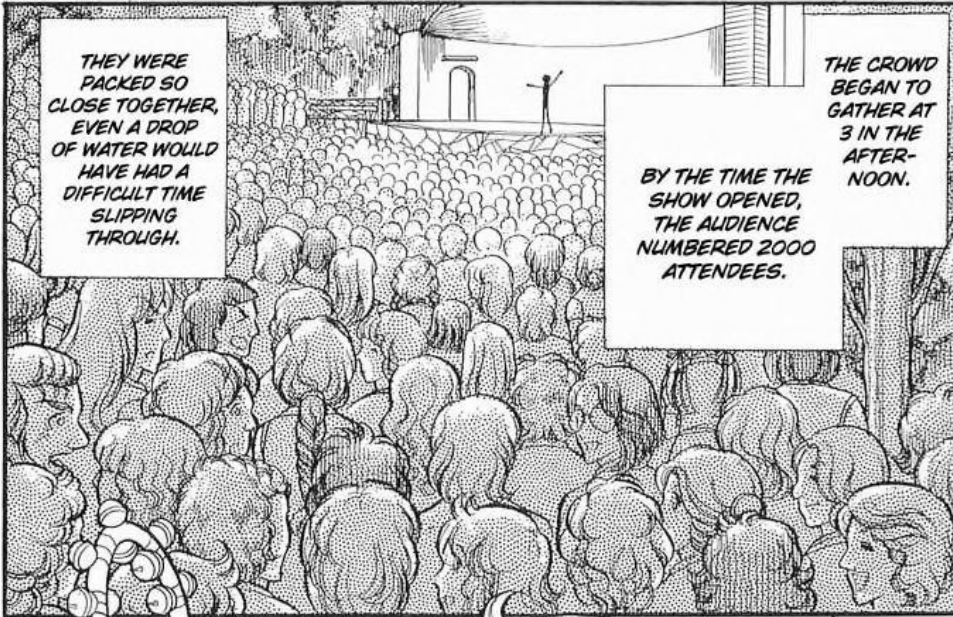




THE SECOND DAY OF "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM".



THEY WERE PACKED SO CLOSE TOGETHER, EVEN A DROP OF WATER WOULD HAVE HAD A DIFFICULT TIME SLIPPING THROUGH.

BY THE TIME THE SHOW OPENED, THE AUDIENCE NUMBERED 2000 ATTENDEES.

THE CROWD BEGAN TO GATHER AT 3 IN THE AFTER-NOON.



ON THE THIRD DAY, THE AUDIENCE EXCEEDED 2500 IN NUMBER.

**AAAAAH** Clap  
**AAAAAH** Clap  
Clap Clap  
Clap

INCLUDING 15 SEATS THAT WERE RESERVED FOR THE MEDIA.



**AAAAAH** **AAAAAH** **AAAAAH**

THE TOTAL GROSS FOR THE FIRST THREE DAYS EXCEEDED 5,000,000 YEN.

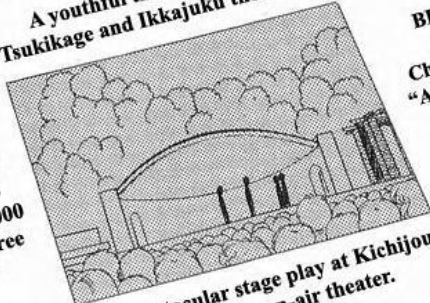
Clap Clap Clap

**The face of youth**

A youthful theater troupe  
"Tsukikage and Ikkajuku theaters"

**BIG SUCCESS!!**  
Charity performance  
"A Midsummer Night's  
Dream"

Attracting  
audiences  
totaling 6,000  
within three  
days



The spectacular stage play at Kichijouji  
Park's # 1 open-air theater.

Everything donated to an  
organization for the disabled



"A LIVELY AND  
AMUSING SHOW  
WHOSE CAST  
EXHIBITED A  
HIGH LEVEL OF  
THEATRICAL SKILL"

AS QUOTED  
FROM HIDEHARU  
HYUGA-SAN, A  
RECIPIENT OF THE  
PRESTIGIOUS  
KIKUKAWA AWARD.

Total  
box office  
gross of  
5,282,416!



**HOORAY!**  
WE'RE GONNA  
PERFORM AT  
ATHENS  
THEATRE!



I'M THE MANAGER  
FOR ATHENS  
THEATRE. I'D LIKE  
TO INVITE YOU TO  
STAGE YOUR NEXT  
PLAY IN OUR  
THEATER.





IT'S JUST LIKE HAYAMI-SAN TOLD US...

IF WE HADN'T FOLLOWED HIS ADVICE, THEN THE PAPERS WOULDN'T HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT US

AND THERE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO MANY PEOPLE WHO CAME TO THE OPEN-AIR STAGE TO WATCH OUR SHOW!

IT SEEMS WE OWE HAYAMI-SAN FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO PERFORM AT ATHENS THEATRE.

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, IT WAS ALSO HAYAMI-SAN WHO BROUGHT THAT PLAYWRIGHT HIDEHARU-SAN TO WATCH US PERFORM.



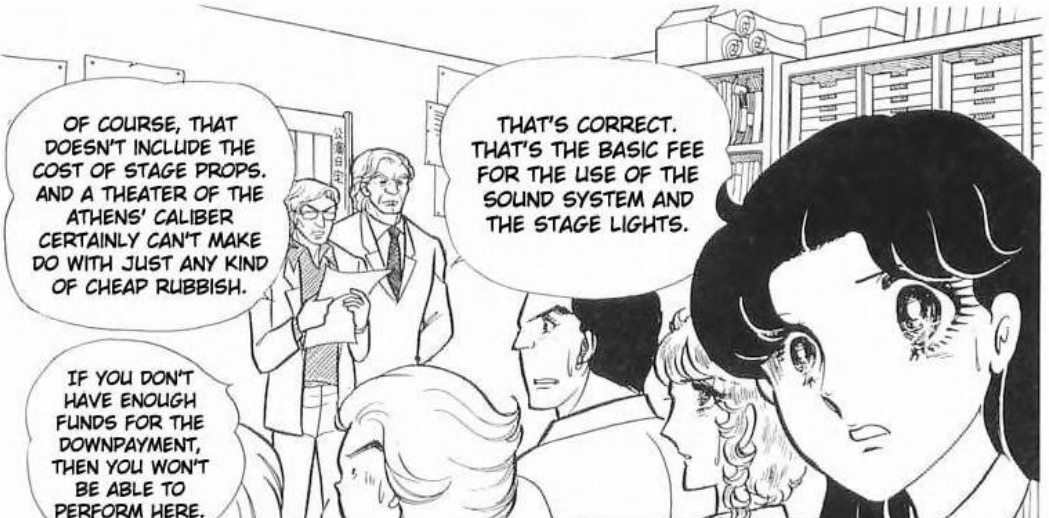
Athens Theatre

WHAT? YOU NEED AT LEAST 3,000,000 YEN IN DOWN-PAYMENT?

He must have a motive for doing all this...

Masumi Hayami...

