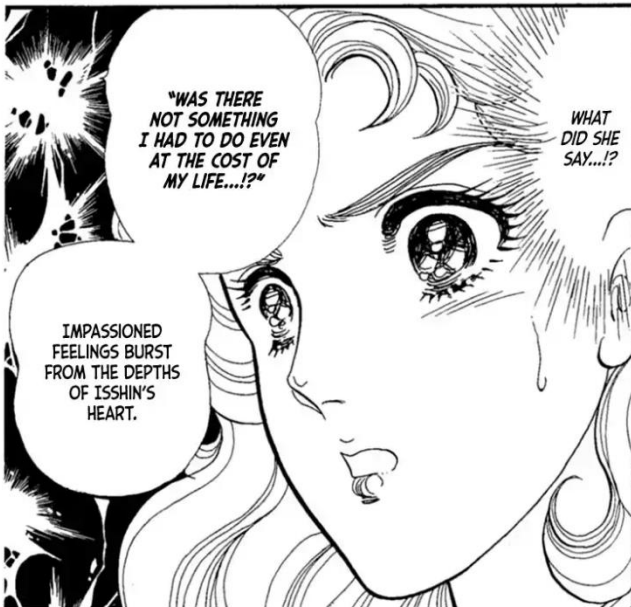


AH!

IT FELT LIKE PEOPLE COULD SEE THE GODDESS IN AKOYA.



FOR A BRIEF MOMENT...



"WAS THERE NOT SOMETHING I HAD TO DO EVEN AT THE COST OF MY LIFE...!?"

IMPASSIONED FEELINGS BURST FROM THE DEPTHS OF ISSHIN'S HEART.

WHAT DID SHE SAY...!?



SHE WAS LIKE A TRUE CELESTIAL MAIDEN...

THE DOOR TO ISSHIN'S LOST MEMORIES WERE ON THE CUSP OF OPENING IN THE FACE OF HER DIVINE PRESENCE.



THE ENTIRE PLAY  
FALLS APART IF AKOYA  
CAN'T CHANNEL THE  
PRESENCE OF THE  
GODDESS!

AKOYA  
MUST REMIND  
ISSHIN OF THE  
GODDESS...!  
  
AND THAT  
WILL BE THE  
TRIGGER THAT  
CAUSES ISSHIN  
TO REGAIN HIS  
MEMORIES!

BUT THIS WAS  
ONLY THE BEGINNING  
OF THE MISFORTUNE  
THAT WOULD BEFALL  
THEIR LOVE.



AND IN  
SUCH A BRIEF  
MOMENT...!  
  
HOW  
CHALLENGING!

THIS IS A  
CRITICAL SCENE  
THAT HINGES ON  
HOW MUCH OF THE  
GODDESS AKOYA  
CAN PRESENT!



SO THIS  
IS AKOYA OF  
THE CRIMSON  
GODDESS!



"WHY DO YOU PRETEND TO HAVE LOST YOUR MEMORY? WHAT ARE YOU HOPING TO GAIN!?"

"JUDGING BY THAT STANCE, YOU MUST BE SOME KIND OF WASHED-UP BANDIT."

"SO NOW WE SEE YOUR TRUE NATURE, RAT!"

WHEN KUSUNOKI'S RETAINER, MATSUNOSUKE, WAS TASKED BY THE OLD WOMAN OF THE VILLAGE TO THREATEN ISSHIN, HE SOMEHOW FOUND HIMSELF KNOWING HOW TO WIELD A SWORD.

"I DON'T KNOW!  
"I TRULY DON'T KNOW!"

ANOTHER TIME, ISSHIN FOUND HIMSELF CARVING A WOODEN BUDDHA DESPITE HIMSELF.

"I WANTED TO CARVE A COMB FOR YOU, SO HOW DID IT END UP LIKE THIS!?"

"HOW DID THIS HAPPEN...?"



"BUT I CANNOT REMEMBER...!"

"SOMETHING I MUST DO AT ANY COST!"

"THERE'S SOMETHING TERRIBLY IMPORTANT!"

"WHO IN THE WORLD AM I!?"

"WHY WAS I ABANDONED!?"



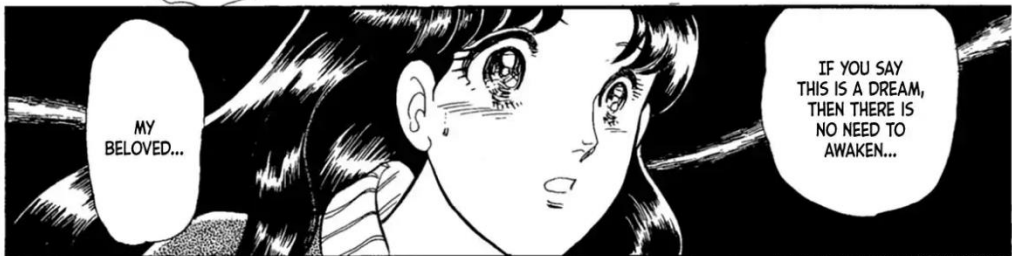
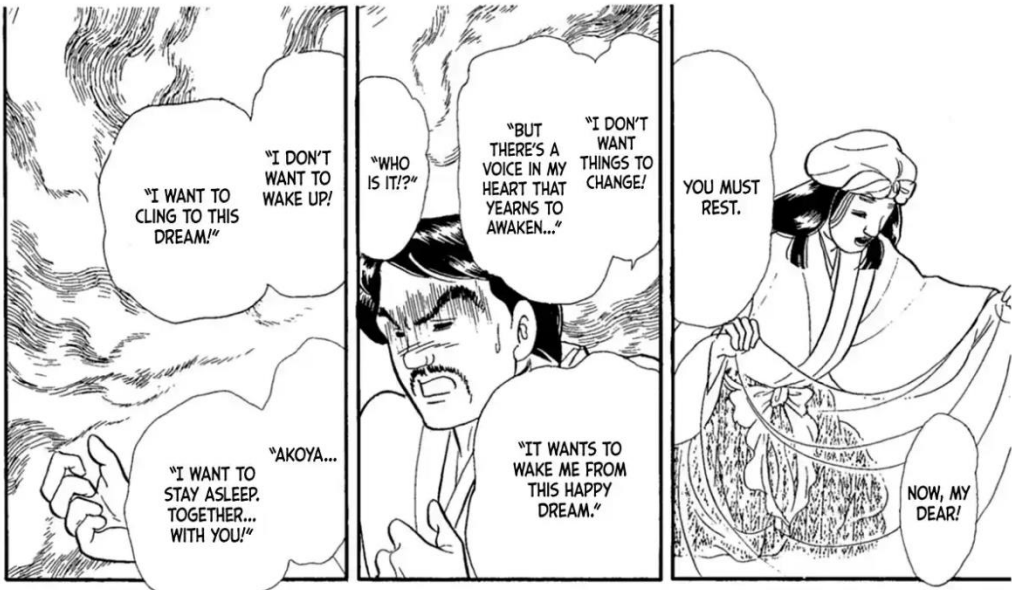
"AKOYA!"

"WHO IN THE WORLD AM I!?"

