

HANA TO YUME COMICS

Glass Mask

SUZUE MIUCHI

35

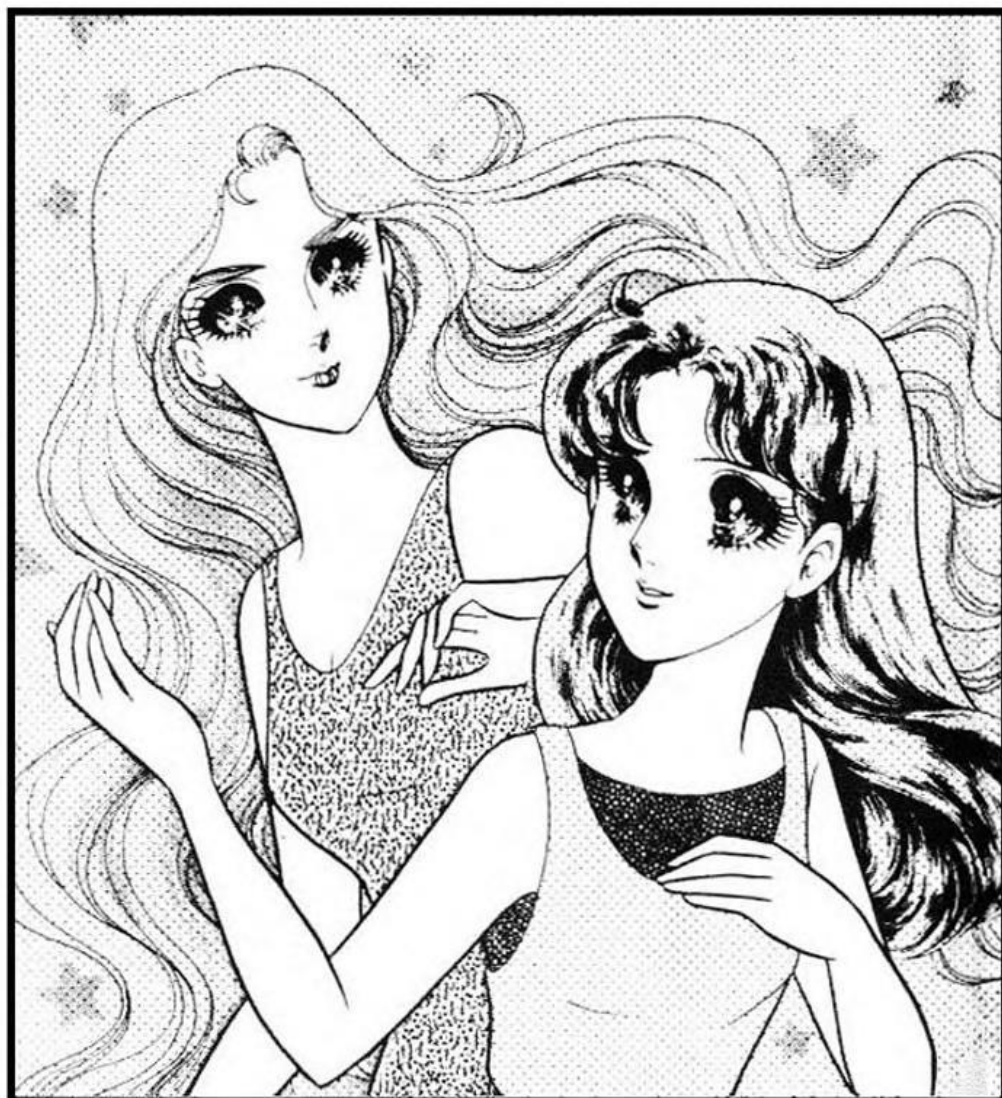


HANA TO YUME COMICS

GLASS MASK

VOLUME 35 THE CRIMSON GODDESS (2)

