

HANA TO YUME COMICS

Glass Mask

SUZUE MIUCHI

39

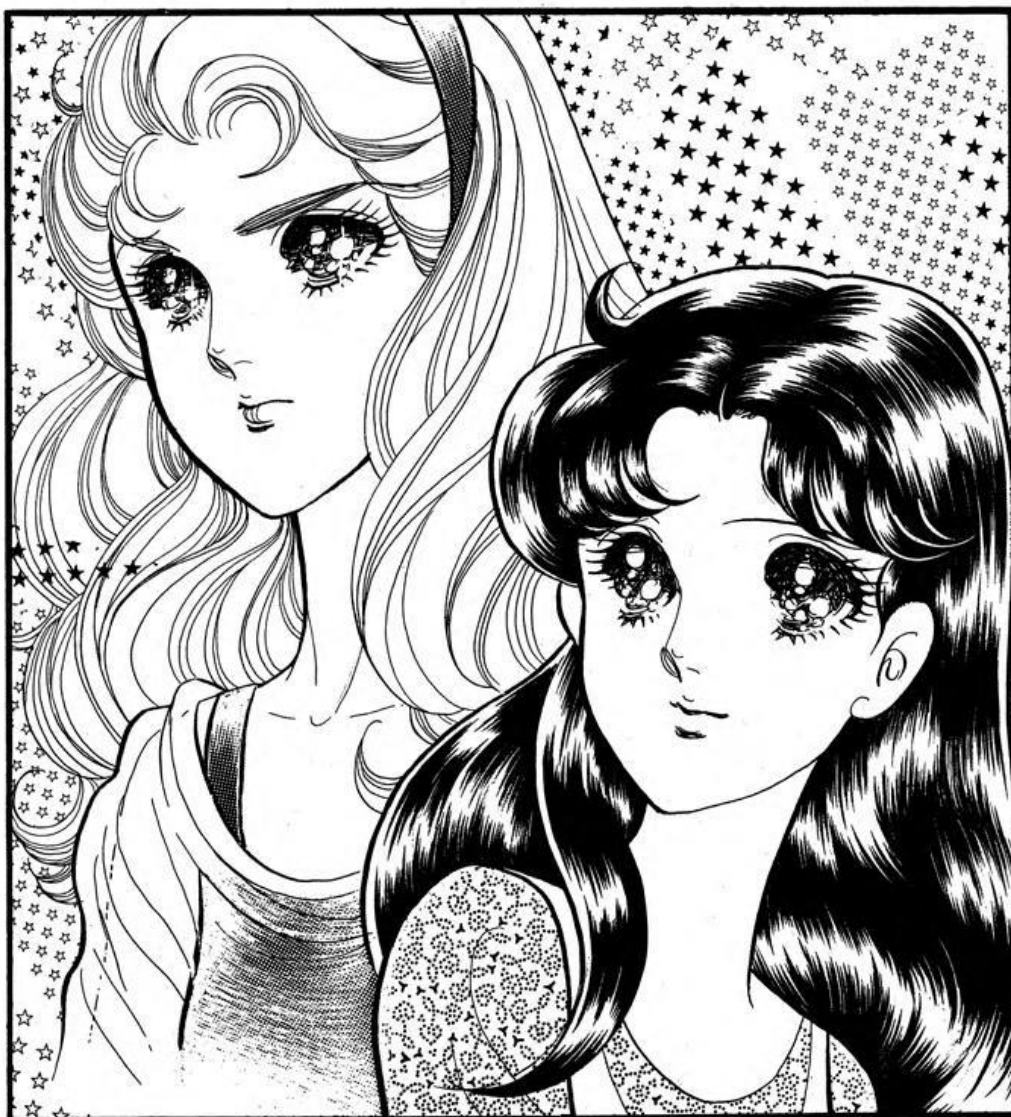


HANA TO YUME COMICS

GLASS MASK

VOLUME 39 THE CRIMSON GODDESS (6)

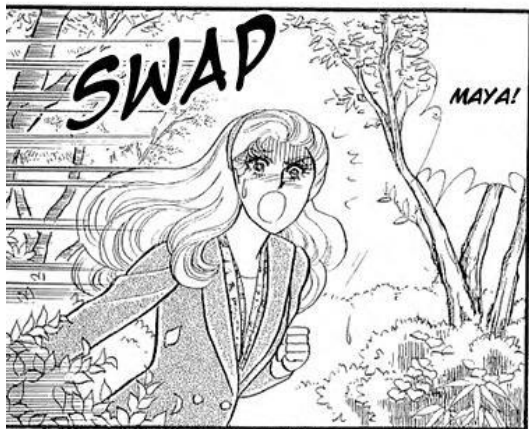
SUZUE MIUCHI



Chapter 211









AYUMI!

Maya!



W... WAIT!
I'M COMING
OVER THERE!

DASH---



HERE!

COME
ON! TAKE
MY HAND!



CREAK

Ayumi!

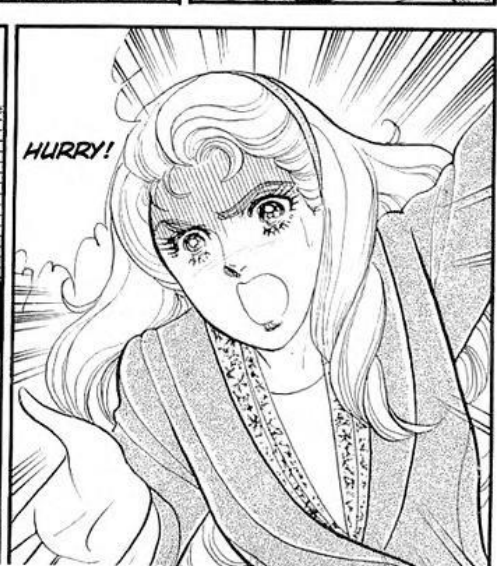


CREAK

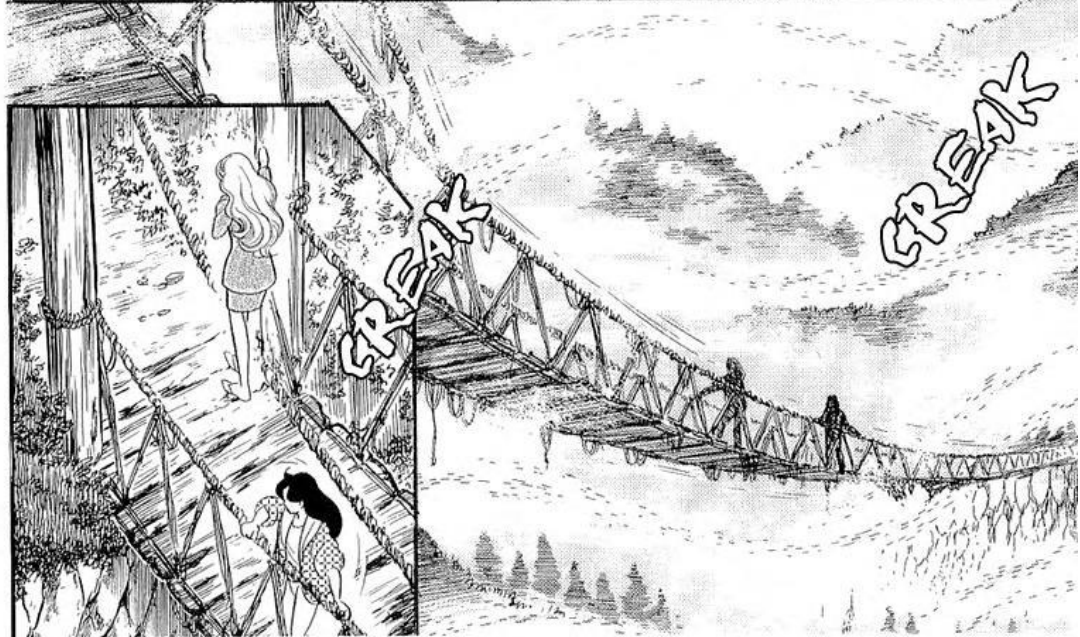
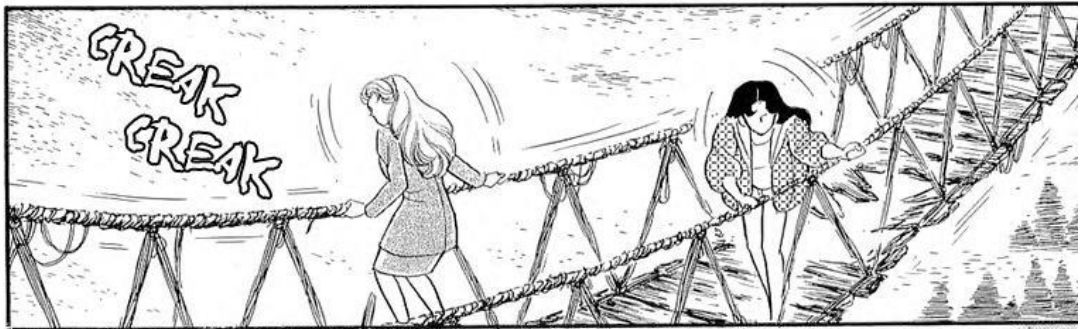
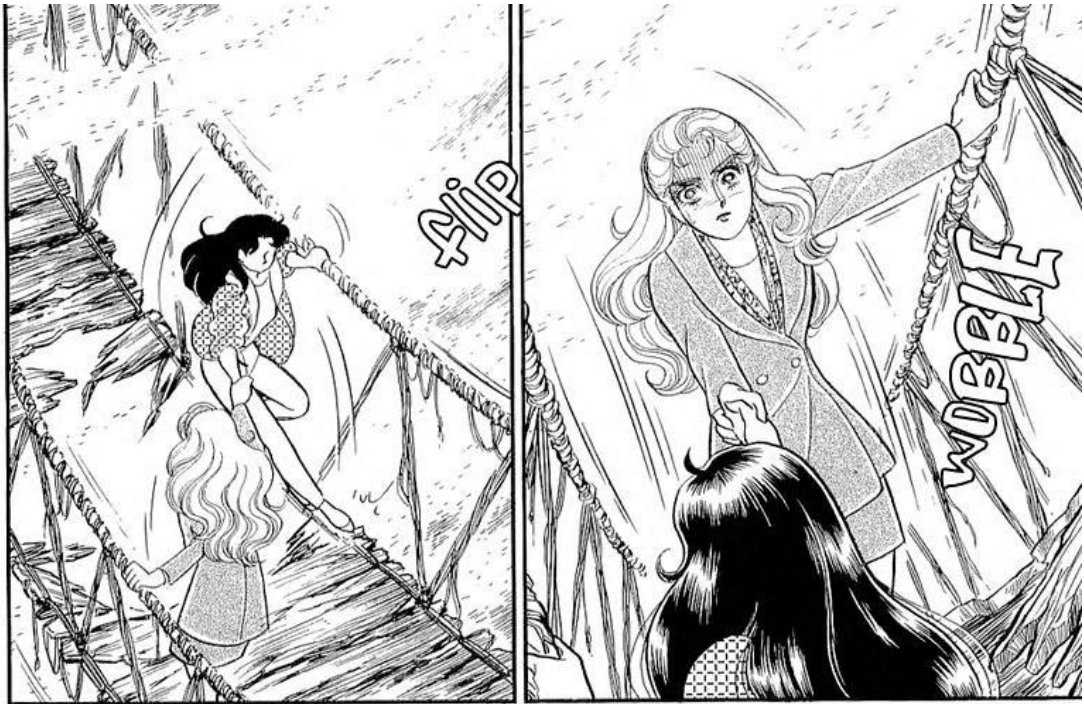
CREAK



Grab



HURRY!





I THINK... THE SAME AS YOU!

I WANTED TO SEE THE VALLEY...



BUT WHAT WERE YOU DOING HERE, SO EARLY IN THE MORNING?



HAHA... THAT WAS REALLY CLOSE! JUST A BIT FURTHER, AND I WOULD HAVE ENDED UP AT THE BOTTOM...

THANKS, AYUMI.

YOU SAVED MY LIFE.

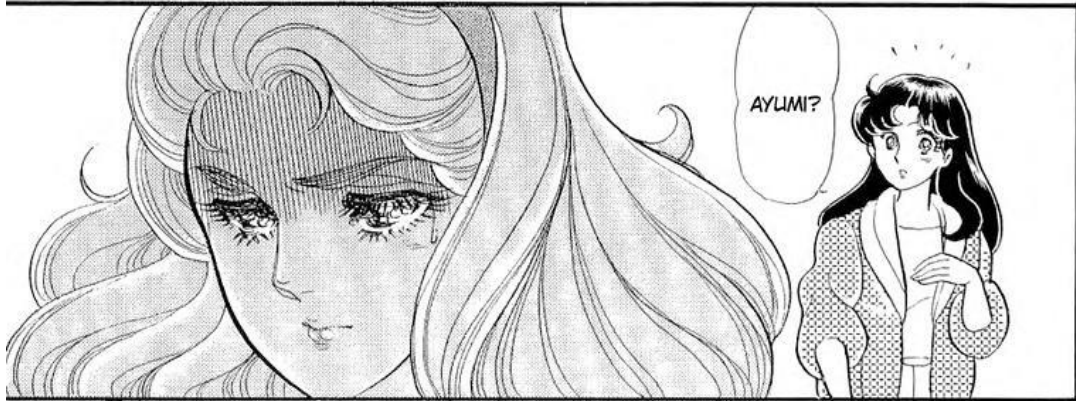


NO.

swap

REALLY?

WHAT A STROKE OF LUCK FOR ME.



AYUMI?



AYUMI.

EH?

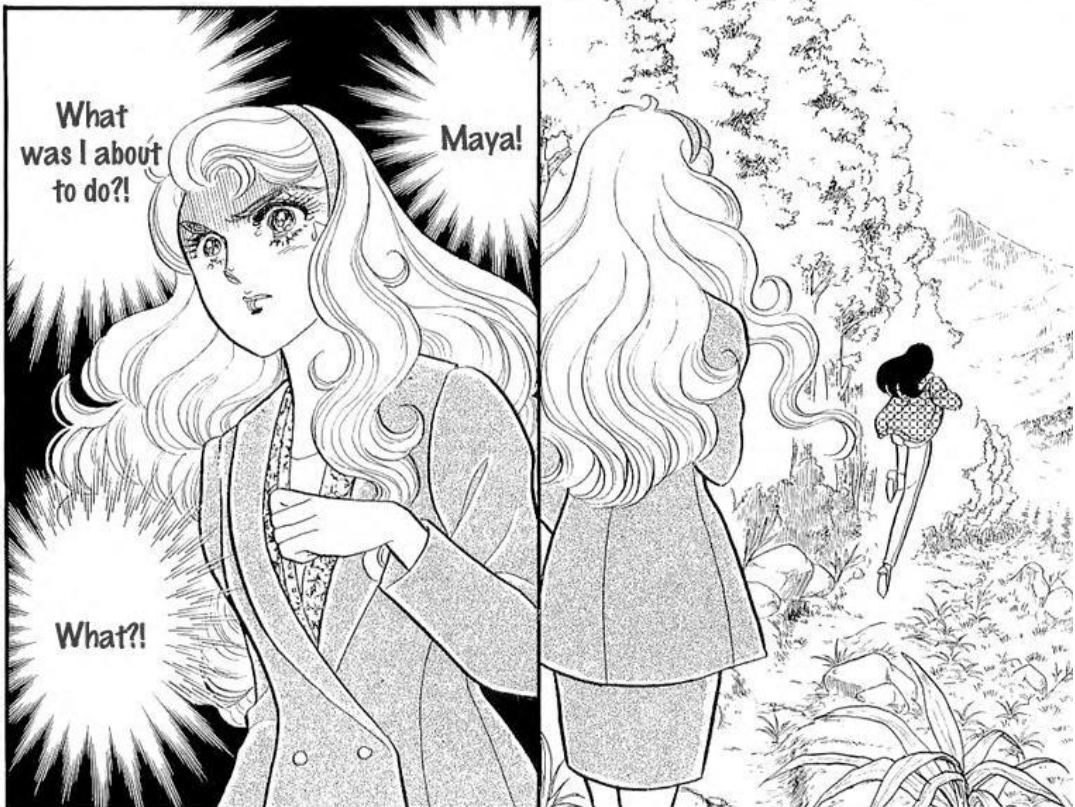


YOU'RE RIGHT!

I'LL GO RIGHT NOW.

BETTER HURRY AND TELL TSUKIKAGE-SAN...

AND THE OTHERS THAT THE BRIDGE IS UNSAFE...





I have the same cruel instincts!

I've never ever, even once, thought about resorting to low tricks to get a part!

I'm always honest!

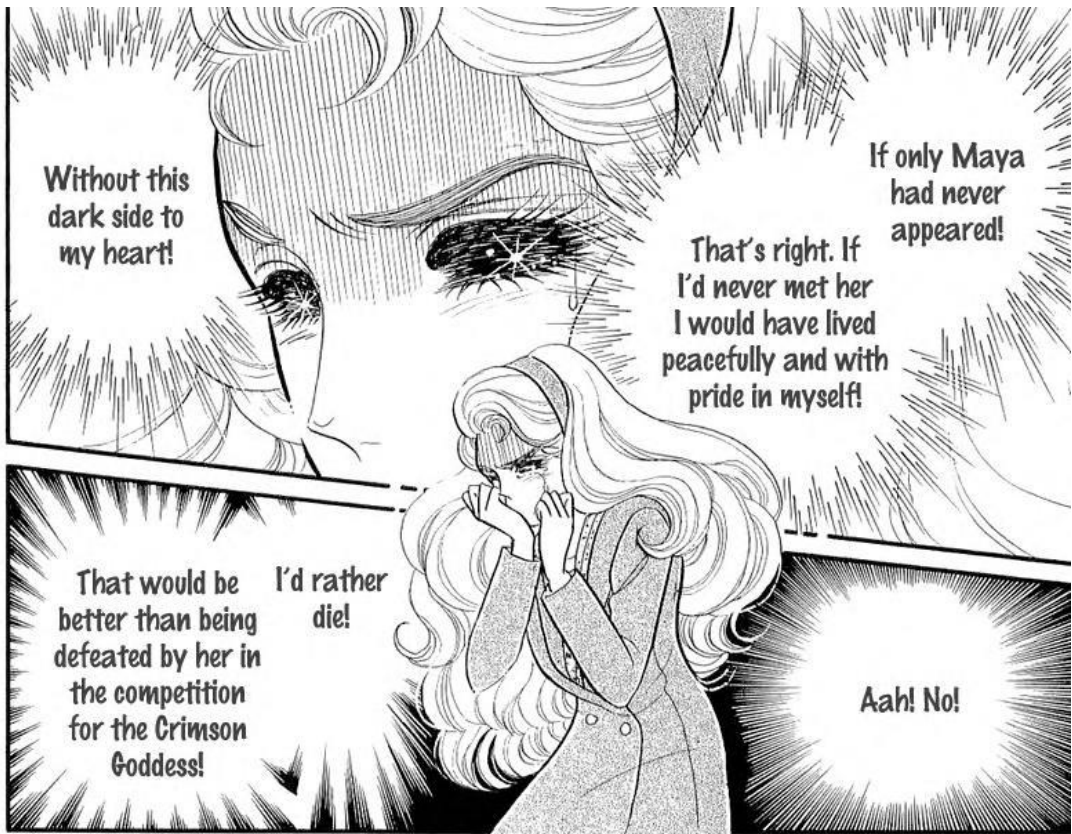
I was about to let her die!

I hated the people who used them, those mean actors...

I'm such a horrible person!

But now I see...

I can't believe I even considered such a thing!



Without this dark side to my heart!

If only Maya had never appeared!

That's right. If I'd never met her I would have lived peacefully and with pride in myself!

That would be better than being defeated by her in the competition for the Crimson Goddess!

I'd rather die!

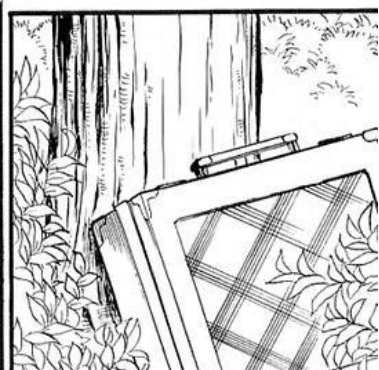
Aah! No!



I can't go back to Tokyo with these feelings!



I don't want to be a loser!





All my efforts up till now haven't been in vain!

I have to believe in myself!

Yes. I'll try my hardest!

There's nothing I can't do!



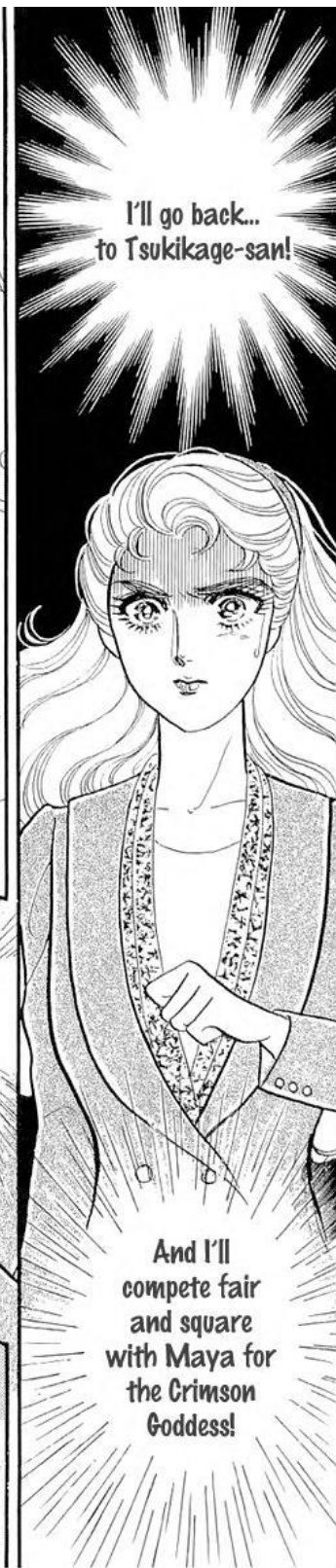
Like that day when I was little...

This time I'll win!

Yes! The battle is just beginning!

I will win!

Yes, I will win!



I'll go back... to Tsukikage-san!

And I'll compete fair and square with Maya for the Crimson Goddess!



LISTEN TO WHAT I'M SAYING,

YOU GOT IT, RIGHT?

UNTIL THE BRIDGE IS REPAIRED, WE CANNOT GO INTO THE VALLEY.

YES!

YES!

IS THAT FINE WITH YOU, GIRLS?

PERFORM THEIR CRIMSON GODDESS IN THE VALLEY OF THE PLUM TREES.

WHEN THE BRIDGE IS IN USE AGAIN, I'D LIKE TO HAVE MAYA KITAJIMA AND AYUMI HIMEKAWA...



REALLY NOW, YOU'RE BEING SILLY!

Come on

MAYBE THE GODDESS OF THAT REMOTE PLACE DOESN'T LIKE US THERE.

SO, FOR NOW, NO MORE TRIPS TO THE VALLEY?

TOO BAD...



COME ON! WE SHOULD ALSO GO TO THE RIVER TO REHEARSE FOR OUR NEXT SHOW!

YES!

AND TAKE YOUR PRACTICE SERIOUSLY!

YOU ARE RIVALS!

NOW GO!

clap

YEAH!

TAD TAD



WHAT IS IT, AYUMI?

TSUKIKAGE-SAN!

I WANTED TO ASK YOU SOMETHING...



TAP TAP



I STILL HAVEN'T GRASPED HER ESSENCE.
THERE'S SOMETHING... THAT I JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND.

WHO IS THE CRIMSON GODDESS?
I KNOW SHE IS THE ANCIENT SPIRIT OF THE PLUM TREE, BUT...



PLEASE, TSUKIKAGE-SAN!
TELL ME WHO THE CRIMSON GODDESS IS!

PLEASE!

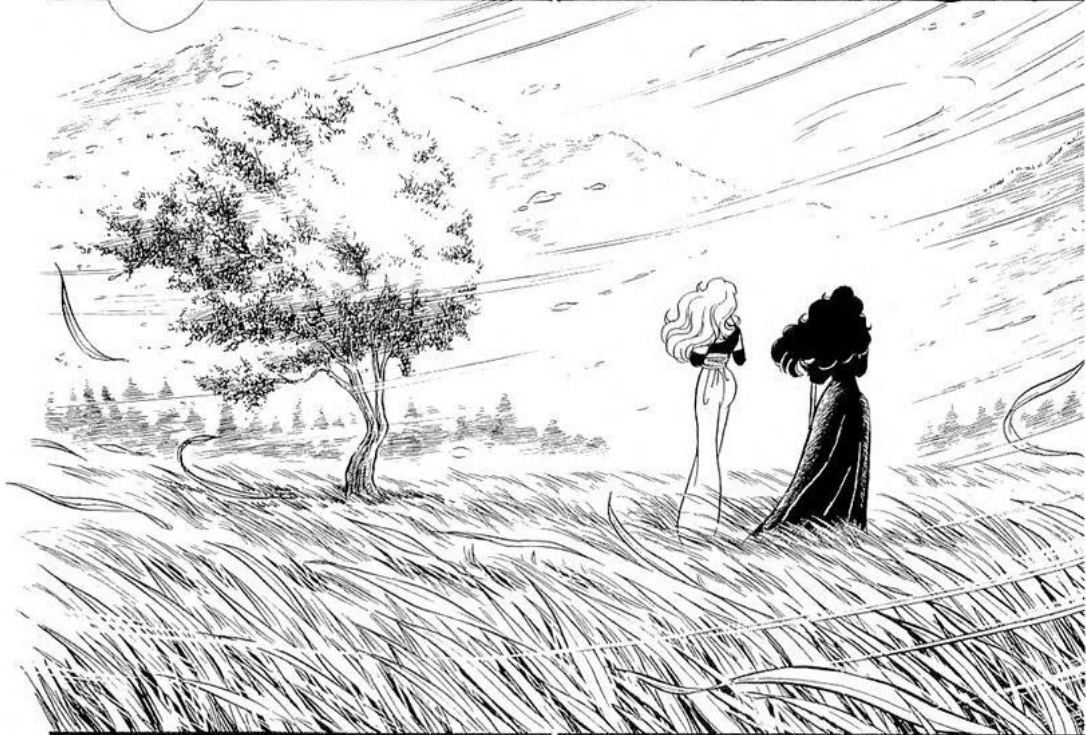


WAIT!



BY NOW, YOU SHOULD ALREADY COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND THE CRIMSON GODDESS!

TRY TO UNDERSTAND WHY I MADE YOU INTERPRET WIND, FIRE, WATER AND EARTH.





I WANTED TO EXPRESS THE INVISIBLE WIND WITH THE MOVEMENTS OF MY BODY...

YES...

AYUMI, DO YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU INTERPRETED THE WIND?

THE WIND?



AH!

YOU UNDERSTAND FROM THEIR MOVEMENTS THAT THE INVISIBLE WIND IS THE ONE THAT STIRS THEM!

WELL, NOW... HOW ABOUT THESE TREES AND THE GRASS? AREN'T THEY DOING THE SAME?



FIRE?

YES, THAT WAS YOUR WIND.

HOW ABOUT FIRE?

YOU CANNOT SEE IT, BUT IT MOVES THINGS ON THE SURFACE...

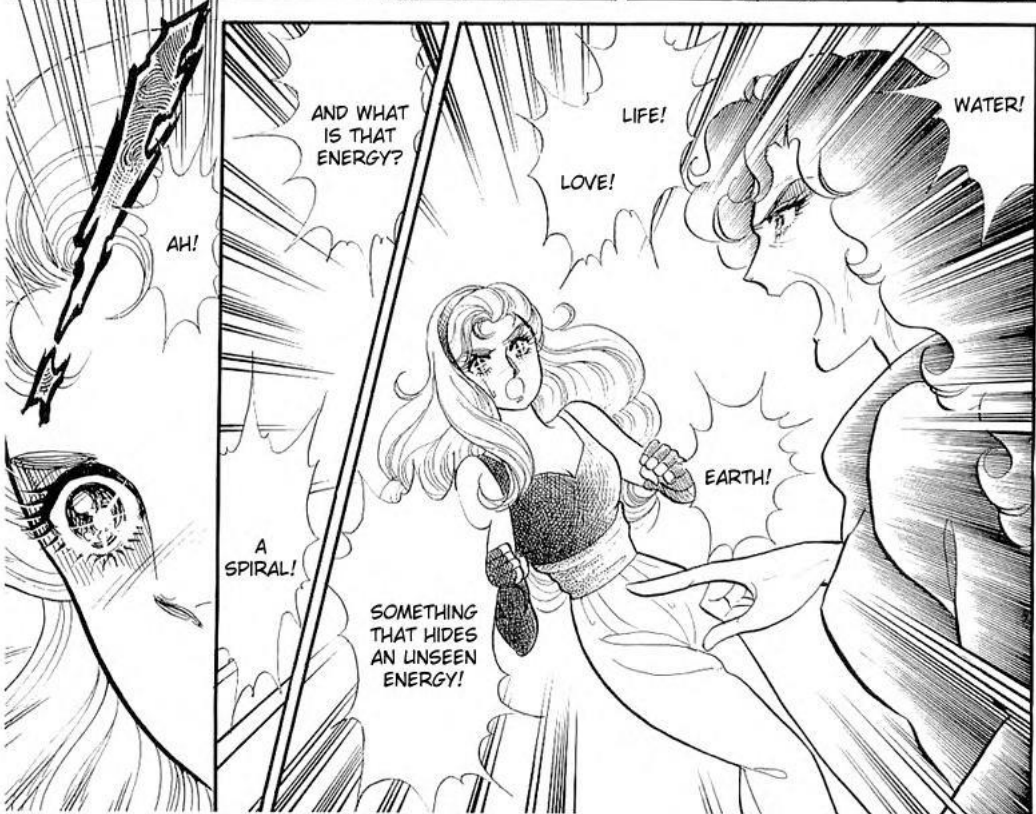
THE WIND!

THAT WAS ...

THE RHYTHM WITHOUT A SHAPE ...
THE RHYTHM THAT BURNS ...

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE SHAPELESS WIND...







YES!
I HAD YOU STUDY WIND, FIRE, WATER AND EARTH SO THAT YOU COULD BETTER UNDERSTAND THE CRIMSON GODDESS!

SO THE CRIMSON GODDESS IS...?!



MY STRENGTH SPIRALS UP TOWARDS THE HEAVENS, WATCHING OVER THE CREATURES OF THE EARTH...

GO ON! SAY THE LINES...

OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS!

AND OF THE WATER...



EXACTLY! THAT IS YOUR CRIMSON GODDESS!



EVEN THOUGH SHE IS INVISIBLE, SHE HAS THE POWER TO MOVE THINGS ON THE SURFACE...

THE PASSION OF THE RHYTHM WITHOUT A FORM...

THE CRIMSON GODDESS ...!

SHE MOVES THE TREES TO GROW ON THE SURFACE ...