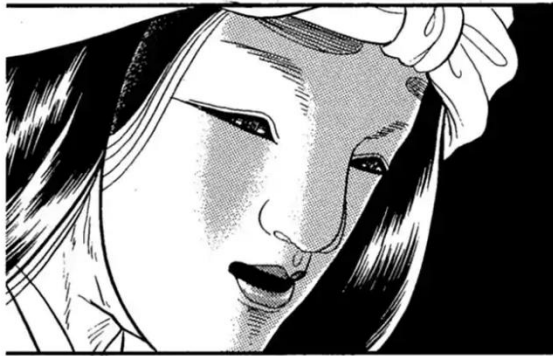
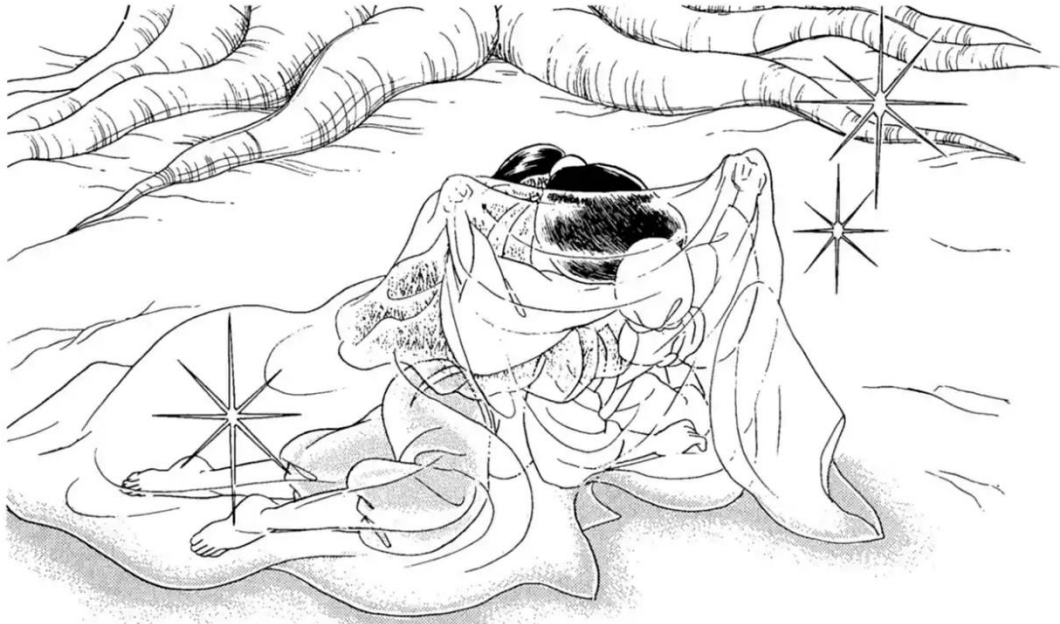
MY DEAR.

"I'M LOSING SIGHT OF MY OWN SELF!"

"A SIDE OF ME THAT I DON'T RECOGNIZE IS EMERGING!"









SHE LOOKED ALMOST LIKE A PLUM TREE WITH A HUMAN SOUL.



"WHY IS THAT...?"  
PEOPLE WONDERED.



HER VERY BEING RADIATED A HEARTRENDING LONELINESS.



IT'S LIKE SHE KNOWS THAT HER LOVE WILL COME TO NOTHING...

IT PAINS ME TO WATCH HER.



THE SADNESS WAS EVEN APPARENT ON HER FACE...



THE TRAGIC LOVE BETWEEN A MAN AND THE SPIRIT OF THE PLUM TREE.

THERE WAS GRIEF IN THE WAY SHE STOOD... SHE WAS FORE-SHADOWING THE TRAGEDY TO COME...

WITH JUST HER POSTURE...!



AKOYA...

YOU WERE LIKE THIS IN THE PAST, TOO...

EVERYONE IN THE AUDIENCE FELL IN LOVE WITH YOU...

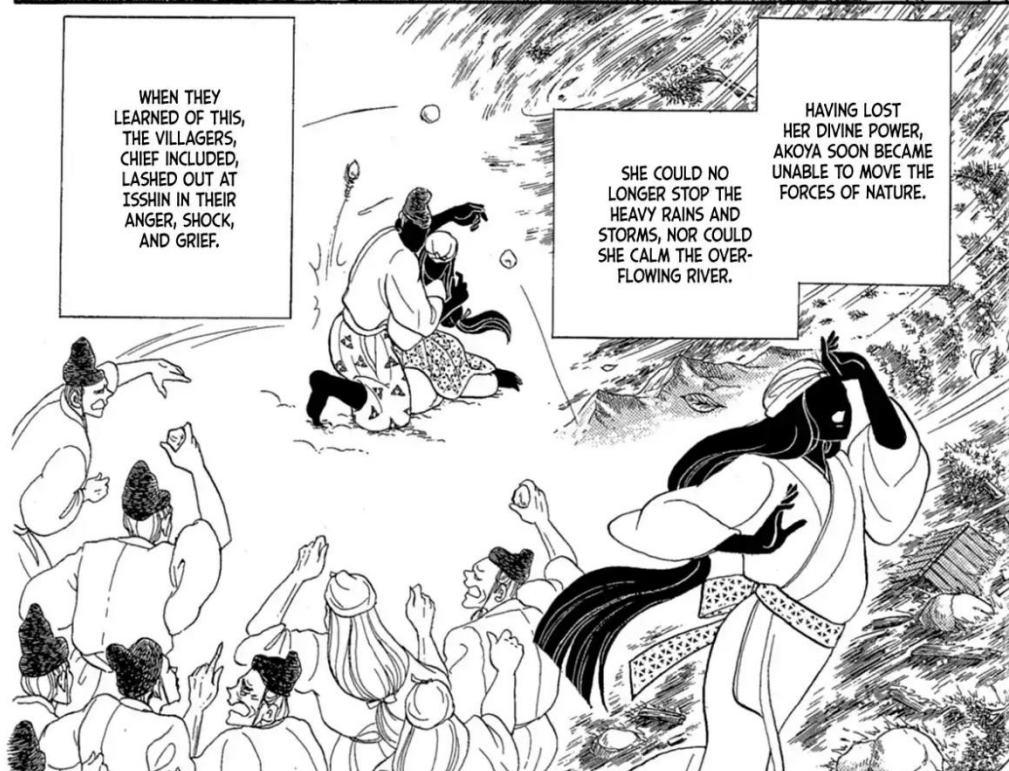
A SINCERE, HEARTRENDING, AND PAINFUL LOVE...



WHAT IS THIS SADNESS THAT HANGS IN THE AIR AFTER THE HEROINE EXITS THE STAGE!

BRILLIANT!

OUR FEELINGS HAVE BECOME ONE WITH AKOYA'S!





MY DEAR!

"DO NOT FOLLOW HIM, AKOYA!  
"THIS IS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD."



MY DEAR!



AND SO THREE MONTHS PASSED...

ISSHIN WAS SEPARATED FROM AKOYA AND JAILED AT KUSUNOKI'S ESTATE.



SOON KUSUNOKI FORCIBLY SEPARATED ISSHIN FROM AKOYA AT THE OLD WOMAN'S REQUEST.

"WE HAVE INFORMATION THAT THERE ARE SPIES FROM THE KYOTO SHOGUNATE RESIDING IN THIS HOUSE...!"

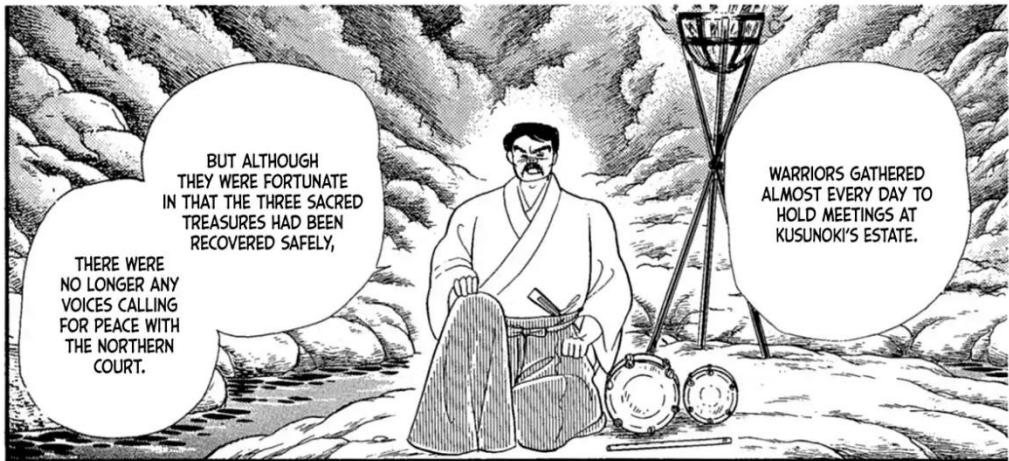
"I HEAR THAT THIS MAN IS ALSO SKILLED WITH THE SWORD!"