SUZUE MIUCHI

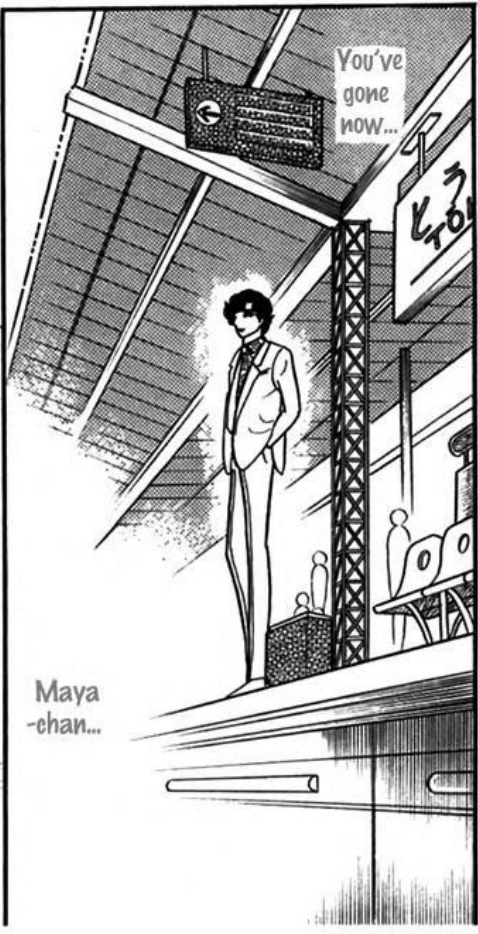




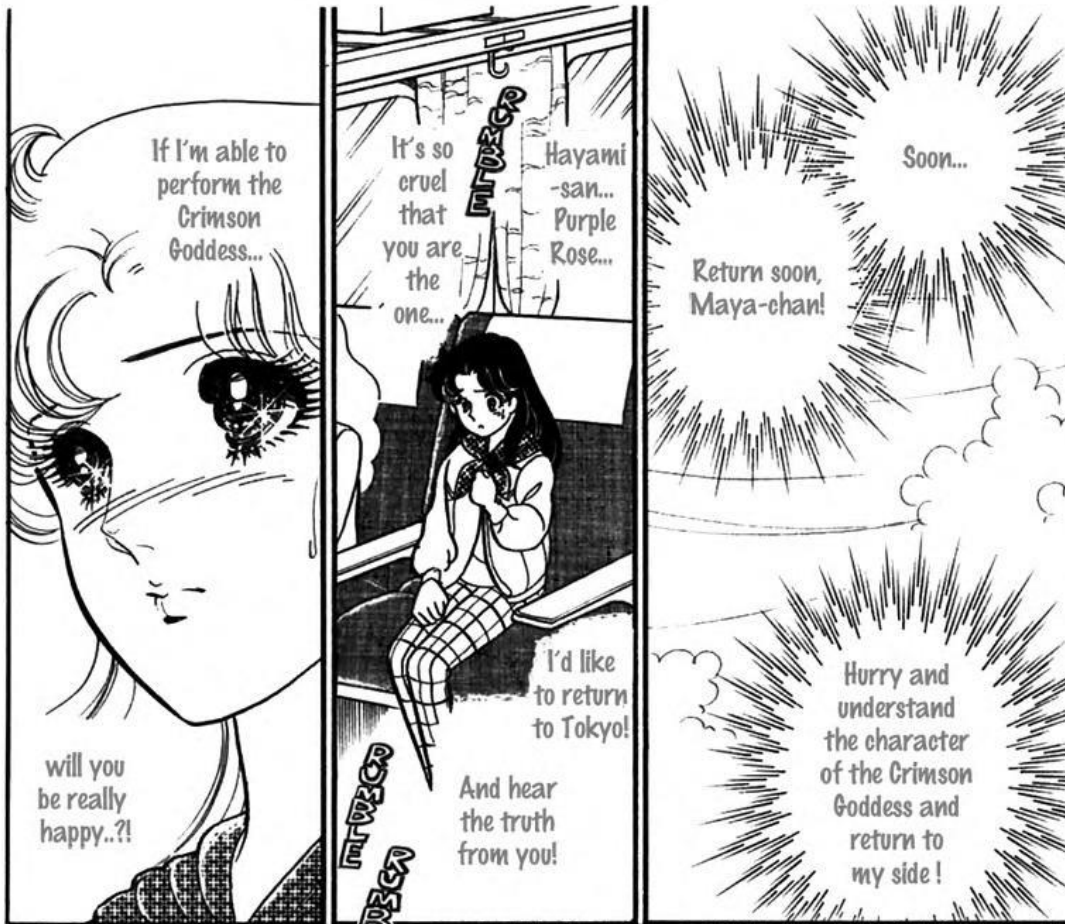
Even if it's just a test staging, to be able to act together with you in the Crimson Goddess...

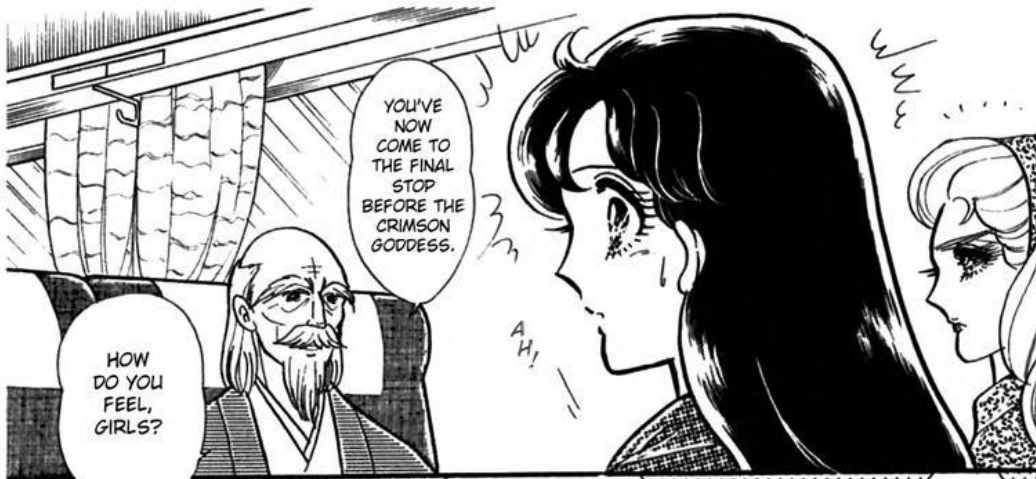
The Crimson Goddess...

and besides, of all the parts, to be playing that of the sacred sculptor Isshin, that falls in love with the Crimson Goddess, I...



Maya-chan...

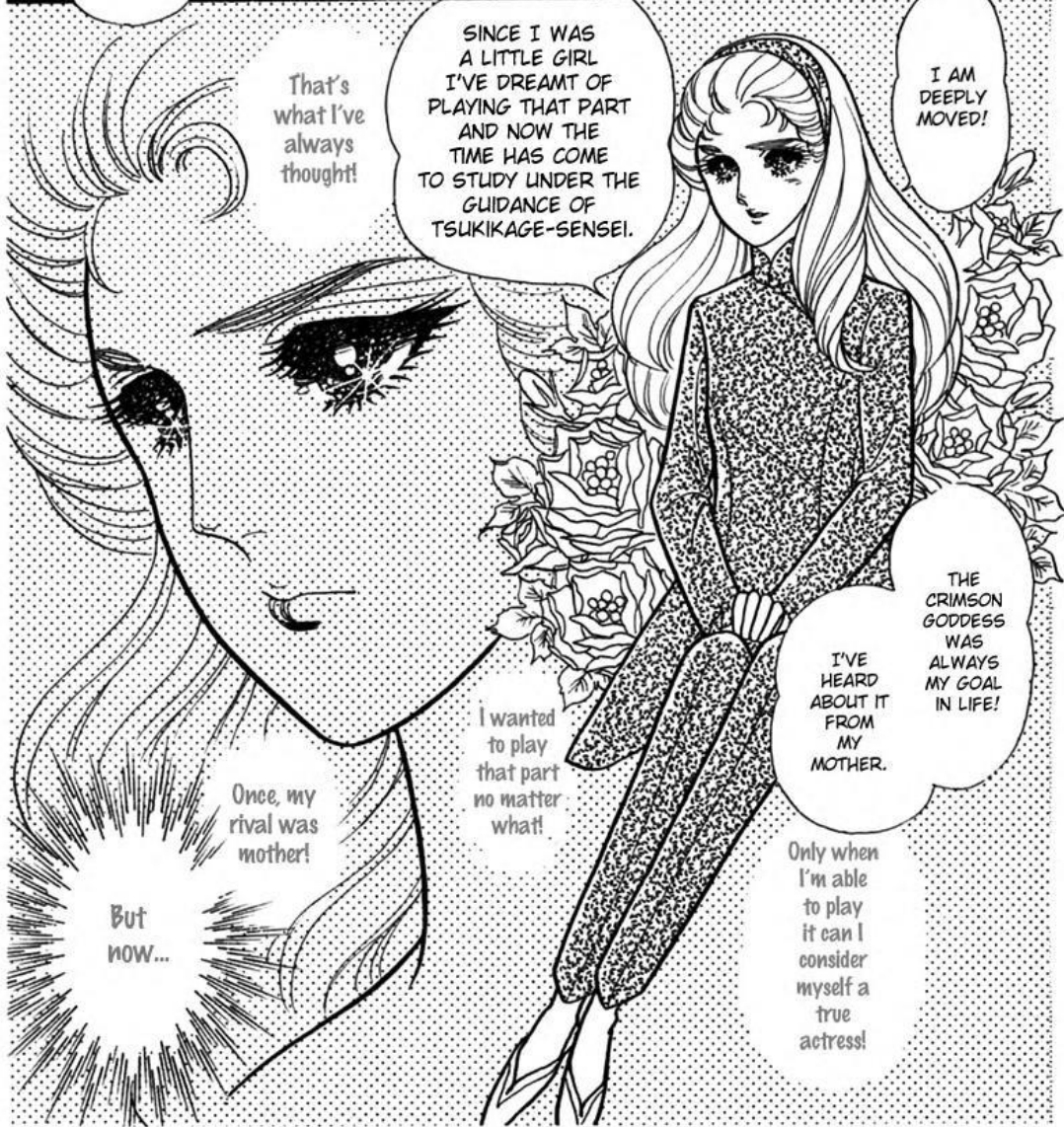




HOW DO YOU FEEL, GIRLS?

