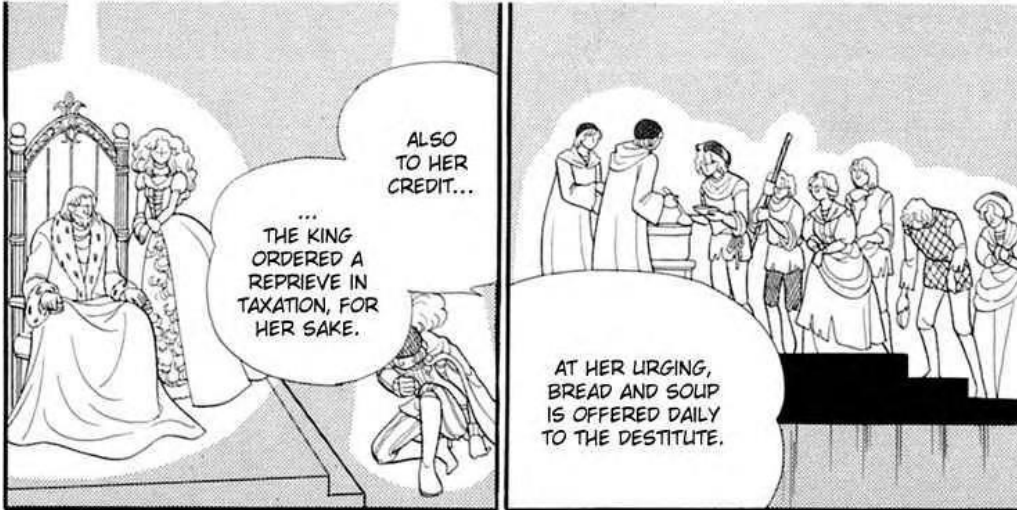
... FOR THE MOMENT AYUMI HIMEKAWA IS BETTER.

IT'LL BE INTERESTING TO SEE THE SECOND ACT.

IN THE BEGINNING MANY THOUGH THE ROLE ASSIGNMENTS WERE A MISTAKE. WHAT DO YOU THINK NOW, ONODERA-SAN?

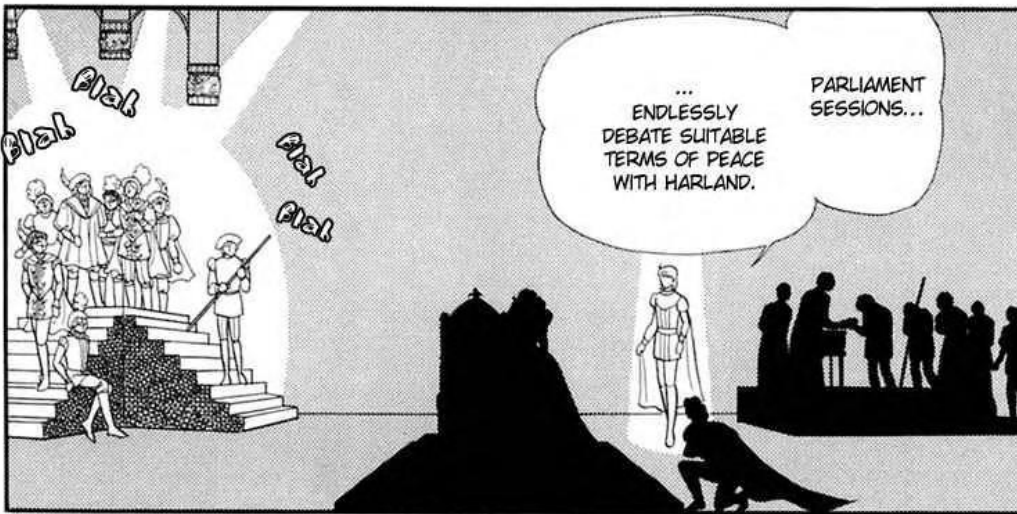






ALSO TO HER CREDIT...
... THE KING ORDERED A REPRIEVE IN TAXATION, FOR HER SAKE.

AT HER URGING, BREAD AND SOUP IS OFFERED DAILY TO THE DESTITUTE.



... ENDLESSLY DEBATE SUITABLE TERMS OF PEACE WITH HARLAND. PARLIAMENT SESSIONS...



LASTONIA IS UNTRUST-WORTHY.
YET FOR A SINGLE THOUGHT!

HARLAND HAS SPURNED THE TERMS.

YET WOULD THEY SHARE THE RIGHTS OF MINING, WITH EXTRACTION, PRODUCTION AND COMMERCE IN OUR PERVIEW...

THEY DESIRE THIS TREATY ALSO.

HARLAND HAS SUFFERED MORE GREATLY THAN LASTONIA IN THIS WAR.

... AND PROMISE OF FUTURE AID TO ALL ENDEAVOURS, FINANCIAL AND MORE.