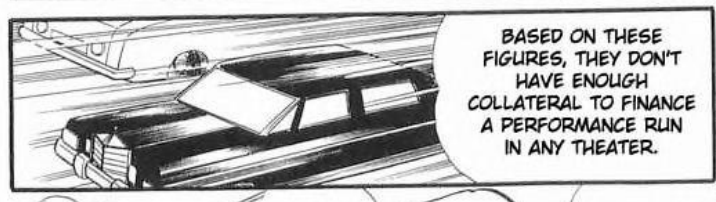
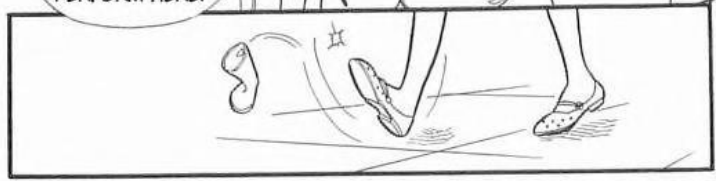
What could it be?



OF COURSE, THAT DOESN'T INCLUDE THE COST OF STAGE PROPS. AND A THEATER OF THE ATHENS' CALIBER CERTAINLY CAN'T MAKE DO WITH JUST ANY KIND OF CHEAP RUBBISH.

THAT'S CORRECT. THAT'S THE BASIC FEE FOR THE USE OF THE SOUND SYSTEM AND THE STAGE LIGHTS.

IF YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FUNDS FOR THE DOWNPAYMENT, THEN YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO PERFORM HERE.



BASED ON THESE FIGURES, THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH COLLATERAL TO FINANCE A PERFORMANCE RUN IN ANY THEATER.

DAMN! I NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT NEEDING MONEY FOR A DOWNPAYMENT.

WE WORKED SO HARD FOR THE CHANCE TO PERFORM THERE. MUST WE GIVE UP SO EASILY?



YES SIR!

GET TO WORK ON IT IMMEDIATELY.

THAT SHOULD BE EASY TO TAKE CARE OF.



HONESTLY...

AND HERE I THOUGHT WE'D FINALLY BE ABLE TO PERFORM SOMEWHERE LIKE THE ATHENS!



*Daito Corporation  
Production  
Planning Group  
Manager  
Kazuya Tamura*

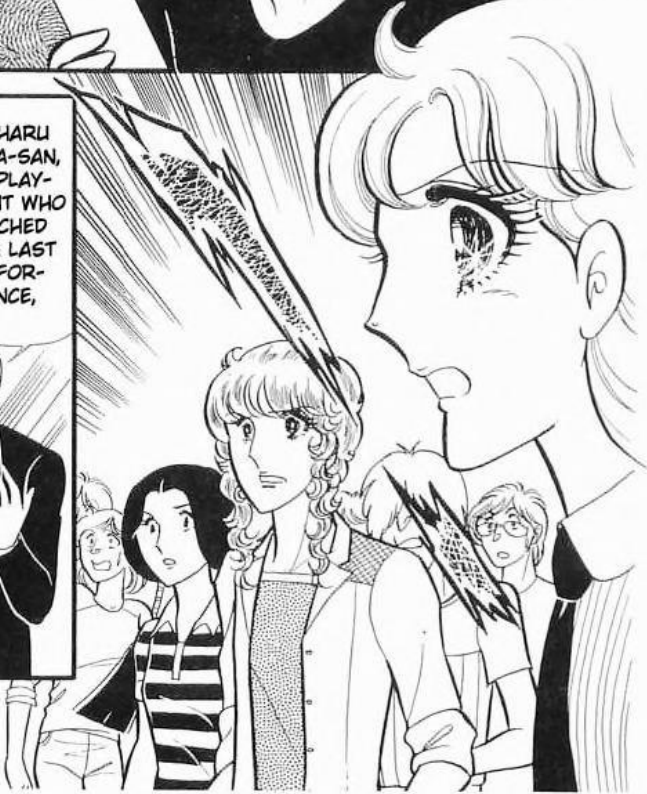


WHAT? DAITO CORPORATION WANTS TO PRODUCE A PLAY AT THE ATHENS USING US?



WISHES TO USE YOU FOR HIS NEXT PLAY.

HIDEHARU HYUGA-SAN, THE PLAY-WRIGHT WHO WATCHED YOUR LAST PERFORMANCE,





So that's his motive. He wants to take advantage of us?

Masumi Hayami

HIS LATEST PLAY IS THE HOTTEST TOPIC IN THE NEWS THESE DAYS.

YOU ALL KNOW THAT HYUGA-SAN RECENTLY RECEIVED THE KIKUKAWA AWARD, WHICH MAKES HIM ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR PLAYWRIGHTS RIGHT NOW.



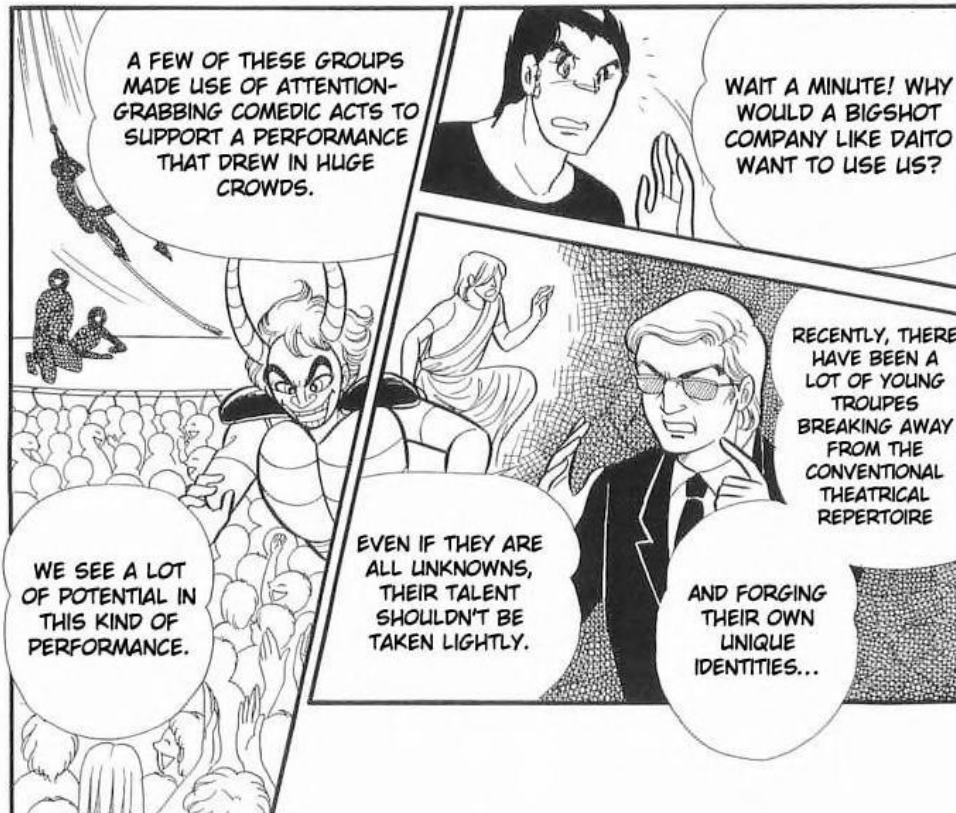
YOU WOULDN'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT MAKING THE DOWN-PAYMENT ANYMORE.