AND BRINGS FORTH A SPIRALING ENERGY FROM THE EARTH... SHE GIVES LIFE TO ALL BEINGS,

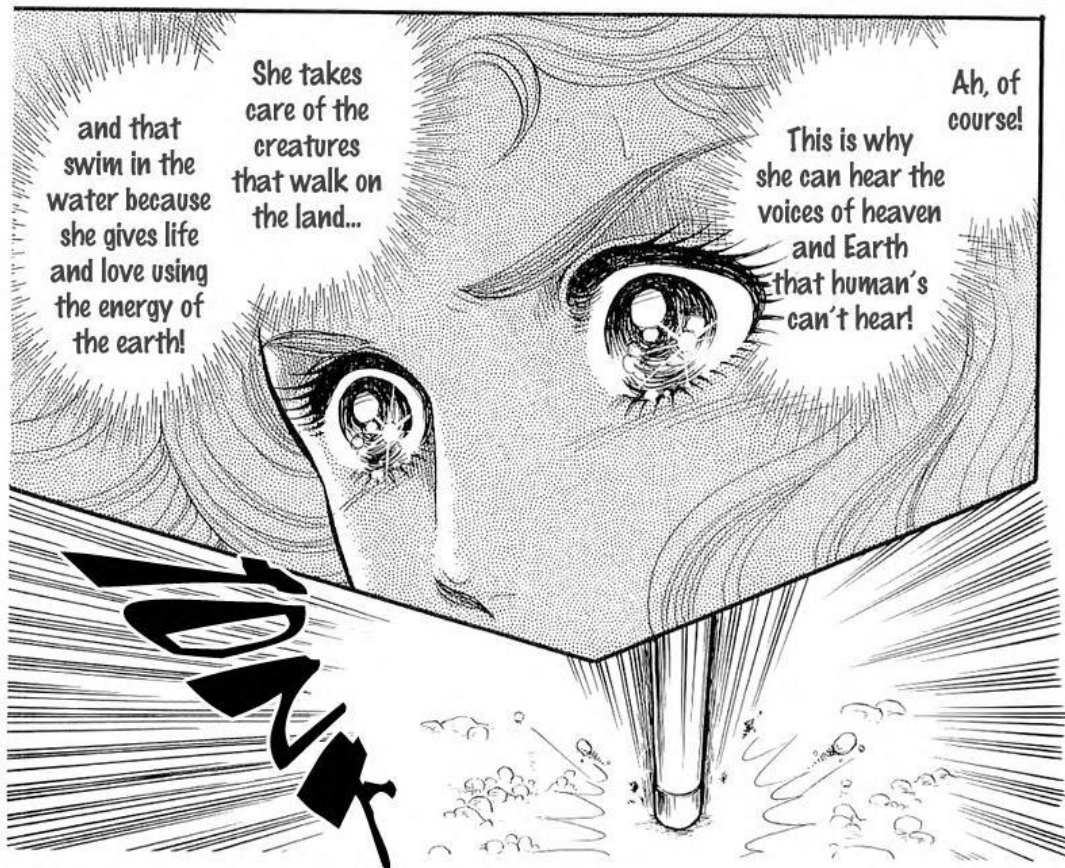


THE SPIRIT OF THE GODS!

This is my Crimson Goddess!

THE TREE AND THE SPIRIT. THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH'S GODS GROWS AND SHOW ITSELF ON THE SURFACE...

This is the Crimson Goddess, the ancient plum tree's spirit!



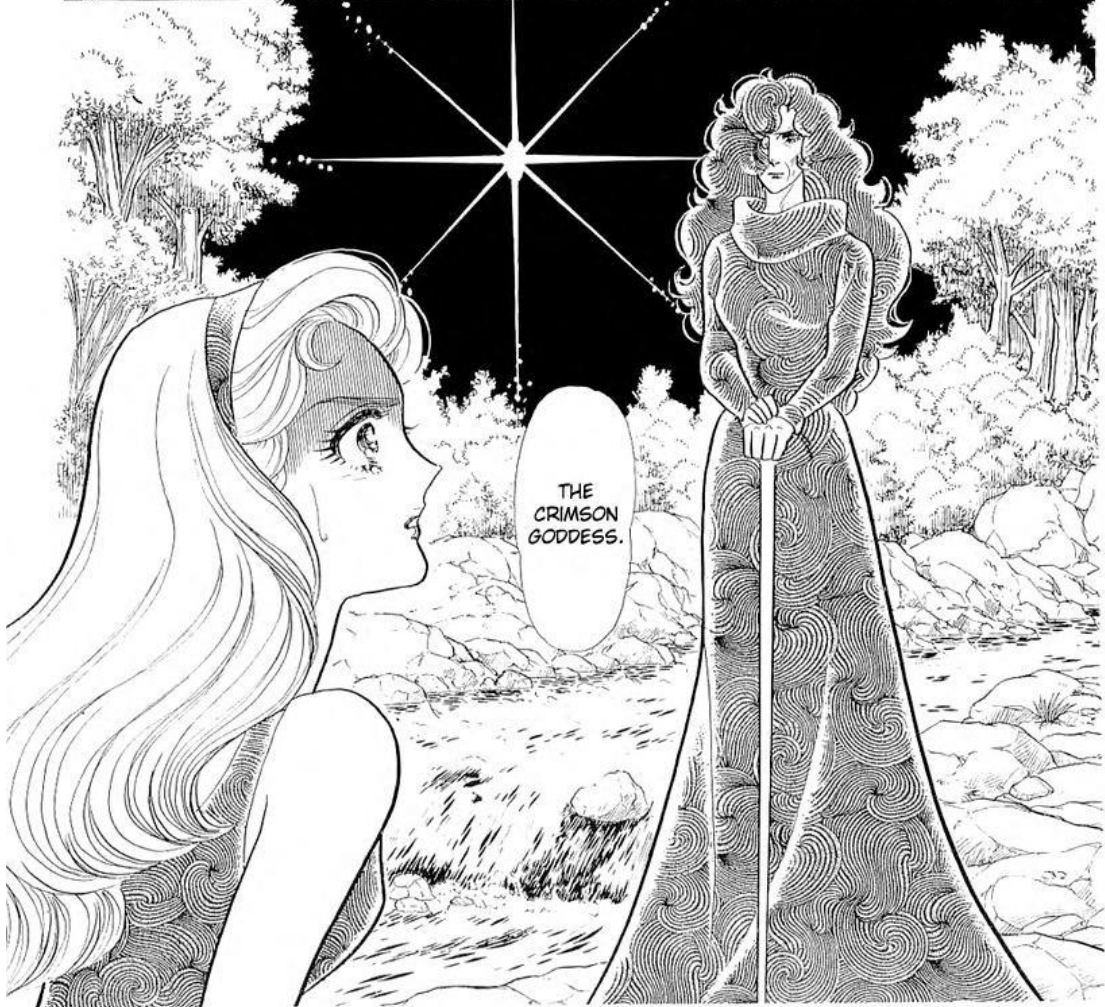
and that swim in the water because she gives life and love using the energy of the earth!

She takes care of the creatures that walk on the land...

This is why she can hear the voices of heaven and Earth that human's can't hear!

Ah, of course!

WAKU





I want to return to the valley...

Yesterday... It was incredible... It was like I wasn't myself anymore...



EH?

POLLEN ...?



UH!

I GOT DUST IN MY EYES ...



But somehow, deep down, I feel like I know her...

Who could the Crimson Goddess be? I still don't understand her...

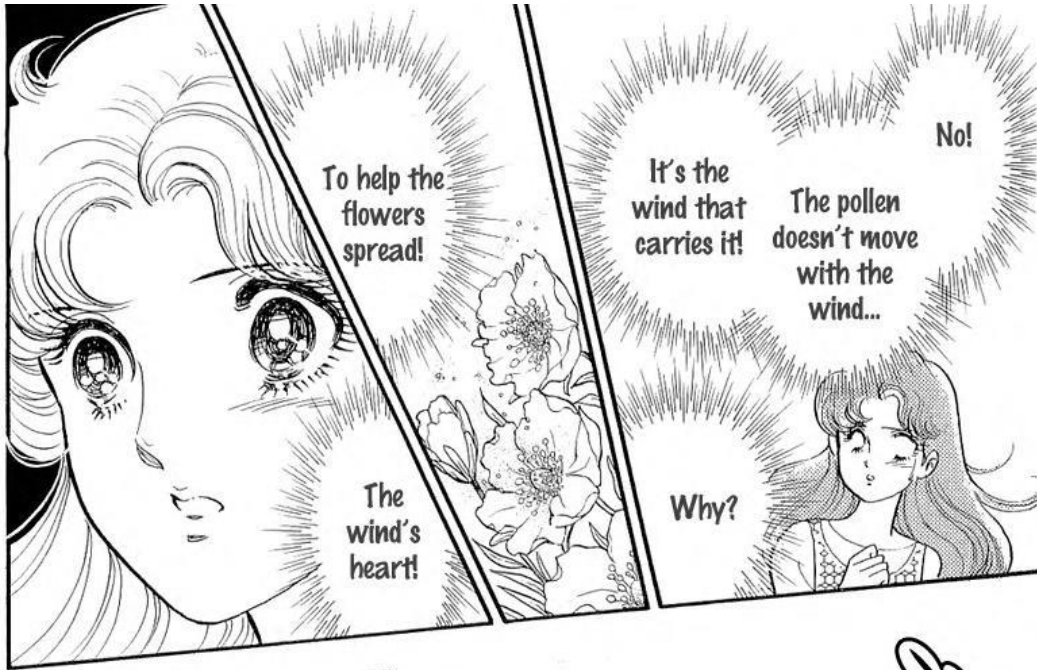
I don't know how to express her with words or actions...

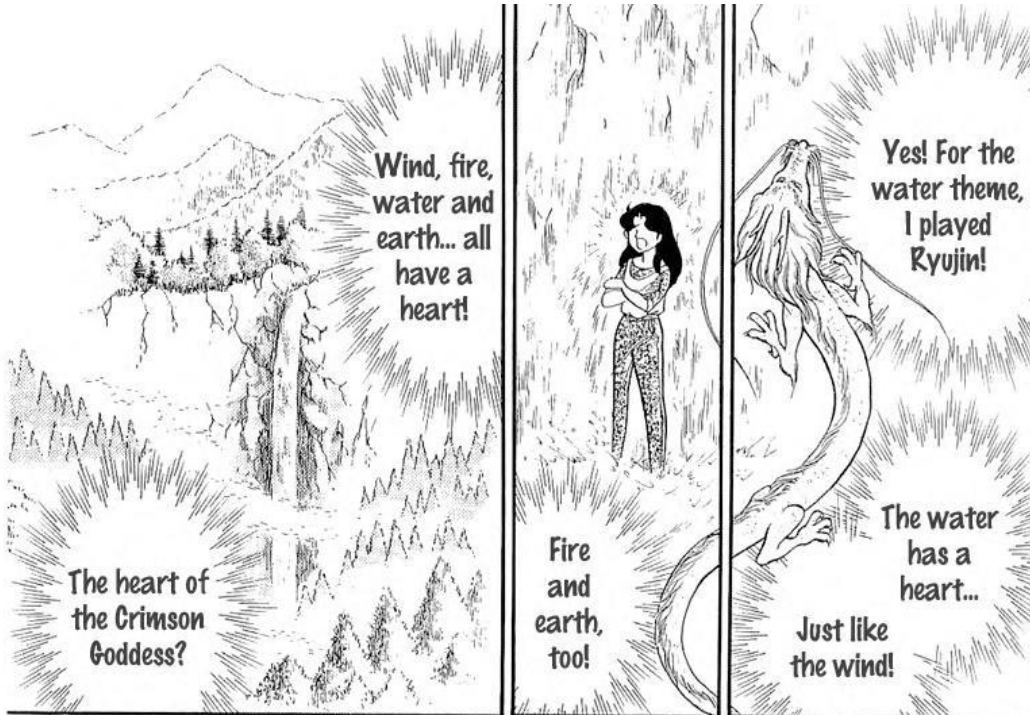


With the wind?



The pollen moves with the wind... To spread flowers...







The heart of the Crimson Goddess!

The growing of the plants is the heart of the Crimson Goddess!

The fire's movement is the heart of the Crimson Goddess!

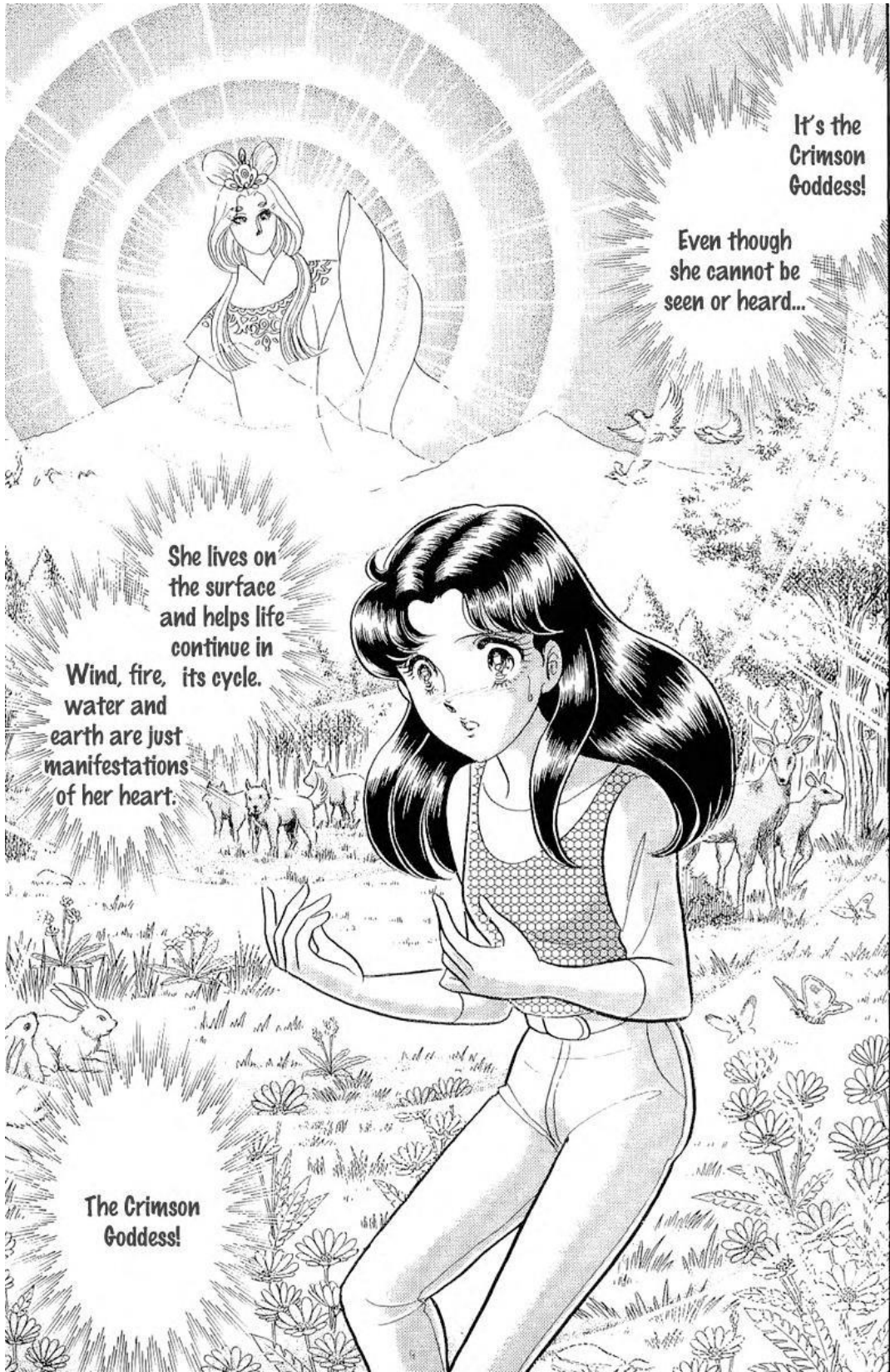
The heart of the Crimson Goddess!

You can see the heart of the Goddess in the movements of nature!
Wind, fire, water and earth!

Everything is brought to life by her heart!

That's what makes plants and animals grow and live!

In that heart, one by one, the god of wind, the god of fire, the god of water and the god of earth come to life!



**It's the
Crimson
Goddess!**

**Even though
she cannot be
seen or heard...**

**She lives on
the surface
and helps life
continue in
Wind, fire, its cycle.
water and
earth are just
manifestations
of her heart.**

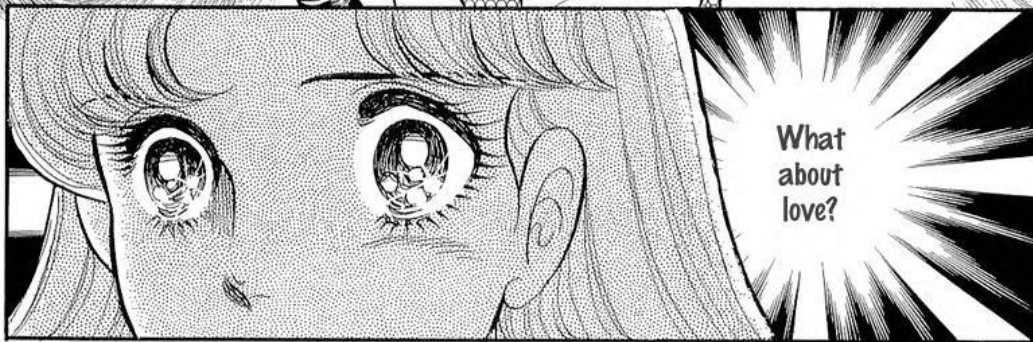
**The Crimson
Goddess!**



I have the feeling that the Crimson Goddess is something truly beyond us...

I...

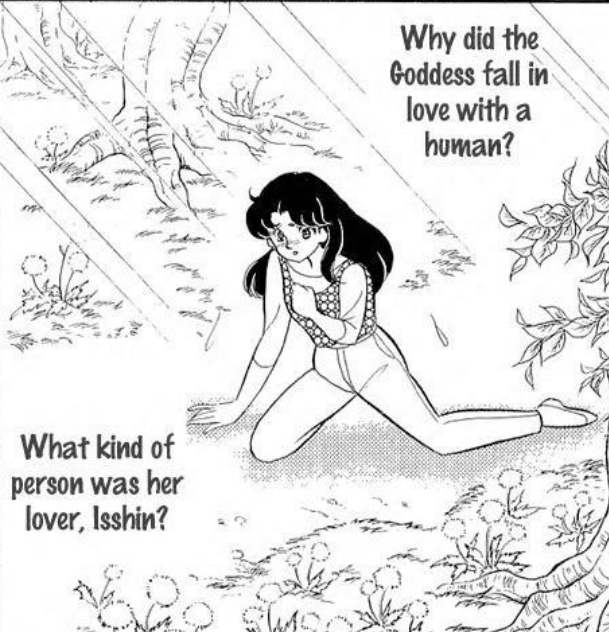
I think I have a chance to portray something really special...



What about love?



WROOM



Why did the Goddess fall in love with a human?

What kind of person was her lover, Isshin?



The place where
the plum trees are
always in bloom...
The place where
the Crimson
Goddess falls in
love with Isshin...



VROOM

SKRECH

What kind
of person
was the
Crimson
Goddess?



SWAP

Who could
she be...?

The Crimson
Goddess that
Isshin fell in
love with...





Chapter 212





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!



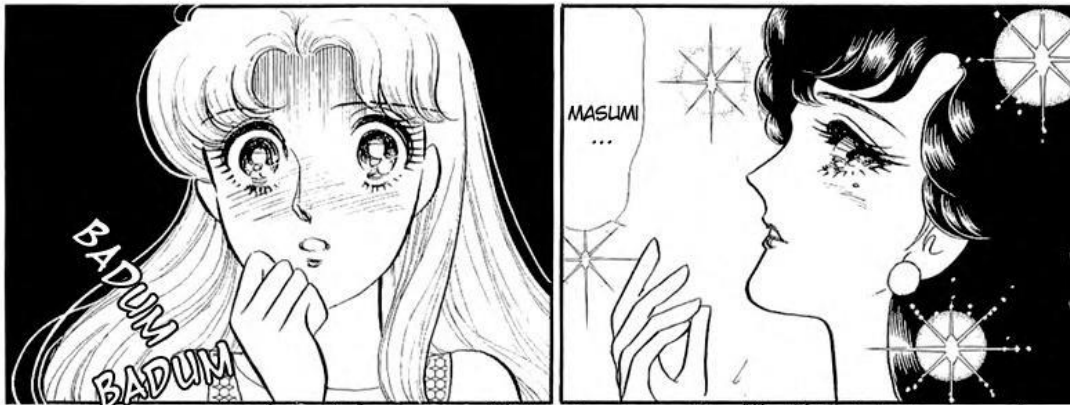
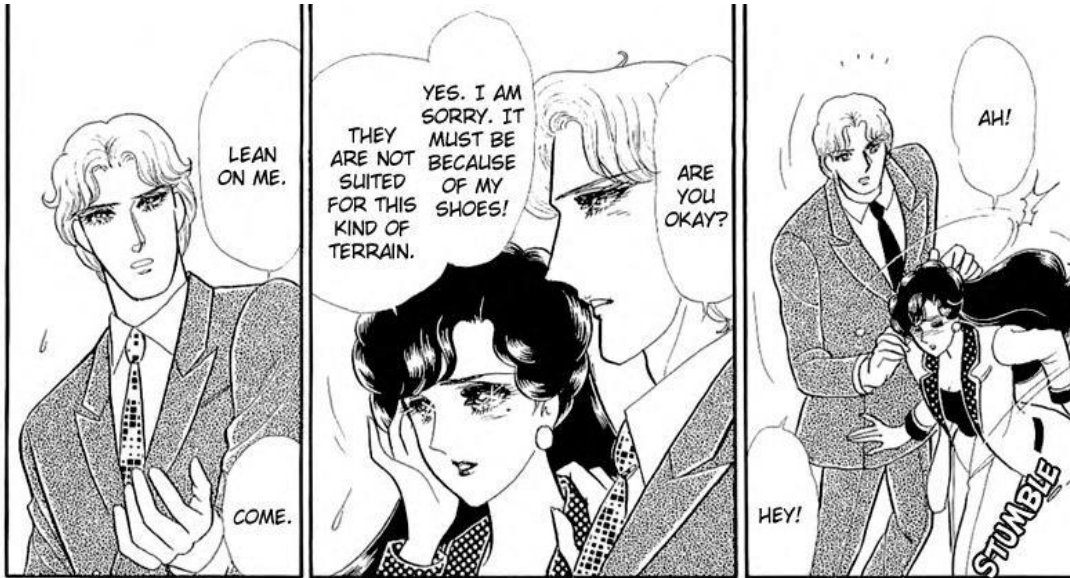
THE VALLEY OF THE PLUM TREES, WHERE THE CRIMSON GODDESS LIVES... IT MUST BE A REALLY WONDERFUL PLACE.

NO, I'M FINE!

ARE YOU TIRED, SHIORI?

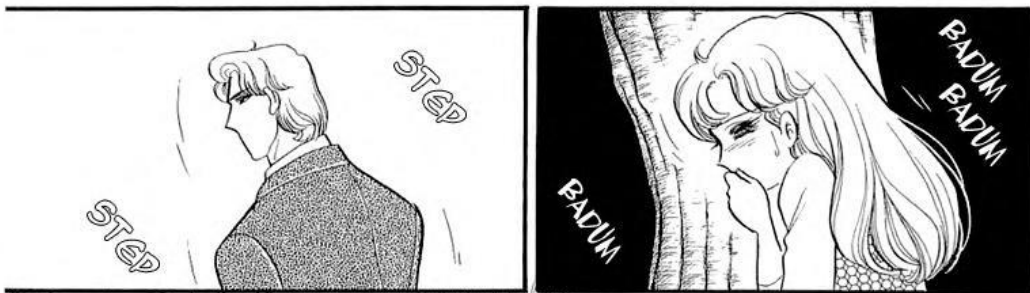
I CAN'T BE TIRED!

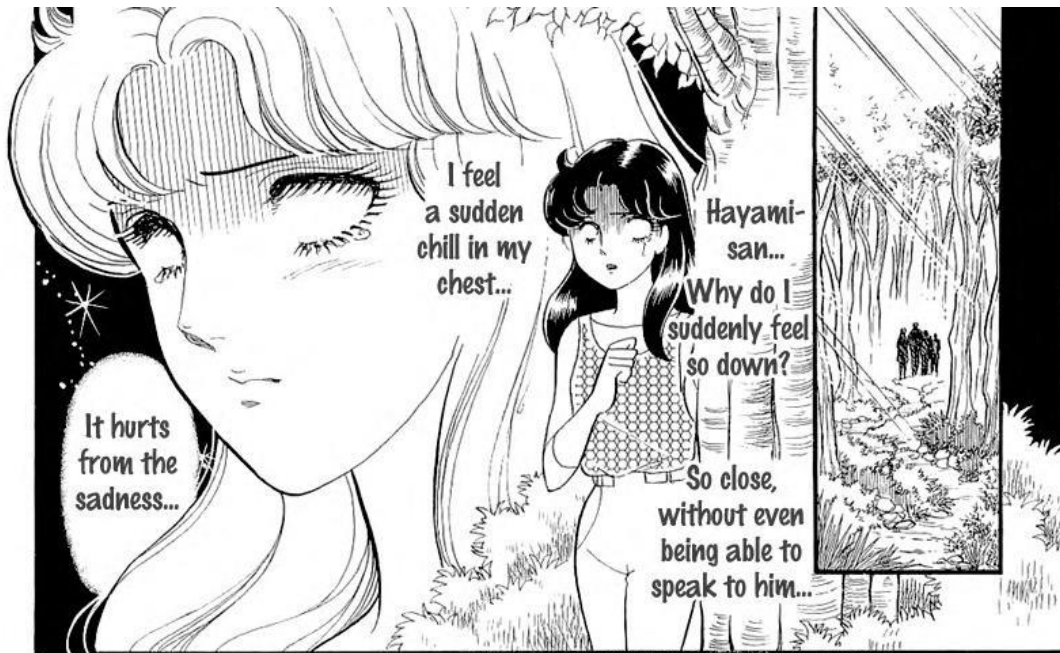
I WAS THE ONE WHO WANTED TO COME.











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?



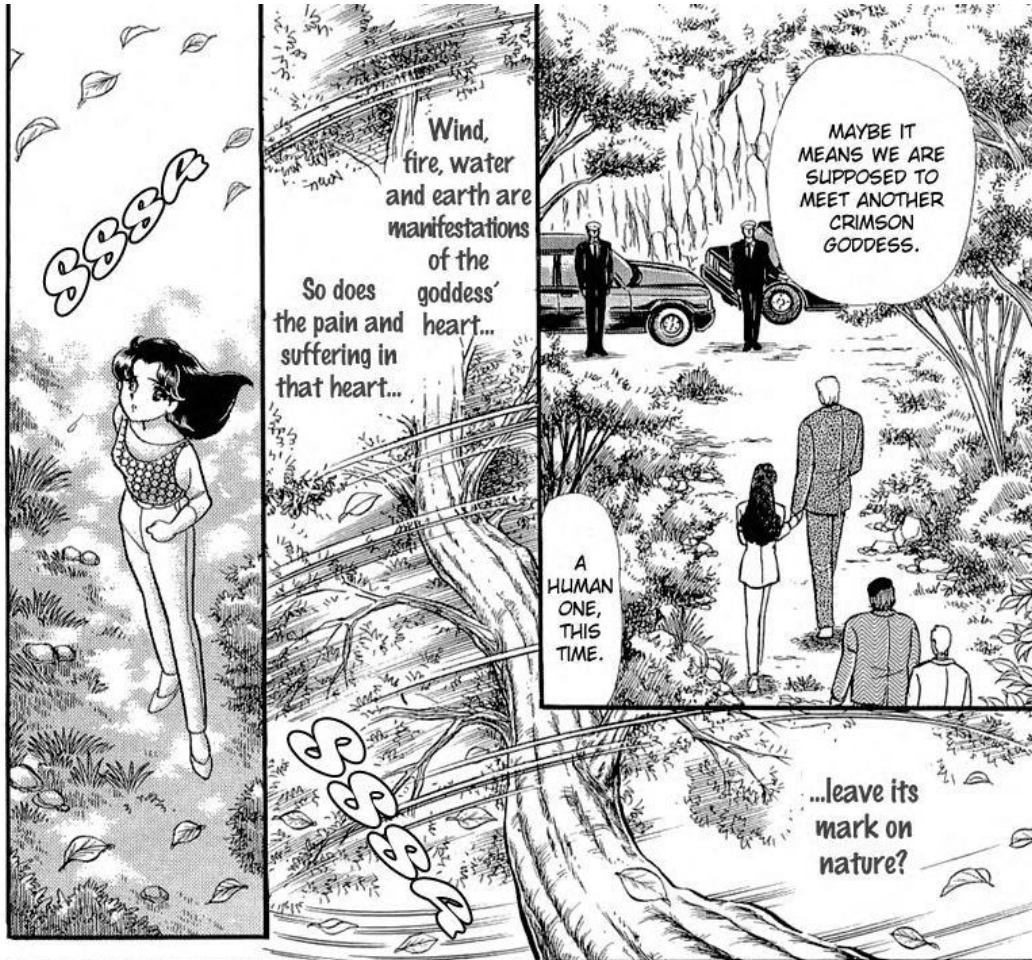
Who knows how much she must have suffered!

fell in love with a human!

The Crimson Goddess who rules over nature...

How sad she must have been!





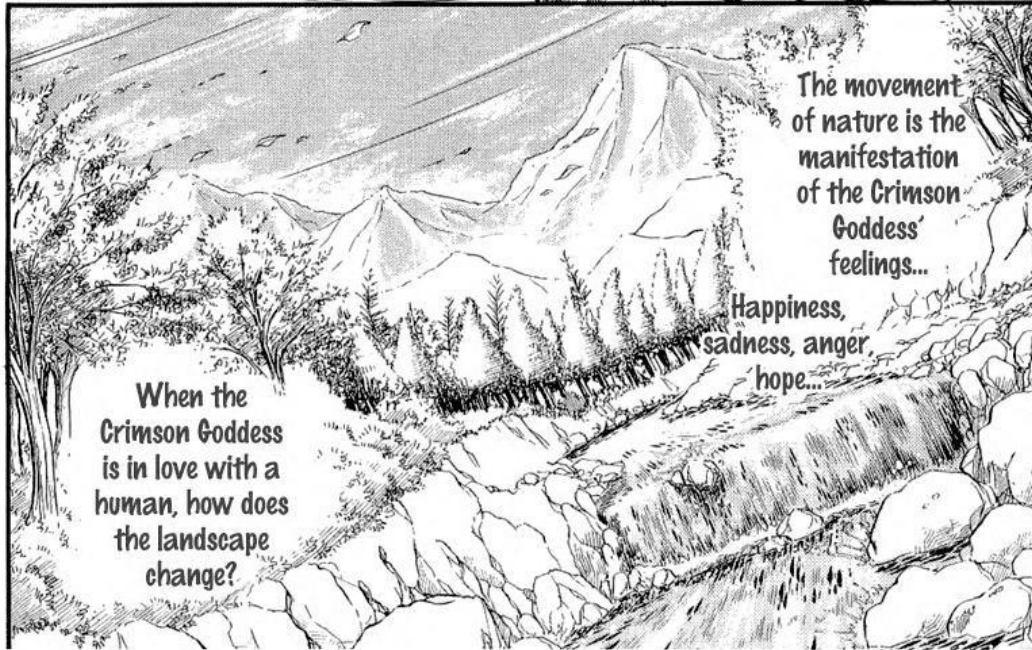
SSSS

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...



When
the Crimson
Goddess is
in love!



Having
fun?



I guess
she had fun
riding on
the wind...

Dancing
in the
sunlight...