YOU'VE NOW COME TO THE FINAL STOP BEFORE THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

AH!



That's what I've always thought!

SINCE I WAS A LITTLE GIRL I'VE DREAMT OF PLAYING THAT PART AND NOW THE TIME HAS COME TO STUDY UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI.

I AM DEEPLY MOVED!

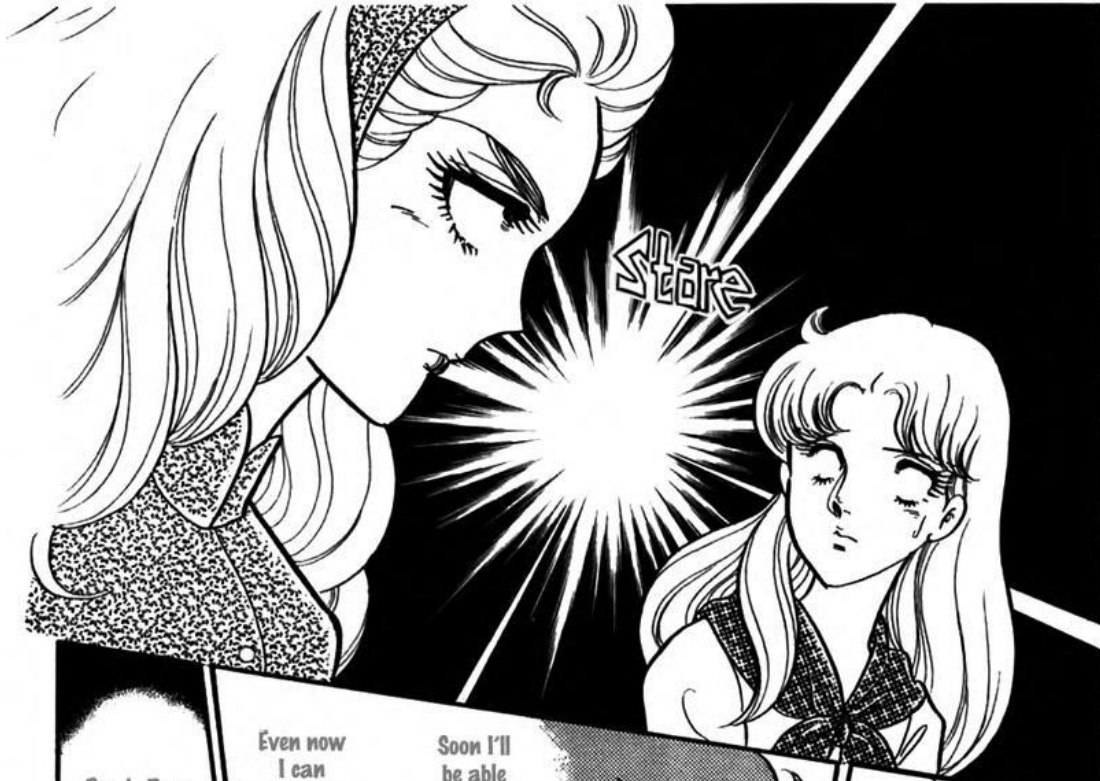
THE CRIMSON GODDESS WAS ALWAYS MY GOAL IN LIFE!
I'VE HEARD ABOUT IT FROM MY MOTHER.

I wanted to play that part no matter what!

Once, my rival was mother!

But now...

Only when I'm able to play it can I consider myself a true actress!



Purple Rose
it's thanks to
your support
that I was able
to come
this far...

Even now
I can
hardly believe
that this
moment
has come...

Soon I'll
be able
to interpret
the Crimson
Goddess!

AND
YOU...
MAYA?



Hayami
-san...