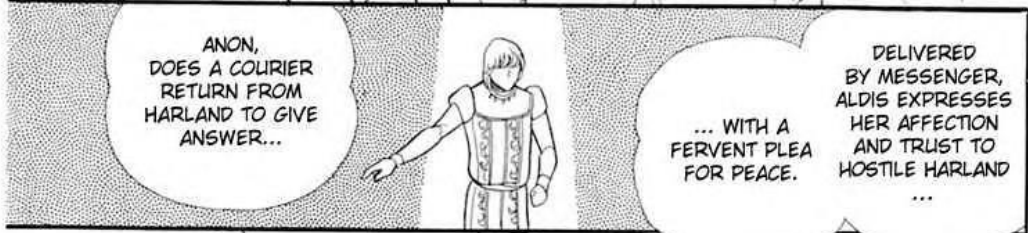


... BUT A
SIMPLE GIRL
THAT LOVES
PEACE.

TO YOUR
GRACIOUS
MAJESTY,
THE KING OF
HARLAND!

I PRAY YOU
CONSIDER ME,
ALDIS, NOT THE
PRINCESS OF
AN ENEMY
KINGDOM
...

PLEASE



ANON,
DOES A COURIER
RETURN FROM
HARLAND TO GIVE
ANSWER...

DELIVERED
BY MESSENGER,
ALDIS EXPRESSES
HER AFFECTION
AND TRUST TO
HOSTILE HARLAND
...



AH?!
AN INVITATION TO
ATTEND HARLAND'S
FOUNDING
ANNIVERSARY?!



TO SEE
WHERE OUR
COMMITMENTS
LIE,

T'IS BUT
A TEST FOR
LASTONIA AND
PRINCESS
ALDIS!

GREAT ADVANTAGE
WOULD THEY
HAVE TO HOLD
YOU RANSOM!

YOUR
HIGHNESS!
T'IS A
TRAP!

IN PEACE OR
DECEPTION...



I WILL FORTH TO HARLAND.

Smile

A TEST... FOR ME...



ALDIS!

YOUR HIGHNESS!

WHAT?!



WE MUST SHOW THEM OUR LOVE AFORE THEY MAY RETURN IT...

IS THAT NOT SO?

...LET IT NOT CONCERN YOU! T'IS ALSO A TEST FOR LASTONIA!

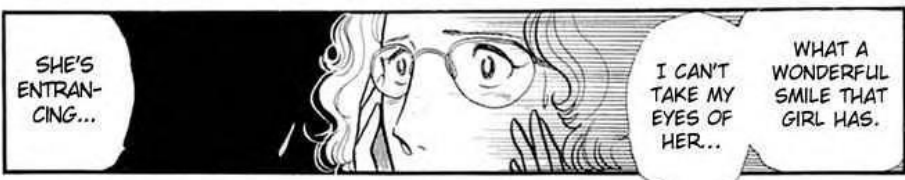
BE AT PEACE ...

AND OUR EFFORTS FOR PEACE WILL FAIL.

IF WE HESITATE, IT WILL BE PROOF OF OUR DECEIT.



YOUR HIGHNESS
...



SHE'S ENTRAN-
CING...

I CAN'T
TAKE MY
EYES OF
HER...

WHAT A
WONDERFUL
SMILE THAT
GIRL HAS.



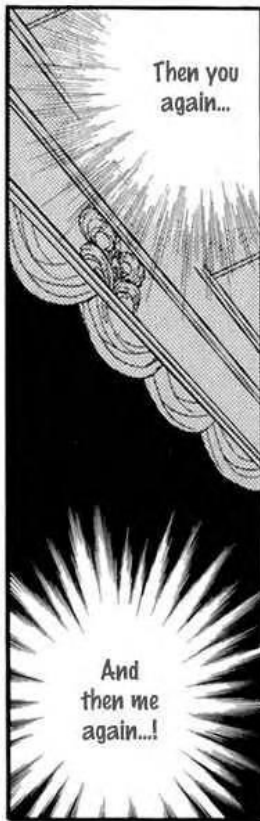
SHE REALLY
DOES HAVE
THE SMILE OF
AN ANGEL
...



AS IF...
SHE SEEMS
CAPABLE TO
FORGIVE
ANYTHING
...

SUCH AN
AURA OF
PURITY...