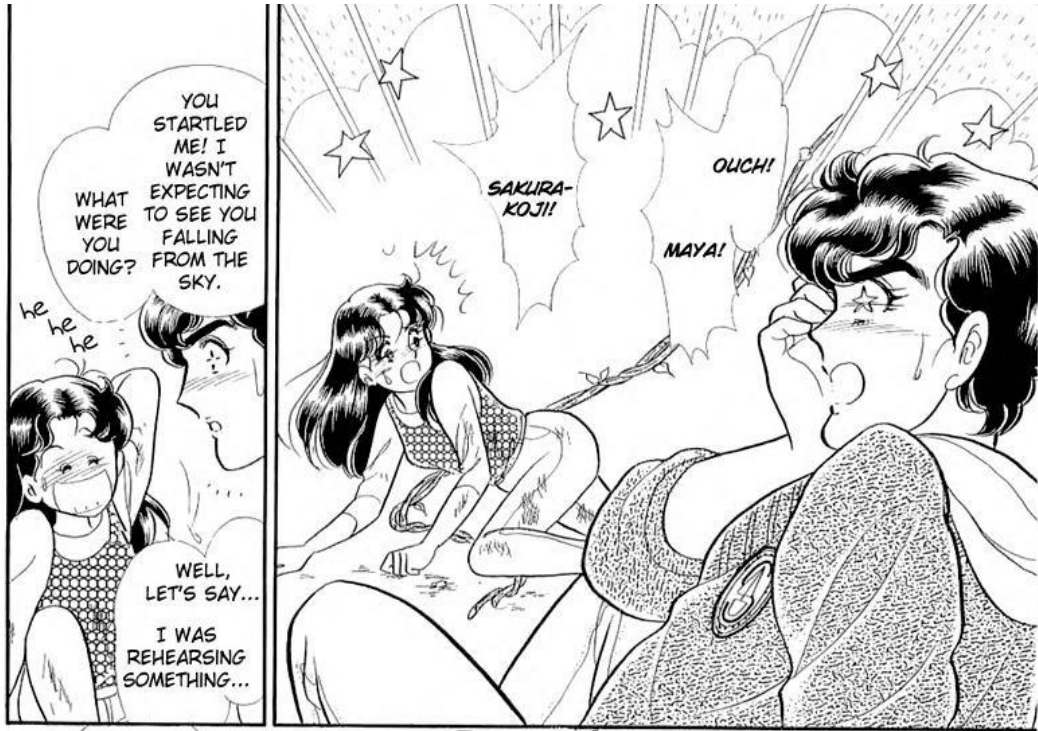
Drawing
rainbows in
the sky...



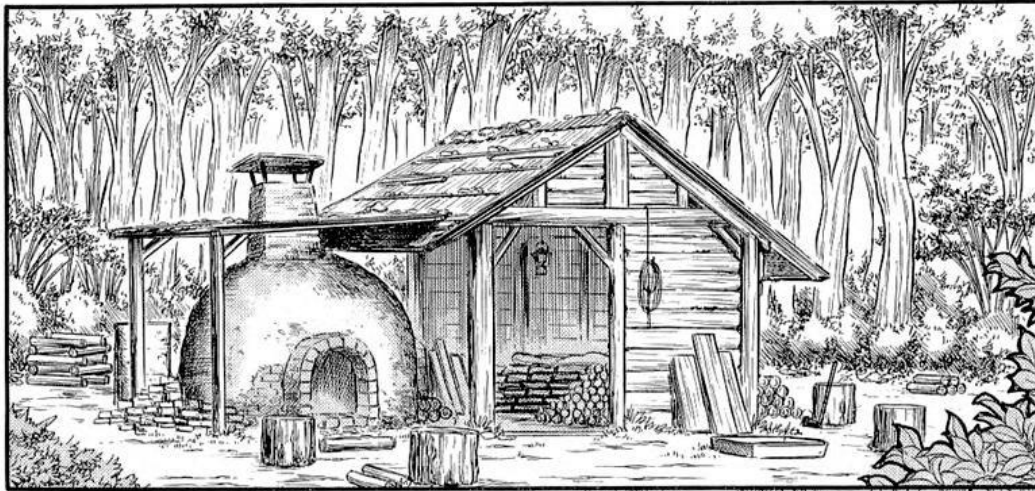
I wonder how she
spent her days?

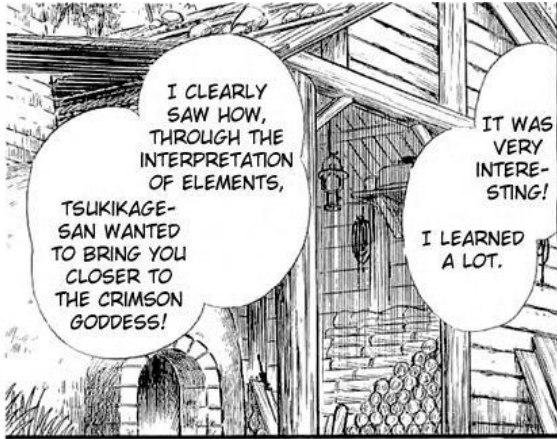












I CLEARLY SAW HOW, THROUGH THE INTERPRETATION OF ELEMENTS, TSUKIKAGE-SAN WANTED TO BRING YOU CLOSER TO THE CRIMSON GODDESS!

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... HUMANES 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...



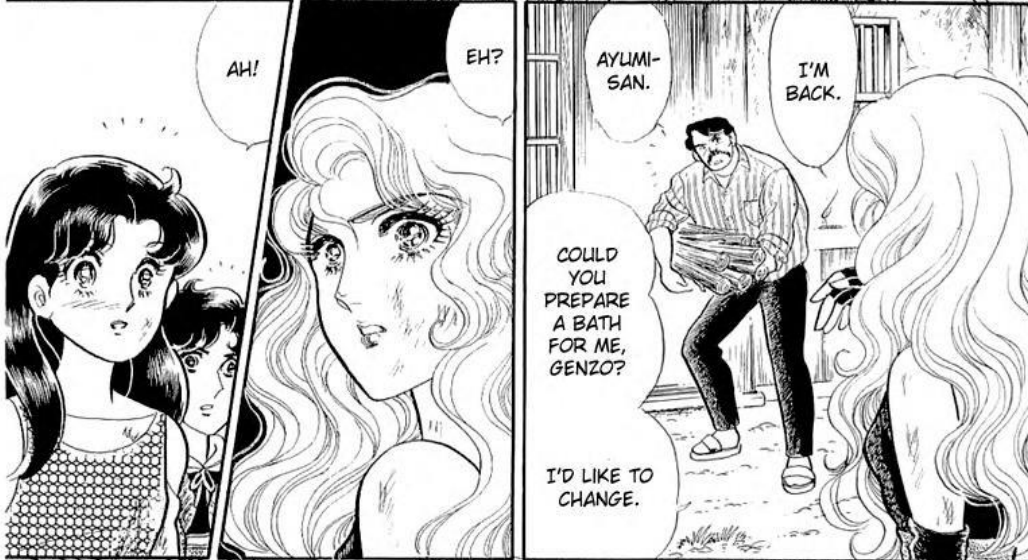
SEEING THE VALLEY, I FELT LIKE I UNDERSTOOD SOMETHING ABOUT THE CRIMSON GODDESS...

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











HI, AYUMI!

KURO-
NUMA-
SAN!
SAKU-
RAKOJI!

to die for

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

WHAT
ARE
YOU
DOING
HERE?



WHAT A
SURPRISE!
YOU LOOK
JUST LIKE A
PEASANT.

BUT...
YOU ARE
KURONUMA!



IT WOULD
SEEM
WE ALL
GATHERED
HERE.

*ka
ka
ka*

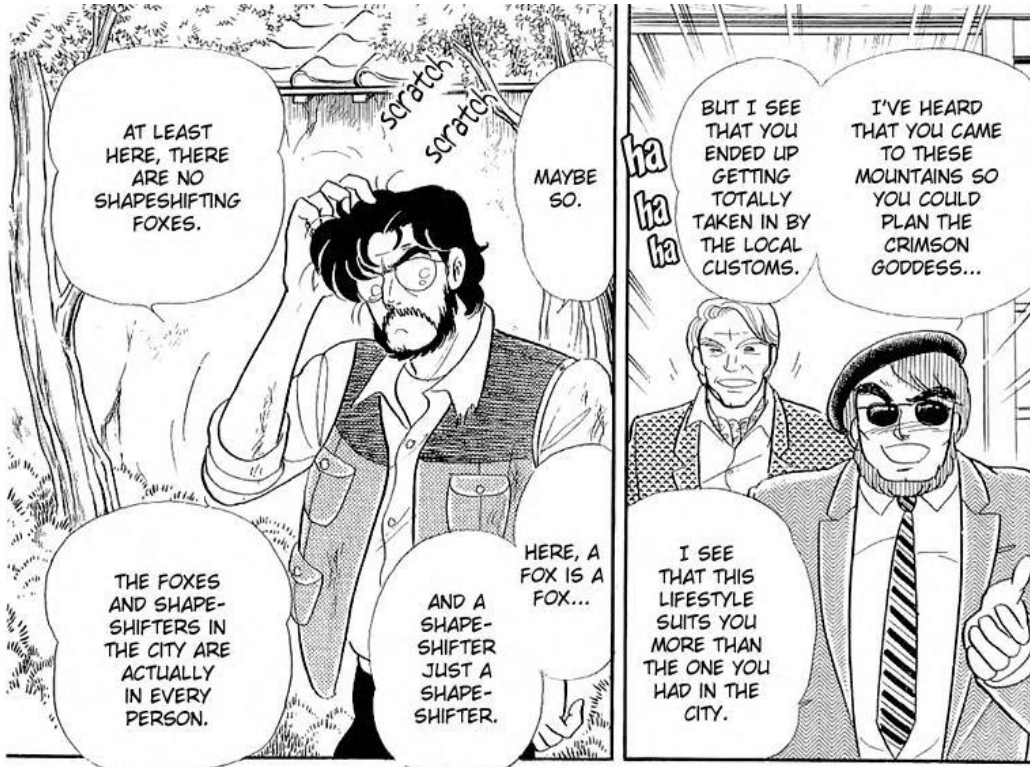


SHOCKED

THE
CRIMSON
GODDESS
OF
UNSUR-
PASSED
BEAUTY
...

WOBBLE

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



AT LEAST HERE, THERE ARE NO SHAPESHIFTING FOXES.

scratch
scratch

MAYBE SO.

ha
ha
ha

BUT I SEE THAT YOU ENDED UP GETTING TOTALLY TAKEN IN BY THE LOCAL CUSTOMS.

I'VE HEARD THAT YOU CAME TO THESE MOUNTAINS SO YOU COULD PLAN THE CRIMSON GODDESS...

THE FOXES AND SHAPE-SHIFTERS IN THE CITY ARE ACTUALLY IN EVERY PERSON.

AND A SHAPE-SHIFTER JUST A SHAPE-SHIFTER.

HERE, A FOX IS A FOX...

I SEE THAT THIS LIFESTYLE SUITS YOU MORE THAN THE ONE YOU HAD IN THE CITY.



CALM DOWN, ONODERA-SAN, AKAME-SAN.

YOU ALWAYS SAY THINGS YOU SHOULDN'T! WE'LL MAKE YOU TAKE THAT BACK!

KU... KIRONUMA!
ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF US?



DO YOU HAVE ANY TROUBLE LIVING HERE?
HOW DO YOU GET YOUR FOOD?

THANKS. I CAN SAY THE SAME ABOUT YOU, YOUNG PRESIDENT OF DAITO.

I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, KIRONUMA-SAN.

IT HAS BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE SAW EACH OTHER.

YOU LOOK WELL.



IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE REHEARSALS ARE ALSO GOING WELL.

HMM



I AM GLAD TO HEAR THAT.

THAT MEANS YOUR DIRECTING PLANS WILL COME OFF WITHOUT A HITCH.



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.

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



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

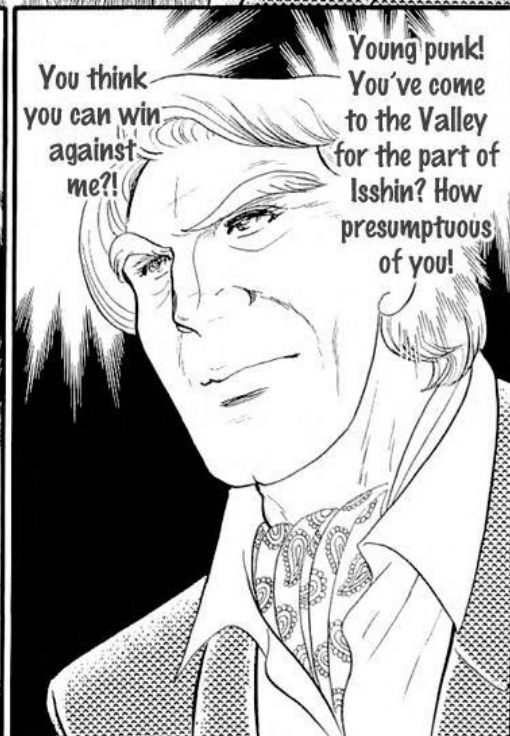
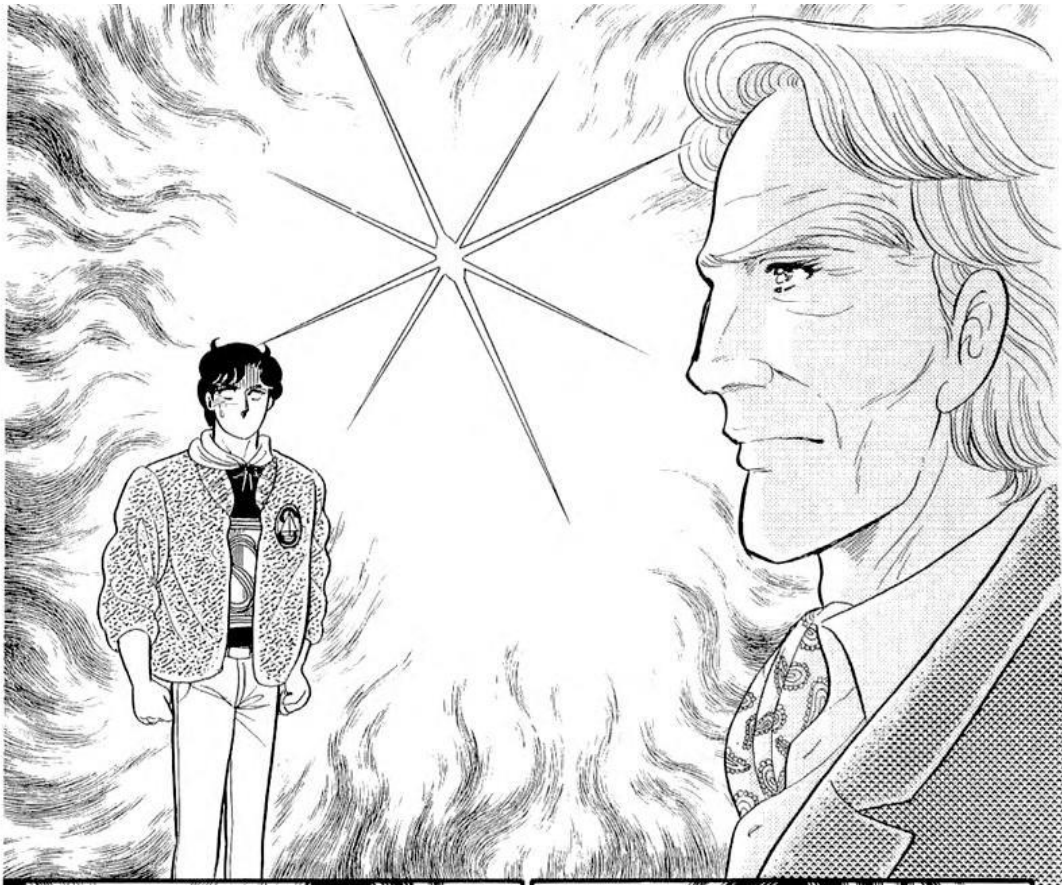


HELLO, SAKURAKOJI.

WHEN DID YOU ARRIVE?

TODAY, HAYAMI-SAN.

OFF TO SEE TSUKIKAGE-SAN?





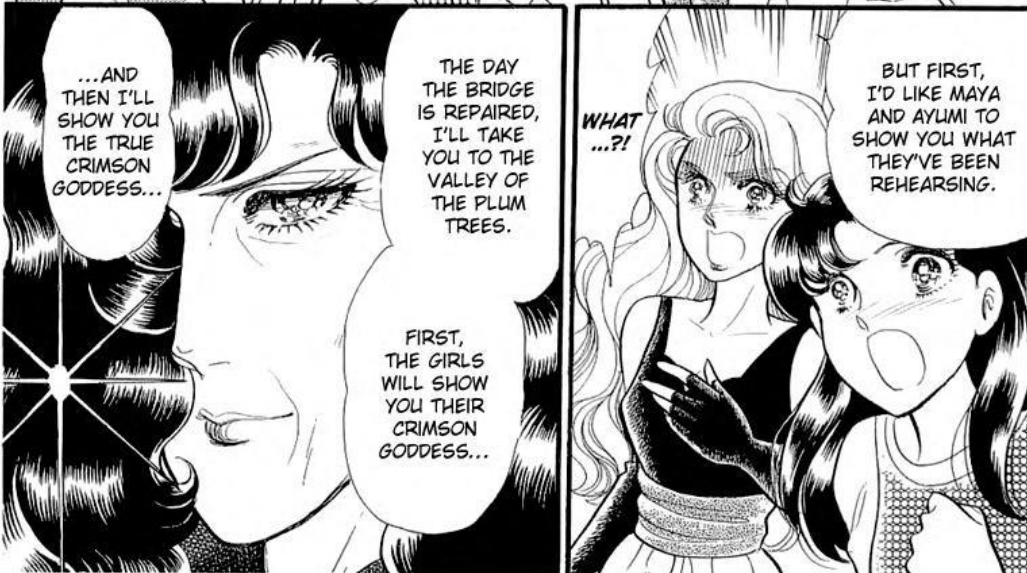


WHAT?!
THE
CRIMSON
GODDESS?!

TWO
CRIMSON
GODESSES,
TWO
ISSHINS...

AND
TWO
DIREC-
TORS.

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



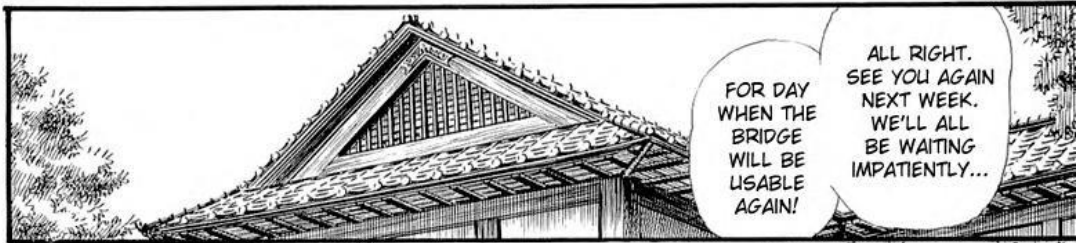
...AND
THEN I'LL
SHOW YOU
THE TRUE
CRIMSON
GODDESS...

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...

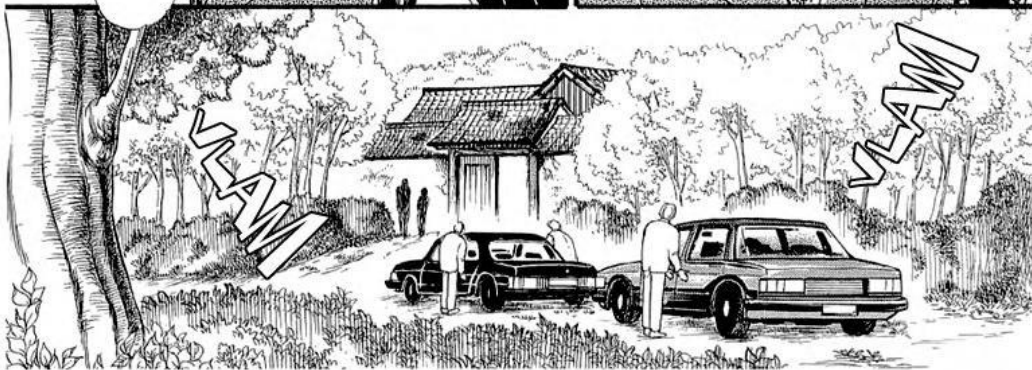
WHAT
...?!

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











Shiori-san!

Compared
to her, I...

I..!



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!

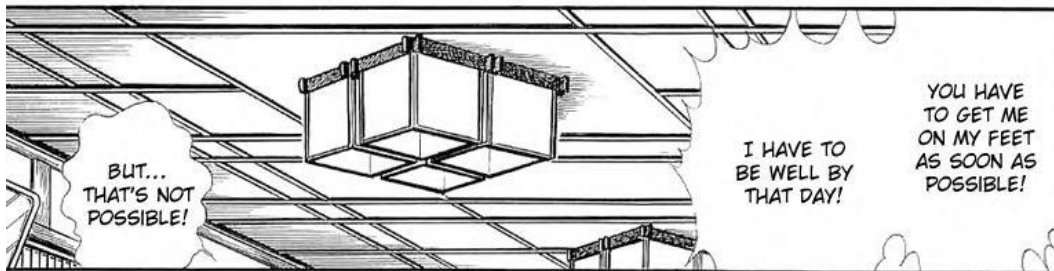
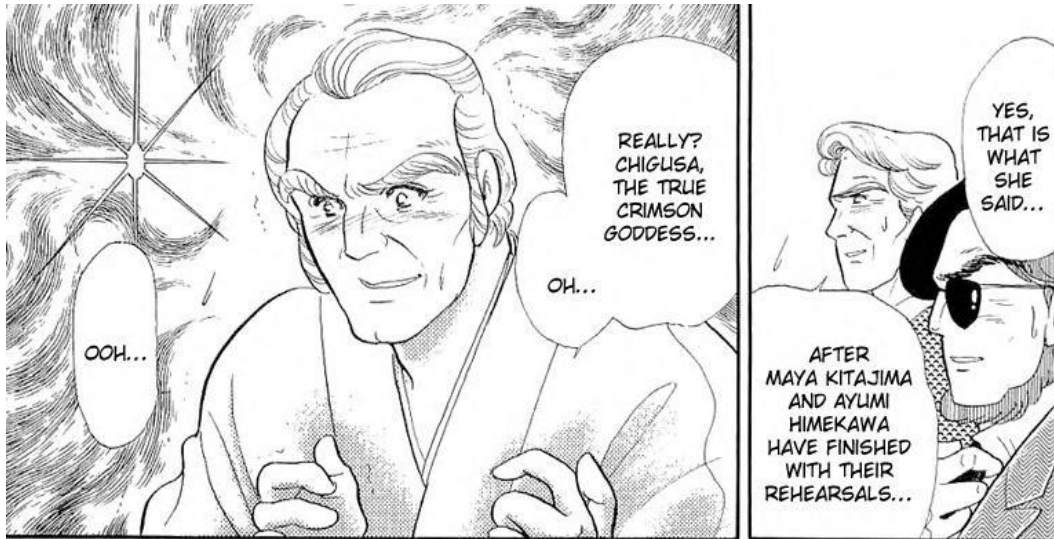


Maya...

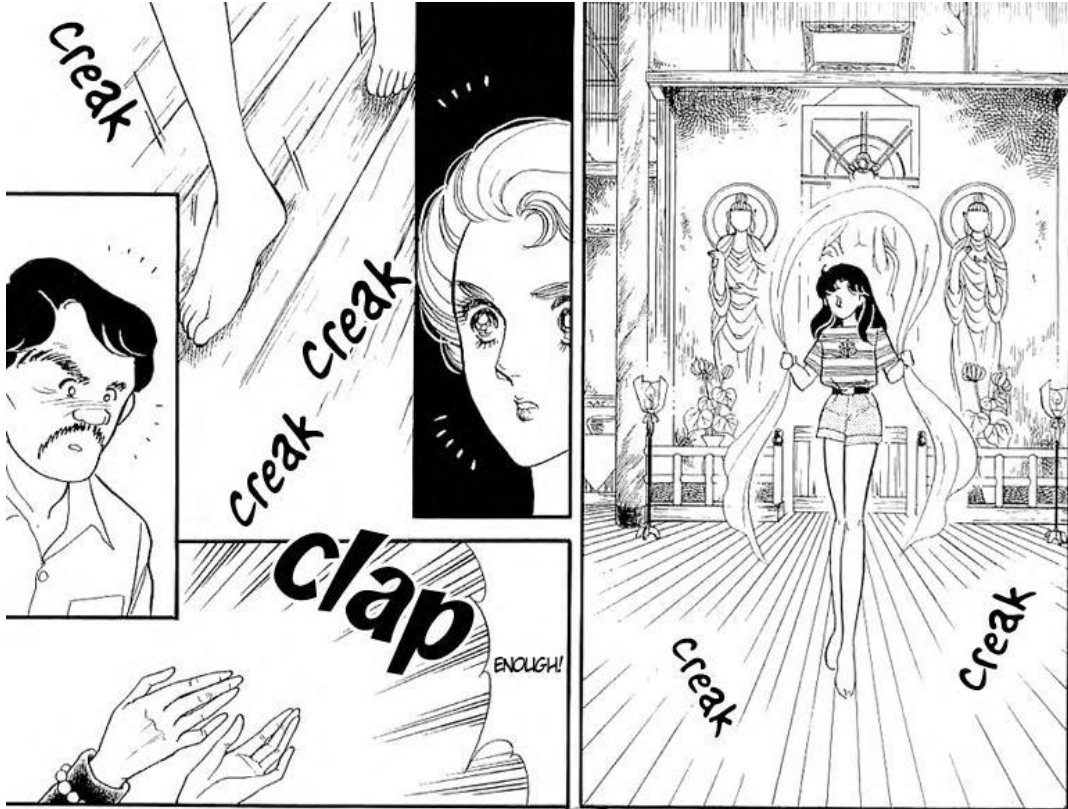


Chapter 213





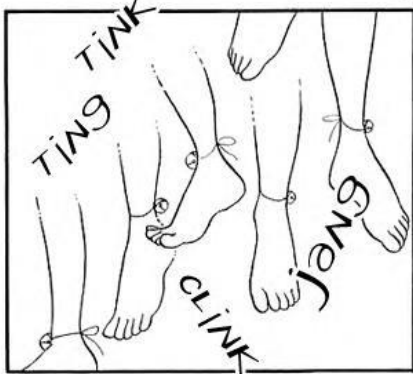






What a rhythm.

Just by walking, she makes it sound like music...



NOW
MAYA!

clap

jing clong

creak



A HUMAN WOULD MAKE THE FLOOR CREAK, WHILE A GODDESS WOULD GLIDE ACROSS IT.

THE CRIMSON GODDESS IS NOT HUMAN.
YOU MUST EXPRESS THAT EVEN IN YOUR STEPS.



WHILE MAYA'S IS JARRING.
I THINK IT'S CLEAR THAT AYUMI'S WALK HAS A CERTAIN RHYTHM,



MUST BE UNEARTHLY, UNLIKE ANY HUMAN'S.

YOUR MANNER OF WALKING,
OF MOVING, OF TALKING, BEHAVIOR, EXPRESSION...

THE AUDIENCE HAS TO KNOW AT FIRST GLANCE THAT THEY ARE LOOKING AT THE SPIRIT OF THE PLUM TREE, A GODDESS.

YOU'LL HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THE CRIMSON GODDESS WITH YOUR MIND AND HEART,
SO THAT ON THE STAGE, YOU CAN BECOME HER.

EVEN THE FLOOR WAS CREAKING ITS COMPLAINTS.





ANOTHER REHEARSAL.

WHAT IS THIS?

CHATTER



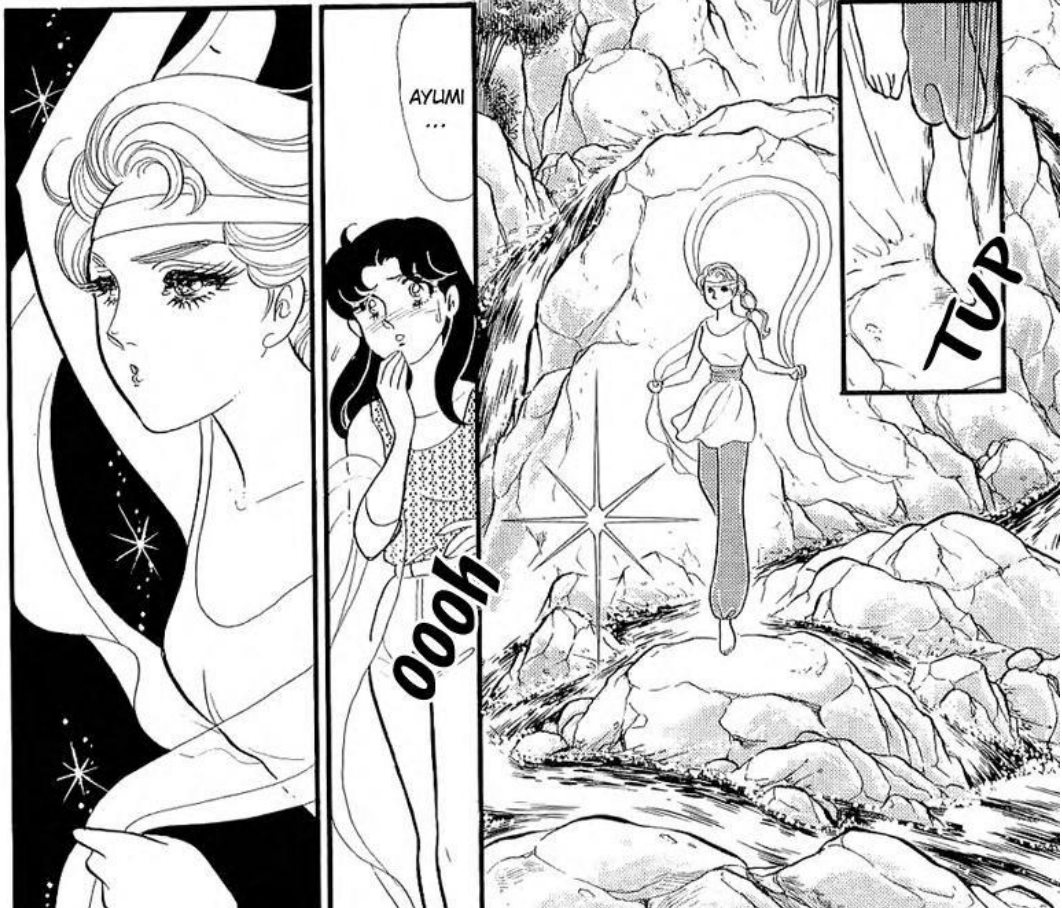
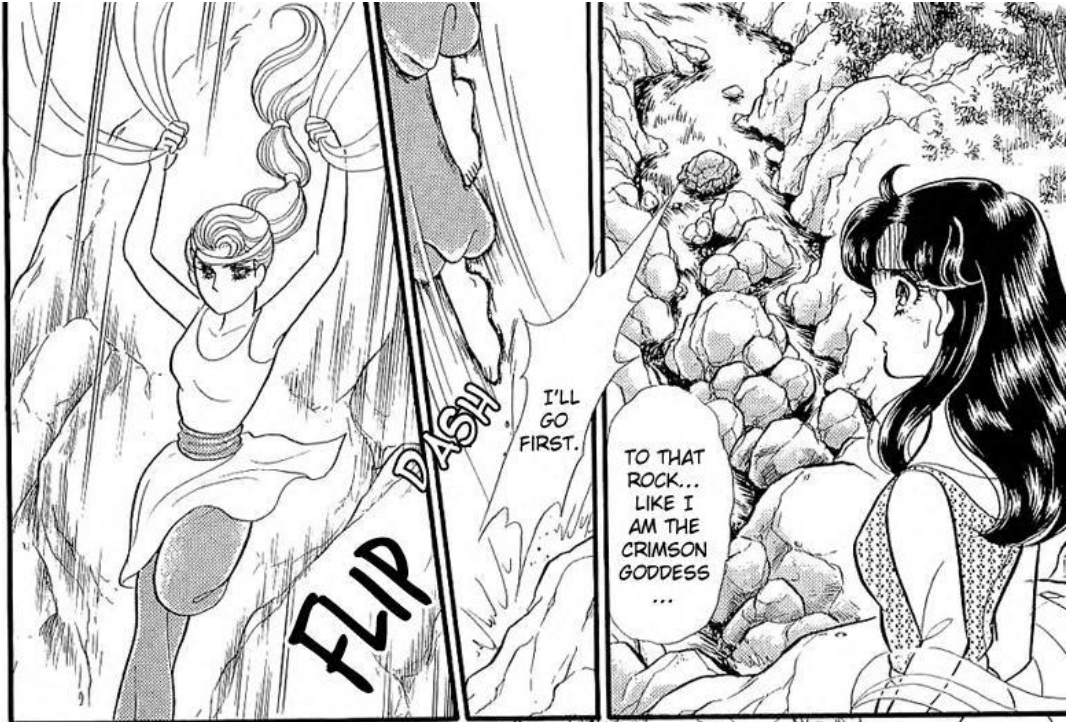
I AGREE.