"HE'S SUSPICIOUS! CAPTURE HIM!"

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?"

MY DEAR!

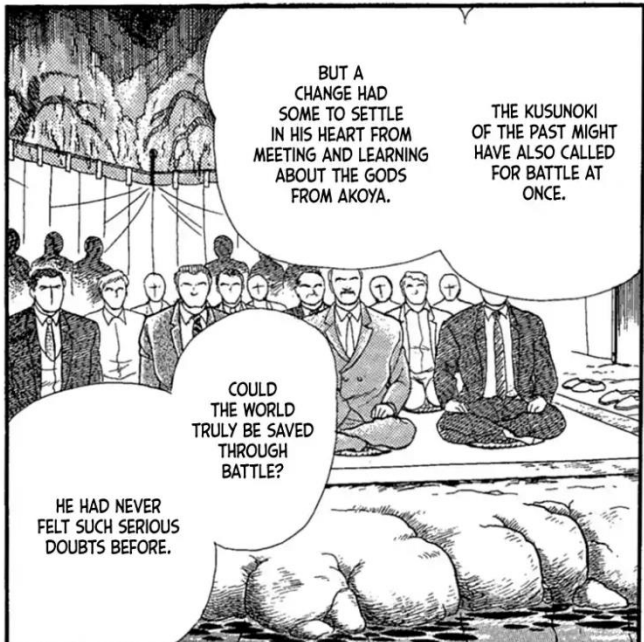




THERE WERE NO LONGER ANY VOICES CALLING FOR PEACE WITH THE NORTHERN COURT.

BUT ALTHOUGH THEY WERE FORTUNATE IN THAT THE THREE SACRED TREASURES HAD BEEN RECOVERED SAFELY,

WARRIORS GATHERED ALMOST EVERY DAY TO HOLD MEETINGS AT KUSUNOKI'S ESTATE.



BUT A CHANGE HAD COME TO SETTLE IN HIS HEART FROM MEETING AND LEARNING ABOUT THE GODS FROM AKOYA.

THE KUSUNOKI OF THE PAST MIGHT HAVE ALSO CALLED FOR BATTLE AT ONCE.

HE HAD NEVER FELT SUCH SERIOUS DOUBTS BEFORE.

COULD THE WORLD TRULY BE SAVED THROUGH BATTLE?



KUSUNOKI WASN'T SURE WHAT TO DO.

IN FACT, THE LOUDEST VOICES WERE THE ONES WHO WANTED TO RECAPTURE KYOTO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

THE COUNTLESS DEATHS CAUSED BY THIS PROTRACTED WAR HAD EXHAUSTED THE PEOPLE. IT WAS TEARING THE COUNTRY APART.

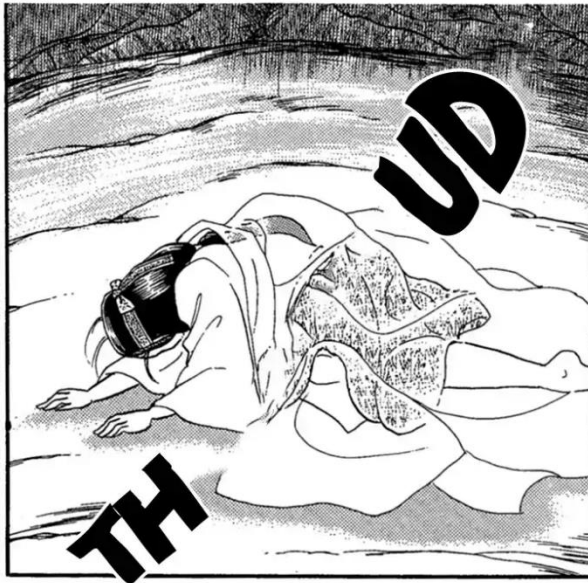


HE BELIEVED THAT IT WOULD BE ENOUGH TO CLEAR THE CLOUDS IN HIS HEART.

JUST SEEING AKOYA WAS ENOUGH.

THAT WAS WHAT KUSUNOKI FELT.

LOOKING UP AT THE CLEAR BLUE SKY, KUSUNOKI HURRIED HIS HORSE TO THE CRIMSON VALLEY.



WHEN KUSUNOKI MET AKOYA, HE FOUND THAT SHE HAD THINNED, AND WAS ON THE VERGE OF DEATH.



THE MAIDSERVANTS WHO ATTENDED AKOYA SOBBED.

"HER DIVINE POWER HAS NOT RETURNED; RATHER, IT HAS WEAKENED."

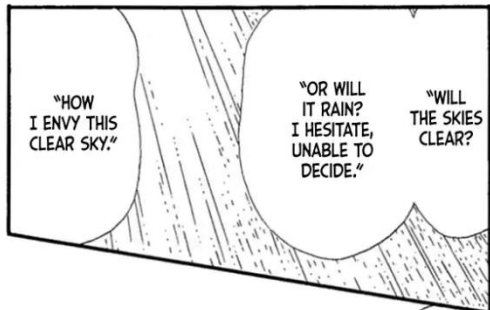
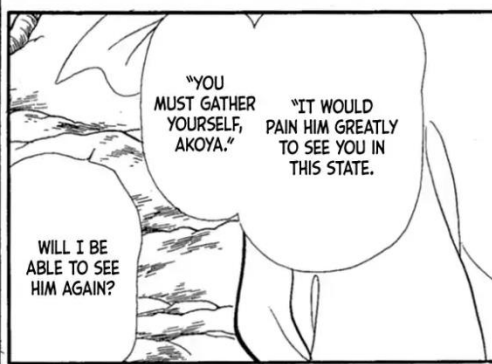
"SHE DOESN'T SLEEP."

"SHE DOESN'T EAT."

KUSUNOKI ASKED.

"WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HER!?"

"NOT ONLY HAS SHE NOT FORGOTTEN ABOUT THAT MAN, SHE NOW YEARNS FOR HIM EVEN MORE FIERCELY," THE VILLAGE CHIEF EXPLAINED.





"THOSE WHO DIED IN BATTLE...  
WHAT DID THEY LIVE FOR?"

"MY FATHER AND BROTHER BOTH PERISHED IN BATTLE."  
"AS YOU SAID, WE CLAIM A JUST CAUSE AND SAY WE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE, BUT THAT REASONING WORKS ONLY ON HUMANS."

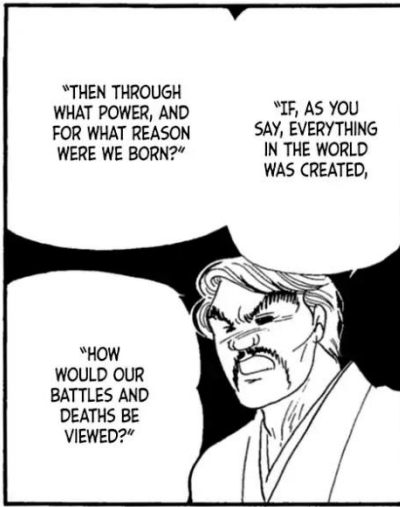


IT IS THE VITALITY OF THE GODS THAT GIVES LIFE TO EVERYTHING.

WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT WE LIVE THANKS TO THEIR POWER!



IS THERE ANY MOTHER THAT WOULD NOT LAMENT SEEING HER CHILDREN FIGHT AND KILL EACH OTHER?