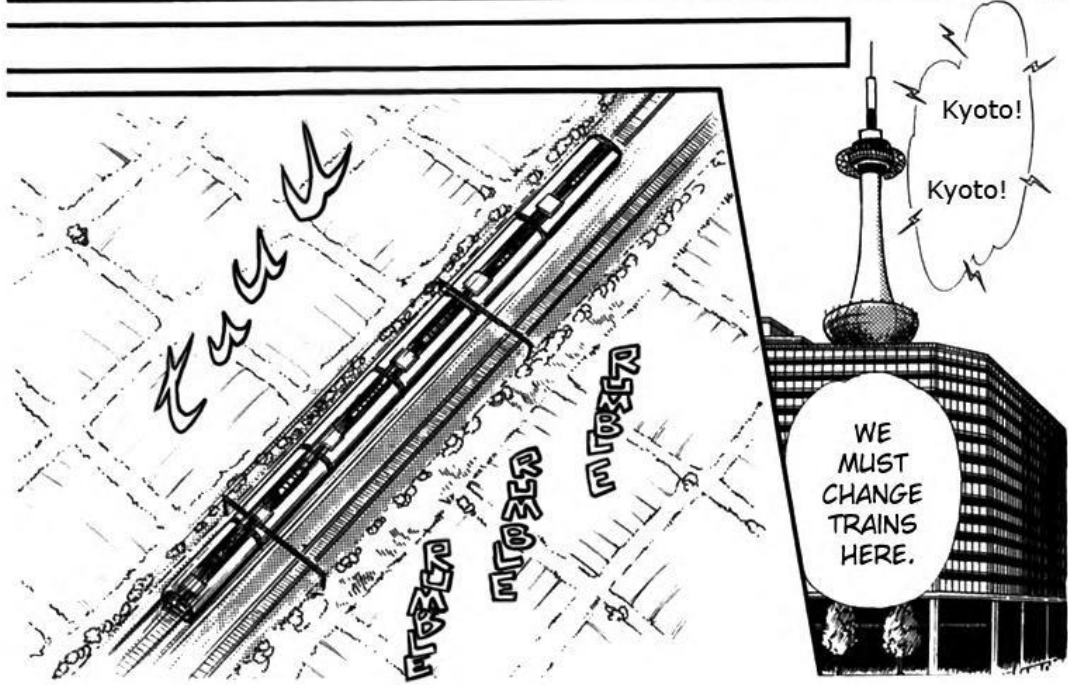
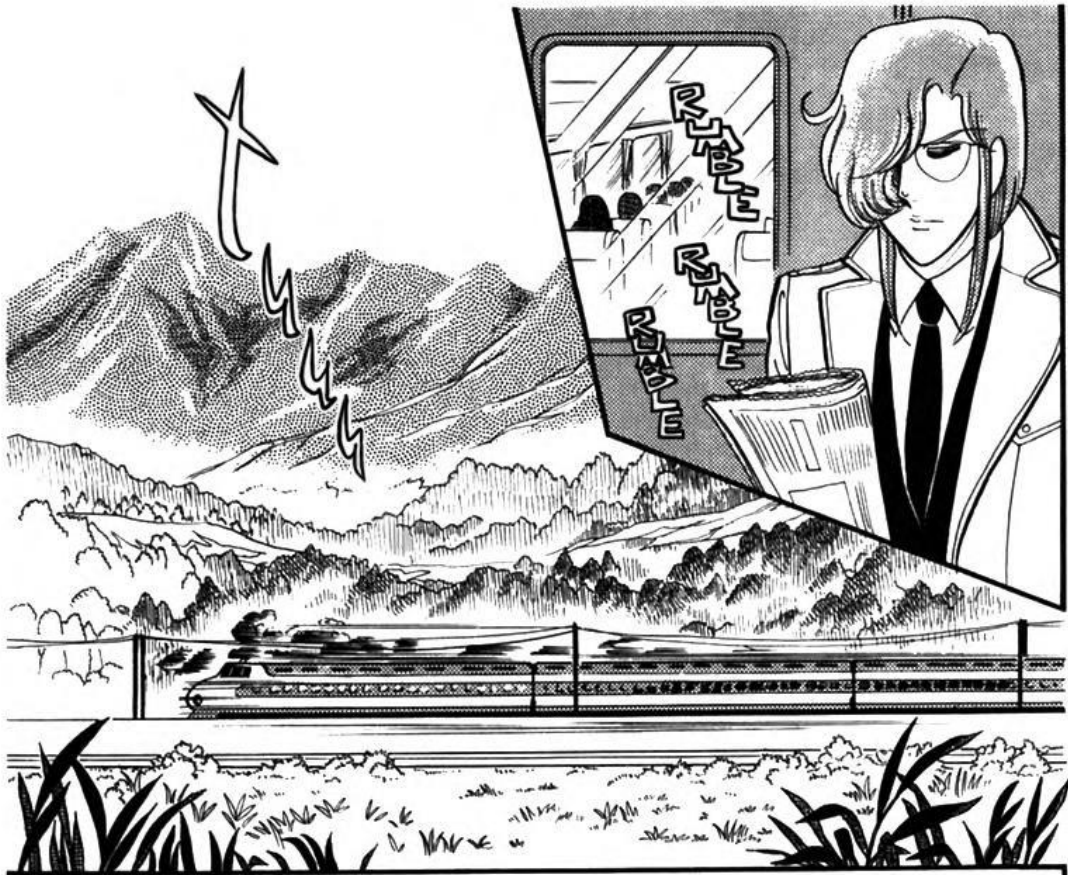
I, that made
my mother worry because
of my foolishness and
uselessness.
By starting to act, I've
come to know the
happiness of living...

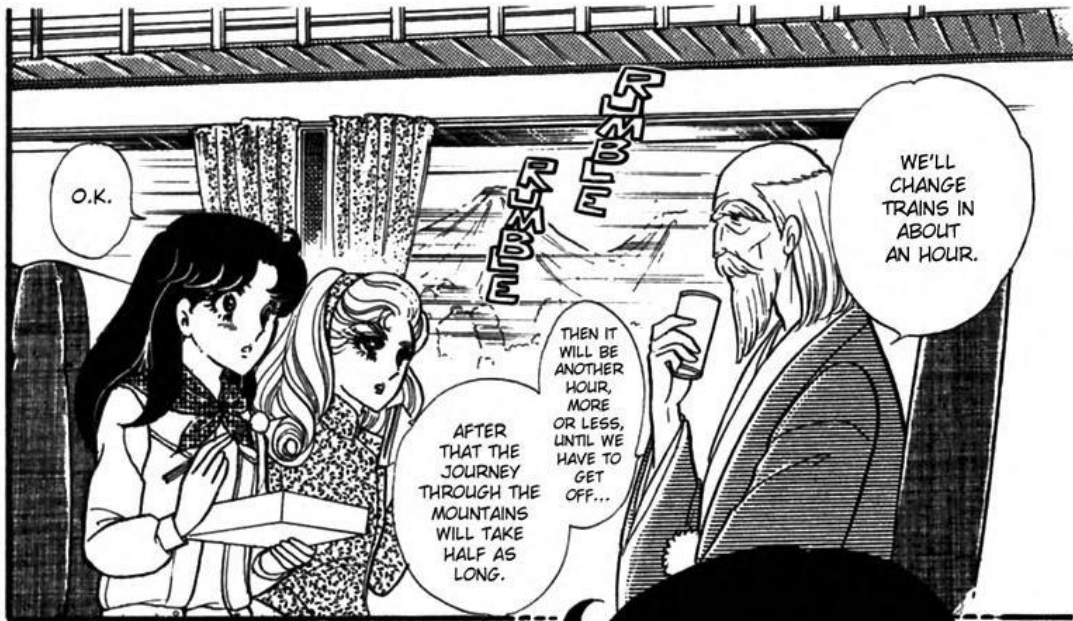
Yeah, from
then on...

I ALSO
FEEL LIKE
I AM
DREAMING.

ERM
...

EVEN
IF IT'S
JUST FOR
REACHING
THIS POINT!





O.K.

WE'LL CHANGE TRAINS IN ABOUT AN HOUR.

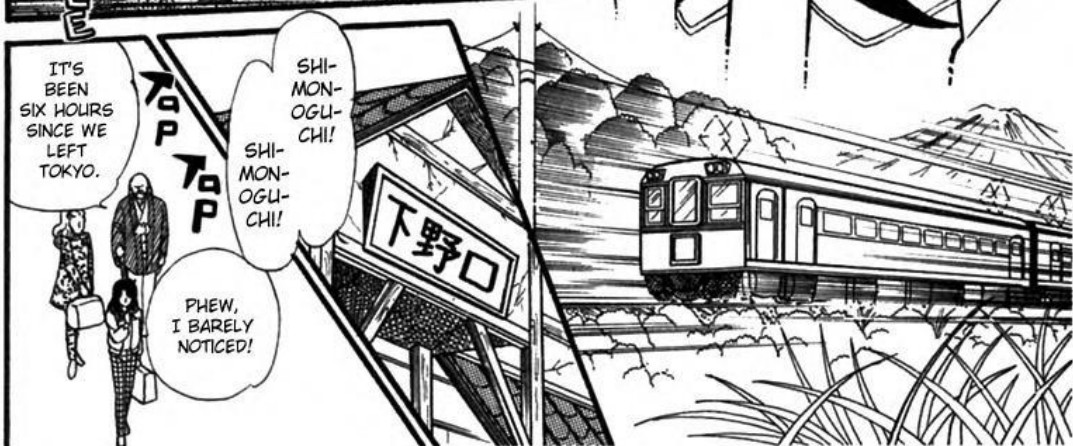
AFTER THAT THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS WILL TAKE HALF AS LONG.