CHATTER



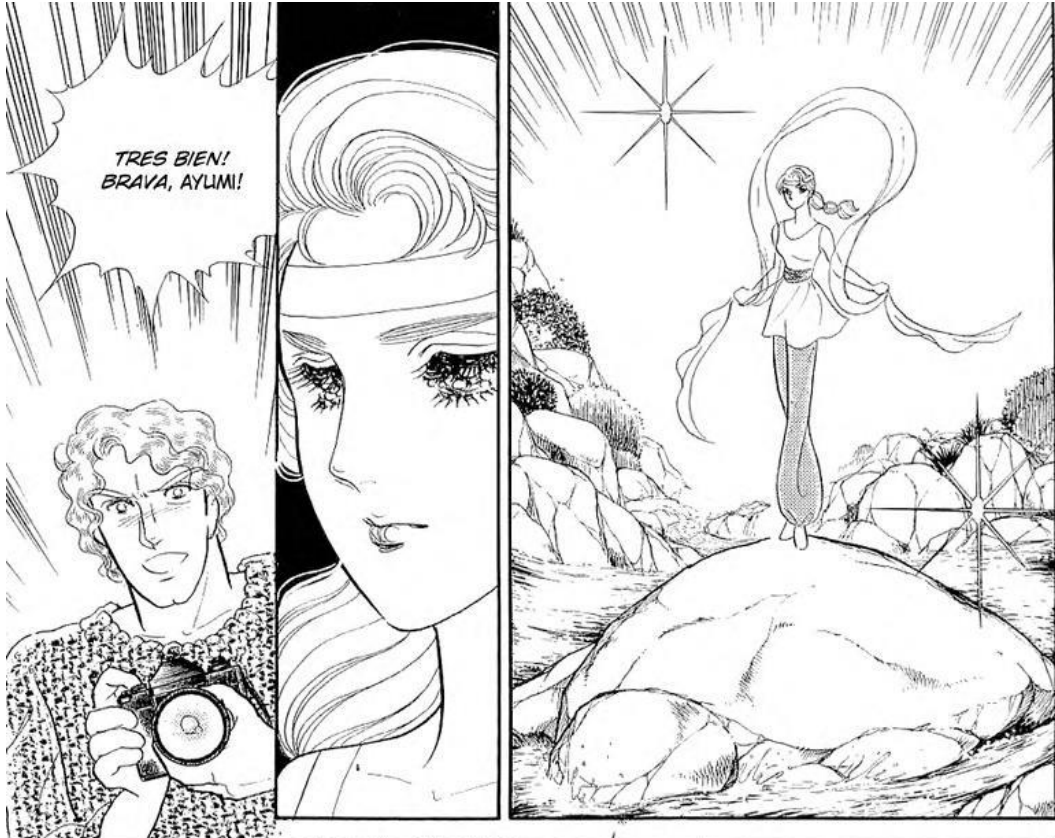
YOU WILL WALK, AS THE CRIMSON GODDESS, TO THAT TURTLE-SHAPED ROCK.











TRES BIEN!
BRAVA, AYUMI!



RUMBLE



MAYA!
YOUR
TURN!

Rather than jumping from rock to rock, she seemed to be dancing...
Ayumi is incredible! So beautiful...

I can't do that! I can't do what she just did!





That's right!

I knew it!

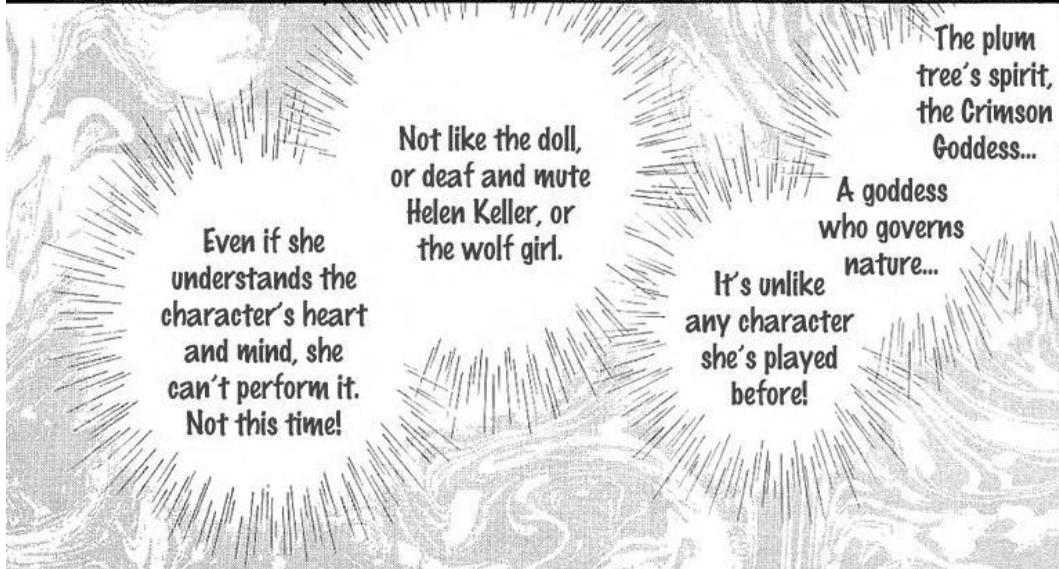
AH!

MAYA!

slip

Her physical ability is nowhere near mine.

Maya may understand the Crimson Goddess, but she can't move like her.



Even if she understands the character's heart and mind, she can't perform it. Not this time!

Not like the doll, or deaf and mute Helen Keller, or the wolf girl.

It's unlike any character she's played before!

A goddess who governs nature...

The plum tree's spirit, the Crimson Goddess...



This is Maya's
weak point!

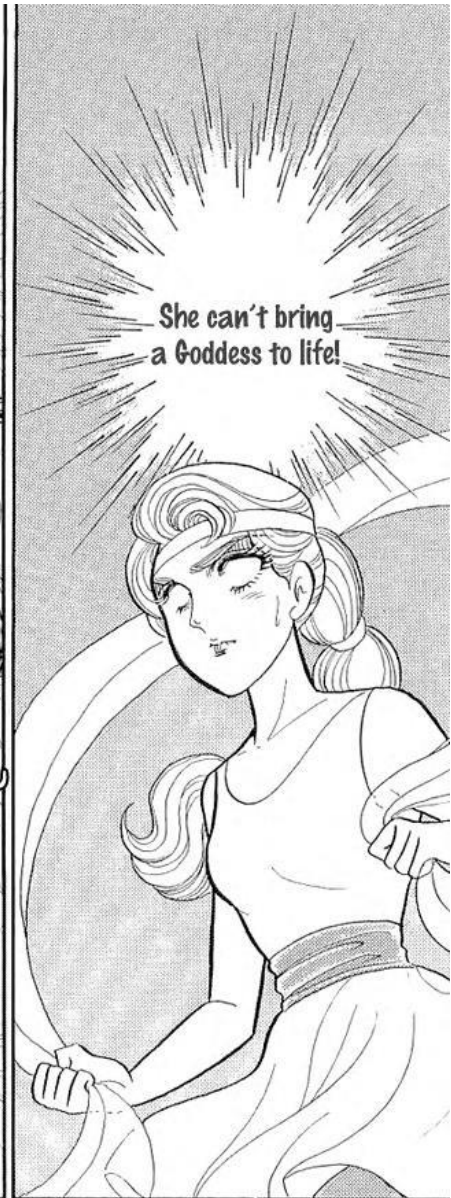


That requires
technique!

NOBBLE

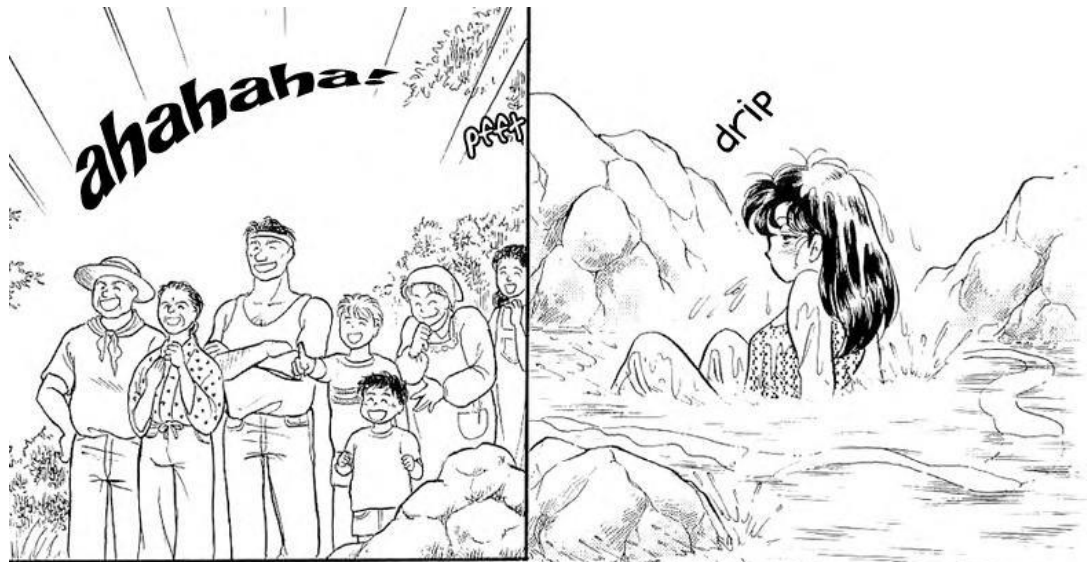
NOBBLE

Artistic
training!



She can't bring
a Goddess to life!







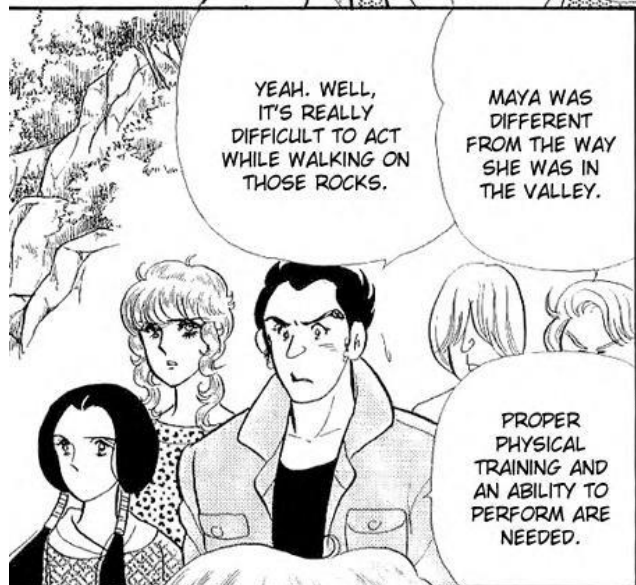


I'm so embarrassed!

I can't believe I fell in front of Ayumi!



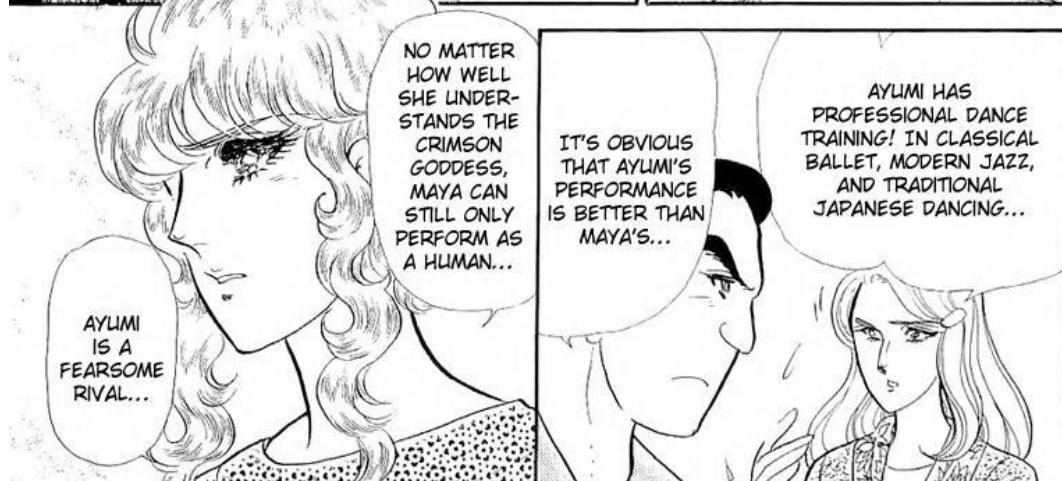
MAYA!



YEAH. WELL, IT'S REALLY DIFFICULT TO ACT WHILE WALKING ON THOSE ROCKS.

MAYA WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE WAY SHE WAS IN THE VALLEY.

PROPER PHYSICAL TRAINING AND AN ABILITY TO PERFORM ARE NEEDED.

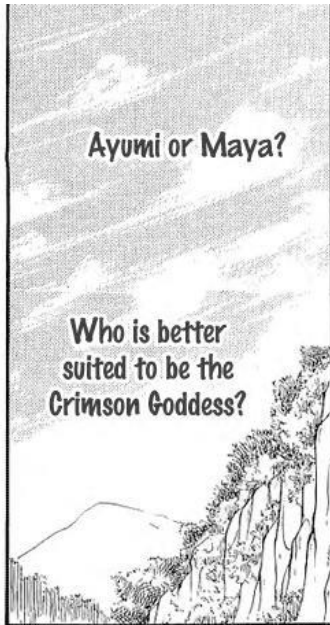


AYUMI IS A FEARSOME RIVAL...

NO MATTER HOW WELL SHE UNDERSTANDS THE CRIMSON GODDESS, MAYA CAN STILL ONLY PERFORM AS A HUMAN...

IT'S OBVIOUS THAT AYUMI'S PERFORMANCE IS BETTER THAN MAYA'S...

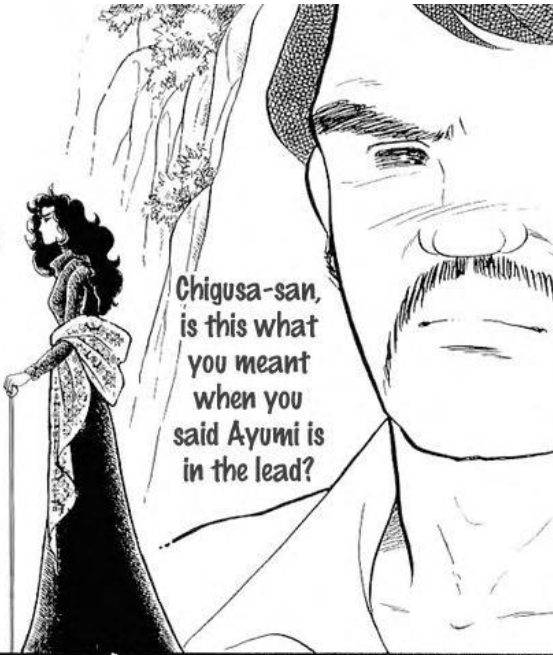
AYUMI HAS PROFESSIONAL DANCE TRAINING! IN CLASSICAL BALLET, MODERN JAZZ, AND TRADITIONAL JAPANESE DANCING...



Ayumi or Maya?

Who is better suited to be the Crimson Goddess?

Even though Maya understands the heart of the Crimson Goddess, her performance is still lacking...



Chigusa-san, is this what you meant when you said Ayumi is in the lead?



I wonder why?

Ayumi asked if we could both do that exercise...

Did she want to get a better idea of my abilities?

STOP



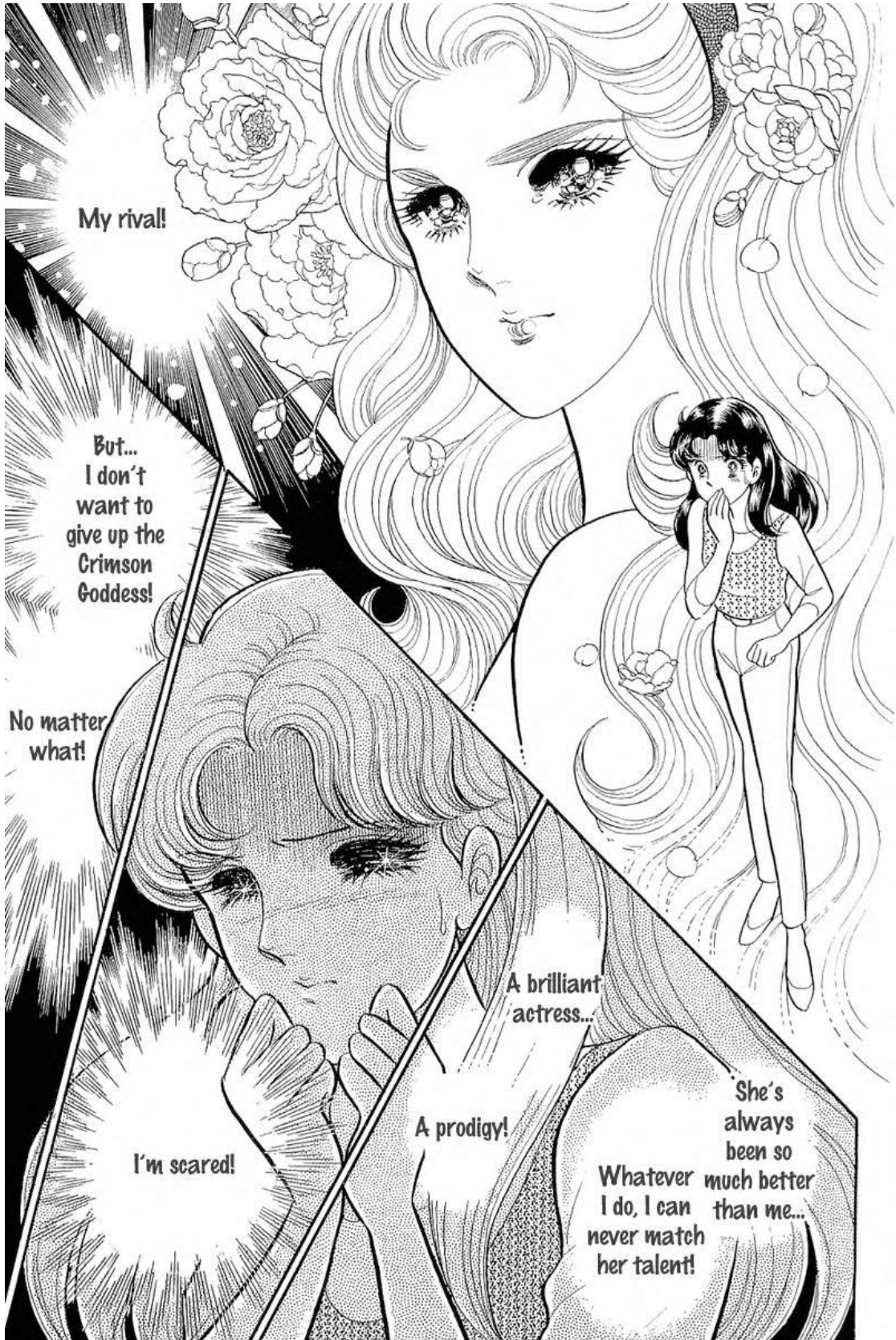
Against such a rival, it's hopeless...

I can never be her equal.



UHM...

Ayumi grew up in the world of showbusiness. She was specially trained, since she's so gifted...



My rival!

But...
I don't
want to
give up the
Crimson
Goddess!

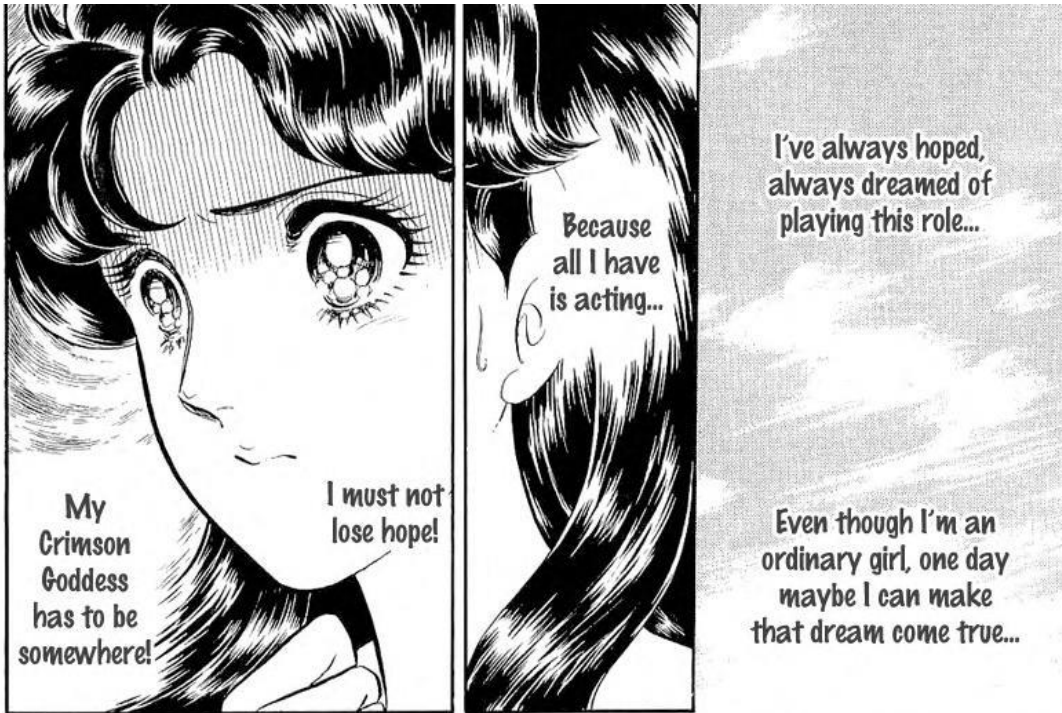
No matter
what!

A brilliant
actress...

I'm scared!

A prodigy!

She's
always
been so
much better
than me...
Whatever
I do, I can
never match
her talent!



My
Crimson
Goddess
has to be
somewhere!

I must not
lose hope!

Because
all I have
is acting...

I've always hoped,
always dreamed of
playing this role...

Even though I'm an
ordinary girl, one day
maybe I can make
that dream come true...

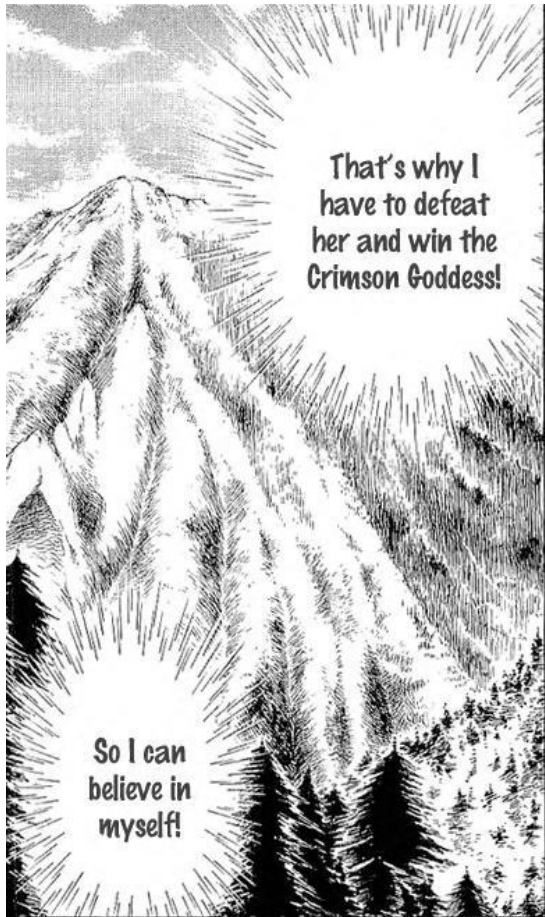


The role that
will make me
famous in my
own right!

I'll never
give the
Crimson
Goddess to
Maya!

The
Crimson
Goddess
has been
my goal
since I was
a child!

The role
that will
prove I'm
a greater
actress than
my mother!



That's why I
have to defeat
her and win the
Crimson Goddess!

So I can
believe in
myself!



But now
that I've met
Maya,

I've learned
that hard
work is not
true genius...

This is
what I've
worked so
hard for!

She's
the real
prodigy!

Since I was
a child, people
called me a
prodigy, but no
one knew my
true abilities...



What
must I do
to defeat
Ayumi?

What
must
I do?



I shall bring
my Crimson
Goddess to
life!

She will be
different from
Maya's!
Better!



I won't be
defeated by
Maya!

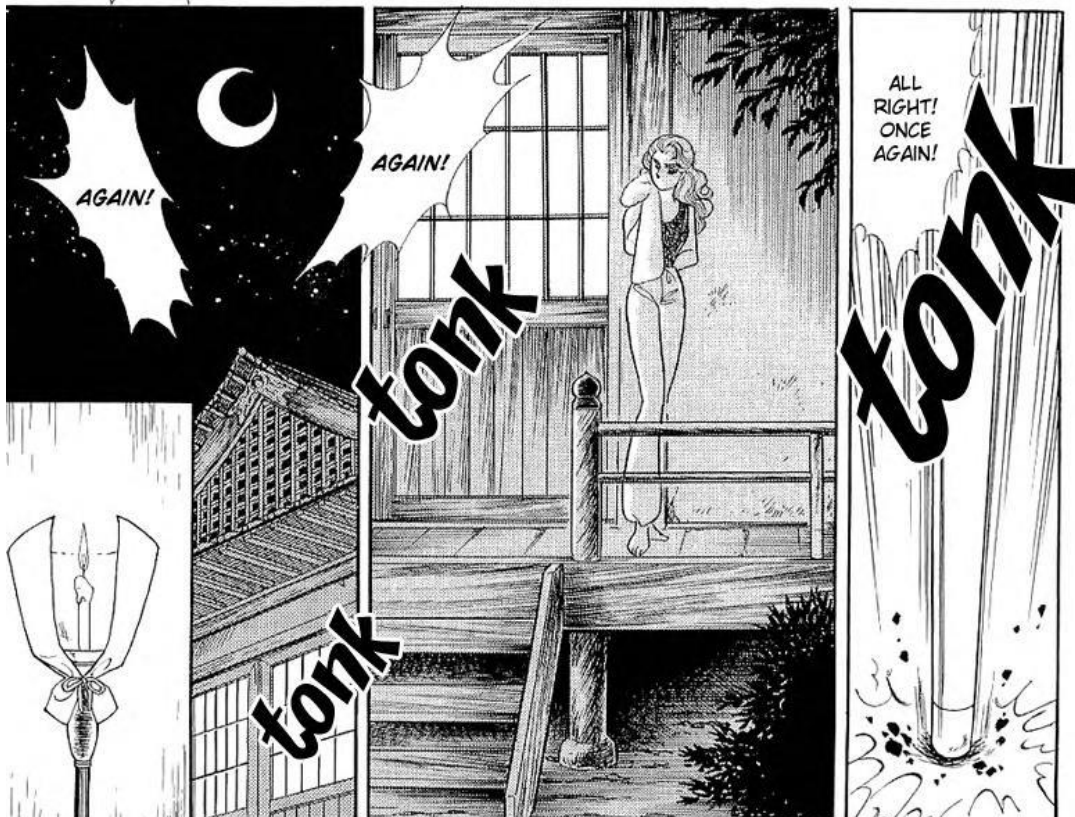
I won't be
defeated by
Ayumi!



The Crimson
Goddess is mine!









DO THEY NOT HEAR THE CRY OF THE EARTH?

DO THEY NOT HEAR THE VOICE OF THE HEAVENS?



DO THEY NOT HEAR THE VOICE OF THE HEAVENS?

DO THEY NOT HEAR THE CRY OF THE EARTH?



WHY CAN THEY NOT SEE?

THEY BRING NAUGHT BUT EVIL INTO THE WORLD.

HOW CAN THEY NOT UNDERSTAND THAT BY ALLOWING EVIL TO TAINT THEIR THOUGHTS, THEY SEAL THEIR OWN FATE?



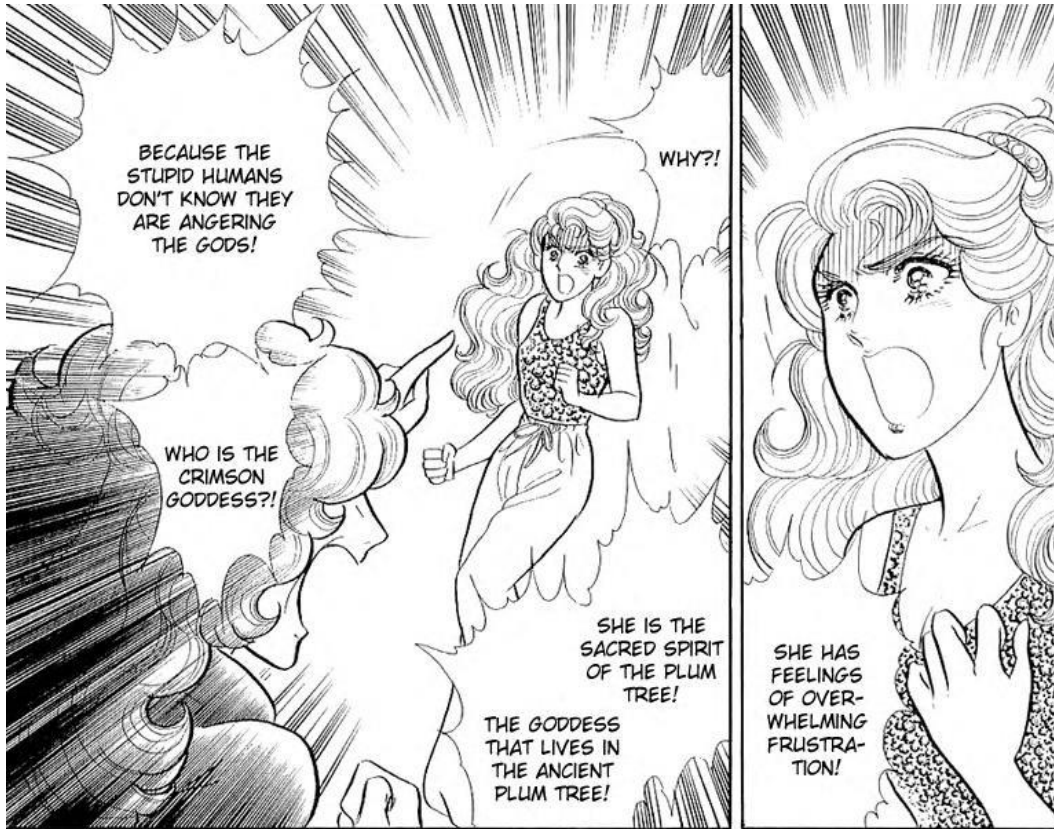
WHY CAN THEY NOT SEE?