PLEASE CONSIDER IT.

IF YOU LET DAITO HANDLE THE PRODUCTION, YOU WON'T NEED TO WORRY WHETHER YOUR PERFORMANCE AT THE ATHENS WILL EVEN TAKE PLACE.



WE BELIEVE THAT A GROUP OF TALENTED BUT VIRTUALLY UNKNOWN YOUNG PERFORMERS LIKE YOU WOULD BE THE MOST SUITABLE FOR THIS PLAY.



A FEW OF THESE GROUPS MADE USE OF ATTENTION-GRABBING COMEDIC ACTS TO SUPPORT A PERFORMANCE THAT DREW IN HUGE CROWDS.

WAIT A MINUTE! WHY WOULD A BIGSHOT COMPANY LIKE DAITO WANT TO USE US?

WE SEE A LOT OF POTENTIAL IN THIS KIND OF PERFORMANCE.

EVEN IF THEY ARE ALL UNKNOWN, THEIR TALENT SHOULDN'T BE TAKEN LIGHTLY.

RECENTLY, THERE HAVE BEEN A LOT OF YOUNG TROUPES BREAKING AWAY FROM THE CONVENTIONAL THEATRICAL REPERTOIRE

AND FORGING THEIR OWN UNIQUE IDENTITIES...





AND WE'RE PLANNING TO GET TAKAFUMI SHIGEMORI FOR STAGE DESIGN.

THE DIRECTOR OF LIGHTING WILL BE HISASHI FURUKAWA

THE PRODUCTION STAFF IS READY, AND THEY'RE ALL FIRST-RATE.

DAITO CORPORATION HAS WANTED TO DEVELOP A THEATRICAL GROUP LIKE THIS FOR A LONG TIME.

AH! THOSE ARE ALL BIG NAMES!

WHAT DO YOU SAY? DO YOU AGREE TO LET US PRODUCE THIS PLAY FOR YOU?



I'M SURE YOU ALL UNDERSTAND HOW GOOD DAITO IS AT PROMOTION.

HEY!

THIS IS AN ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY!

YOU'LL DEFINITELY STAND OUT WITH US.



WE'LL WAIT FOR THE GOOD NEWS.

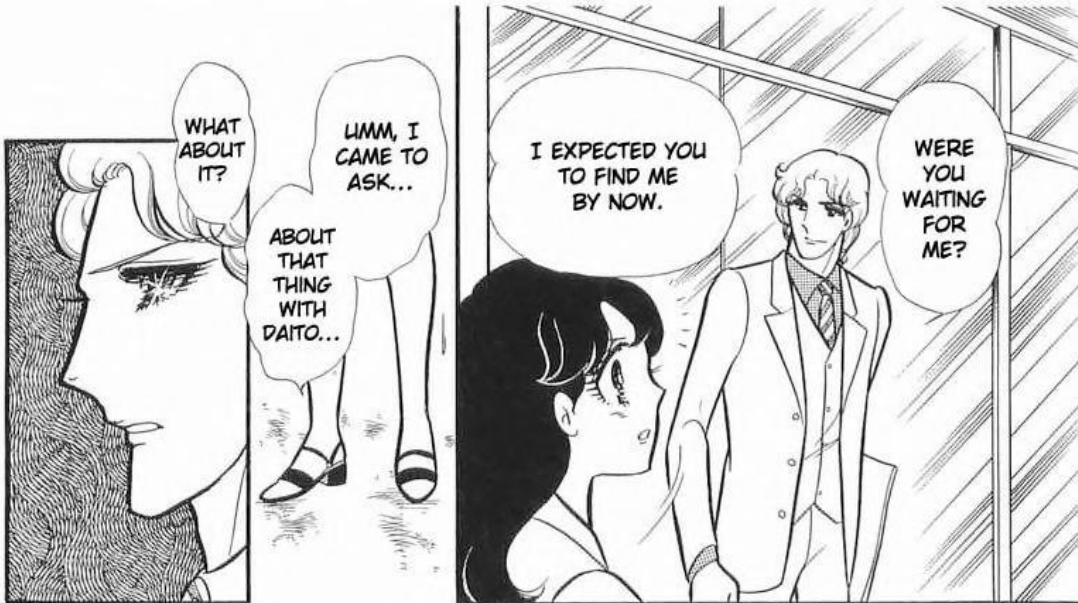
OF COURSE, OF COURSE.

PLEASE GIVE US TIME TO CONSIDER.

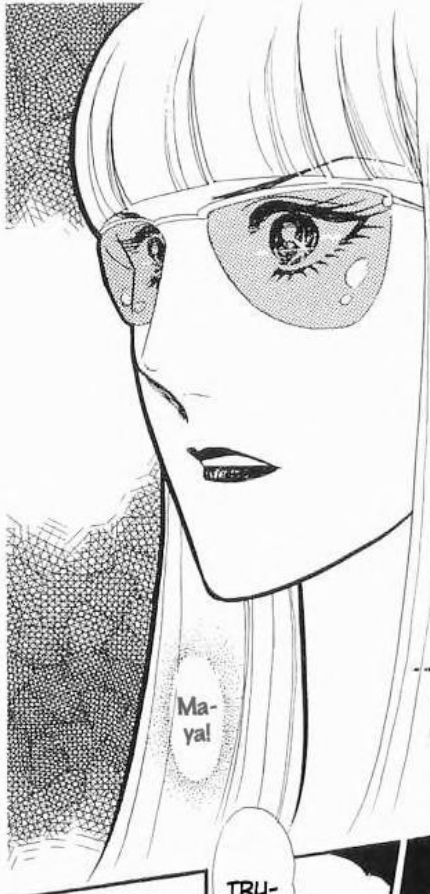
YOUR OFFER IS AN UNBELIEVABLE PIECE OF LUCK. IT'S LIKE A DREAM.











Masumi-sawa...

NO, THAT WAS A COMPLIMENT.

YOU'RE THE FIRST PERSON TO ADDRESS ME IN SUCH A RUDE AND BOSSY WAY.

ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF ME, HAYAMI-SAN?



I JUST WANT THINGS TO GO WELL FOR YOU!

I DON'T HAVE ANY ULTERIOR MOTIVE.

VERY WELL. LET ME TELL YOU THE TRUTH.

Ma-ya!

TRU-LY.

TRU-LY?

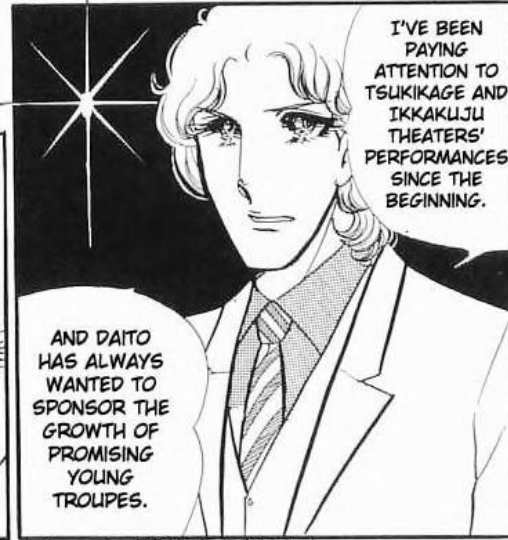
I'VE BEEN PAYING ATTENTION TO TSUKIKAGE AND IKKAKUJU THEATERS' PERFORMANCES SINCE THE BEGINNING.