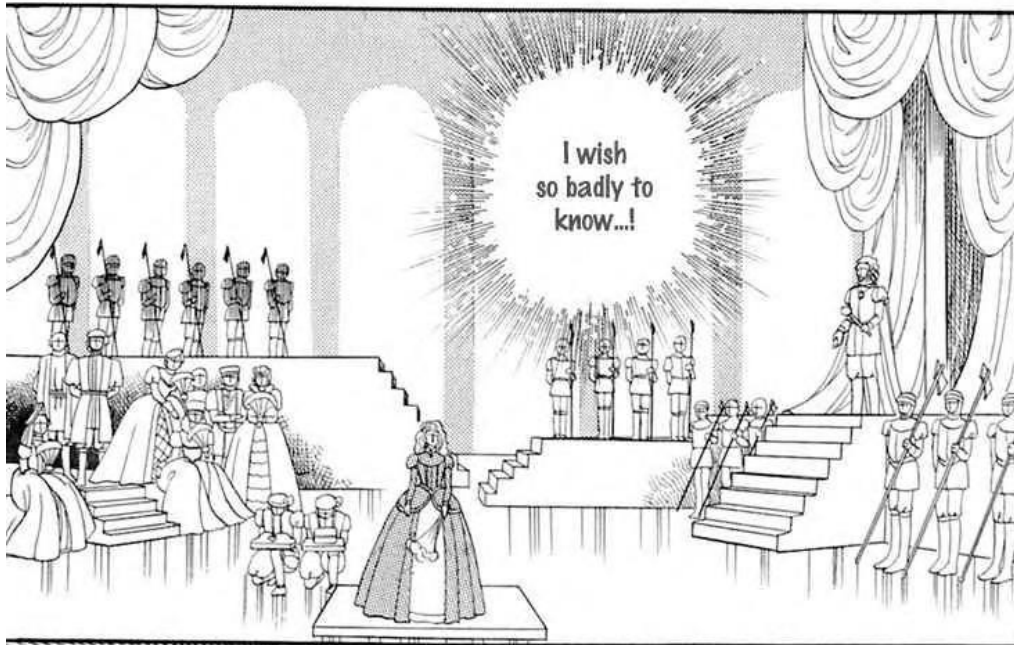
SHE'S
GENTLE,
INNOCENT
...





Who will the public watch...?!

But when the curtain falls...



I wish so badly to know...!



DAAA

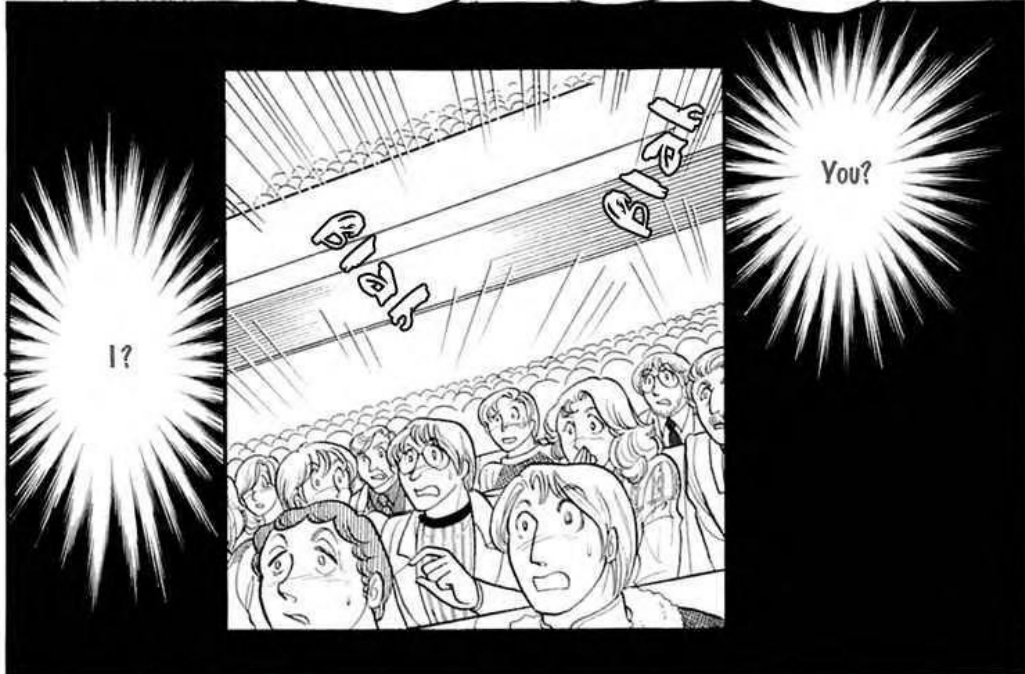


AS A TOKEN,
SUCH GIFTS
HAVE BEEN
BROUGHT.

WITH A
SINCERE
HEART DO
I EXTEND
LASTONIA'S,
MY NATION'S
CONGRATU-
LATIONS.

T'IS AN HONOUR
TO HAVE BEEN
INVITED TO THE
CELEBRATION OF
YOUR KINGDOM'S
FOUNDING.

MAY
THEY BE
PLEASING
TO YOU!



!?

You?



AS IT HAS BEEN SAID. SHE'S BEAUTIFUL, IS SHE NOT?

THAT THE KING IS ENAMORED, I CAN UNDERSTAND. A GRACIOUS AND ANGELIC GIRL.



Maya!



You will not defeat me!

Maya!



GLASS MASK (END OF VOLUME 26)