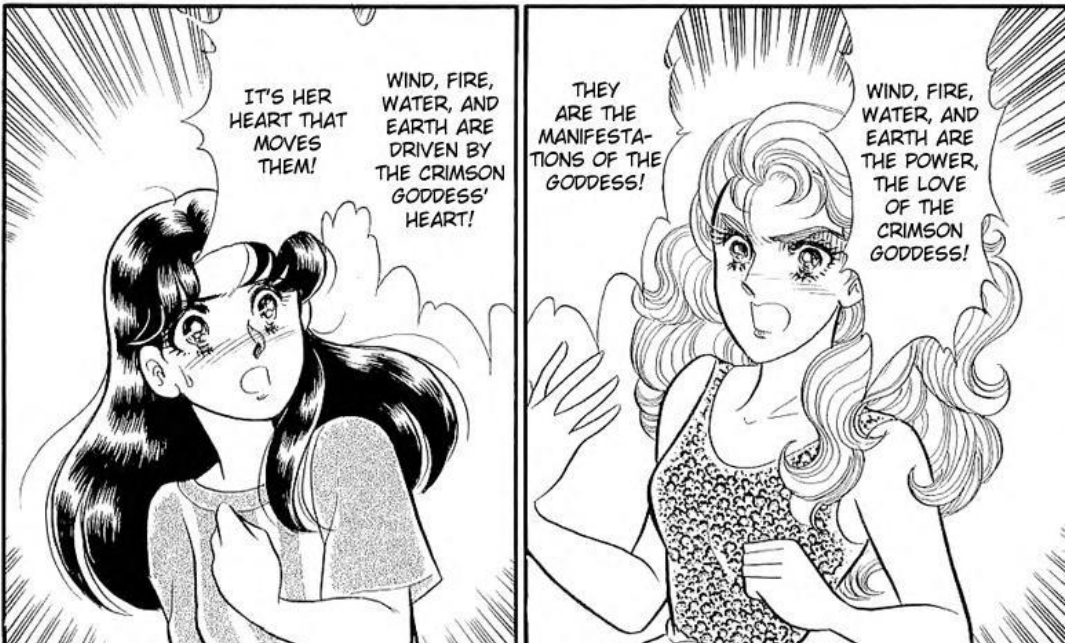
THEY BRING NAUGHT BUT EVIL INTO THE WORLD.

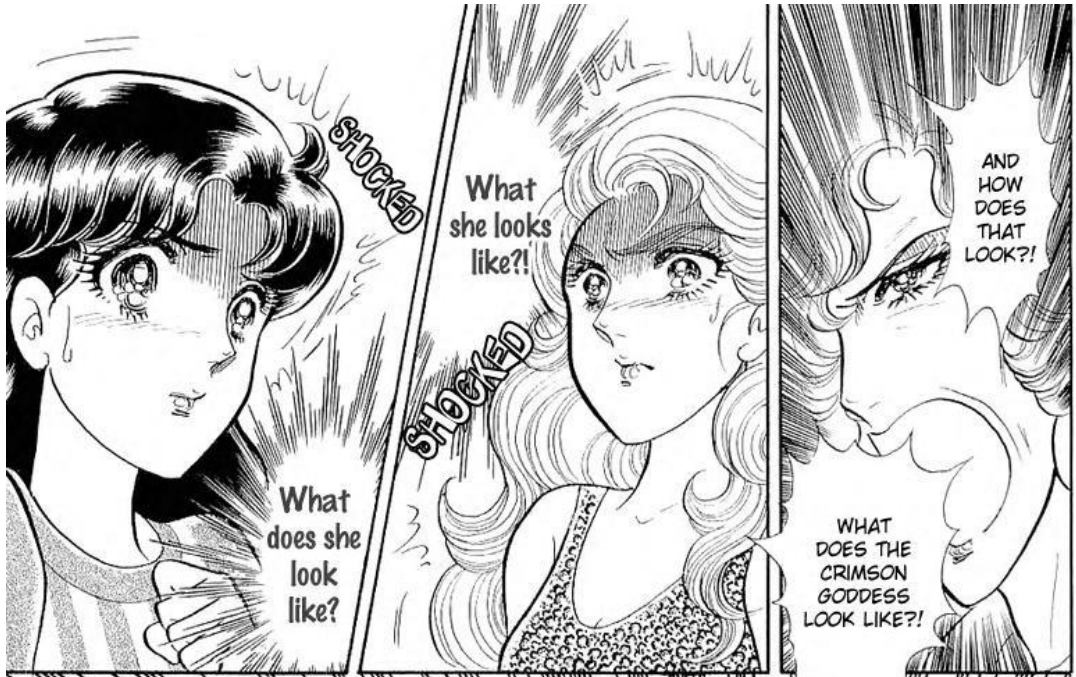
HOW CAN THEY NOT UNDERSTAND THAT BY ALLOWING EVIL TO TAINT THEIR THOUGHTS, THEY SEAL THEIR OWN FATE?



WHAT IS THE CRIMSON GODDESS FEELING?!







What does she look like?

What she looks like?!

AND HOW DOES THAT LOOK?!

WHAT DOES THE CRIMSON GODDESS LOOK LIKE?!

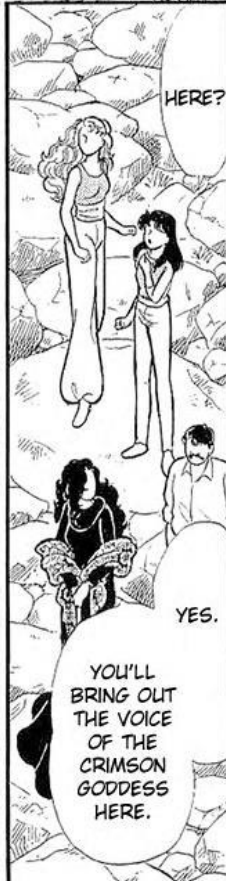


COME ON!

YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO EXPRESS IT, GIRLS!

Chapter 214







HEAR THE VOICE OF THE GODDESS IN THIS VALLEY.

SHOUT YOUR LINES LIKE THEY REALLY ARE THE WORDS OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS. DON'T HOLD BACK...

WHEN YOU EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS... YOU USE YOUR WORDS.

THIS VALLEY ECHOES WITH THE SOUND OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS'S HEART.



RED WHIRLPOOL AND THE WHITE WHIRLPOOL... POOL... POOL...

TWO EDDIES THAT ARE OPPOSING EACH OTHER EACH OTHER OTHER...



THE RED WHIRLPOOL AND THE WHITE WHIRLPOOL...

I SEE TWO EDDIES OPPOSING EACH OTHER.



THAT'S THE SOUND OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS'S HEART?

THEIR OWN FATE
OOOWN FATE
FATE



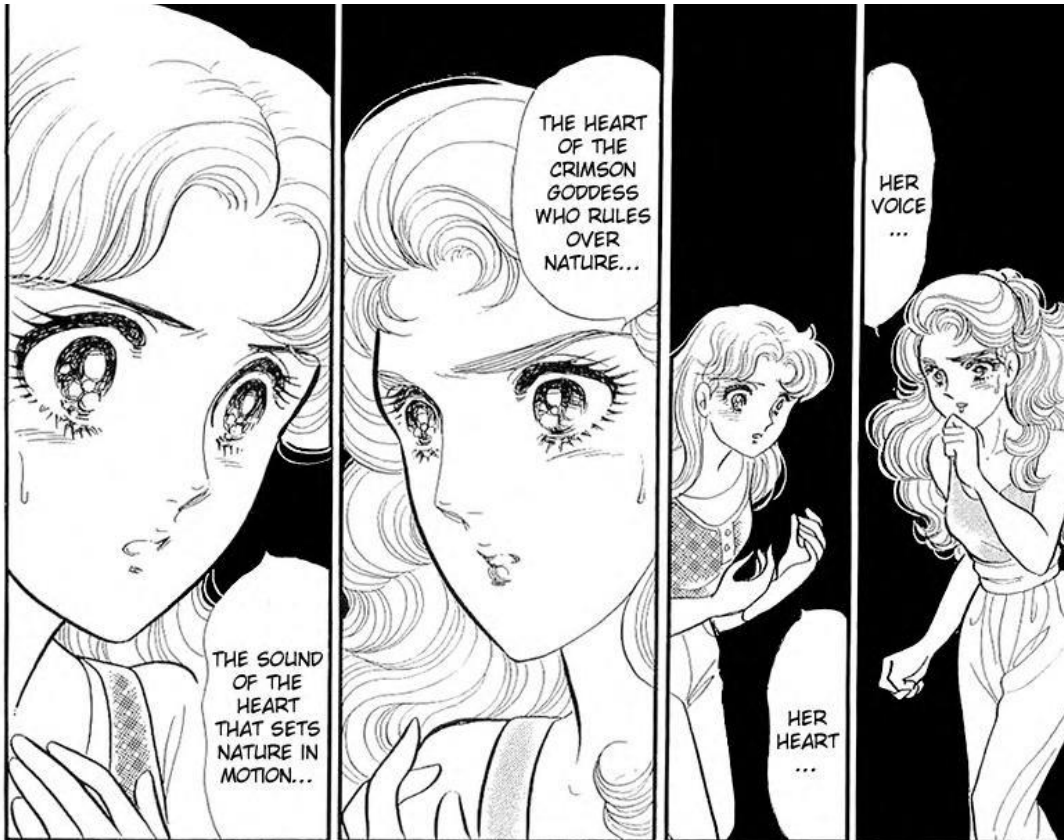
HOW CAN THEY NOT UNDERSTAND THAT BY ALLOWING EVIL TO TAINT THEIR THOUGHTS, THEY SEAL THEIR OWN FATE?

WHY CAN THEY NOT SEE? THEY BRING NAUGHT BUT EVIL INTO THE WORLD.



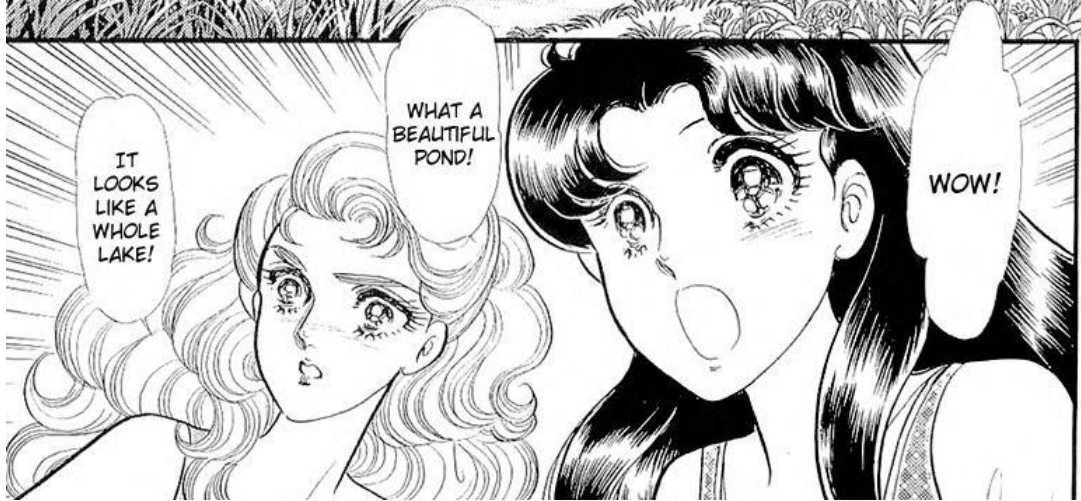
NO, THAT'S JUST MY VOICE! THE VOICE OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS?

THAT'S NOT THE VOICE OF A GODDESS...





LET'S CONTINUE ELSEWHERE! FOLLOW ME.



IT LOOKS LIKE A WHOLE LAKE!

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL POND!

WOW!



INTO THE LAKE?



IT IS AS YOU SAID.

THIS IS CALLED MIRROR LAKE.

NOW SHOW ME THE APPEARANCE OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

LOOK INTO THE LAKE.

THE MIRROR OF THE HEART THAT SHOWS EVERYTHING...



WHAT DID YOU SEE?
THE FACE OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS?



AH!



YES...



IF YOU DIDN'T SEE HER, THAT MEANS SHE IS NOT HERE!

STRANGE! THE LAKE SHOULD HAVE SHOWN YOU THE CRIMSON GODDESS!

KEEP LOOKING,

UNTIL YOU SEE THE GODDESS.



WHAT, THEN?

NO...?

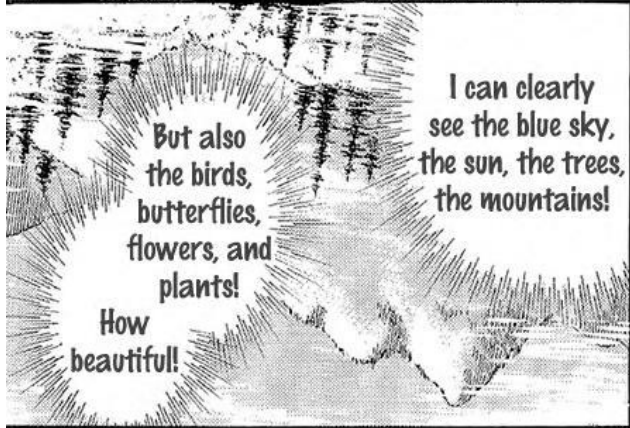
MYSELF...



Incredible!
It's so clear!

What do I
have to do
to make it
reflect the
image of the
Goddess?

It really
does look
like a
mirror!
What?

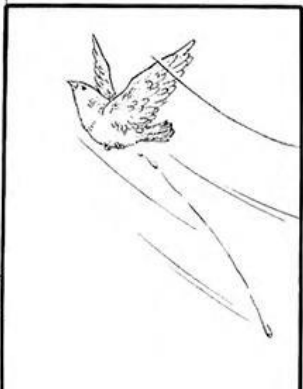


But also
the birds,
butterflies,
flowers, and
plants!
How
beautiful!

I can clearly
see the blue sky,
the sun, the trees,
the mountains!



Plink



Not the
Crimson
Goddess!

The face
looking back
at me from
the surface of
the water is...

Ayumi
Himekawa...

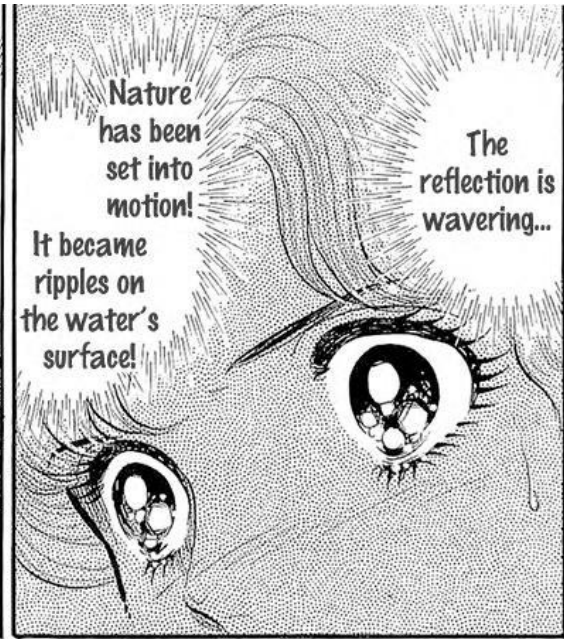
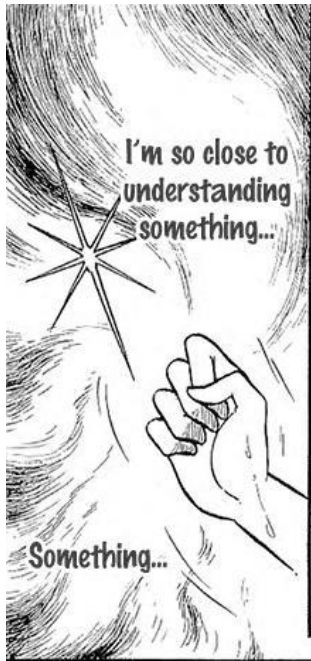
In this huge
mirror, I can't
pretend to be
someone else...

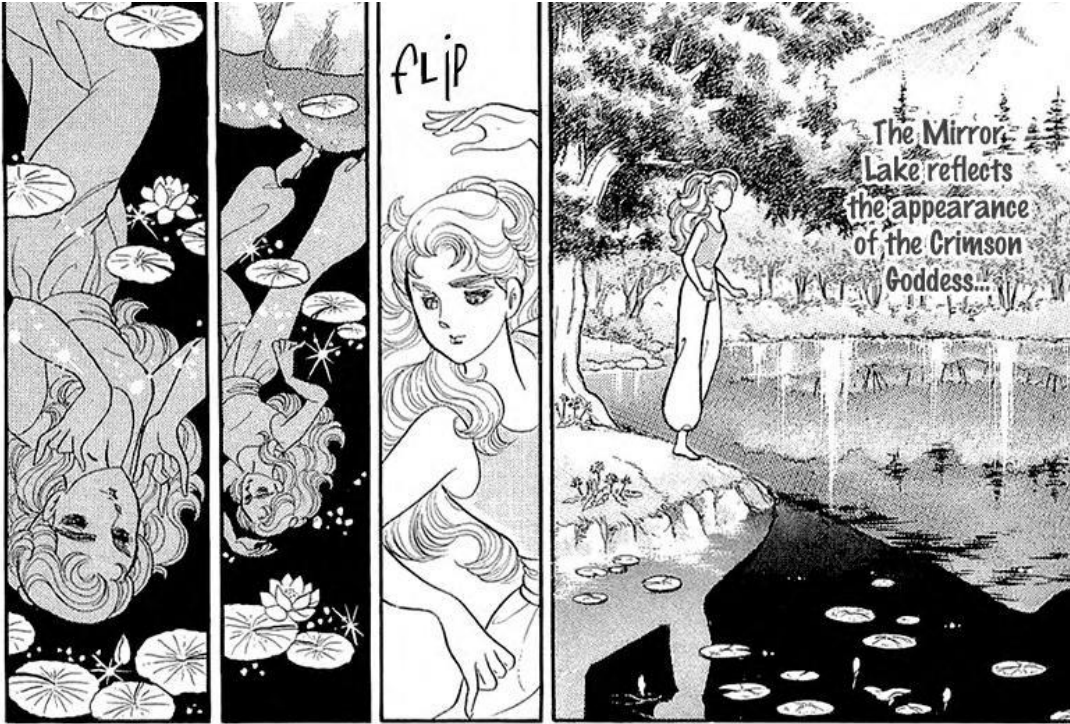
The
look and
expression
aren't
those of a
goddess...



It's all
waving...
The mountain
scenery...







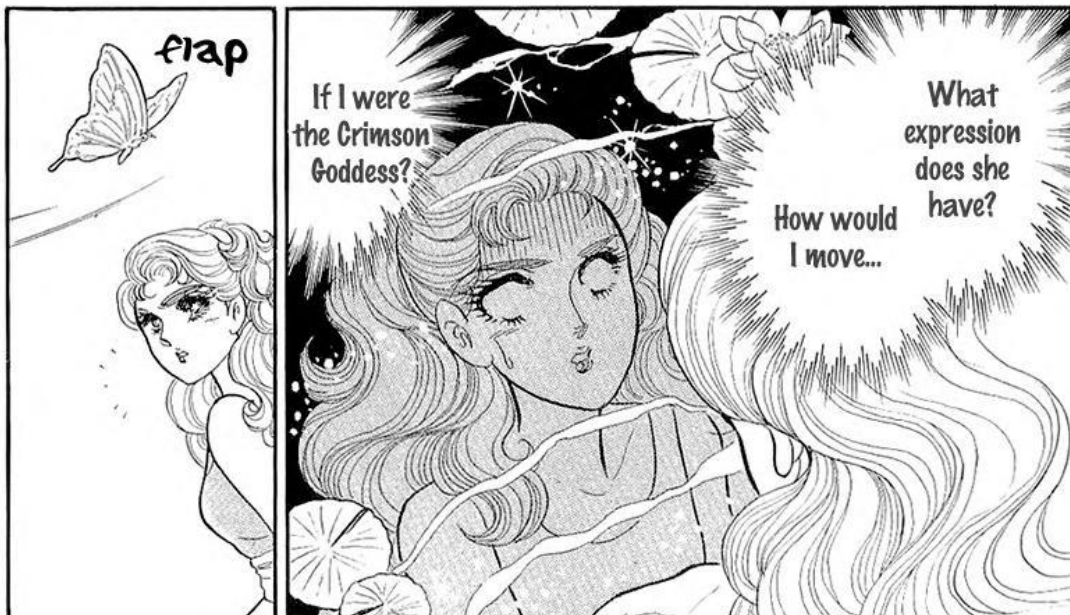
flip

The Mirror Lake reflects the appearance of the Crimson Goddess...



Even if I change positions, that doesn't make me the Crimson Goddess. I'm still just Ayumi Himekawa.

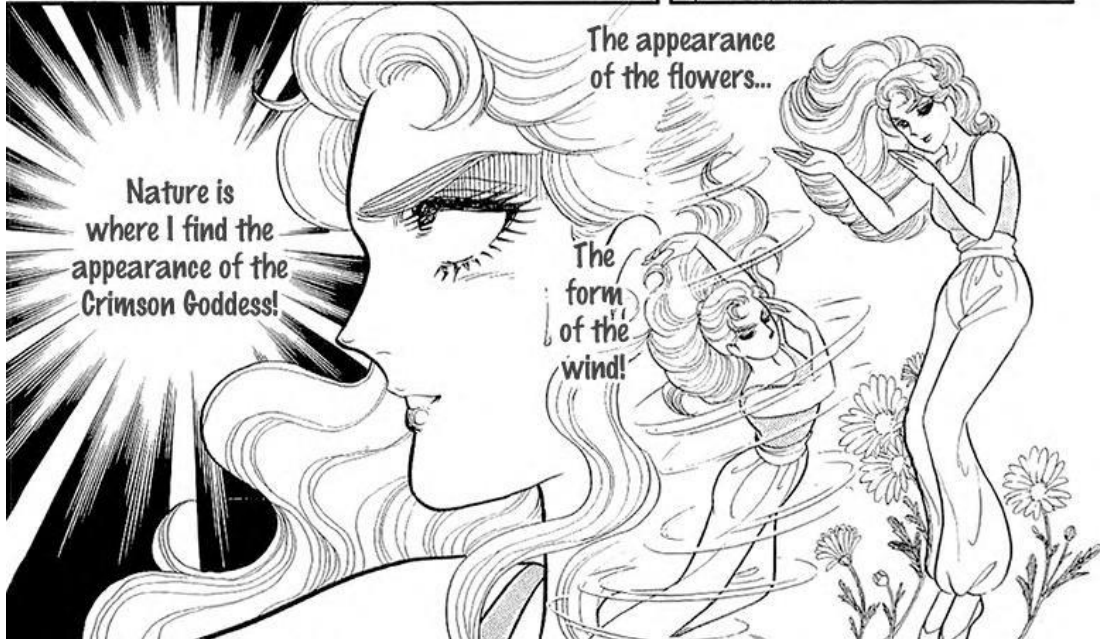
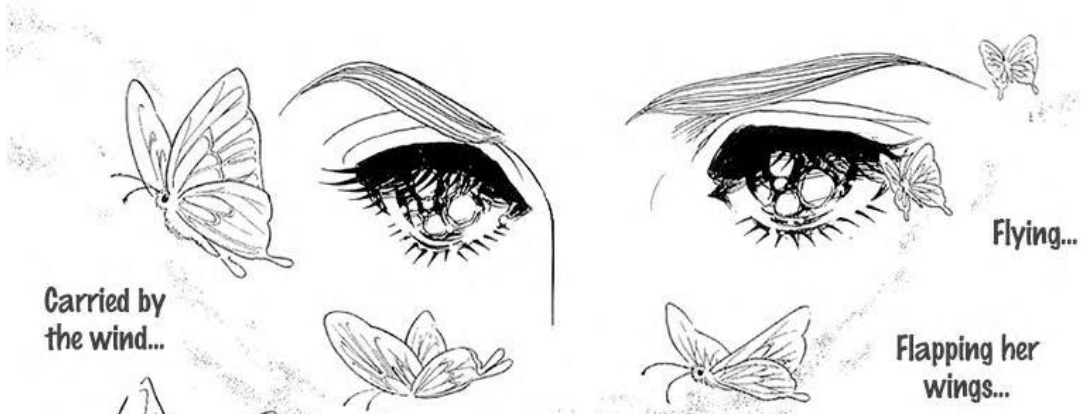
No!

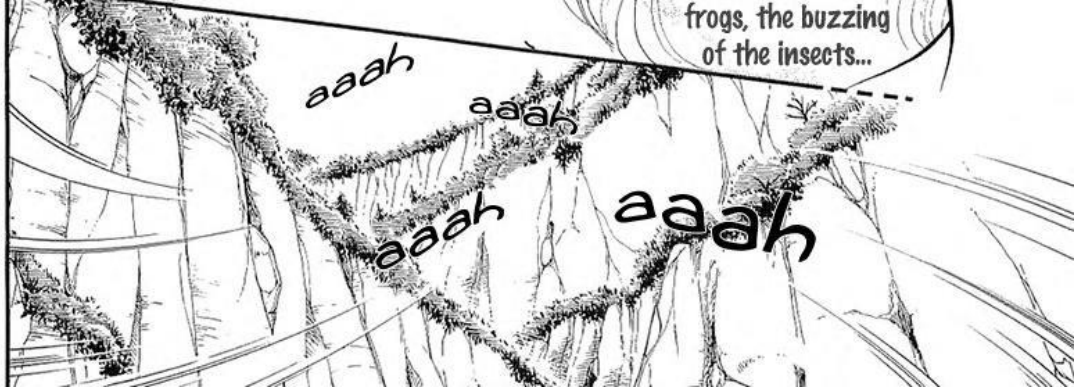
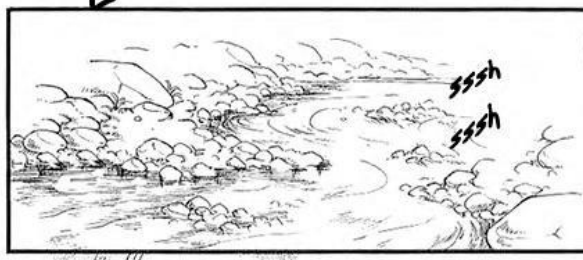
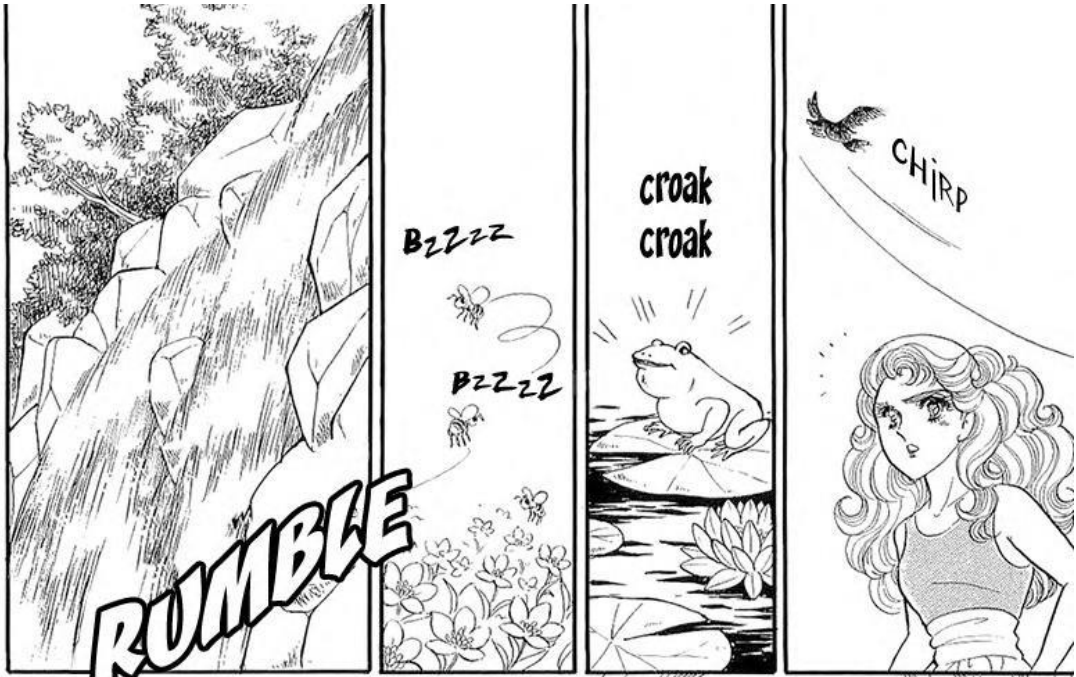


flap

If I were the Crimson Goddess?

What expression does she have? How would I move...





The chirping of the birds, the croaking of the frogs, the buzzing of the insects...



Aaaaaah
Aaaaaaah

The crisp
chatter of
the birds...



WHO...

CALLS
FOR ME?!



The low
croaks of
the frogs...

Dooh



The drone
of the insects,
making the air
tremble...



The soft
murmurs of
the flowing
water...

oooooh

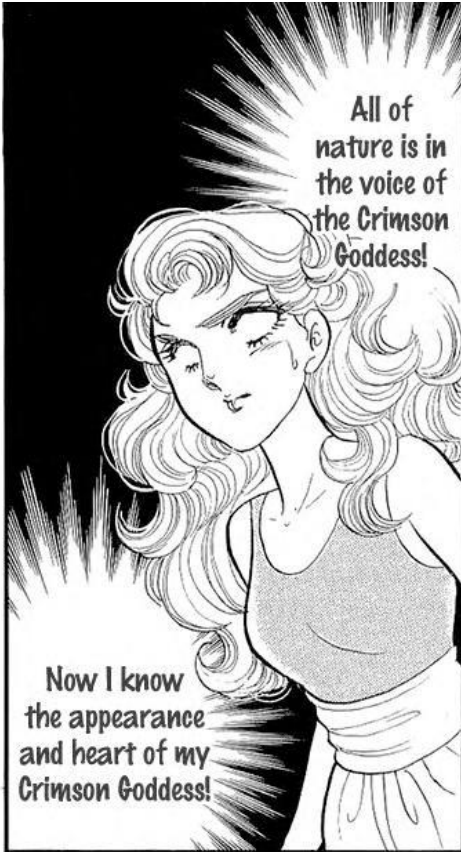


The roar
of the mighty
waterfall...

oooooh



grip



All of nature is in the voice of the Crimson Goddess!

Now I know the appearance and heart of my Crimson Goddess!



who calls for me

me for me for me



HEY, BRO, DID YOU HEAR THAT SCARY VOICE?

MAYBE I WAS JUST HEARING THINGS.