AND DAITO HAS ALWAYS WANTED TO SPONSOR THE GROWTH OF PROMISING YOUNG TROUPEES.

BECAUSE I ALREADY SWORE THAT I'D NEVER PERFORM FOR DAITO AGAIN...

OF COURSE I DON'T!

WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU DON'T WANT TO WORK WITH DAITO?





DON'T THINK THAT THE WORLD REVOLVES AROUND YOU.

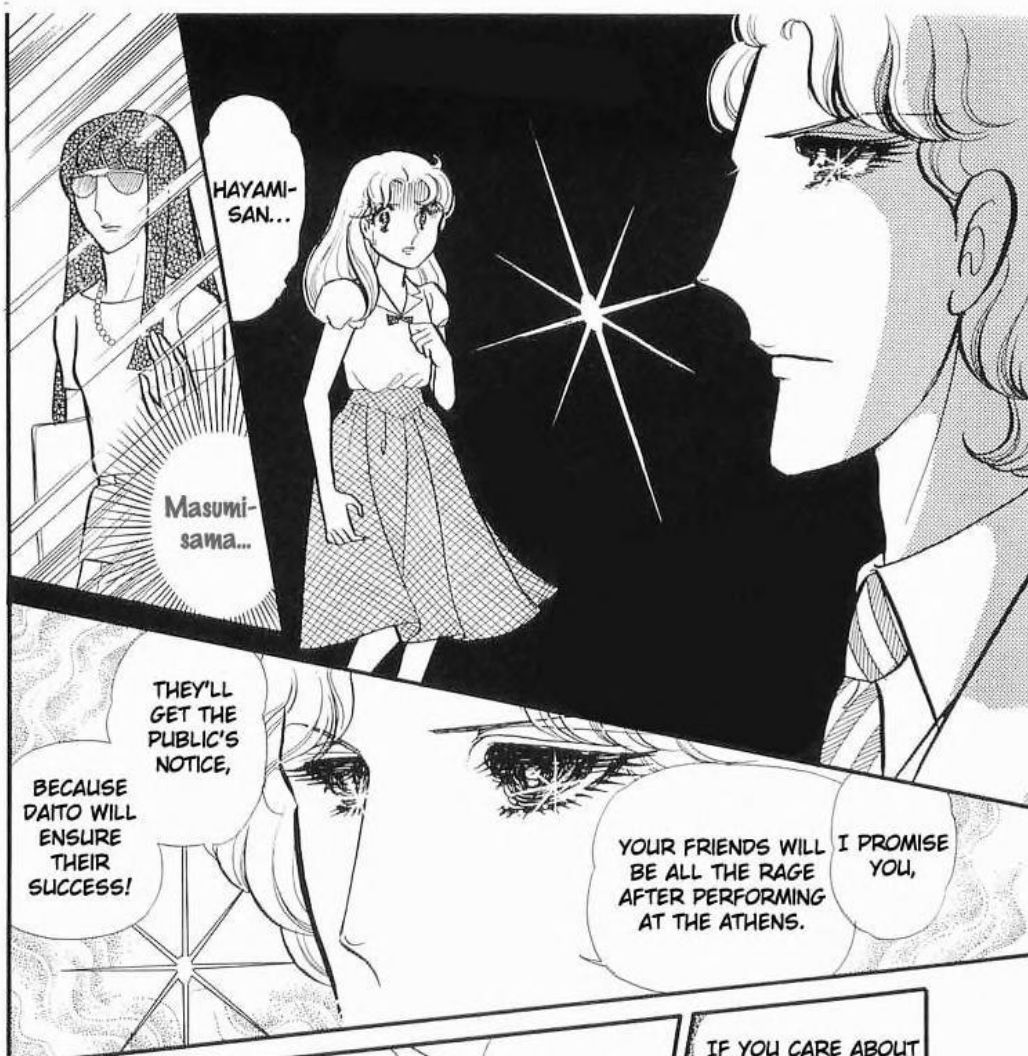
YOU'RE NOT EVEN GOING TO BE IN THIS PRODUCTION.

I can't join the play at the Athens...

...in this production...

I'm not...





HAYAMI-SAN...

Masumi-sama...

THEY'LL GET THE PUBLIC'S NOTICE, BECAUSE DAITO WILL ENSURE THEIR SUCCESS!

I PROMISE YOU, YOUR FRIENDS WILL BE ALL THE RAGE AFTER PERFORMING AT THE ATHENS.



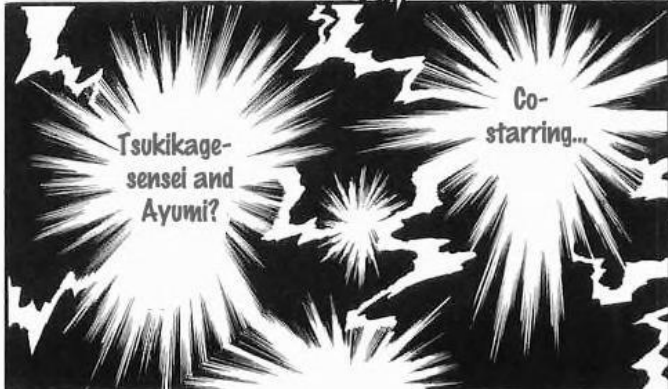
ONODERA-SAN.