"THEN THROUGH WHAT POWER, AND FOR WHAT REASON WERE WE BORN?"

"IF, AS YOU SAY, EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD WAS CREATED,

"HOW WOULD OUR BATTLES AND DEATHS BE VIEWED?"



CREATION AND DESTRUCTION...  
HEAVEN AND EARTH...

THE WORLD IS COMPOSED OF OPPOSING FORCES...  
BIRTH AND DEATH,

AKOYA...!







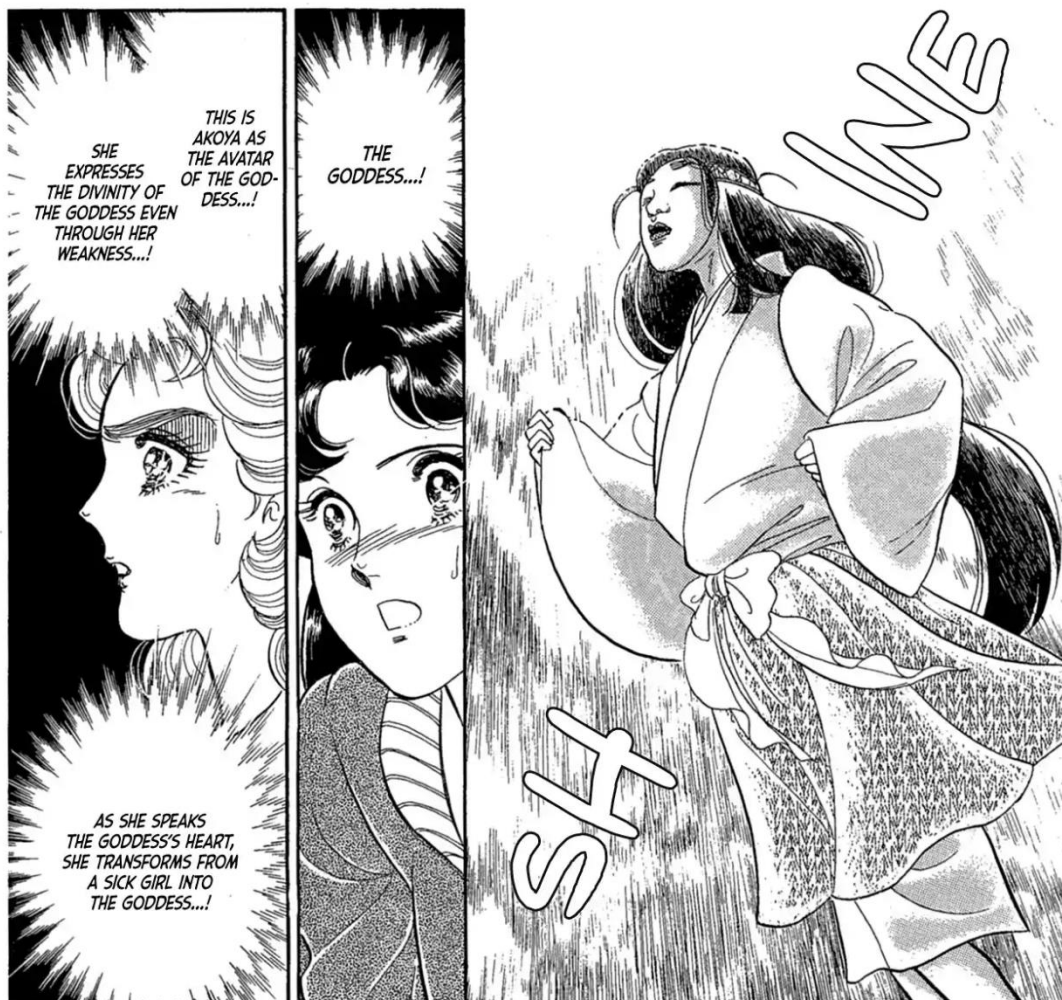
OUR VISIBLE BODIES ARE DRIVEN BY OUR INVISIBLE SOULS...

THOSE THINGS THAT SEEM TO BE POLAR OPPOSITES ARE SIMPLY TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN.

MEN AND WOMEN ARE YIN AND YANG BORN OF THE SAME SOUL.

WHEN THEY COME TOGETHER, A NEW LIFE IS BORN.

IT IS THROUGH DARKNESS THAT WE HAVE LIGHT AND THROUGH LIGHT THAT WE HAVE DARKNESS.



SHE EXPRESSES THE DIVINITY OF THE GODDESS EVEN THROUGH HER WEAKNESS...!

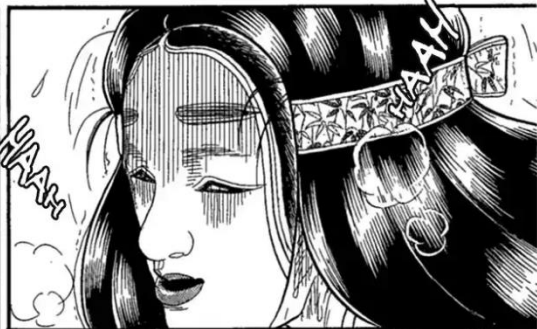
THIS IS AKOYA AS THE AVATAR OF THE GODDESS...!

THE GODDESS...!

AS SHE SPEAKS THE GODDESS'S HEART, SHE TRANSFORMS FROM A SICK GIRL INTO THE GODDESS...!

SHE

INE





SURELY, YOU TOO CAN SEE IT IF YOU LOOK AROUND YOU.

MY LORD, THERE IS NO WAY THAT YOU'D BE UNAWARE.

I WAS NOT TAUGHT.

I KNEW THIS ALL ALONG.

YOU JUST NEED TO NOTICE IT.



MMM...

I'M SHOCKED... IS SHE REALLY JUST ACTING?



AND ALL THE WORLD LIVES IN ACCORDANCE WITH IT.

THE NATURAL WORLD IN ITS ENTIRETY IS GOVERNED BY DIVINE LAW

HAHH

THE WORLD IS SUSTAINED BY SOMETHING LIKE A WONDROUS LAW.



"HMM..."

TO FIGHT AND KILL ONE ANOTHER IS TO GO AGAINST DIVINE LAW...!

THERE IS NO MEANING IN EXTINGUISHING LIFE. RATHER, THERE IS MEANING IN PRESERVING IT.



"WE MUST NOT FIGHT!"

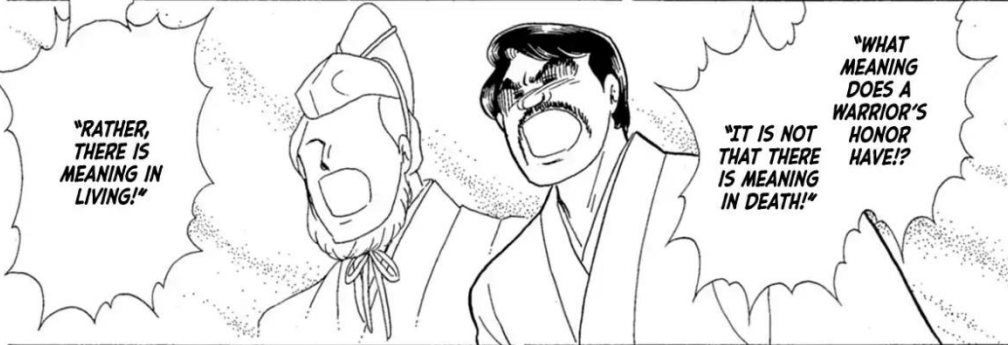
"TO LIVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THAT LAW IS THE RIGHT PATH...!"

"THERE MUST NOT BE WAR!"

"THE LAW OF THE GODS GOVERNS THE NATURAL WORLD!"