IT CAME FROM THAT VALLEY.



calls for meeee

for mee

for me

A GHOST!

me

AAH!

THE SPIRIT OF THE VALLEY!

LET'S RUN FOR IT!

ARGH!

WHOOOOO

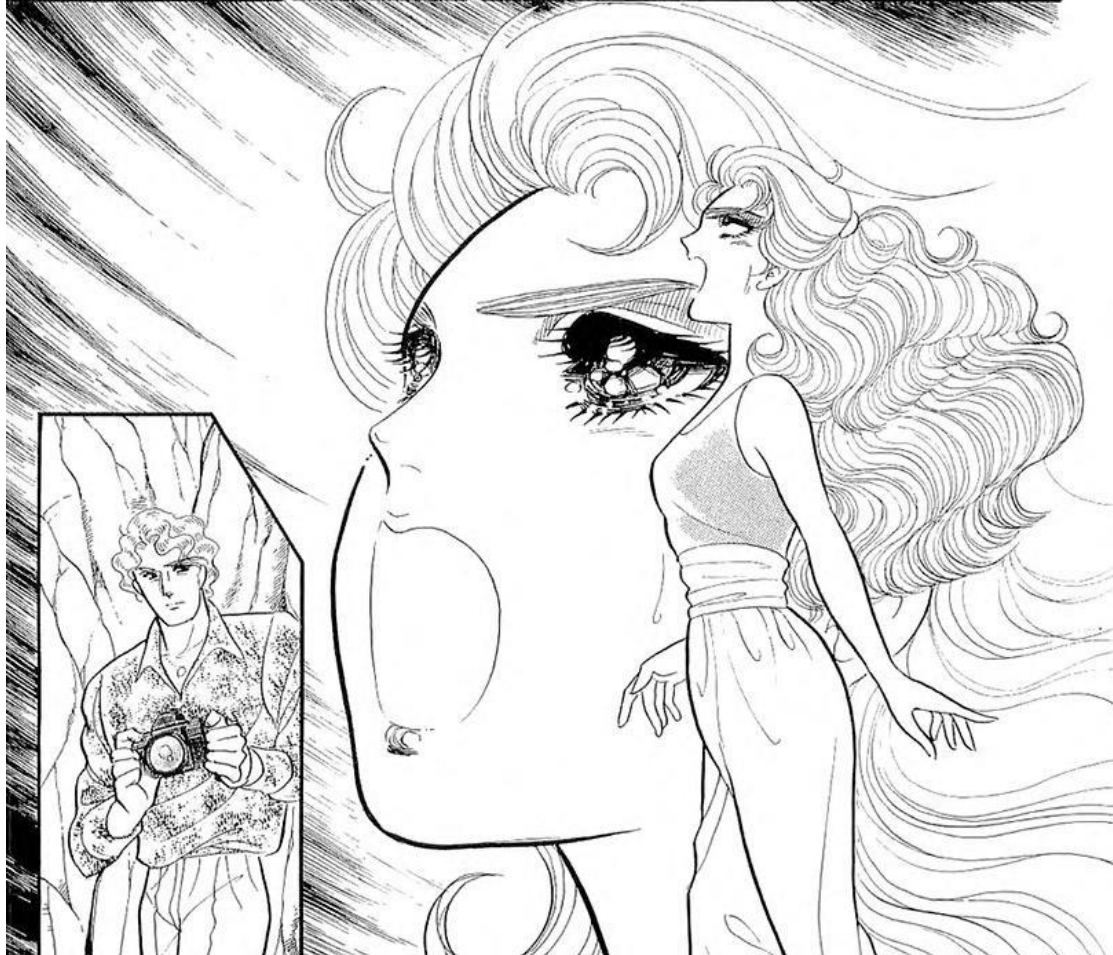


I HEARD IT TOO.

WHAT COULD IT HAVE BEEN?

splash

splash





The scene
wavers...
The world
wavers...

plink

SWISH

It becomes
ripples on the
surface...



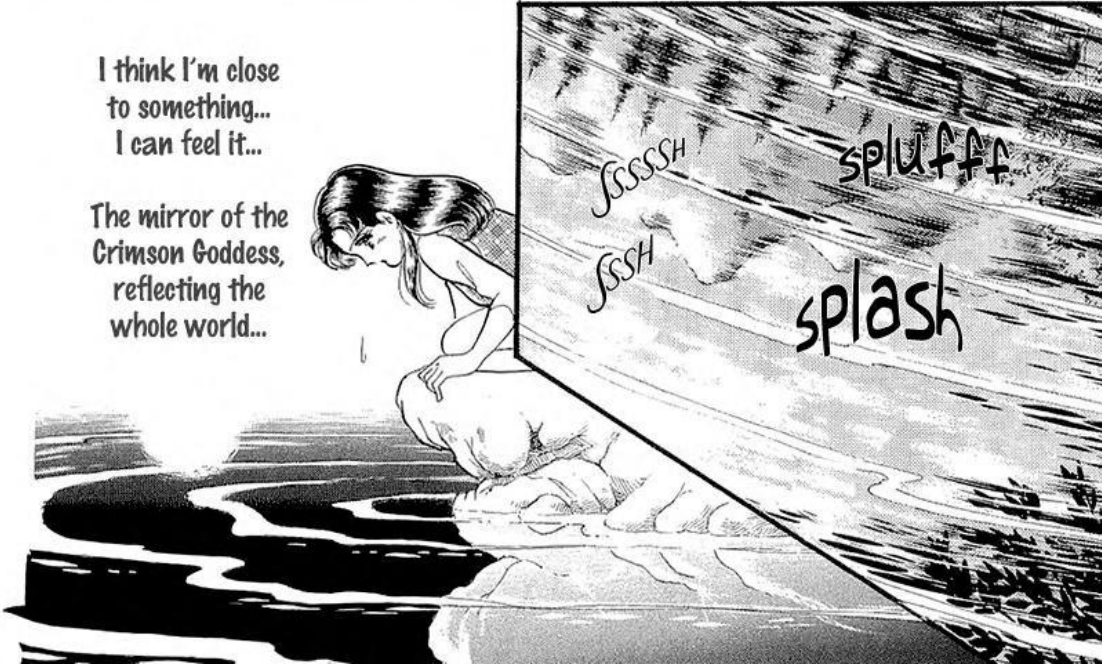
SWISH

Throwing
her heart!



The heart of
the Crimson
Goddess...

A stone.



I think I'm close
to something...
I can feel it...

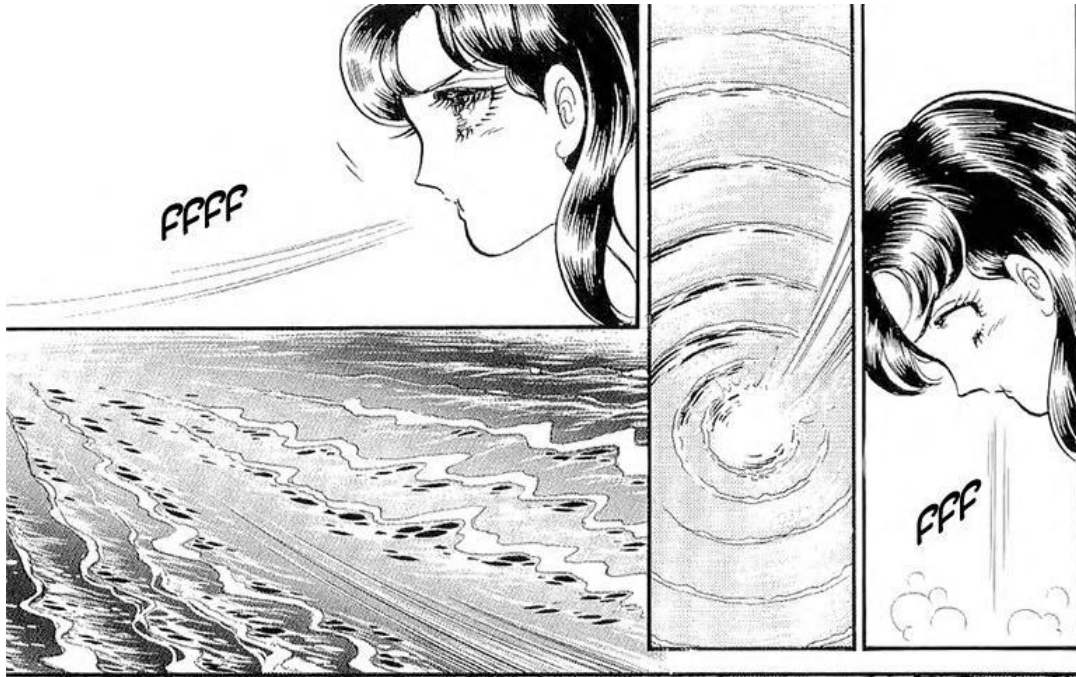
The mirror of the
Crimson Goddess,
reflecting the
whole world...

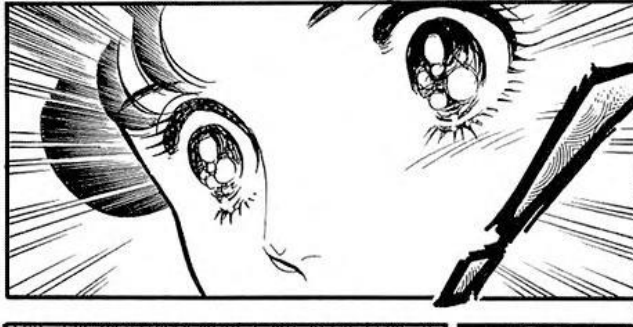
JSSSSH

JSSH

SPLUFFF

splash







The words of
the Crimson
Goddess change
the world!

They set it
into motion!

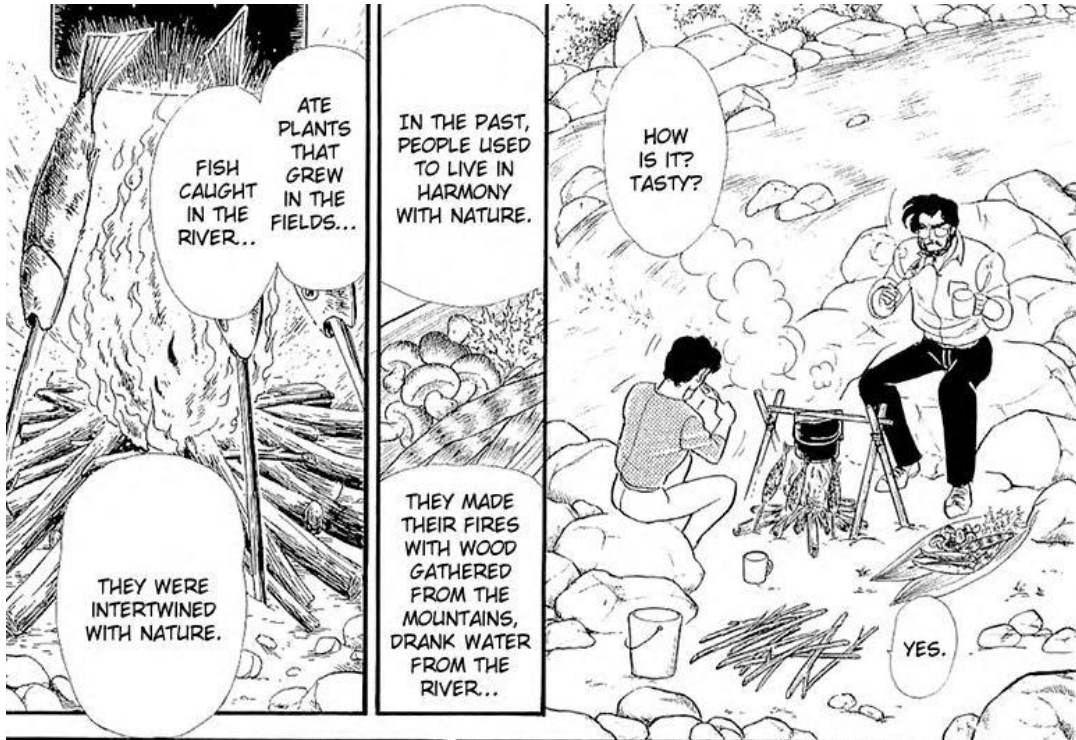
It moves...
The water
moves... The
words set it
into motion!



The sound of
the heart...

of the
Crimson
Goddess!









AYUMI.

huff

huff

R...
RIGHT
AWAY!

WATER...
PLEASE...



2/1/72



MAYA!



WRR

I'M
BACK.



huff

WRR

thud



AND...
THE BATH?
DINNER?

NOT
NOW.

I'LL HAVE A
BATH LATER,
THANK YOU...









chatter
chatter

YES.

GREAT! SOON THE BRIDGE WILL BE FIXED, RIGHT, TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI?

THANK YOU, EVERYONE.

WE DON'T KNOW HOW USEFUL WE'LL BE, BUT WE'LL DO OUR BEST.

WE ARE HONORED TO BE ABLE TO HELP YOU TOMORROW WITH THE STAGING OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS.



COME ON! PULL THAT ROPE!

ONE, TWO, THREE ...



All of nature reflected in her.

The wind's form... The flower's shape...

Therein lies her face!



The appearance of the Crimson Goddess!



SPLASH

NO!

THIS IS NOT HER FACE!

THIS IS NOT THE CRIMSON GODDESS!



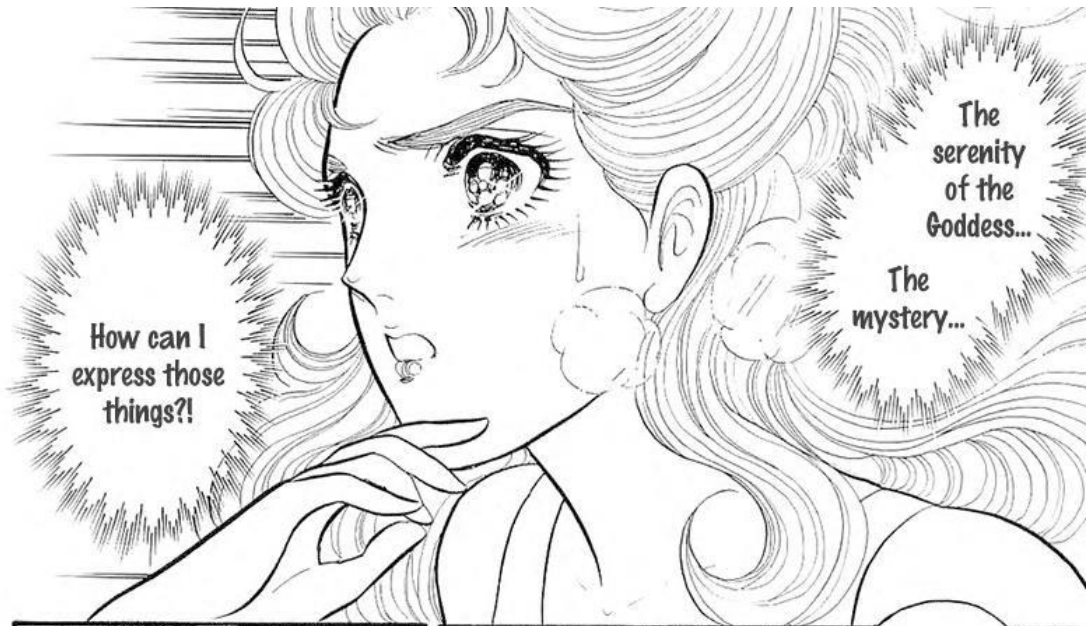
IT SEEMS LIKE A DREAM...

TO BE ABLE TO SEE TSUKIKAGE CHIGUSA IN THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

I CAN HARDLY WAIT.

chatter

chatter



How can I express those things?!

The serenity of the Goddess...

The mystery...



AND THEIR CONFLICT DESTROYS EVERYTHING...

THEY STIR AND STIR, ONE AGAINST THE OTHER,



I SEE TWO EDDIES OPPOSING EACH OTHER.

RUMBLE

THE RED WHIRLPOOL AND THE WHITE WHIRLPOOL, LIKE TWO SPINNING POOLS, TOPS THAT WREAK HAVOC UPON THE WORLD.

THEIR DANCE IS EVER MORE TERRIFYING.

RUMBLE



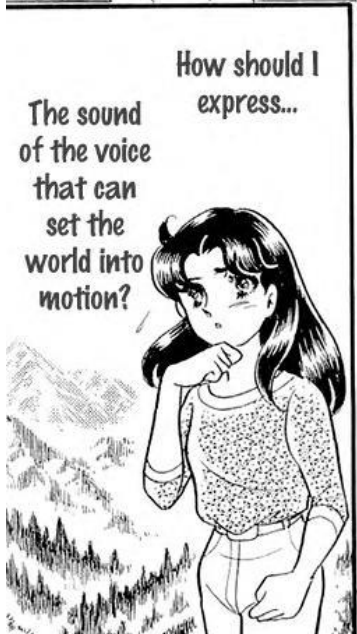
THE SPIRITS OF THE GODS ARE AGITATED. FROM THE TWO WHIRLPOOLS,



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



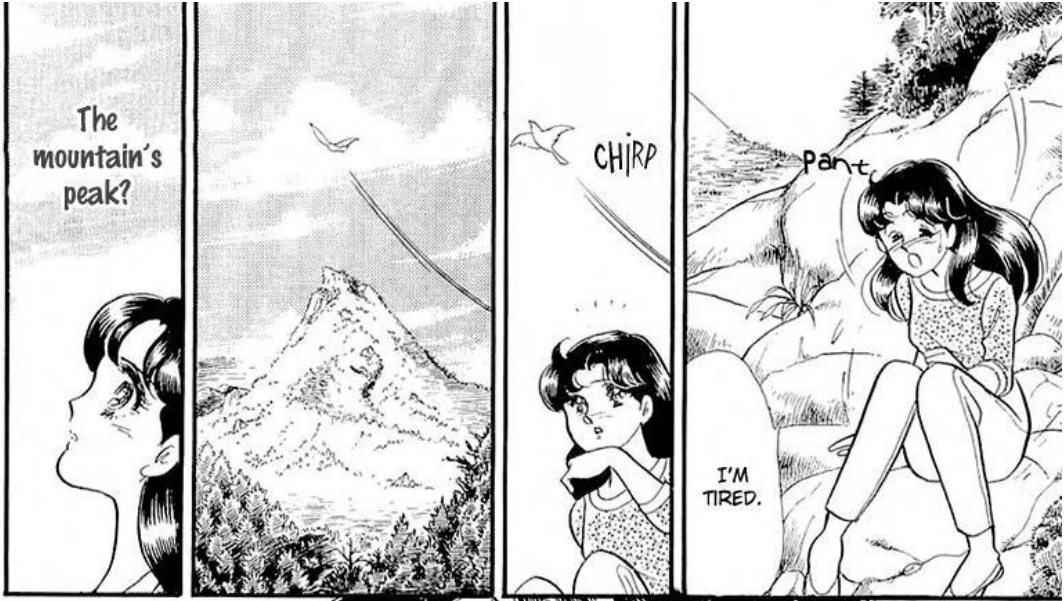
THE FLAME OF WAR EMERGES, SPREADING HATRED AND SUFFERING.



How should I express...
The sound of the voice that can set the world into motion?



Do they not hear the voice of the heavens heavens eavers...
Do they not hear the cry of the earth earth earth...



How would the mountains look from the sky?



Chapter 215





AND NOW
IT'S RAINING,
SO I
CAN'T EVEN
REHEARSE!

I CAN'T
CATCH UP
WITH HER!

EVEN
IF IT'S
JUST A
PASSING
RAIN...



AH!

ssssh



STAYING
STILL LIKE
THIS, I
CAN'T HELP
FEELING
RESTLESS
...

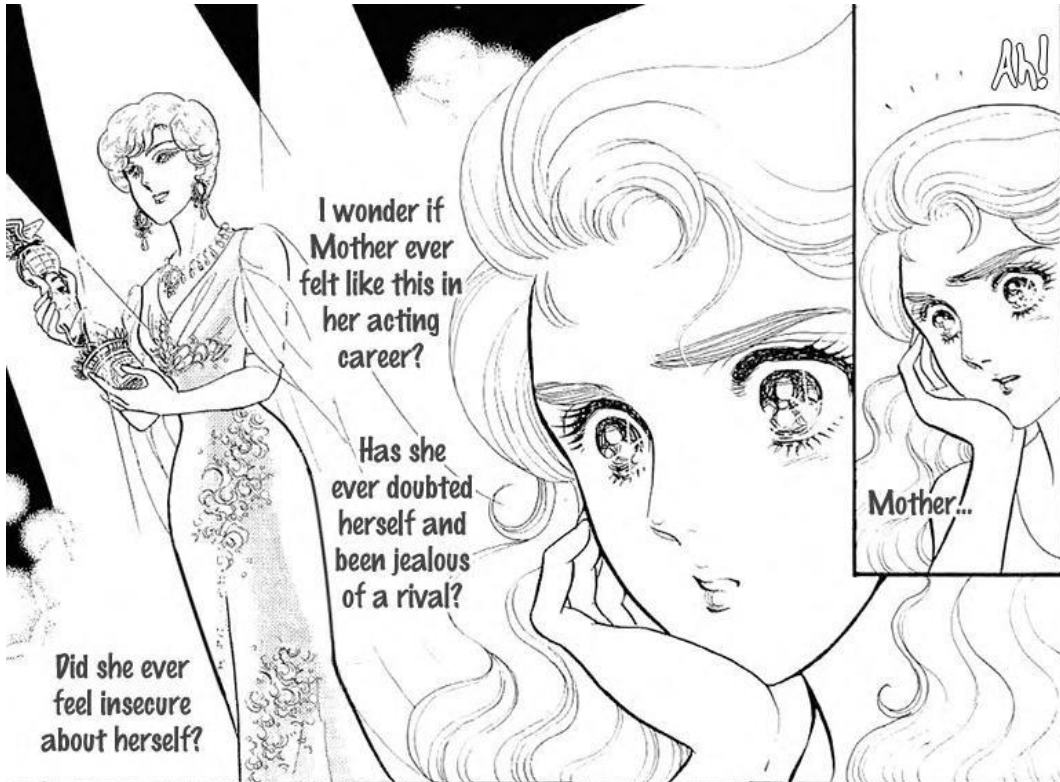
MAYA...

WHO KNOWS
WHAT SHE'S
REHEARSING
NOW?



sssh

WHO
KNOWS
WHEN
IT WILL
STOP?



I wonder if Mother ever felt like this in her acting career?

Has she ever doubted herself and been jealous of a rival?

Did she ever feel insecure about herself?

Ah!

Mother...



How I wish you were at my side right now...

Father...



Mother is lucky...

She can get advice from Father.



With Maya as my rival... For the first time, I feel things like self-doubt!



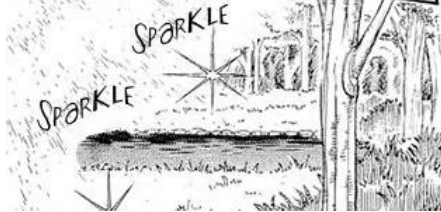


This is great!



HM?

FINALLY I CAN GO BACK TO REHEARSING ...



SPARKLE

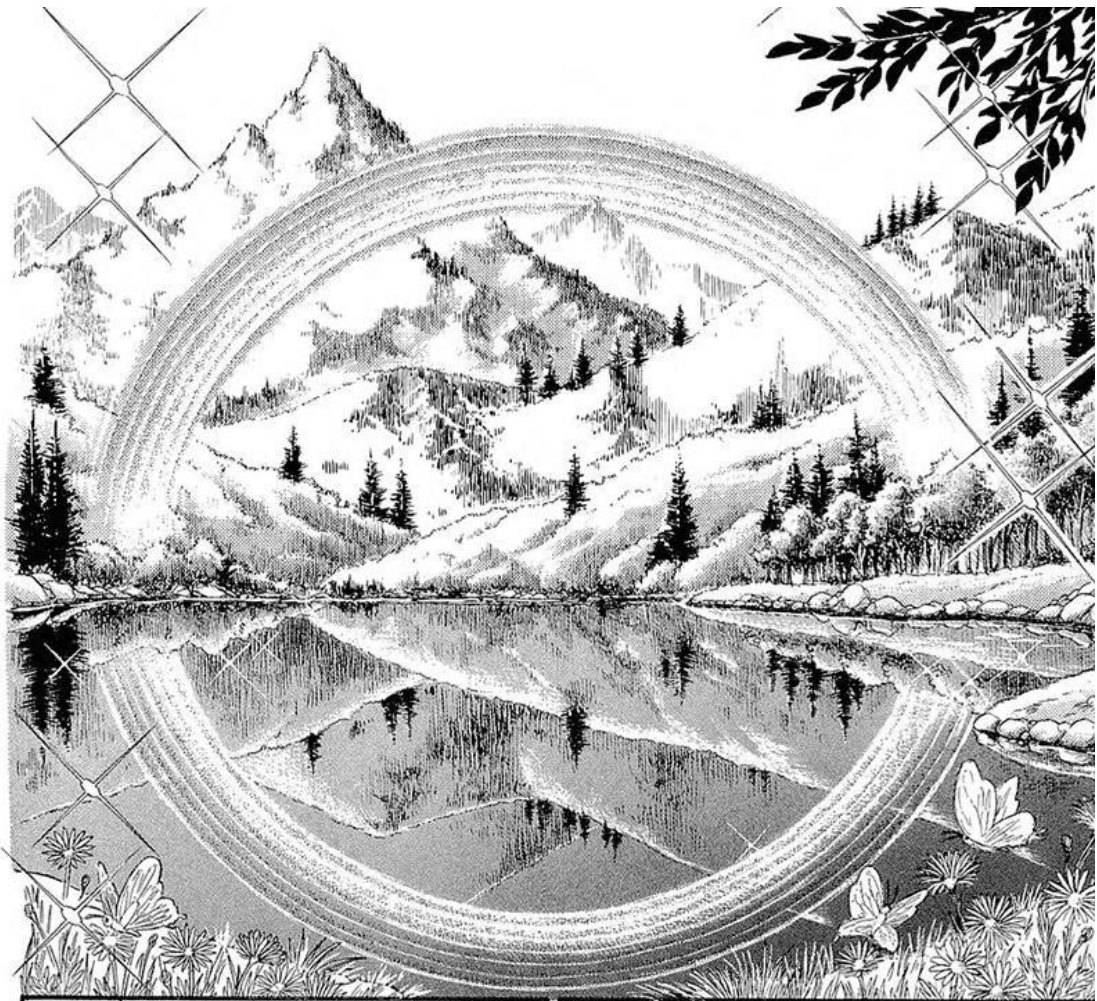
SPARKLE

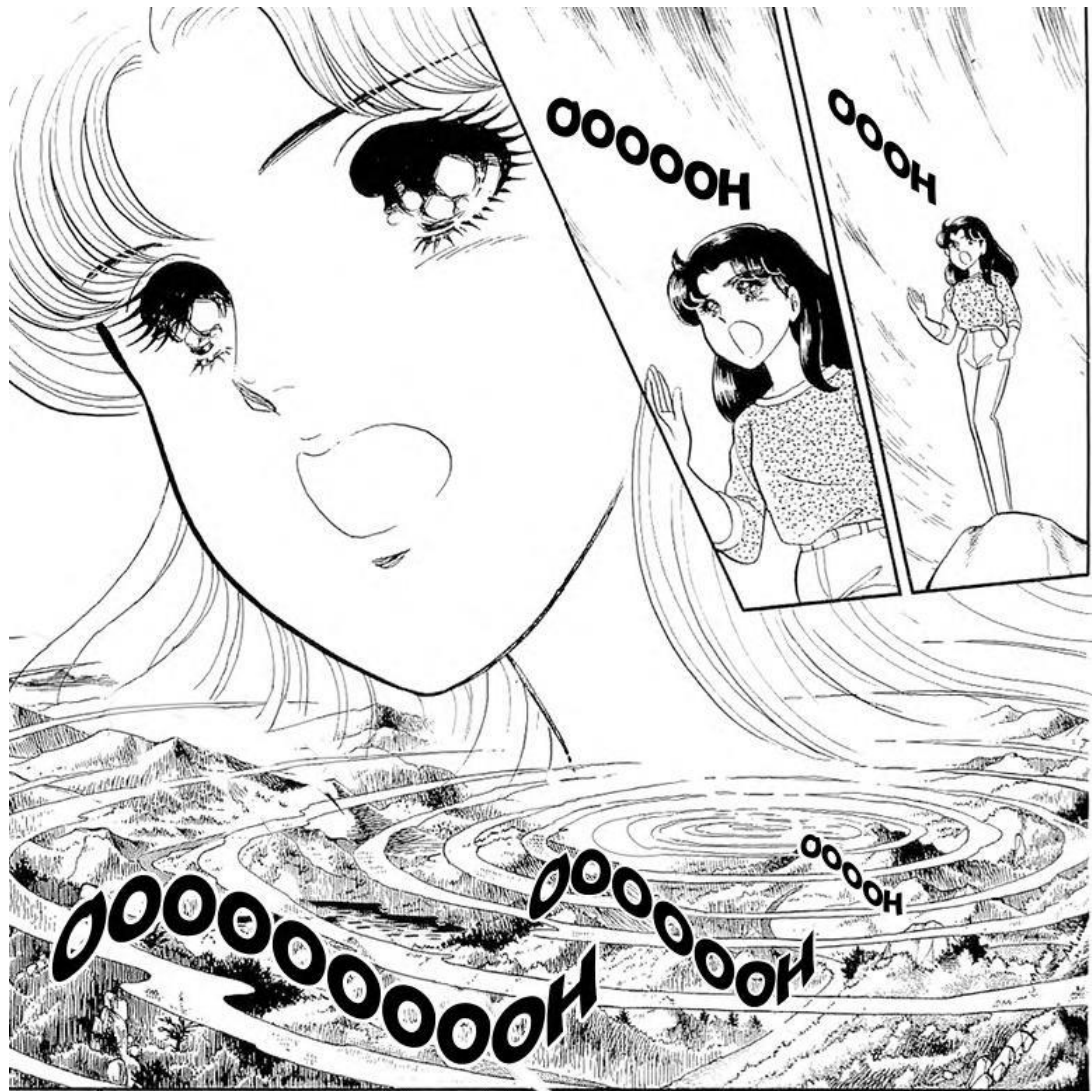


WHEW!
THE RAIN ENDED!



chirp







DO THEY NOT HEAR THE VOICE OF THE HEAVENS?

DO THEY NOT HEAR THE CRY OF THE EARTH?