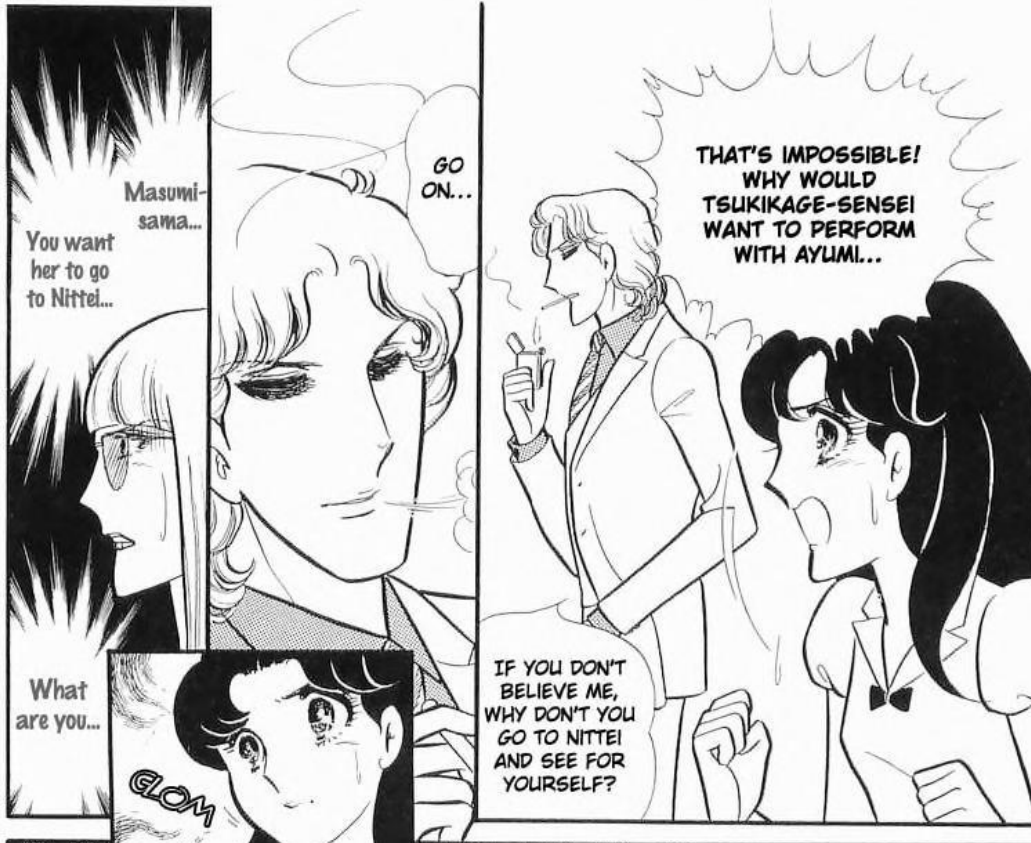
MASUMI! YOU HAVEN'T GONE HOME YET?

OH!

IF YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR FRIENDS AT ALL, IT'S BEST THAT YOU DON'T INTERFERE.











Eh?

I'M A FOOL!

I'M SUCH AN IDIOT!

I ALMOST CONVINCED MYSELF THAT YOU WERE A GOOD PERSON...

THAT YOU JUST ENJOYED TEASING ME SOMETIMES!  
I'M... I'M...

Dash

CHIBI-CHAN!

SLAP

WAIT!

Grab







PANT

I WILL...  
I WILL SUCCEED!  
I'LL SHOW YOU!  
HMPH!



VERY  
GOOD  
...

THAT'S  
THE  
SPIRIT.



TAP  
TAP  
TAP



WELL, I'LL  
BE GOING  
AHEAD!

WHAT A  
COCKY  
LITTLE...



YOU CAN'T  
FOOL ME,  
MASUMI-SAMA.

WHAT  
ARE YOU  
BABBLING  
ABOUT?

YOU HAVE ANOTHER  
REASON FOR  
SEPARATING HER  
FROM HER FRIENDS,  
DON'T YOU?



TO BE ABLE TO  
PROVOKE HER  
INTO SAYING  
SUCH THINGS.  
HOW TOUCHING.

THAT'S  
MASUMI-  
SAMA  
FOR YOU.

Clap  
clap

MIZUKI-  
KUN!

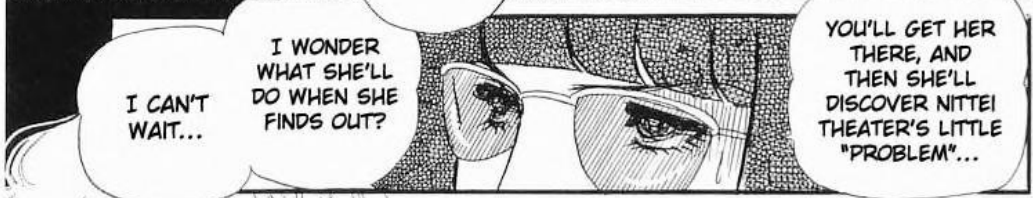


YOU'RE DELIBERATELY TRYING TO PROVOKE HER FIGHTING SPIRIT, AREN'T YOU?

IN THE PAST, YOU'VE ALWAYS TOLD ME

THAT ANGER IS A MUCH BETTER MOTIVATOR THAN GRIEF...

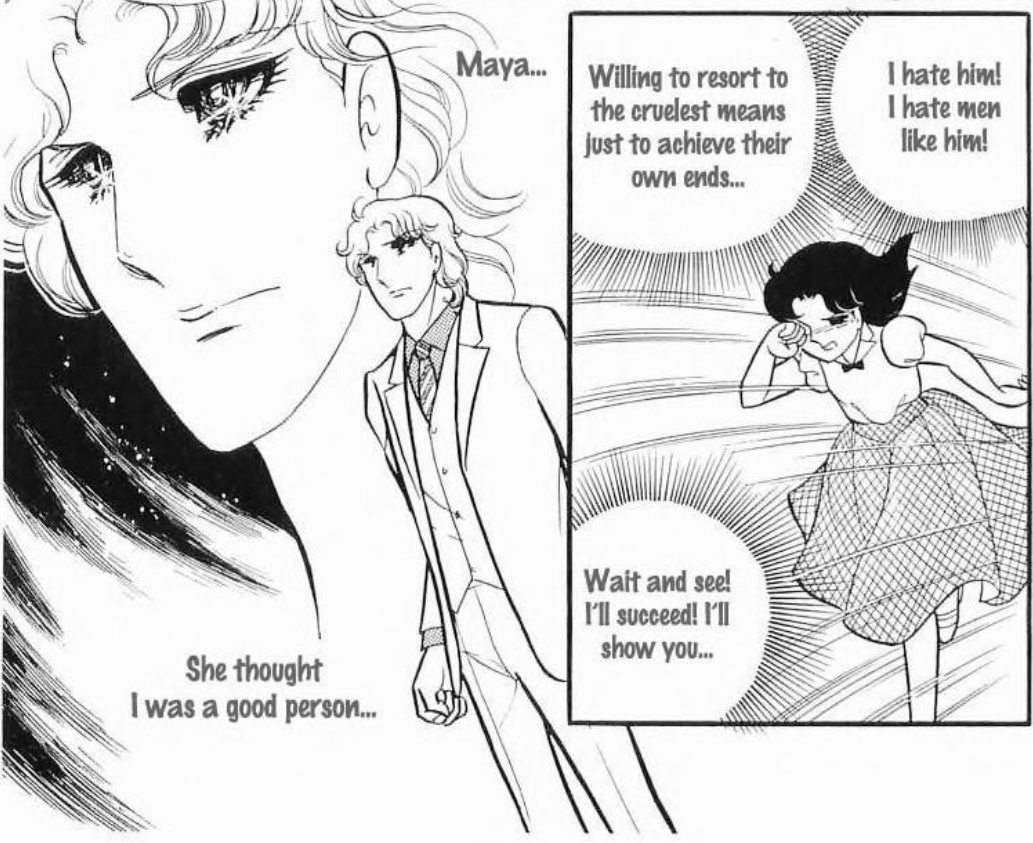
TO GOAD HER INTO GOING TO NITTEI THEATER...



I CAN'T WAIT...

I WONDER WHAT SHE'LL DO WHEN SHE FINDS OUT?

YOU'LL GET HER THERE, AND THEN SHE'LL DISCOVER NITTEI THEATER'S LITTLE "PROBLEM"...