THEN IT WILL BE ANOTHER HOUR, MORE OR LESS, UNTIL WE HAVE TO GET OFF...



It's such a long way...

Tsukikage-Sensei...

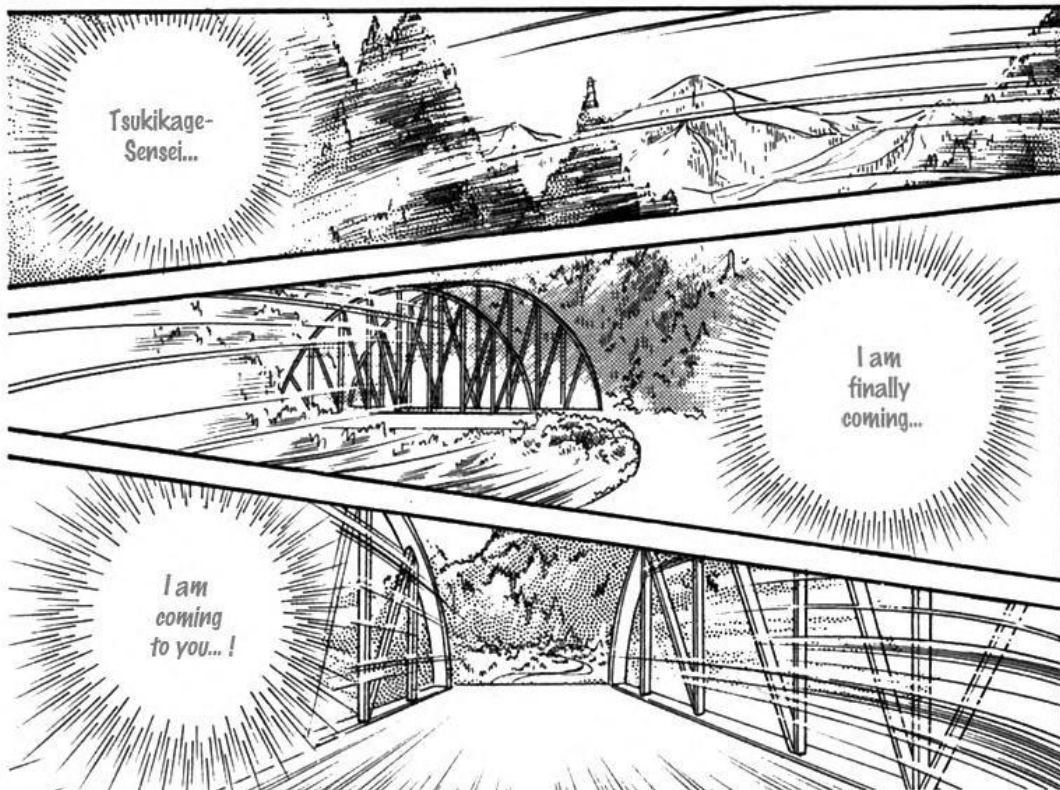


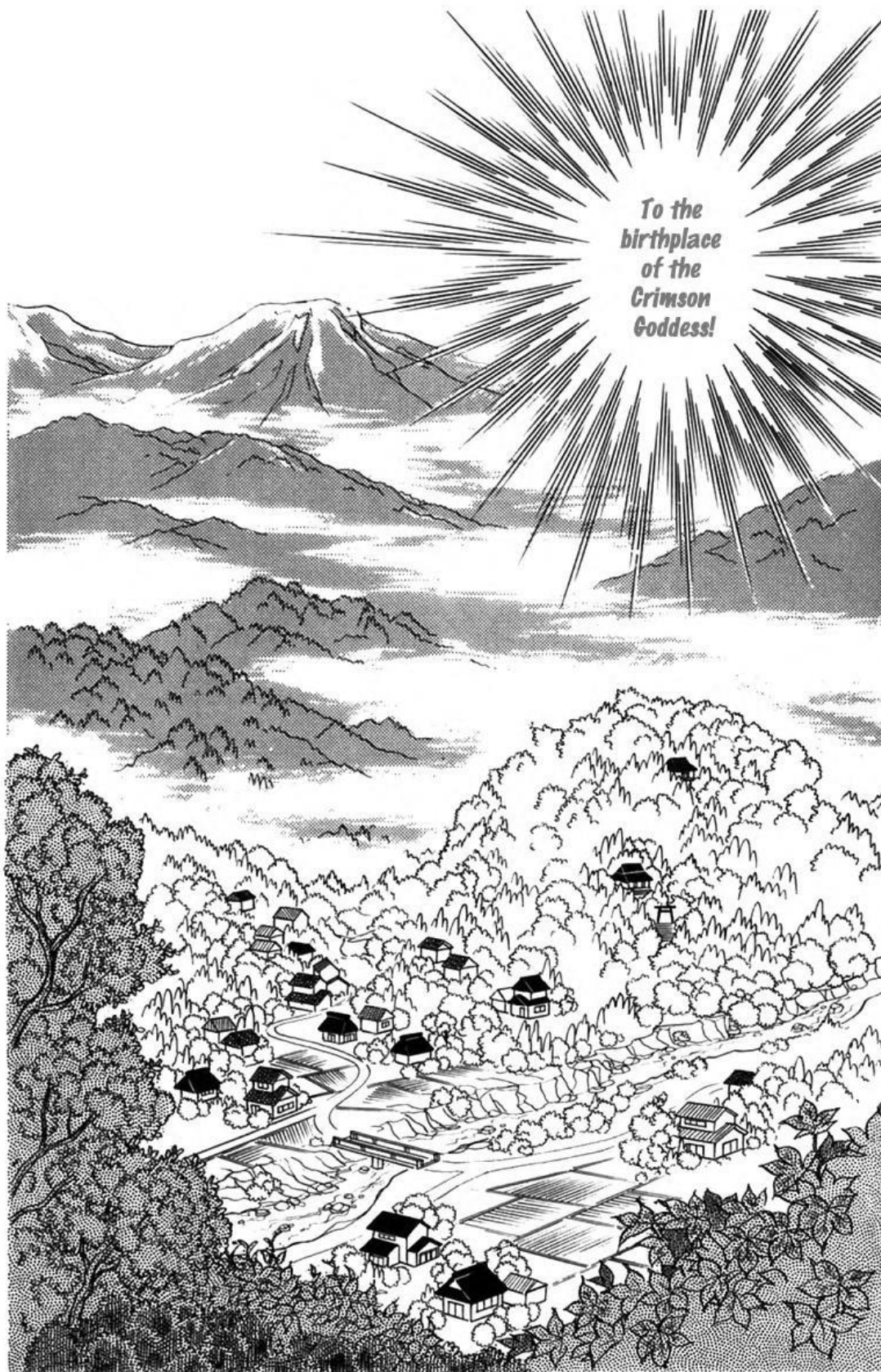
IT'S BEEN SIX HOURS SINCE WE LEFT TOKYO.