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

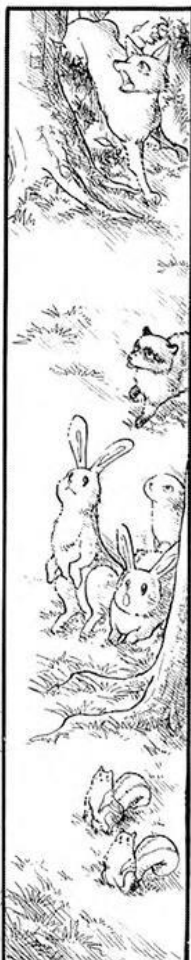
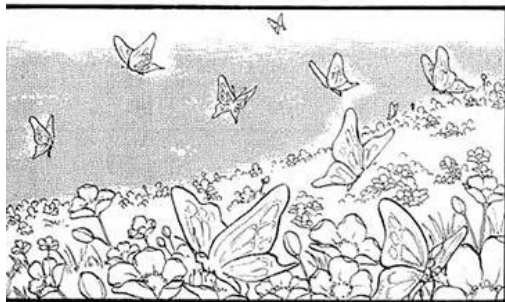
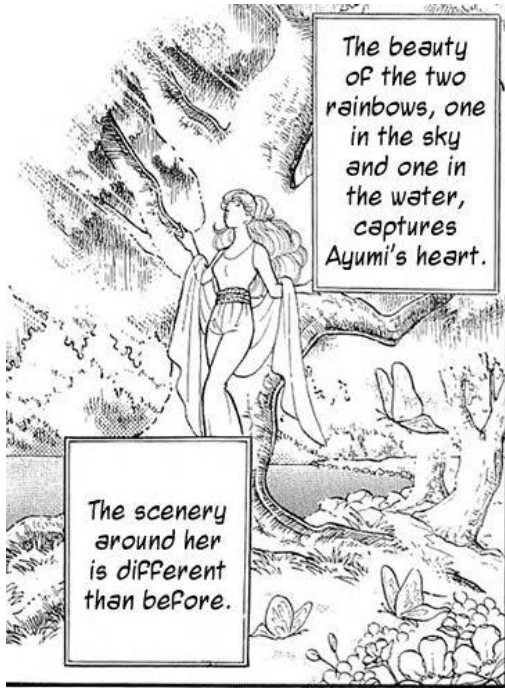


WHY DO HUMANS FIGHT ONE ANOTHER?

WHY DO THEY SPILL BLOOD AND WREAK DESTRUCTION?

I DO NOT UNDERSTAND.







Yes...

I am the plants...

The fresh air...

The butterflies...

The flowers...

The Crimson Goddess seems so unimportant...

I don't care about defeating Maya anymore...

It's wonderful, to be able to lose myself like this in nature's splendor...

Ah... How blissful it would be to feel like this always...



The pure air is refreshing me from the inside out...

I feel so at peace...

What a sense of tranquility...



And also...

flap

The entire forest...



I am the rainbow, the sunlight...





I've found her!
My Crimson
Goddess!



A GODDESS...
THERE'S A
GODDESS...



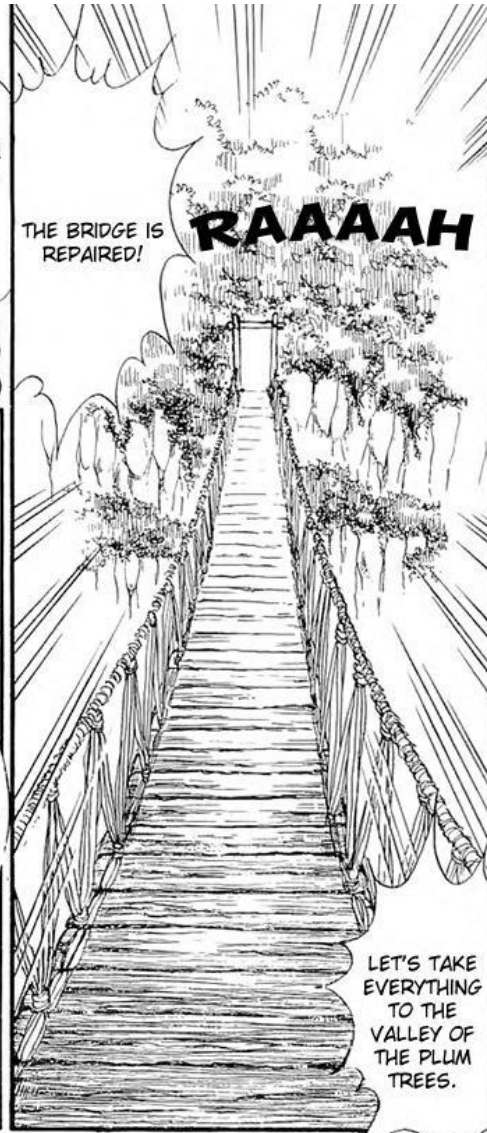
Hmf...



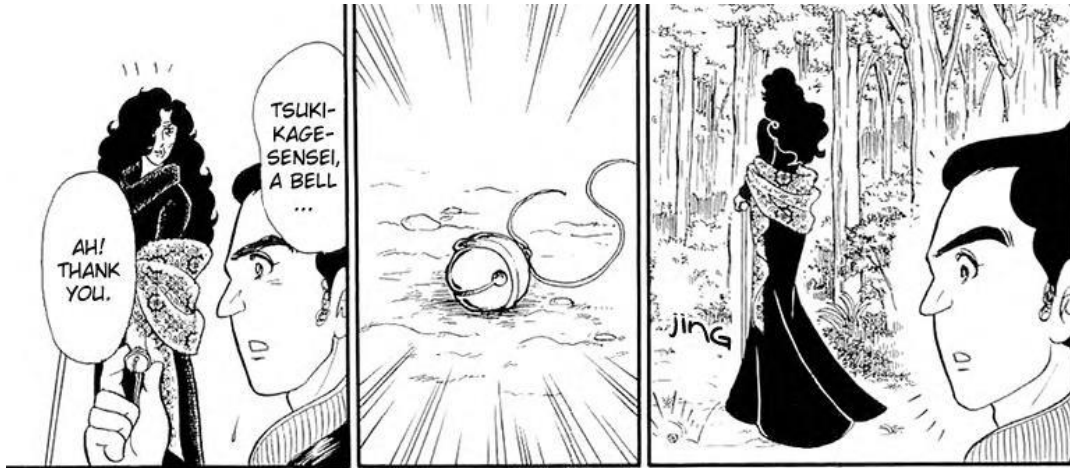
Yes...
This feeling...



This feeling...!

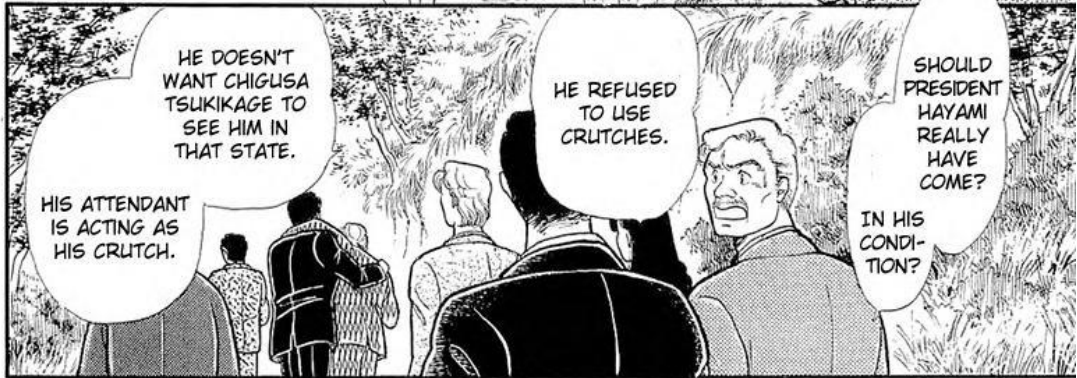




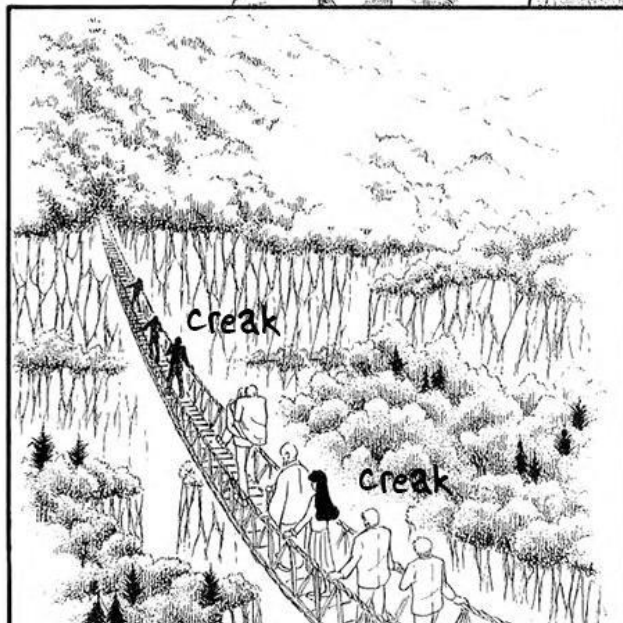
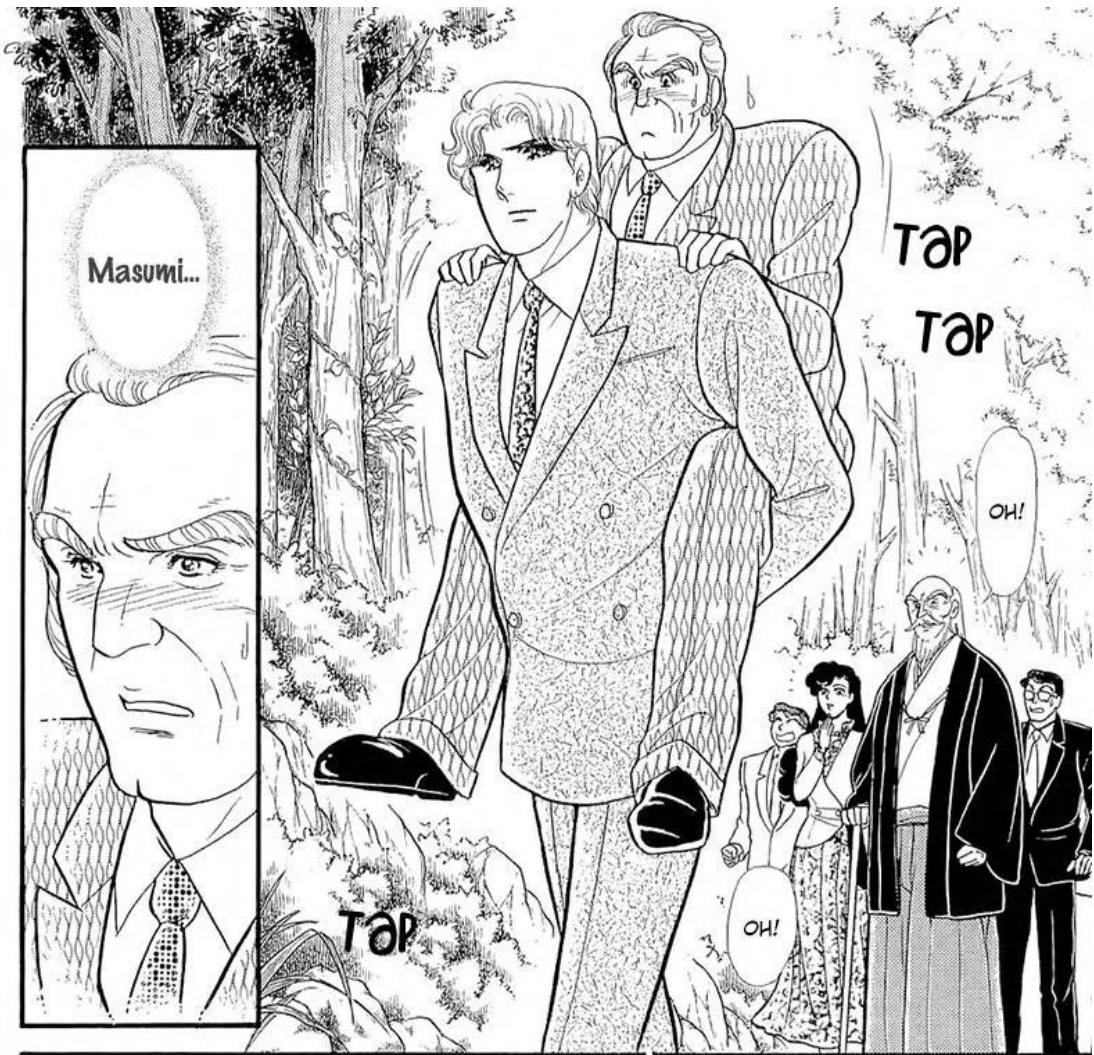














SO THIS IS THE FAMED VALLEY OF THE PLUM TREES!
WHAT A WONDERFUL PLACE!

oooooooooh



PLEASE TAKE YOUR SEATS.

OOH!
YOU'VE ARRANGED QUITE A TASTEFUL SETTING.



OOH! THAT LOOKS LIKE A STAGE...

IT'S NOT MUCH...

chatter

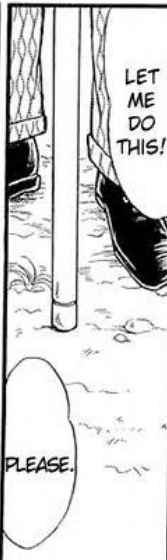
chatter



Father...

I UNDERSTAND.

PLEASE.



LET ME DO THIS!



I'LL WALK THE REST OF THE WAY.

YOU GO ON.

BUT ...!



LET ME DOWN, MASUMI. HERE IS FINE.

SURE.

chatter

chatter



SUGIMOTO,
WALK ME
TO THAT
ROCK.

AS YOU
WISH.



WELCOME,
LADIES AND
GENTLEMEN.

YOU ARE
ABOUT TO WITNESS
A PERFORMANCE
OF THE CRIMSON
GODDESS. THANK
YOU FOR COMING
TO THE VALLEY OF
THE PLUM TREES.

I AM
CHIGUSA
TSUKIKAGE.



chatter
chatter



THE CRIMSON GODDESS HAS ENDURED ONLY IN THE MEMORIES OF THOSE WHO SAW IT BEFORE...

SINCE I HAVE LONG SINCE LEFT THE STAGE,

MANY YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE WRITER, ICHIREN OZAKI, LEFT THIS WORLD... LEAVING ME THE RIGHTS TO THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

GRADUALLY DISAPPEARING, LIKE A MIRAGE.



BUT FOR NOW, I'D LIKE YOU TO SEE WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED IN THESE MOUNTAINS.

IT IS STILL TOO SOON TO TELL WHO WILL PLAY THE CRIMSON GODDESS IN TOKYO,



TODAY, THANKS TO THESE TWO TALENTED ACTRESSES, AYUMI HIMEKAWA AND MAYA KITAJIMA,

I WANT TO BRING THE CRIMSON GODDESS BACK TO LIFE.



NOW WE SHALL BEGIN WITH AYUMI HIMEKAWA'S CRIMSON GODDESS.

MAYA KITAJIMA WILL FOLLOW.



THIS IS A NATURAL STAGE.

THERE ARE NO OTHER ACTORS.

ONLY ME. PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR THIS.



AFTER WHICH, IF MY MEMORY STILL SERVES ME...

I WILL PERFORM THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

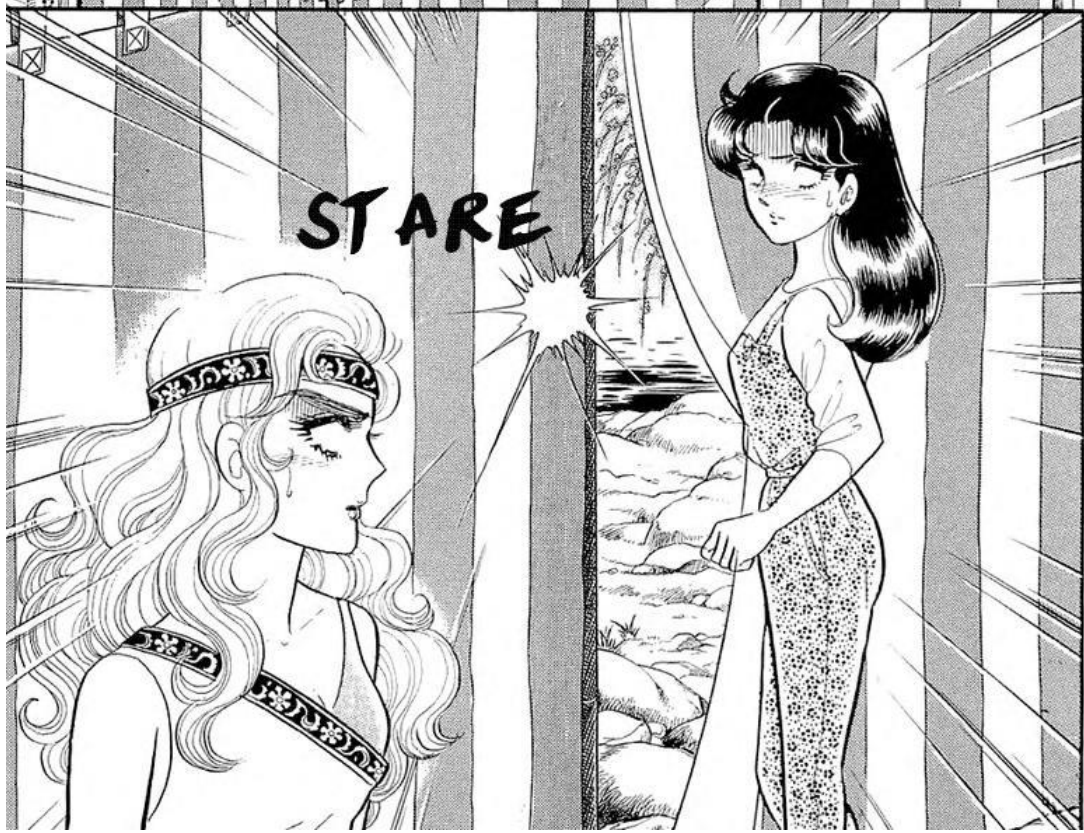


clap
clap

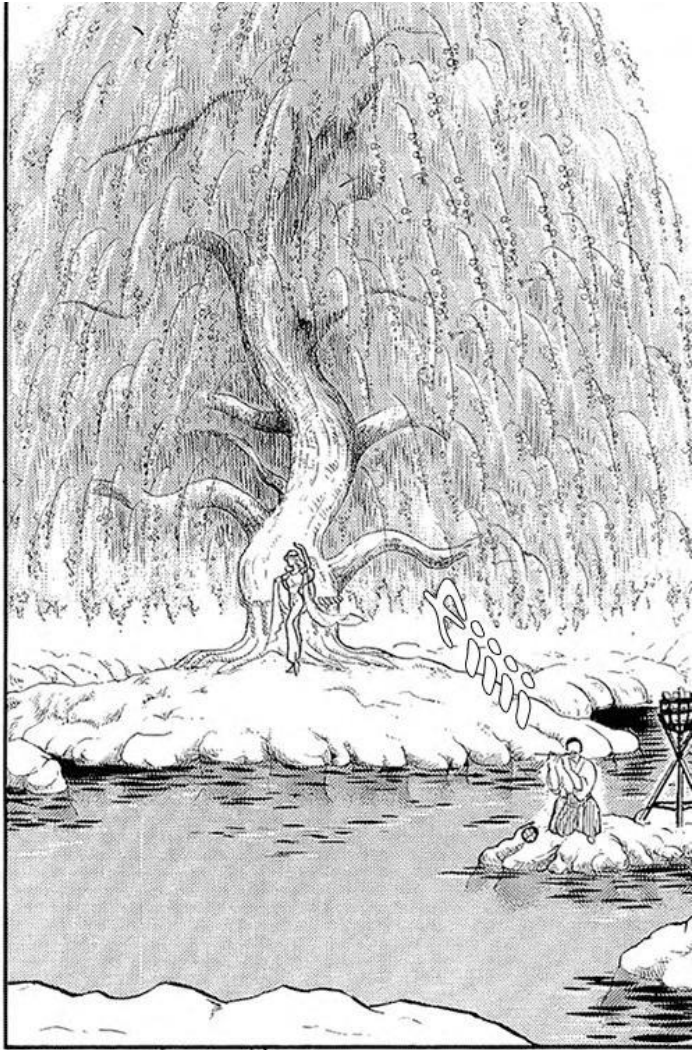
clap

clap

clap



STARE

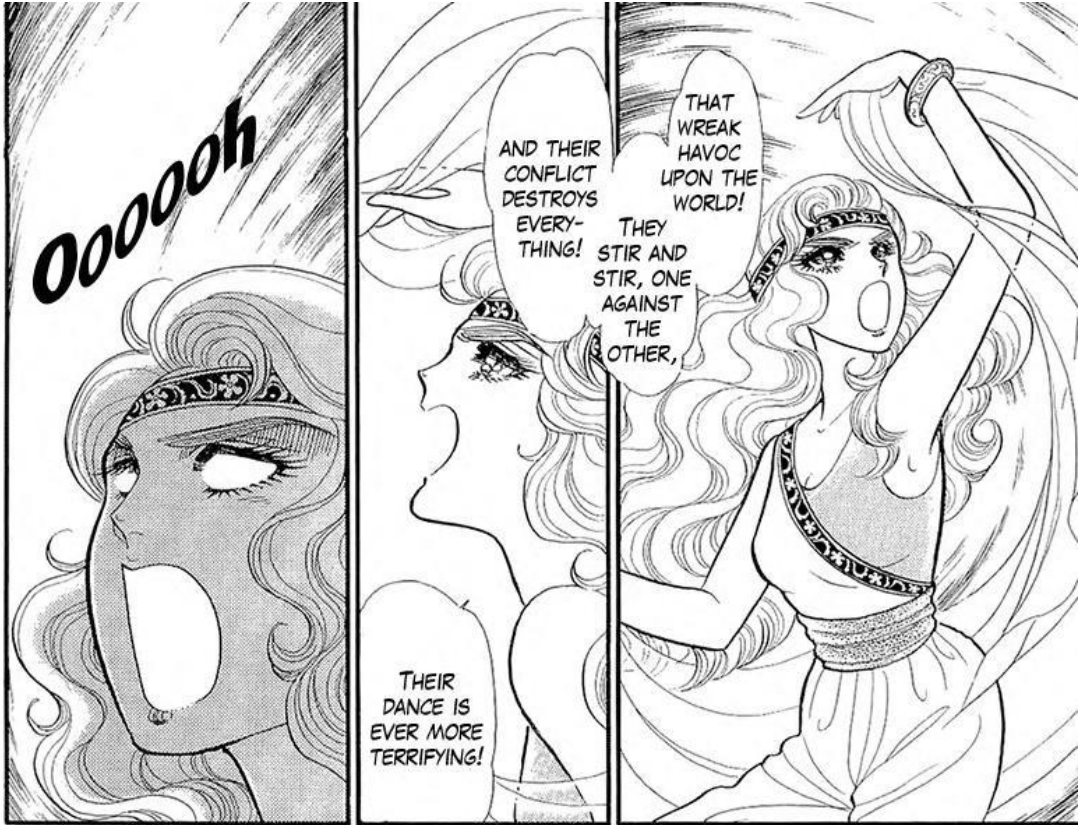












AND THEIR CONFLICT DESTROYS EVERY-THING!

THAT WREAK HAVOC UPON THE WORLD!

THEY STIR AND STIR, ONE AGAINST THE OTHER,

Ooooooh

THEIR DANCE IS EVER MORE TERRIFYING!



is not Ayumi's voice...

What the audience hears...

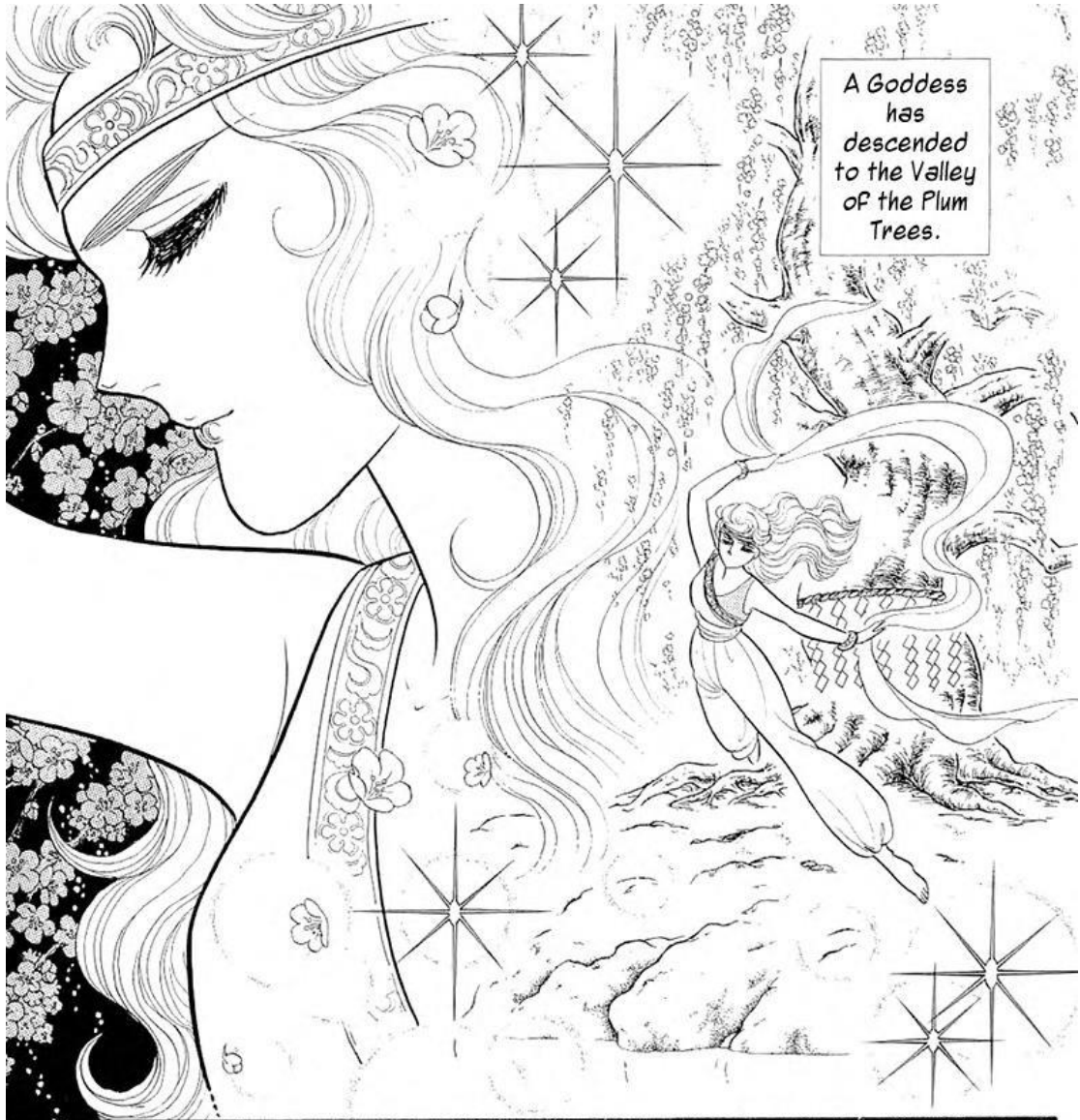


No one looks at that stage...

It echoes with the high notes of birdsong...

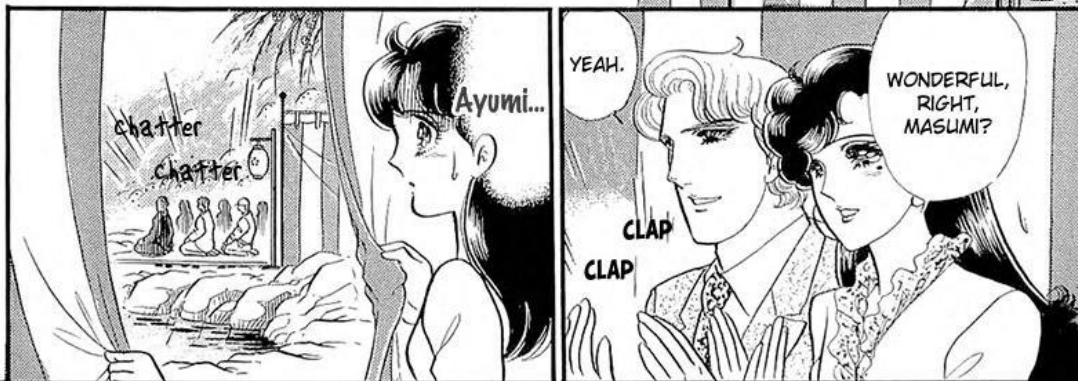
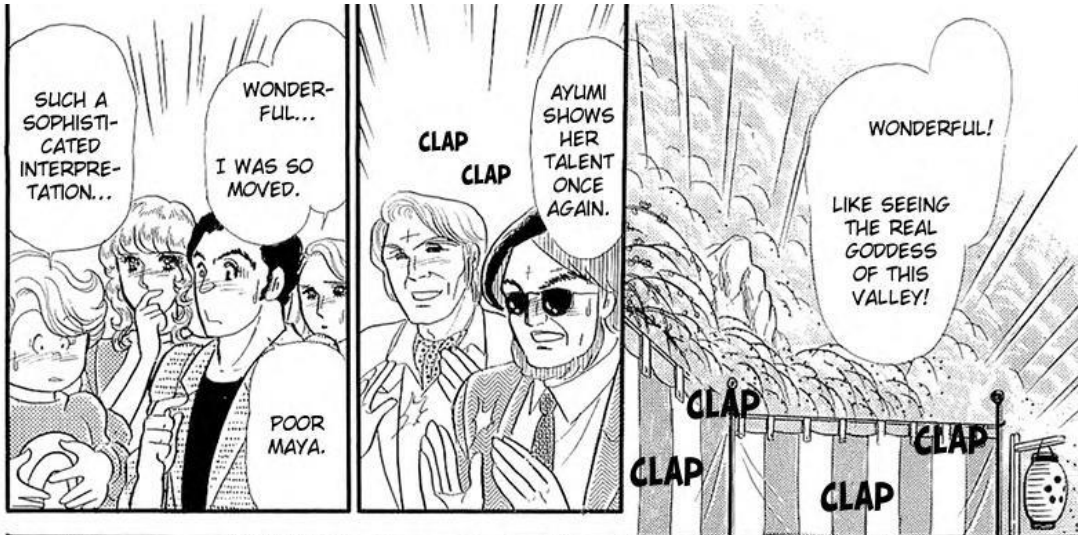
and sees a human...

and the deep rumblings of the earth.



A Goddess
has
descended
to the Valley
of the Plum
Trees.





Chapter 216







IT IS THE STENCH OF BLOOD...

NO,



IS IT THE ECHO OF THE FOREST?
THE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT?

THE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT?



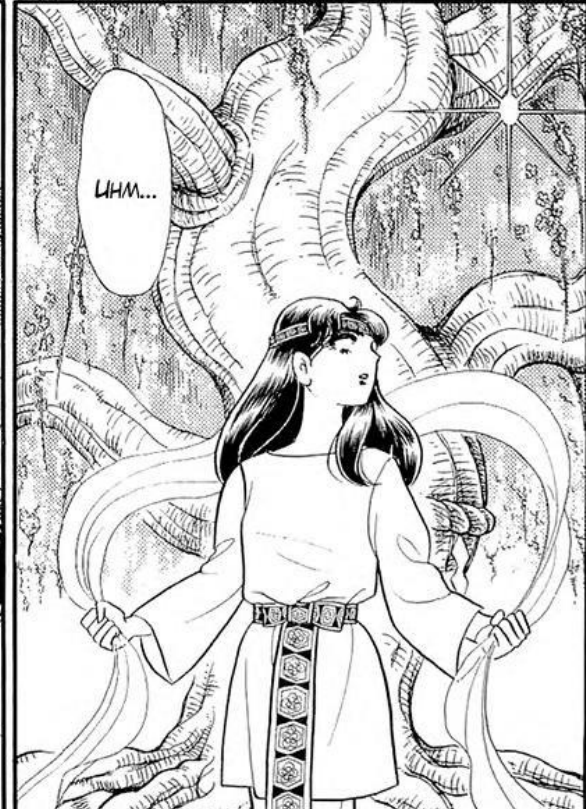
TREMBLE



THE RED WHIRLPOOL AND THE WHITE WHIRLPOOL,

I SEE TWO EDDIES OPPOSING EACH OTHER...