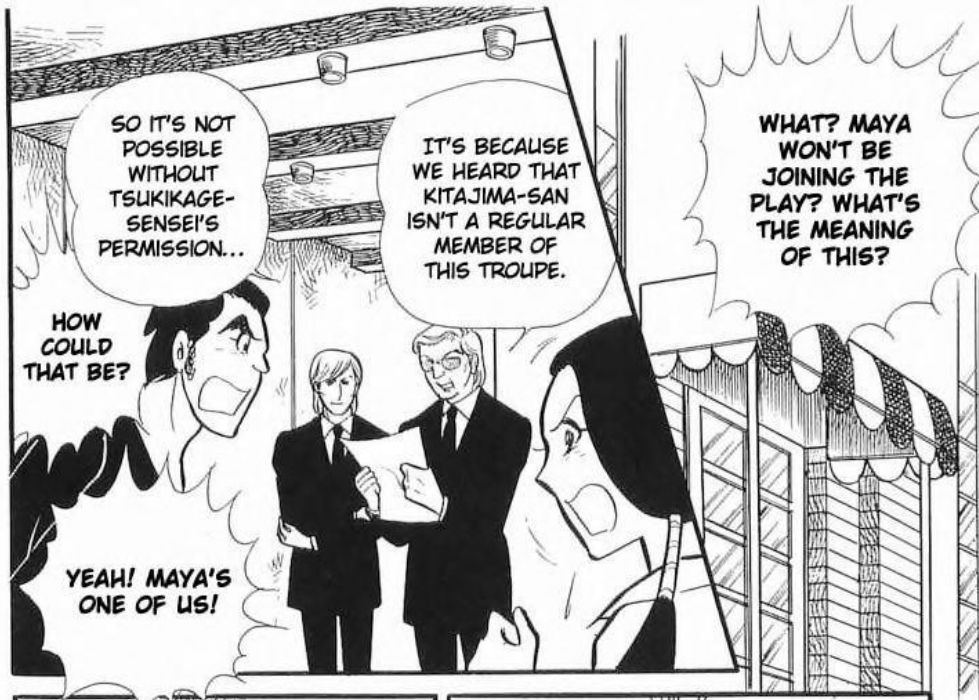
Maya...

Willing to resort to the cruelest means just to achieve their own ends...

I hate him! I hate men like him!

Wait and see! I'll succeed! I'll show you...

She thought I was a good person...



SO IT'S NOT POSSIBLE WITHOUT TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI'S PERMISSION...

IT'S BECAUSE WE HEARD THAT KITAJIMA-SAN ISN'T A REGULAR MEMBER OF THIS TROUPE.

WHAT? MAYA WON'T BE JOINING THE PLAY? WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?

HOW COULD THAT BE?

YEAH! MAYA'S ONE OF US!



I won't drag them into my quarrel with Daito.

That's right! I can't keep being a burden to everyone.

A first class production staff. Hideharu Hyuga-san's play, the money to finance the promotion and performance of the play...



I ALREADY SAID THAT I WON'T ACT FOR DAITO ANYMORE!

IT DOESN'T MATTER.

I REFUSED THEM YESTERDAY ANYWAY...

MAYA...

PLEASE DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.

THIS...





As long as I'm not there...

As long as I step out of the picture...

All of it would be a big help towards your success!



Ayumi-san and Tsukikage-sensei will be co-starring in such a big theater...

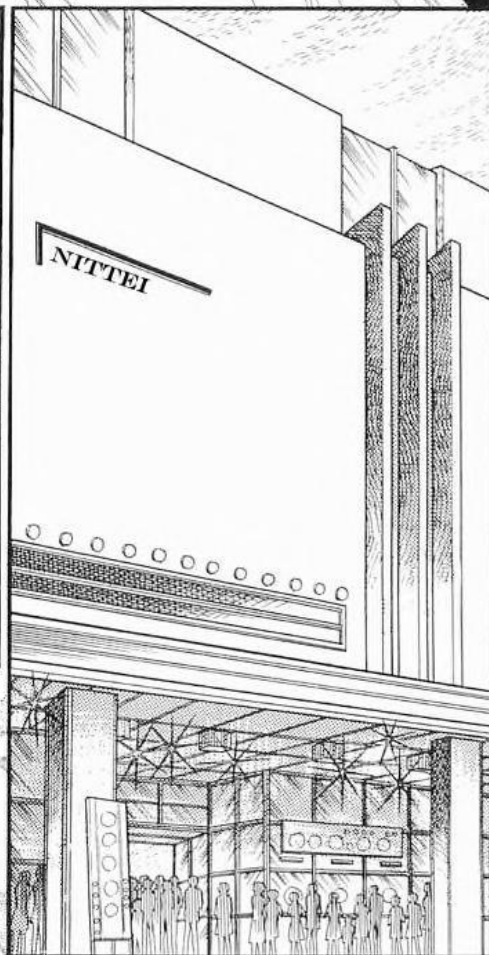
Spring next year...

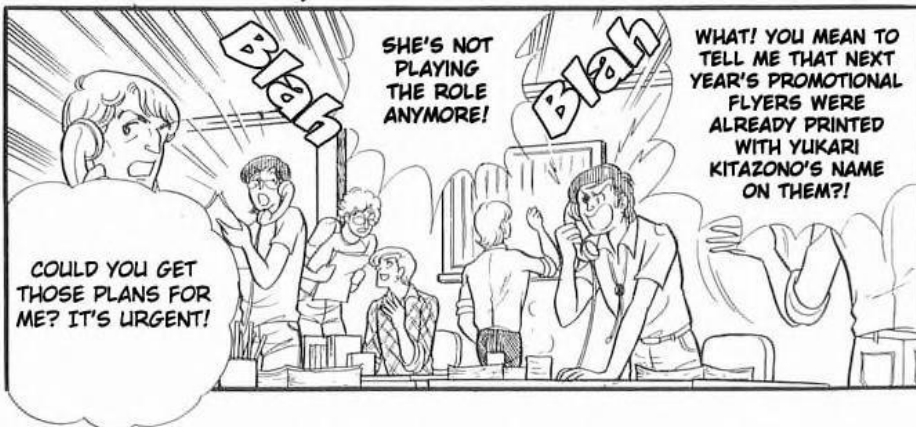
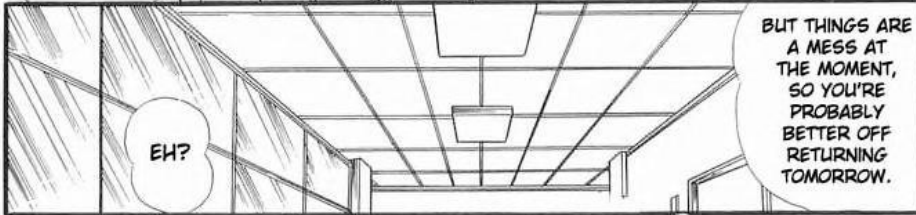
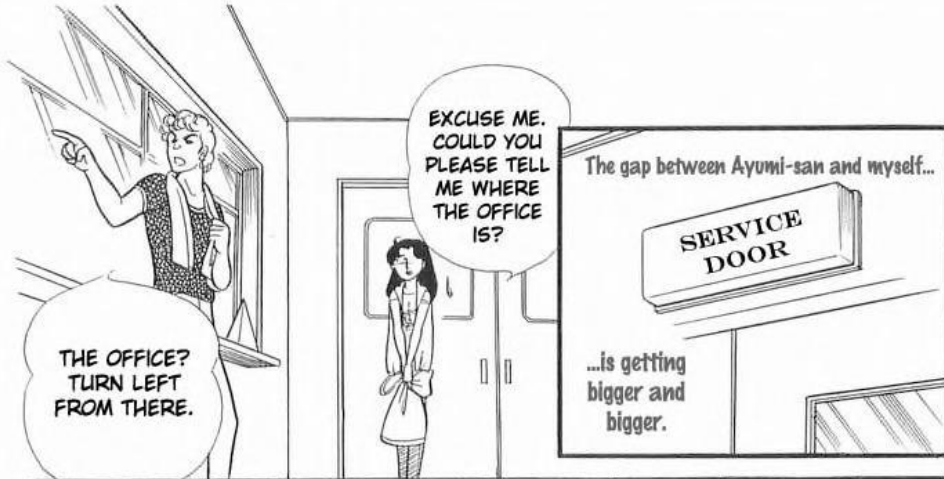
What role will she be playing this time?