SHI-MON-OGU-CHI!
SHI-MON-OGU-CHI!

PHEW, I BARELY NOTICED!

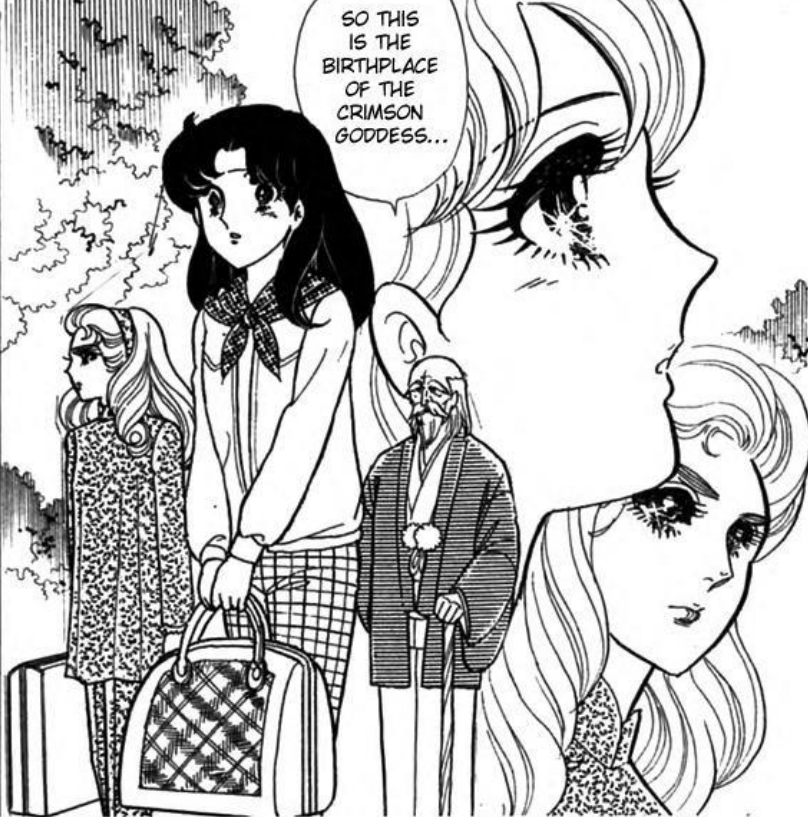
下野口





*To the
birthplace
of the
Crimson
Goddess!*







COME THIS WAY PLEASE.

AH, HOW WONDERFUL! FROM HERE YOU CAN SEE THE WHOLE VILLAGE!



IN THE SHINTO TEMPLE OF THIS VILLAGE THERE IS A BEAUTIFUL STATUE OF A GODDESS CARVED FROM A PLUM TREE'S WOOD, DATING BACK TO THE NANBOKUCHO* PERIOD

YES.

ITS LEGEND IS THE ONE THAT IS TOLD IN THE CRIMSON GODDESS.



ICHIREN OZAKI WAS INSPIRED BY THE LOCAL LEGEND THAT IS PASSED ON FROM ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER IN WRITING THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

YES, THAT'S RIGHT.

SO THIS IS THE VILLAGE WHERE ICHIREN OZAKI WAS BORN...

A LEGEND?

*THE PERIOD IN WHICH JAPAN WAS DIVIDED IN THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN DYNASTIES, AROUND 1333-1392

*HEAVENLY DOGS, TYPICALLY FOUND IN JAPANESE FOLKLORE

ONCE UPON A TIME, IN A VALLEY HIDDEN SOMEWHERE IN THESE MOUNTAINS, THERE LIVED A GODDESS THAT WAS GUARDED BY A CLAN OF TENGU* AND A DRAGON.

SHE WAS THE QUEEN OF THE SPIRITS AND ALSO OF THE EARTH, SINCE SHE CONTROLLED THE ENERGY OF ALL THE BEINGS THAT LIVED ON THE EARTH.



BUT IN THE NANBOKUCHO PERIOD A SCULPTOR, THAT SPECIALISED IN SACRED REPRESENTATIONS, CARVED A STATUE OF THE GODDESS FROM THE WOOD OF THAT TREE TO PLEAD FOR PEACE ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

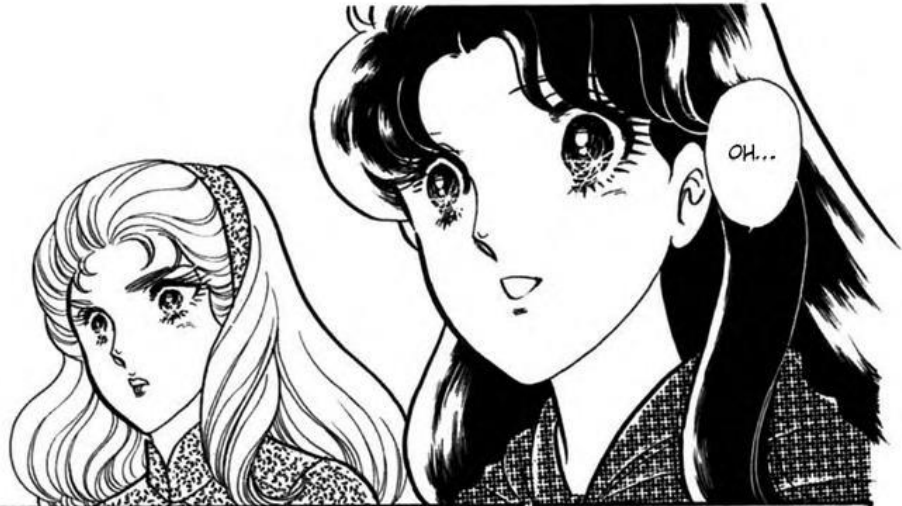
IN THAT VALLEY, THERE WAS ALSO A SACRED PLUM TREE THAT WAS THOUGHT TO BE THE REINCARNATION OF THE GODDESS...

THAT IS HOW THE INTERNAL BATTLE IN THE IMPERIAL FAMILY, WHICH WAS SPLIT BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH, WAS SETTLED.