STAND



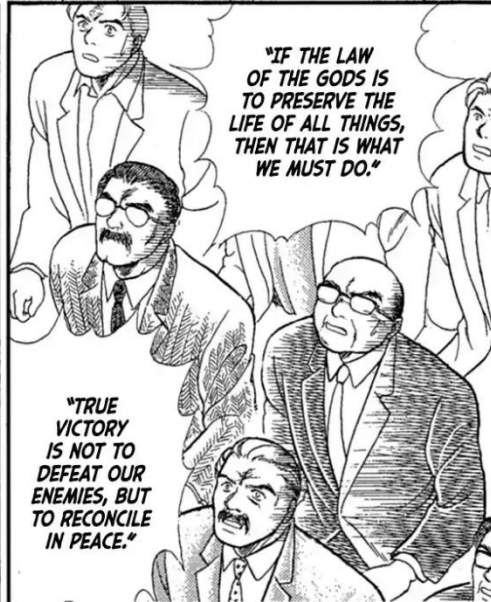
"RATHER, THERE IS MEANING IN LIVING!"

"IT IS NOT THAT THERE IS MEANING IN DEATH!"

"WHAT MEANING DOES A WARRIOR'S HONOR HAVE!?"



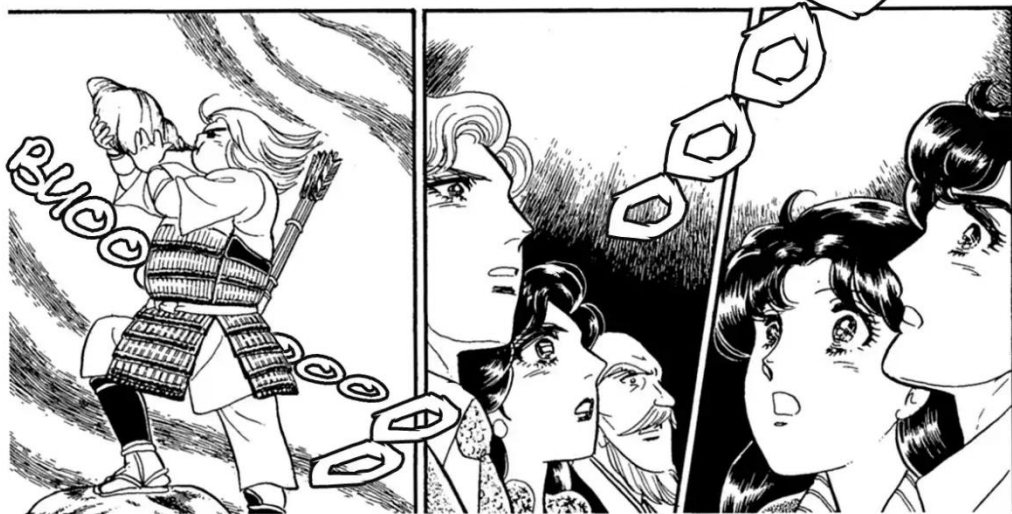
"THIS WAR MUST BE PUT TO AN END!"



"IF THE LAW OF THE GODS IS TO PRESERVE THE LIFE OF ALL THINGS, THEN THAT IS WHAT WE MUST DO."

"TRUE VICTORY IS NOT TO DEFEAT OUR ENEMIES, BUT TO RECONCILE IN PEACE."









THE SOUTHERN COURT HAS MADE ITS MOVE...!

THEY'VE MOBILIZED THE ENTIRE ARMY!

"WHAT DID YOU SAY!?"

THE WAR HAS BEGUN!

BUOOO

"WHAT IS THE MATTER? DID SOMETHING HAPPEN!?"

"WHAT ...!?"

PITTER PITTER

PITTER PITTER



THIS IS THE TIME TO TAKE DOWN THE DOGS OF THE SHOGUNATE AND RECLAIM THE CAPITAL!

RAAAH HEAR HEAR!

OUR GOAL IS THE CAPITAL, KYOTO!!

RAAAH

WE HAVE NO REASON TO AWAIT ORDERS FROM THAT COWARD, KUSUNOKI!

OUR ARMY IS THE STRONGEST OF ALL!



"YOU MUST NOT WOUND ONE ANOTHER!"  
"YOU MUST NOT KILL ONE ANOTHER!"



"YOU MUST NOT GO TO BATTLE!"  
"YOU MUST NOT FIGHT!"

"WAIT! DO NOT BE SO HASTY!"



"NOT A SINGLE HAIR OR NAIL WAS CREATED BY US...!"

"THESE BODIES WERE GIVEN TO US BY THE GODS!"



"OUR FLESH AND BLOOD ARE GIFTS FROM THE GODS!"

"CEASE FIGHTING!"

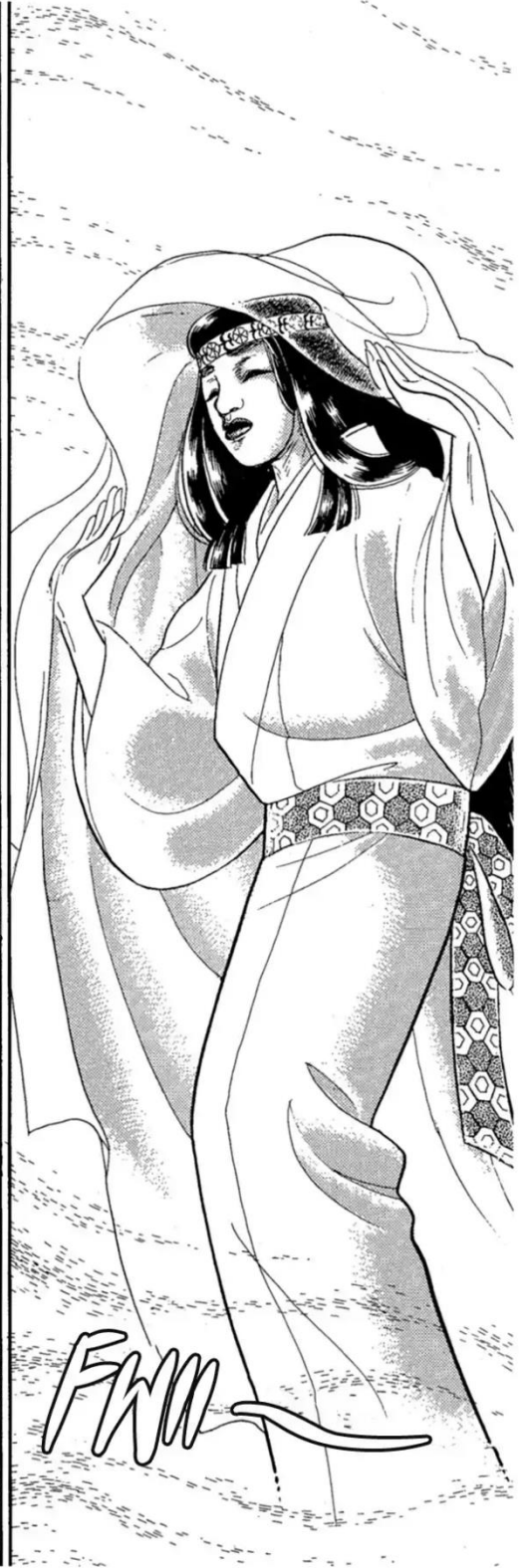


"BUT IN RECONCILING PEACEFULLY."

"TRUE VICTORY IS NOT IN DEFEATING OUR ENEMIES,"

"THE WAY OF THE GODS IS TO PRESERVE ALL LIFE!"







CAN YOU NOT HEAR THE VOICE OF THE HEAVENS?  
CAN YOU NOT HEAR THE VOICE OF THE EARTH?

O FOOLISH AND INSOLENT SLEEPING SOULS.



LEND YOUR EARS TO THE SOUND OF THE HEAVENS.