I wonder what kind of play it is?

Is it because she's busy with the play?

Tsukikage-sensei... She hasn't called in a while...





YOU SHOULD BE ASKING HER PUBLICIST INSTEAD!

**DRILLING**  
**DRILLING**

YOU'RE ASKING ME WHY YUKARI KITAZONO REFUSED TO CO-STAR WITH AYUMI HIMEKAWA?

SHOUJO MAGAZINE?

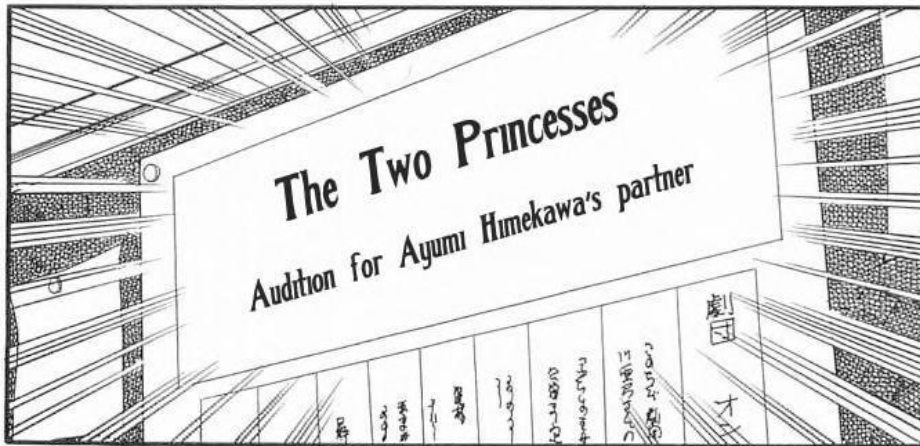


Yukari Kitazono. Isn't she the actress who always plays sweet and innocent girls on TV?

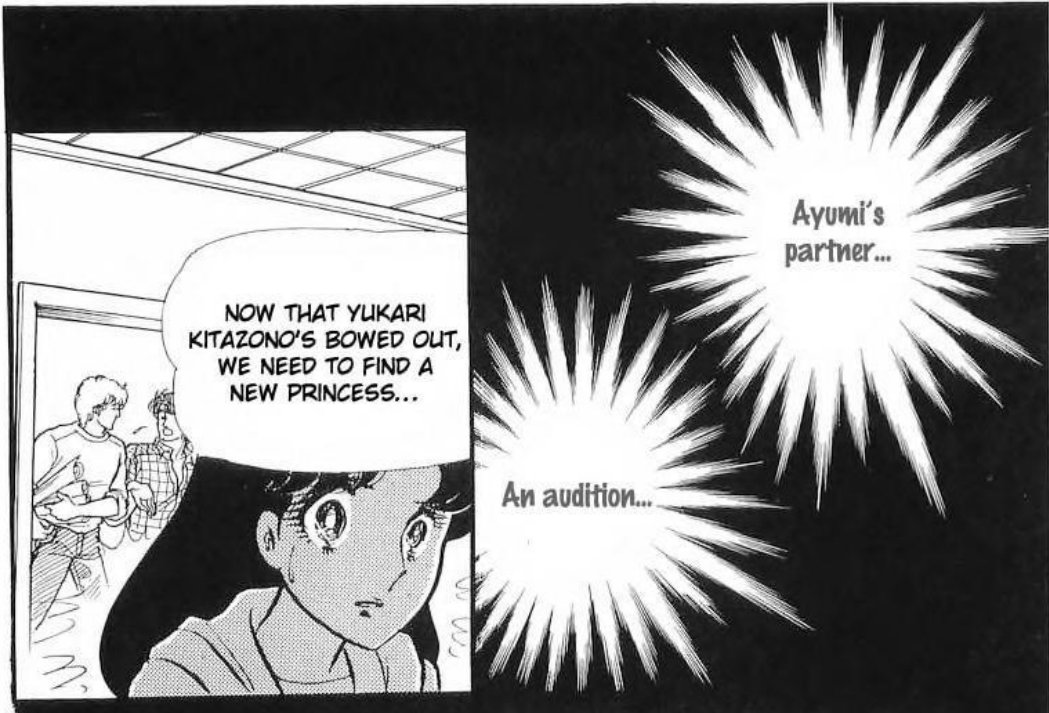
Ayumi's co-star. The one who refused to act with her...