AS WELL AS BEING A PLACE WHERE CORRUPT MEN WERE FORBIDDEN TO ENTER.

THE VALLEY OF THE CRIMSON IS FAMOUS FOR THE BLOOMING SEASON OF ITS CRIMSON PLUM TREES ...

THOSE THAT DISREGARDED THESE RULES WERE KILLED BY THE TENGU.



NO WAY!
GENZO-SAN!

I'D LIKE TO SEE THE PLUM TREES' VALLEY...

WHO KNOWS IF YOU'LL BE ABLE TO...IT IS HIDDEN. I IMAGINE THAT THERE ARE FEW PEOPLE THAT HAVE SEEN IT.

HOW I'D LIKE TO SEE THAT STATUE!

THAT IS THE STATUE THAT WAS FOUND IN THE TEMPLE.

HA HA HA HA!

YOU'D BE KILLED BY THE OGRES!

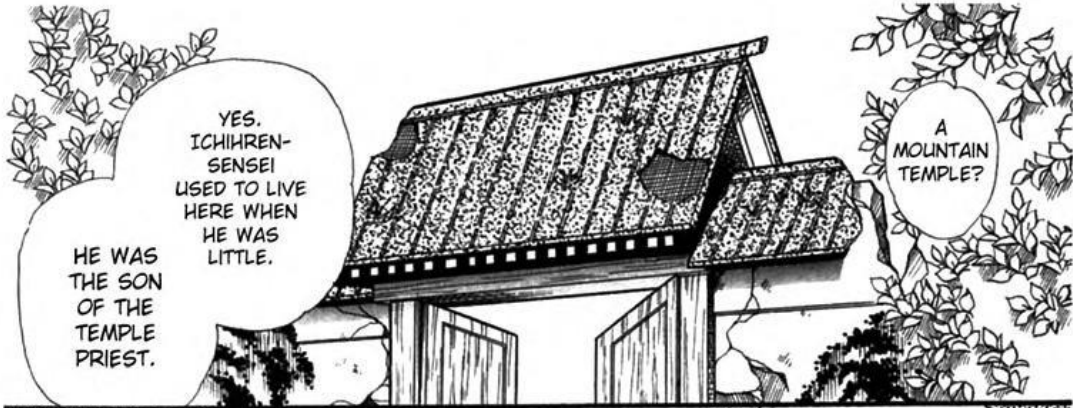


A BUDDHIST STATUE IN A SHINTO TEMPLE?



AH, THERE IT IS, THAT'S THE TEMPLE.

YES, MEN WERE THE ONES THAT TRIED TO DIVIDE THE GODS INTO CATEGORIES, BUT IN THIS TEMPLE BUDDHIST AND SHINTO DEITIES ARE WORSHIPPED.



HE WAS THE SON OF THE TEMPLE PRIEST.

YES. ICHIHREN-SENSEI USED TO LIVE HERE WHEN HE WAS LITTLE.

A MOUNTAIN TEMPLE?



AND IT HAS BECOME, MORE OR LESS, A PLACE FIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION.

BY ASKING FOR HELP FROM THE VILLAGERS WE MANAGED TO REPAIR IT SOMEWHAT...

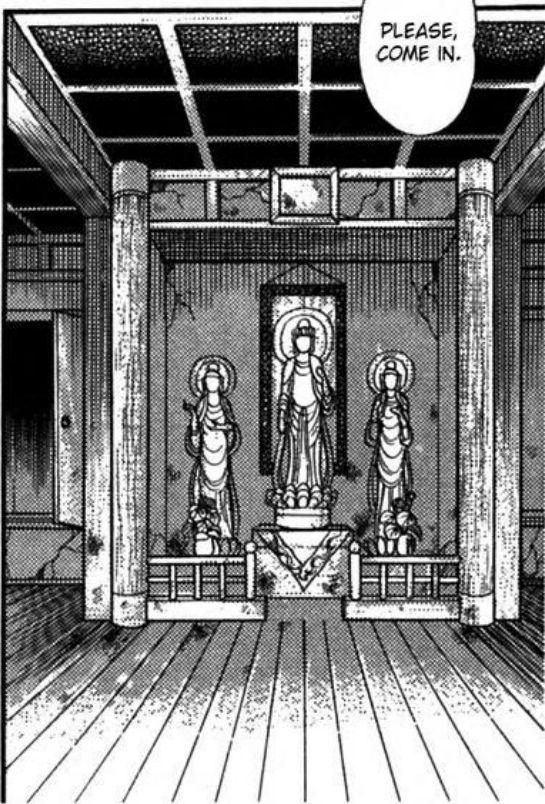
THIS TEMPLE HAD BEEN ABANDONED FOR A LONG TIME. WHEN WE ARRIVED HERE IT WAS IN A TERRIBLE CONDITION.



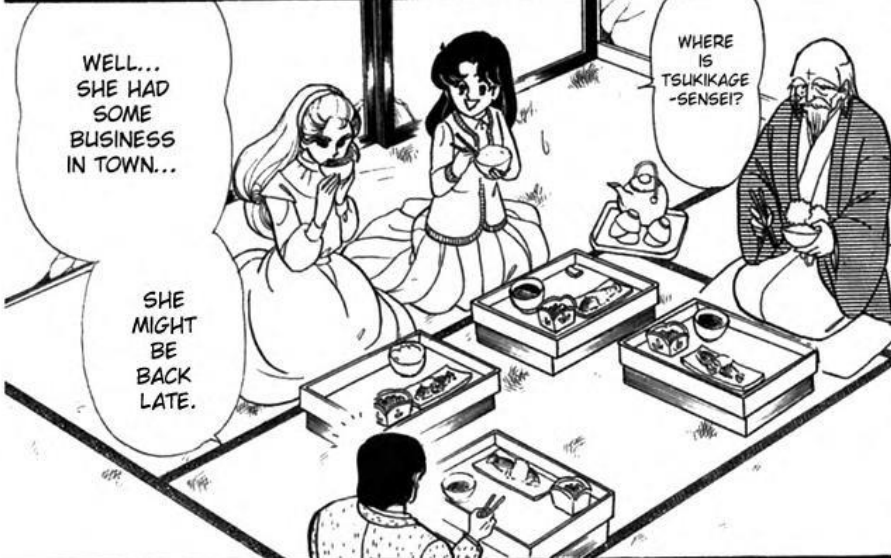
AH, IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU DIDN'T OPEN THE DOORS AND WINDOWS THAT FACE THE BACKYARD DURING THE NIGHT.