LEND YOUR EARS TO THE WORDS OF THE EARTH.



UNDERSTAND.  
YOU MUST PERCEIVE.

THAT WHICH MOVES YOUR LIFE.



AWAKEN.  
OPEN YOUR EYES.

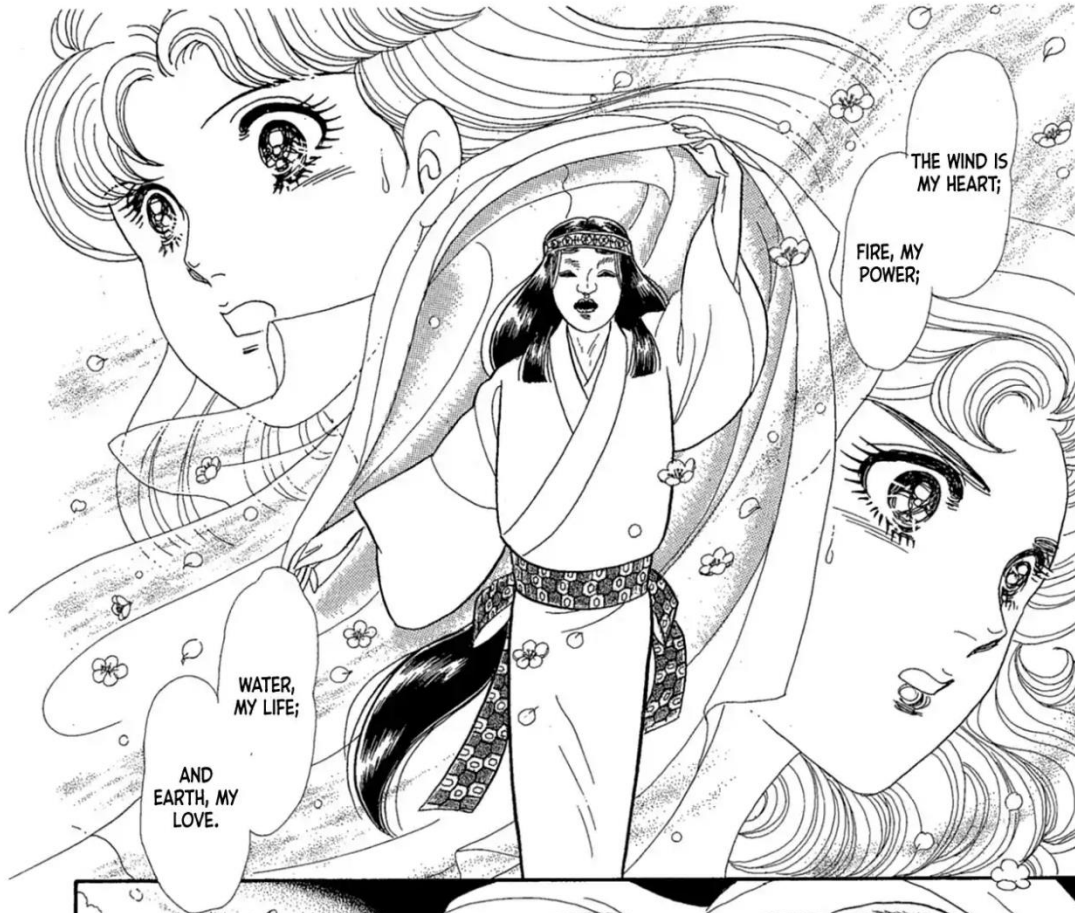
KNOW YOUR TRUE FORM.



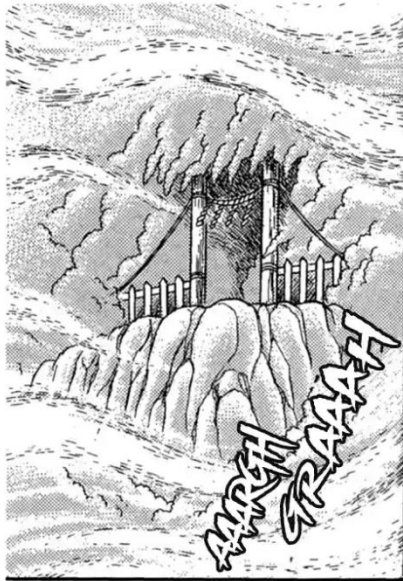
THERE ARE GODS IN THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.  
AND BETWEEN THEM, HUMANITY WAS BORN.

O SOULS THAT DWELL IN HUMANITY THAT DESIRE TO BE DIVINE.











OOOOHHHHE

MEN!

WE MARCH  
AT ONCE!



KUSUNOKI  
RELEASED  
ISSHIN FROM  
JAIL, AND  
GAVE HIM HIS  
OWN SWORD.

THEN, INFORMATION  
CAME TO HIM THAT  
THE NORTHERN COURT'S  
ARMY HAD THEIR  
SIGHTS SET ON THE  
CRIMSON VALLEY.

KUSUNOKI,  
AS HEAD OF  
THE FAMILY,  
WAS UNABLE TO  
DEFY DESTINY  
AND ENDED UP  
MARCHING OUT  
TO BATTLE.



"THE CRIMSON GODDESS IS THE GODDESS OF TAN!"

"THE FORBIDDEN LAND IS A TREASURE TROVE OF TAN."

AT THE HEAD OF THE NORTHERN COURT ARMY THAT INVADDED THE CRIMSON VALLEY WAS THE LEADER OF THE PERFORMING TROUPE!

SHE FLED WITH THE VILLAGE CHIEF AND THE OTHERS IN AN EFFORT TO PROTECT THE GODDESS.

MEANWHILE, AKOYA, WHO HAD LOST HER DIVINE POWER, WAS UNABLE TO STOP THE APPROACHING NORTHERN ARMY.



OOHHH!

FROM THE NORTH, OMINOUS DARK CLOUDS APPROACH LIKE A SPIRALING WHEEL!



"I HAVE SEEN SOMETHING LIKE THIS BEFORE."

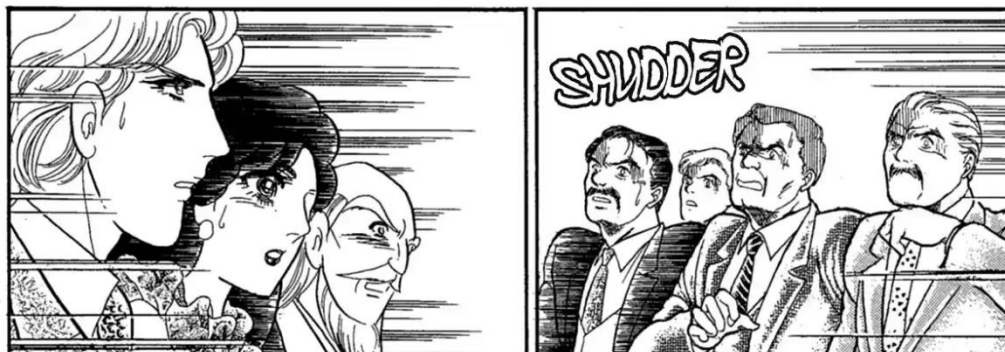
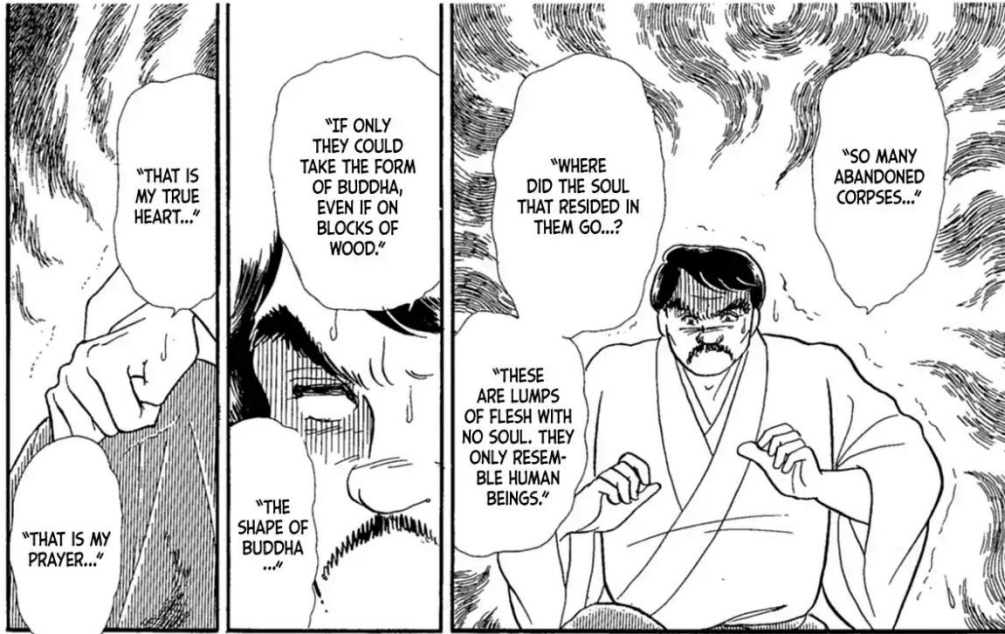
ISSHIN HURRIED TO THE CRIMSON VILLAGE AND FOUND IT BURNING IN THE FLAMES OF WAR.