**Blah**

**Blah**

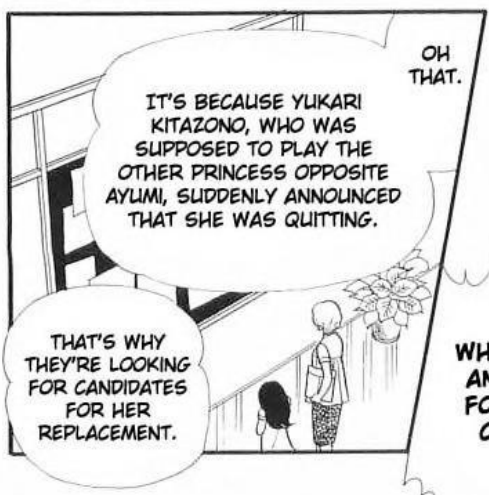


**The Two Princesses**  
Audition for Ayumi Himekawa's partner

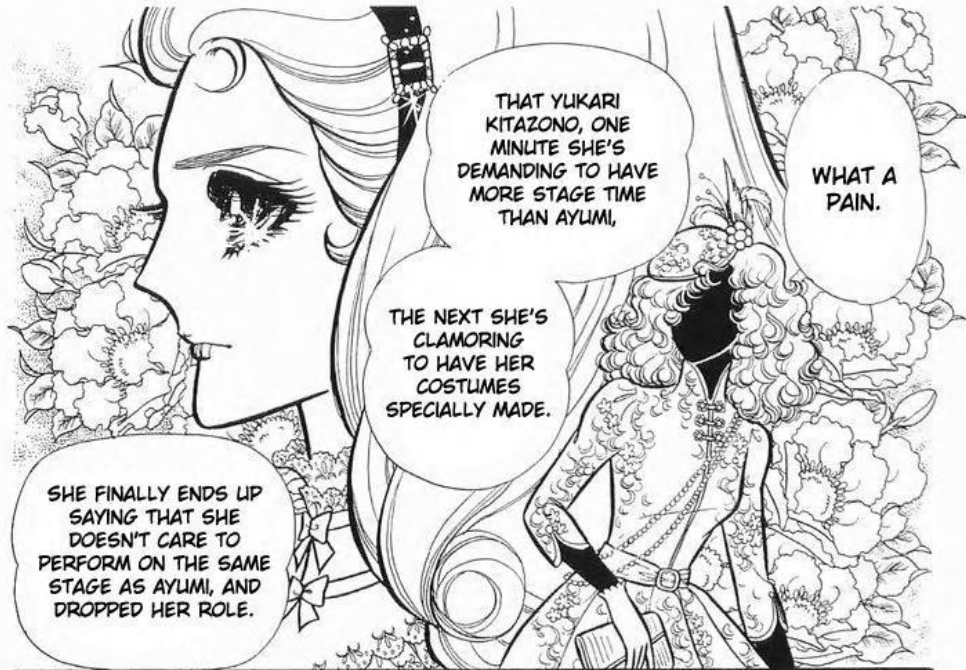


Ayumi's partner...

An audition...





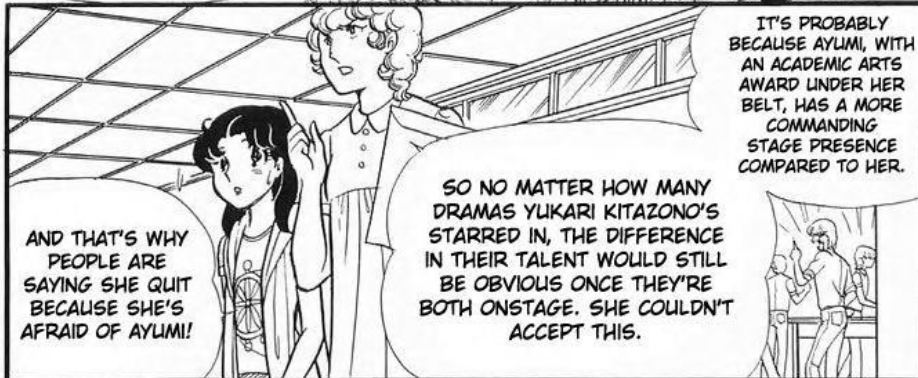


THAT YUKARI KITAZONO, ONE MINUTE SHE'S DEMANDING TO HAVE MORE STAGE TIME THAN AYUMI,

WHAT A PAIN.

THE NEXT SHE'S CLAMORING TO HAVE HER COSTUMES SPECIALLY MADE.

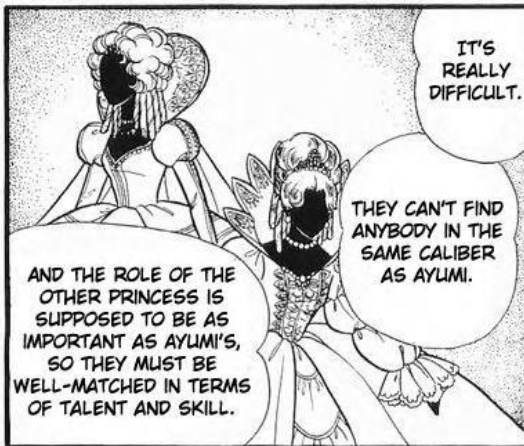
SHE FINALLY ENDS UP SAYING THAT SHE DOESN'T CARE TO PERFORM ON THE SAME STAGE AS AYUMI, AND DROPPED HER ROLE.



IT'S PROBABLY BECAUSE AYUMI, WITH AN ACADEMIC ARTS AWARD UNDER HER BELT, HAS A MORE COMMANDING STAGE PRESENCE COMPARED TO HER.

AND THAT'S WHY PEOPLE ARE SAYING SHE QUIT BECAUSE SHE'S AFRAID OF AYUMI!

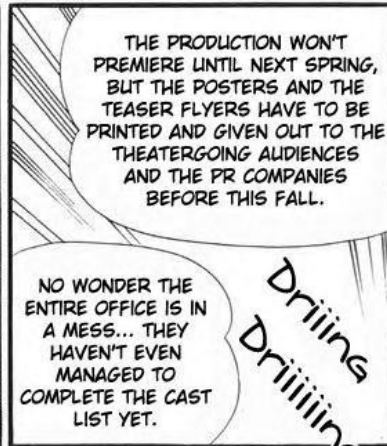
SO NO MATTER HOW MANY DRAMAS YUKARI KITAZONO'S STARRED IN, THE DIFFERENCE IN THEIR TALENT WOULD STILL BE OBVIOUS ONCE THEY'RE BOTH ONSTAGE. SHE COULDN'T ACCEPT THIS.



IT'S REALLY DIFFICULT.

THEY CAN'T FIND ANYBODY IN THE SAME CALIBER AS AYUMI.

AND THE ROLE OF THE OTHER PRINCESS IS SUPPOSED TO BE AS IMPORTANT AS AYUMI'S, SO THEY MUST BE WELL-MATCHED IN TERMS OF TALENT AND SKILL.



THE PRODUCTION WON'T PREMIERE UNTIL NEXT SPRING, BUT THE POSTERS AND THE TEASER FLYERS HAVE TO BE PRINTED AND GIVEN OUT TO THE THEATERGOING AUDIENCES AND THE PR COMPANIES BEFORE THIS FALL.

NO WONDER THE ENTIRE OFFICE IS IN A MESS... THEY HAVEN'T EVEN MANAGED TO COMPLETE THE CAST LIST YET.

Drilling  
Drilling  
Drilling

THAT'S WHY ONLY HAND-PICKED REPRESENTATIVES FROM OTHER THEATER COMPANIES WILL BE TAKING PART IN THE AUDITION.

THE TWO PRINCESSES ARE BOTH LEADS, SO THEIR STAGE PRESENCES MUST BE COMPLEMENTARY.

COULD YOU TELL ME HOW TO GET INTO THE AUDITION?

PLEASE WAIT!

A casting call... Ayumi's partner...  
If I could get the role...  
Then maybe...

Partnering with Ayumi onstage...  
With Ayumi!

YOU'D BETTER GIVE IT UP! DIDN'T YOU JUST HEAR ME SAY THAT ONLY HAND-PICKED TOP TALENTS FROM OTHER THEATER COMPANIES CAN AUDITION?

YOU WANT TO JOIN?

DO YOU HAVE THE CONFIDENCE FOR THAT?

BECAUSE THIS ROLE WILL BE PLAYED OPPOSITE AYUMI HIMEKAWA ONSTAGE...

YES! PLEASE LET ME!

I BEG YOU! TELL ME HOW!