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



UHM...



ONE AGAINST THE OTHER,
AND THEIR CONFLICT DESTROYS EVERYTHING.

THEY STIR AND STIR...



THE SPIRITS OF THE GODS ARE AGITATED.

THEIR DANCE IS EVER MORE TERRIFYING.



oooooooo

FROM THE TWO WHIRLPOOLS,
THE FLAME OF WAR EMERGES,
SPREADING HATRED AND SUFFERING.
ONE AFTER ANOTHER, THE PEARLS OF LIFE DISAPPEAR!



uuuuuuuuu



SHE...
PROBABLY SEES THE WORLD IN THERE...

WHAT IS SHE DOING?
WHAT COULD SHE BE LOOKING AT IN THE LAKE?

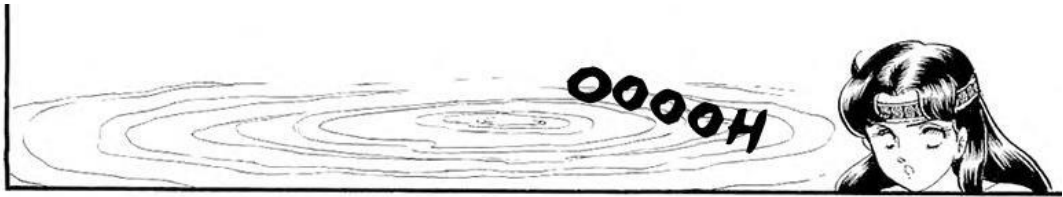
Maya...



oooooooooH

oooooooooH

oooo

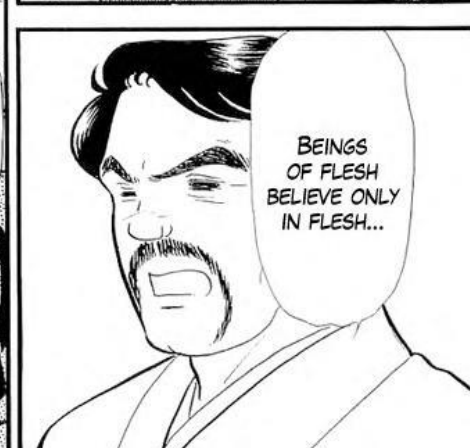




The sound coming from Maya's throat produces a tremendous rumble.



More than a voice, it resembles...
a sonic boom.





HERE IN THIS HOLY GROUND, WHERE GODS THRIVE, I HAVE THE SHAPE OF A PLUM TREE...

THE TREE AND THE SPIRIT. THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH'S GODS GROWS AND SHOWS ITSELF ON THE SURFACE.



AND OF THE WATER...

MY STRENGTH SPIRALS UP TOWARDS THE HEAVENS, WATCHING OVER THE CREATURES OF THE EARTH...



BLOOM, YOU CRIMSON FLOWERS OF ETERNAL LIFE!



GROW! GROW TALL AND PROUD! FASTER!

SPREAD OUT ACROSS THE LAND! SPREAD YOUR SEEDS WITH MY BLESSING!



frush AND OVER THOSE THAT STRETCH THEIR ROOTS BENEATH THE GROUND, THOSE THAT SLITHER OVER THE GROUND, THOSE THAT FLY, WALK...

OR SWIM ...



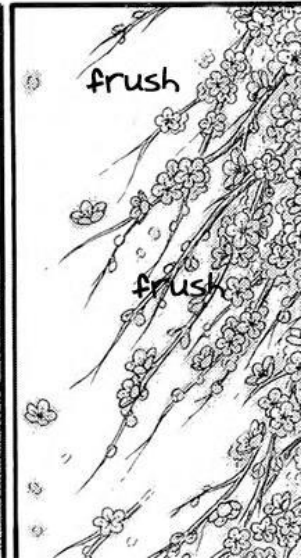
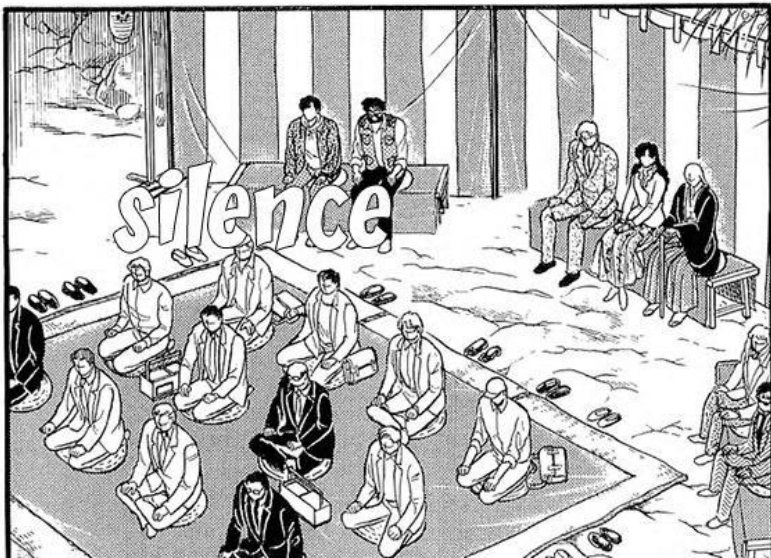
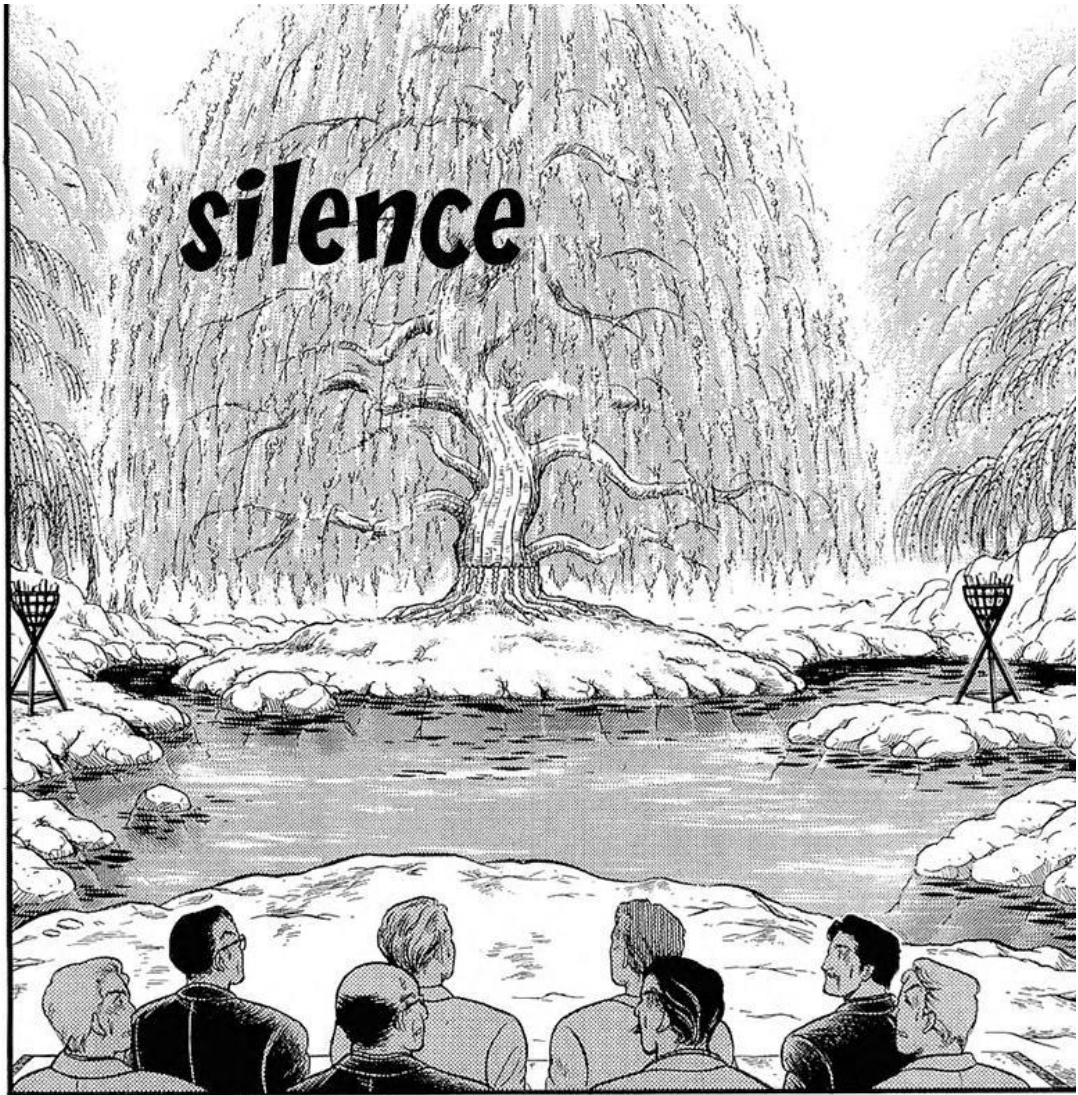
flap



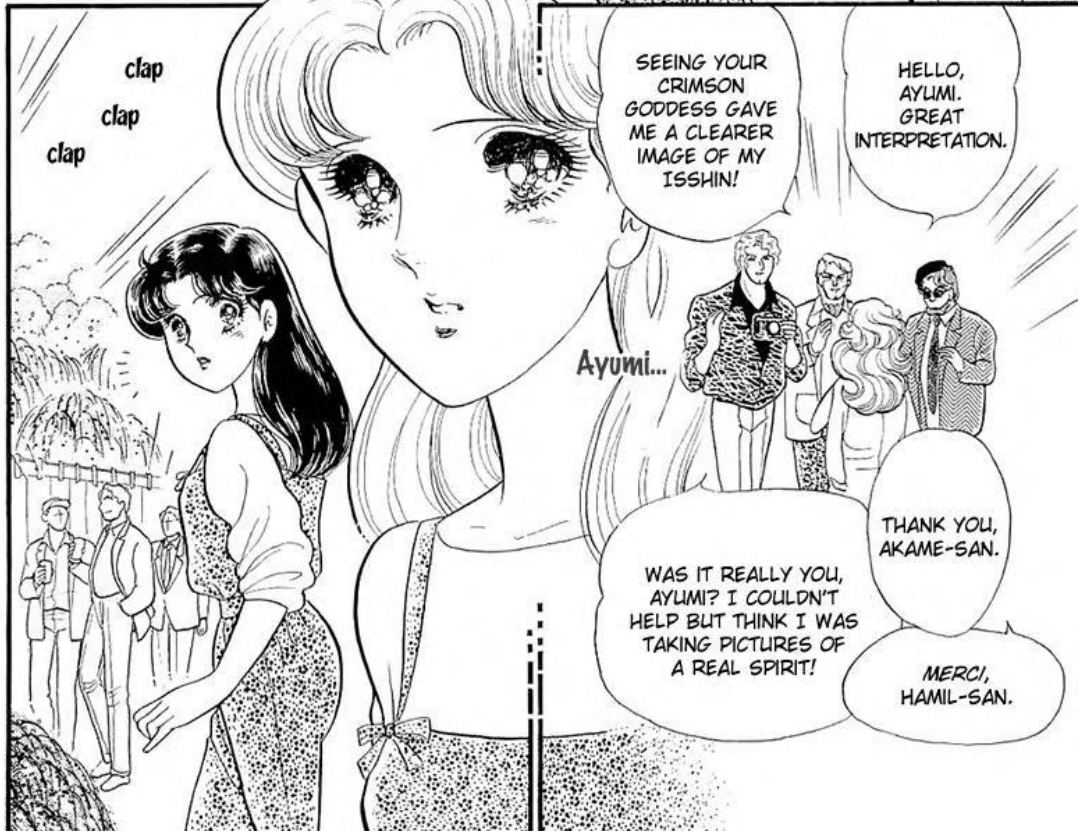
frush



fiiiiiiii







clap
clap
clap

SEEING YOUR CRIMSON GODDESS GAVE ME A CLEARER IMAGE OF MY ISSHIN!

HELLO, AYUMI. GREAT INTERPRETATION.

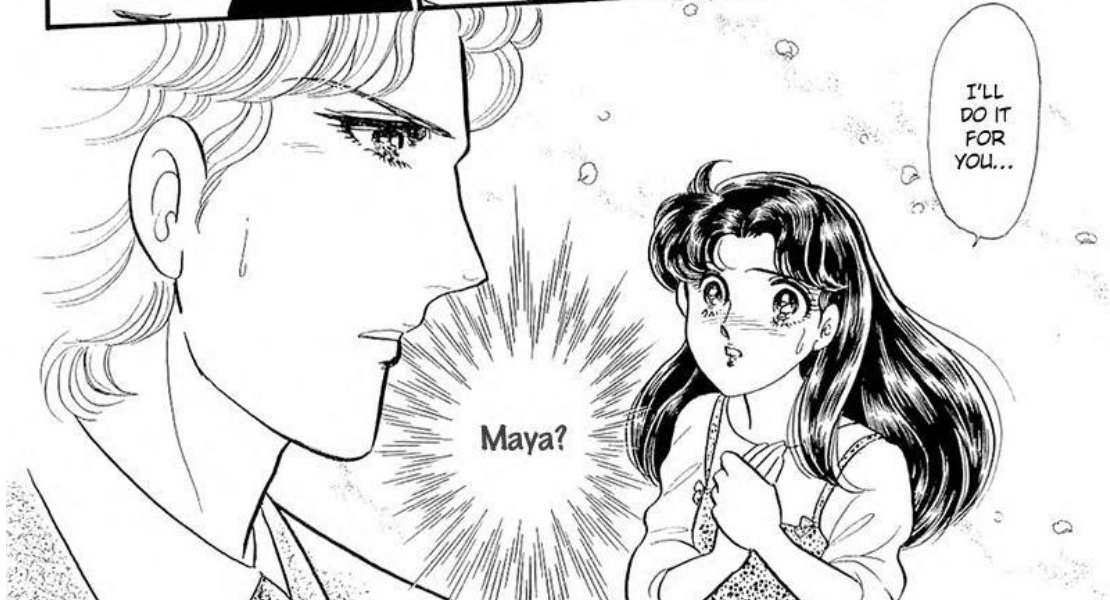
Ayumi...

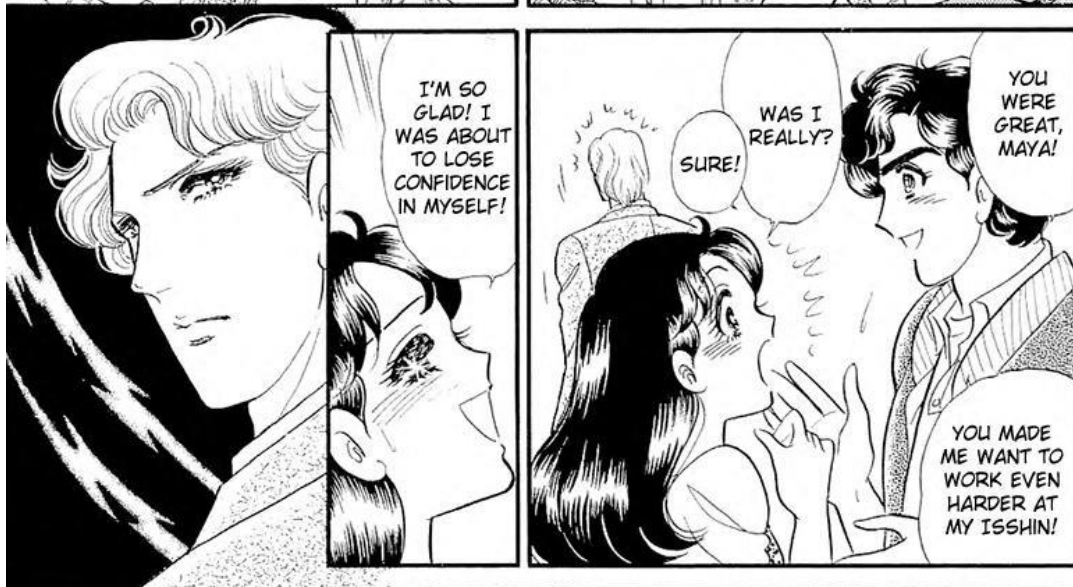
WAS IT REALLY YOU, AYUMI? I COULDN'T HELP BUT THINK I WAS TAKING PICTURES OF A REAL SPIRIT!

THANK YOU, AKAME-SAN.

MERCI, HAMIL-SAN.

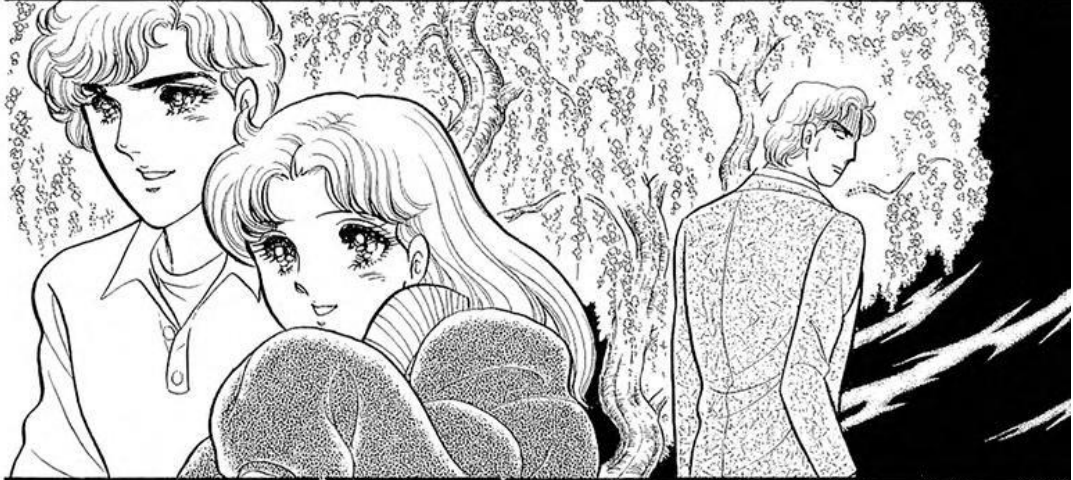








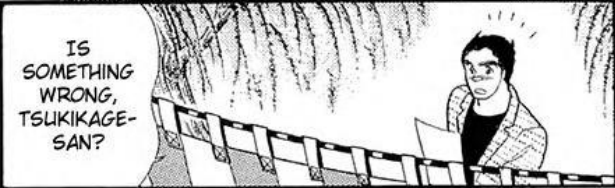






AH!
ALL THE SEATS ARE
ALREADY
TAKEN...

AH!
THERE'S A
SEAT DOWN
THERE!



IS
SOMETHING
WRONG,
TSUKIKAGE-
SAN?



hanf

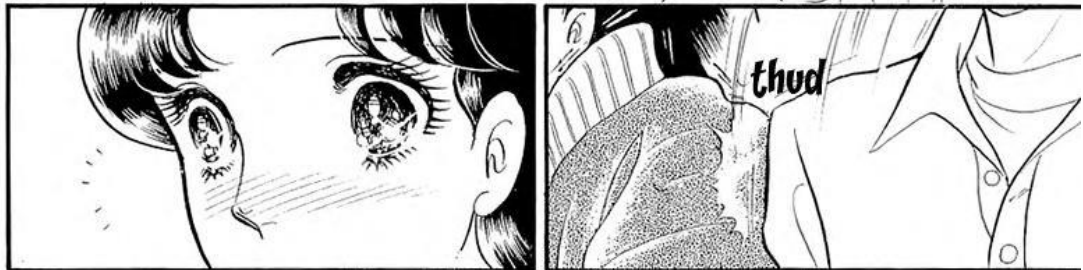
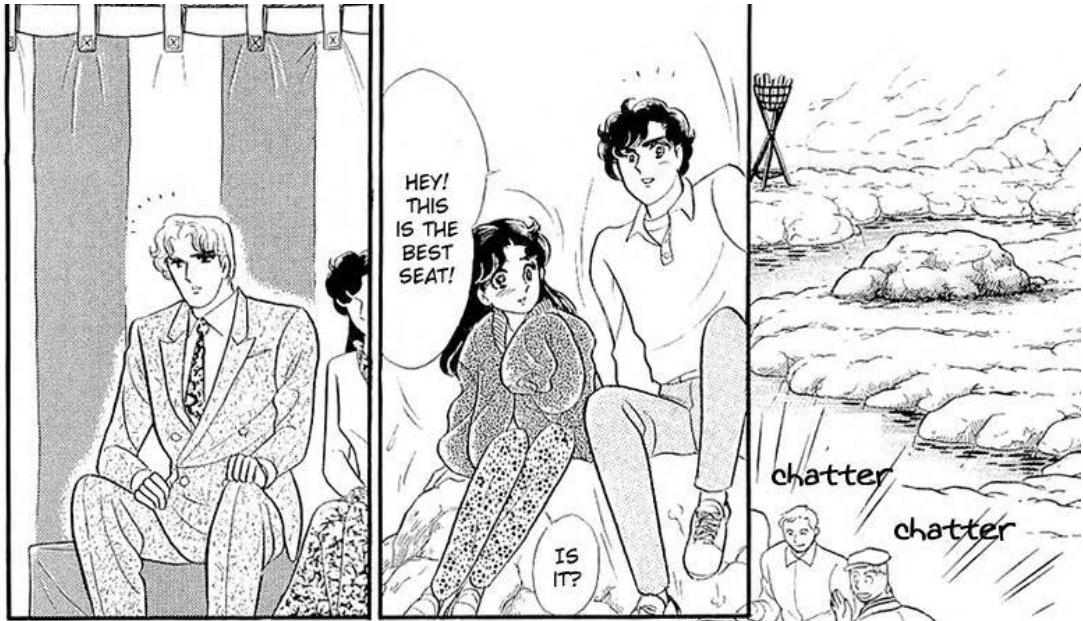
hanf

NO...

hanf

hanf

NOTHING IS
WRONG!





YOUR FATHER HAS ALWAYS LOVED THE CRIMSON GODDESS, CHIGUSA TSUKIKAGE?

DID YOU KNOW...



AND WHO KNOWS HOW MOVED PRESIDENT HAYAMI MUST FEEL NOW!



I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE GOING TO SEE CHIGUSA TSUKIKAGE'S CRIMSON GODDESS, MASUMI.

YES...



I KNOW...

YES...

YOUR FATHER AND CHIGUSA TSUKIKAGE HAVE HATED EACH OTHER FOR A LONG TIME OVER THE CRIMSON GODDESS...

chatter
chatter



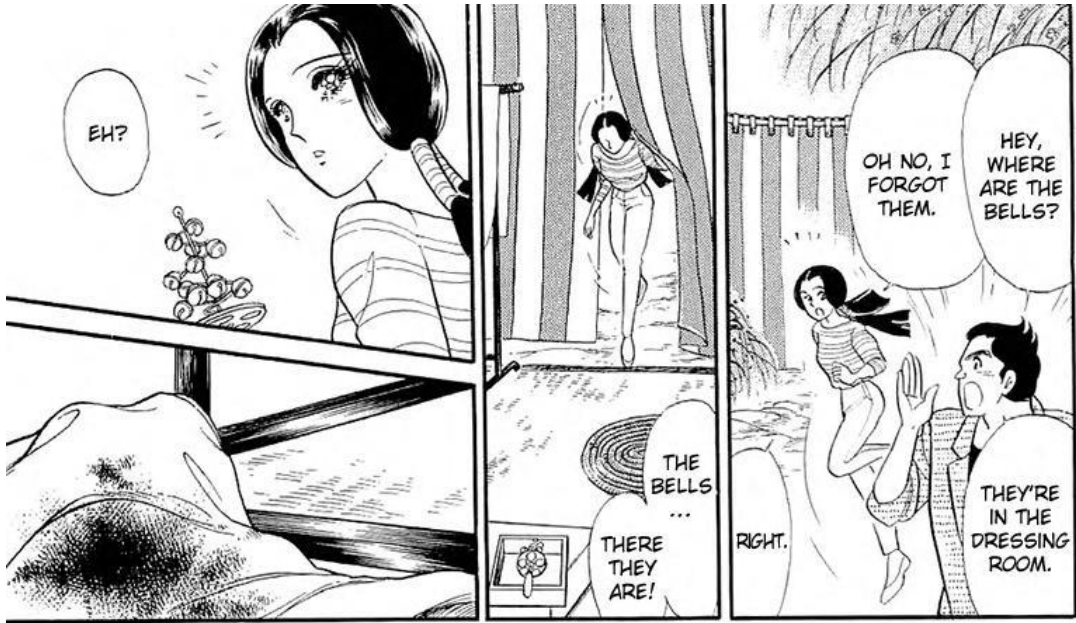
AND ON TOP OF THAT, TO SEE IT IN THIS VALLEY...

I THINK SO, TOO.

I THINK THAT IF ICHIREN OZAKI WERE STILL ALIVE, HE WOULD BE DEEPLY MOVED.

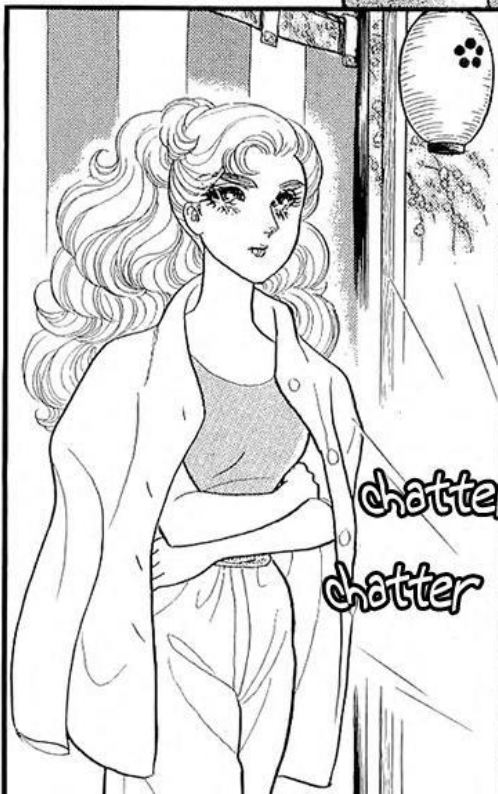
chatter

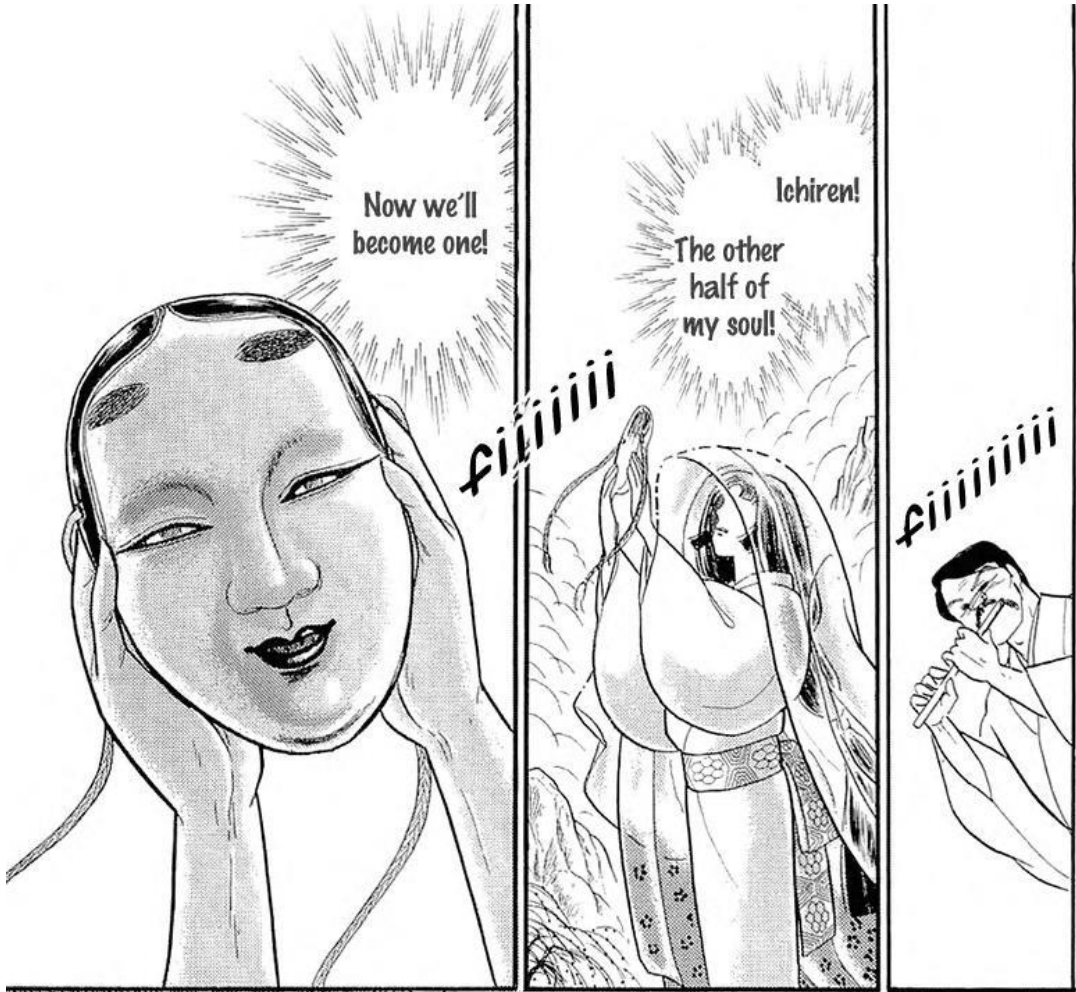


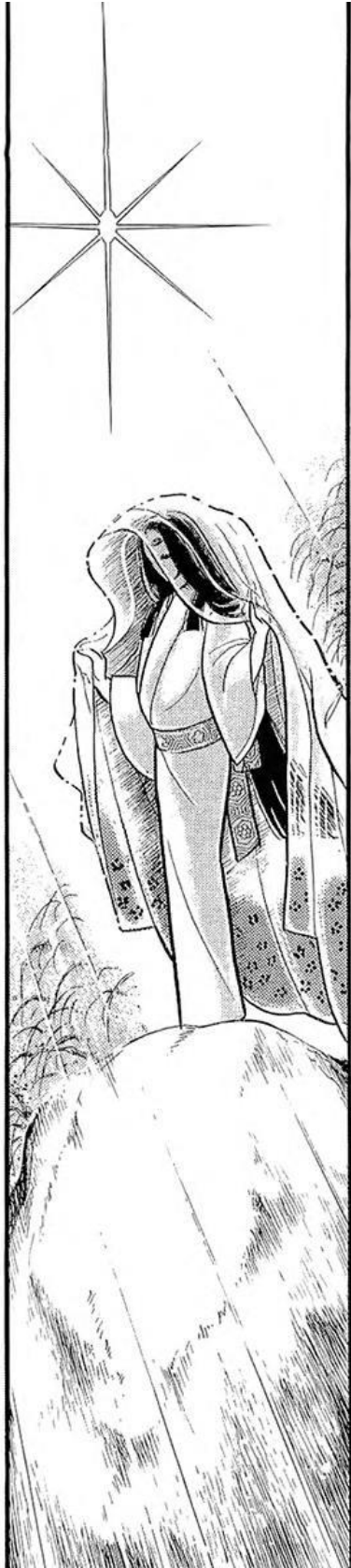














Tsukikage-sensei!

AH!

The Crimson Goddess!

SENSEI ...

SHE'S UP THERE!