ALONGSIDE THE WRETCHED CORPSES OF THE MASSACRED VILLAGERS...

HIS DISTANT MEMORIES WERE BEGINNING TO AWAKEN.

"BLOOD-STAINED CORPSES PILED HIGH...  
"HOMES BURNED TO THE GROUND..."

FROM THE LAND COMES A MALEVOLENT CROWD, DRIVEN BY GREED. EYES BLOODSHOT, THEY CRAWL ON THE EARTH WITH THEIR FANGS BARED.







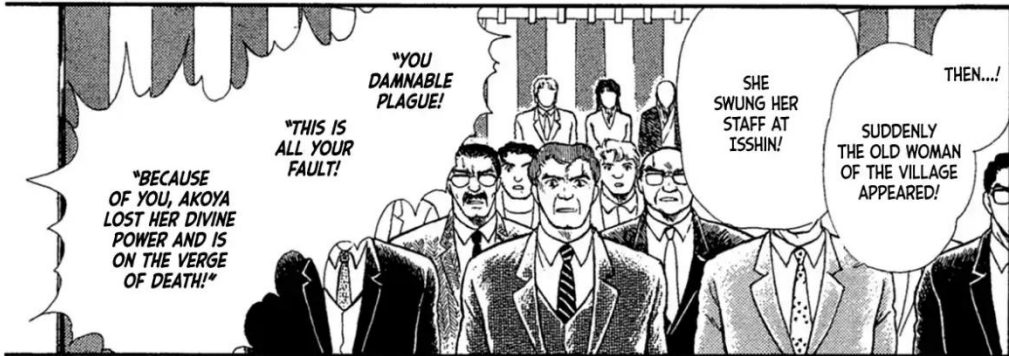
AND SIGNS THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE HAD RUSHED IN.

AXE IN HAND, ISSHIN WENT TOWARDS THE FORBIDDEN LAND. THERE, HE FOUND THAT THE SACRED ROPE AT THE ENTRANCE HAD BEEN CUT.



HE POINTED AT AN AXE BESIDE A TREE STUMP AND THEN TURNED HIS FINGER TOWARDS THE FORBIDDEN LAND.

SUDDENLY, THE MONK FROM LONG AGO APPEARED BEFORE HIM AGAIN.



"BECAUSE OF YOU, AKOYA LOST HER DIVINE POWER AND IS ON THE VERGE OF DEATH!"

"THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT!"

"YOU DAMNABLE PLAGUE!"

SHE SWUNG HER STAFF AT ISSHIN!

THEN...!

SUDDENLY THE OLD WOMAN OF THE VILLAGE APPEARED!



"CLAD IN GARB OF CRIMSON FLOWERS, THE THOUSAND-YEAR PLUM TREE..."

"SHE IS THE GODDESS, BORN OF THE UNION OF HEAVEN AND EARTH..."

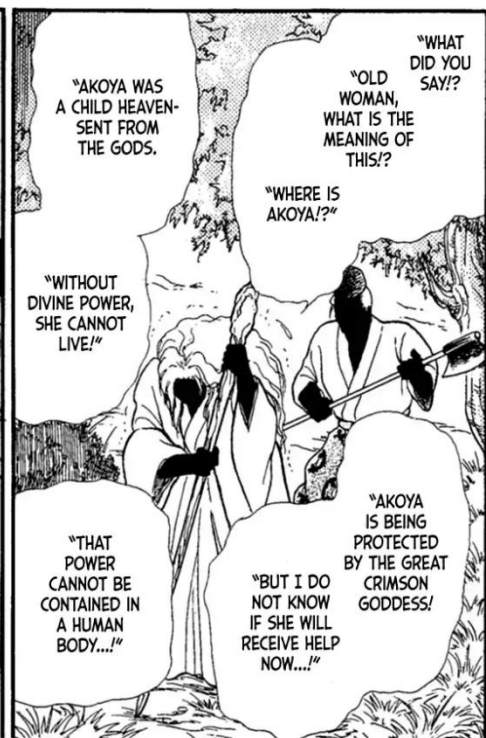
"SHE IS THE AVATAR OF THAT GODDESS!"



"WHAT KIND OF DEITY IS THE CRIMSON GODDESS!?"

"SPEAK, OLD WOMAN!"

"WHAT IS THIS GODDESS THAT DWELLS IN AKOYA'S BODY!?"



"AKOYA WAS A CHILD HEAVEN-SENT FROM THE GODS."

"WITHOUT DIVINE POWER, SHE CANNOT LIVE!"

"THAT POWER CANNOT BE CONTAINED IN A HUMAN BODY...!"

"WHAT DID YOU SAY!?"

"OLD WOMAN, WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS!?"

"WHERE IS AKOYA!?"

"AKOYA IS BEING PROTECTED BY THE GREAT CRIMSON GODDESS!"

"BUT I DO NOT KNOW IF SHE WILL RECEIVE HELP NOW...!"





THE SCREAMS OF THE NORTHERN COURT SOLDIERS...!

THAT AN OMINOUS FEELING SHOOK THEM.

IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT.

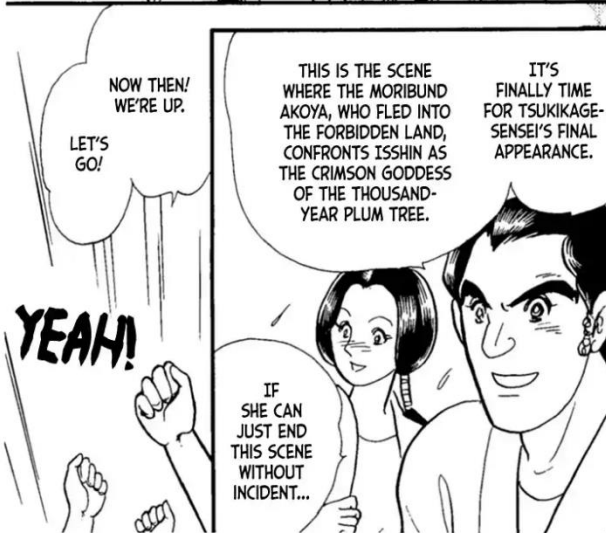


"AKOYA IS A GODDESS...!"

"THE GODDESS OF THE THOUSAND-YEAR PLUM TREE!"

"THE THOUSAND-YEAR PLUM TREE!"







OH MY, WHAT A SIGHT IT IS TO SEE THE SOLDIERS BEING BLOWN AWAY.

I'LL BLOW THEM AWAY WITH A GUST OF WIND!

THEY LOOK LIKE SPINNING TOPS!

ZZZZZ

ZZZZZ

THIS IS A SACRED LAND OF THE GODS. THE CRIMSON GODDESS' DWELLING PLACE.

SOLDIERS WHO HAVE STAINED YOUR HANDS IN BLOOD.

HEEDLESS HUMANS DRIVEN BY GREED.

OOOOO

IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIVES, LEAVE AT ONCE!

THIS PLACE IS NOT FOR THE LIKES OF YOU.

KYAA

ZZZZZ



**KYAAA**

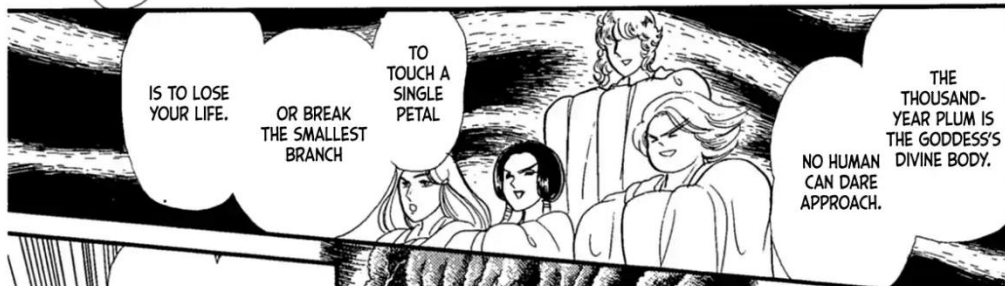
THEY ARE FLEEING...!  
THEY ARE FLEEING!

HOW AMUSING—THE  
BLADES OF LIGHTNING  
HAVE PARALYZED  
THEIR BODIES!

LOOK AT  
THAT! THEY  
STUMBLE IN  
THE FOG

AND CUT  
DOWN THEIR  
OWN ALLIES,  
MISTAKING  
THEM FOR  
ENEMIES.

I WILL  
OBSTRUCT  
THEIR VIEW  
WITH FOG, AND PURIFY  
THEM WITH BLADES  
OF LIGHTNING.



IS TO LOSE  
YOUR LIFE.

OR BREAK  
THE SMALLEST  
BRANCH

TO  
TOUCH A  
SINGLE  
PETAL

THE  
THOUSAND-  
YEAR PLUM IS  
THE GODDESS'S  
DIVINE BODY.  
NO HUMAN  
CAN DARE  
APPROACH.



LET US  
TEACH HIM A  
LESSON...!

OH HOW  
SHAME-  
LESS...!

OUR  
POWER  
DOES NOT  
AFFECT  
HIM...!

THE  
FIERCE  
WINDS AND  
LIGHTNING  
BOTH AVOID  
THE MAN!

WE ARE  
POWER-  
LESS!

AH...!  
THAT MAN  
HAS COME!

HE  
WIELDS  
AN AXE IN  
HAND...!

WHO IS ABLE  
TO CUT DOWN  
THE THOUSAND-  
YEAR PLUM  
TREE.

HOWEVER,  
THERE IS  
JUST ONE  
HUMAN  
BEING

THAT IS  
THE MAN  
BELOVED BY  
THE GOD-  
DESS...





WILL HIS LIFE BE TAKEN, OR WILL OURS!?

OH CRIMSON GODDESS...! LEND US YOUR POWER!



AND WE TOO WILL LOSE OUR LIVES!

IF THIS CONTINUES, THE CRIMSON GODDESS- THE THOUSAND-YEAR PLUM TREE- WILL BE CUT DOWN...!

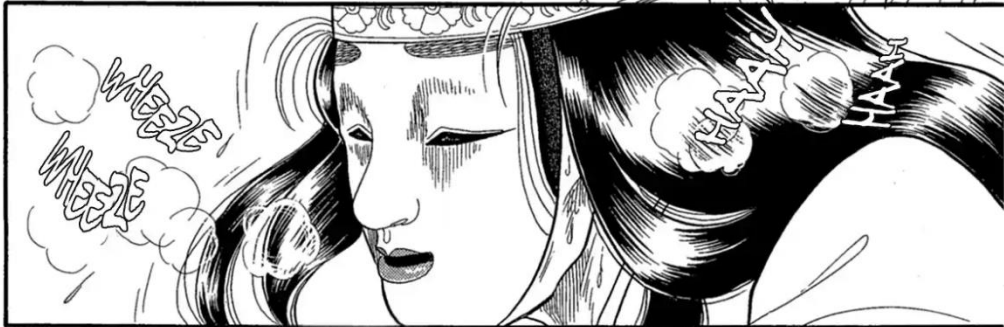
THEN WHAT CAN WE DO...!?



IF THAT MAN IS ABLE TO CUT DOWN THE THOUSAND-YEAR PLUM TREE

THEN SHE ALSO HAS THE POWER TO TAKE HIS LIFE!

WE CAN ONLY CLING TO THE GODDESS'S POWER!



WHEEZE  
WHEEZE  
WHEEZE



TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI...?



WH  
IM



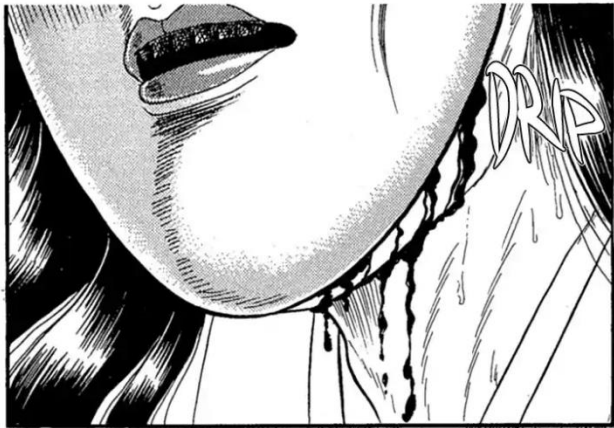
HUH...?

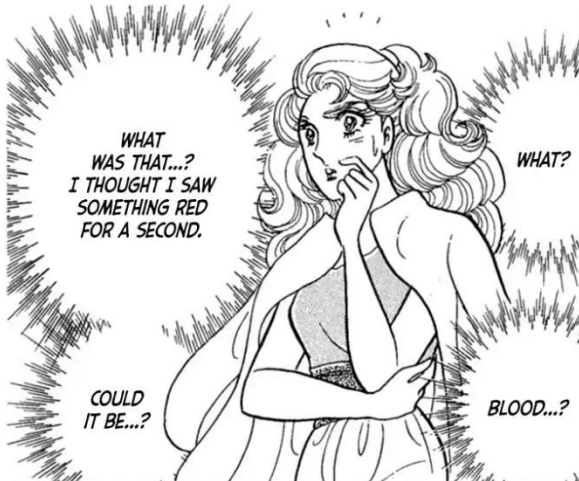


PLUM  
DAB









WHAT WAS THAT...? I THOUGHT I SAW SOMETHING RED FOR A SECOND.

WHAT?

COULD IT BE...?

BLOOD...?



SMACK



PLEASE KILL HIM!  
IF YOU DON'T, HE WILL KILL YOU!

BRING BACK YOUR DIVINE POWER, AND TURN EVERYTHING BACK...!



WHE EZE



CRIMSON GODDESS! LEND US YOUR POWER...!

HAAH  
THAT MAN IS ON HIS WAY!



LEND ME YOUR POWER...!

ICHIREN...!

MY LOVE...!

THE LAST OF YOUR POWER...!

WHE EZE

WHE EZE

HAAH HAAH