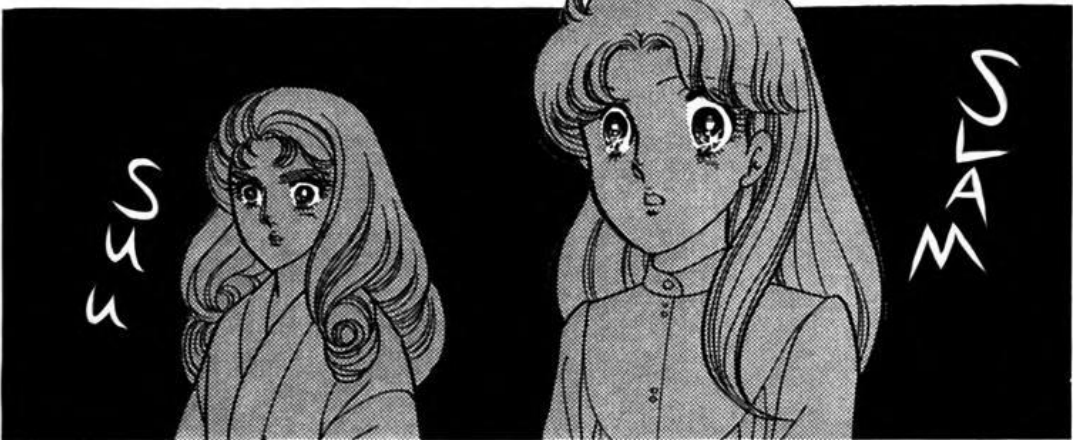
THIS WILL BE YOUR ROOM.

EH?



PLEASE, COME IN.







Now that we are finally here...

The birthplace of the Crimson Goddess...

The temple in which Ichiren Ozaki was raised...



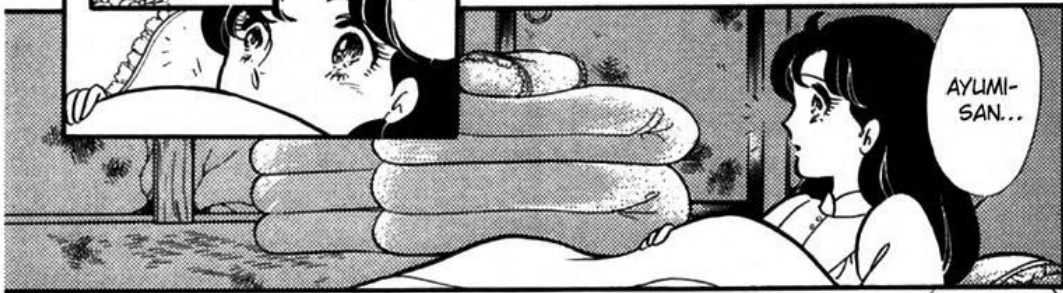
AWOOOOO

Where are you, Tsukikage-sensei?



Uhm...

Eh?



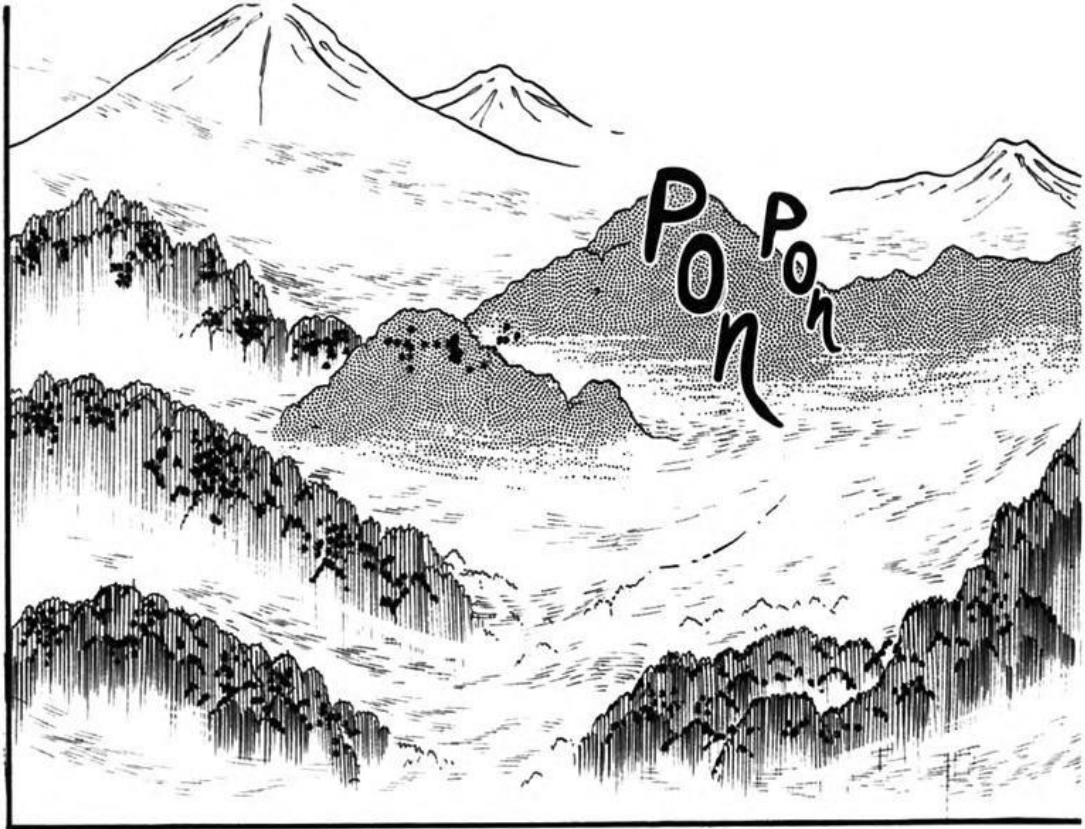
AYUMI-SAN...

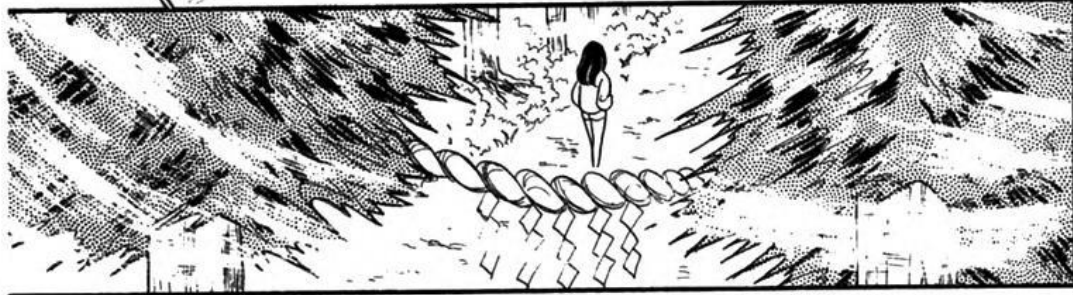


I CAN'T FIND GENZO-SAN EITHER... THAT'S STRANGE. SO EARLY IN THE MORNING...

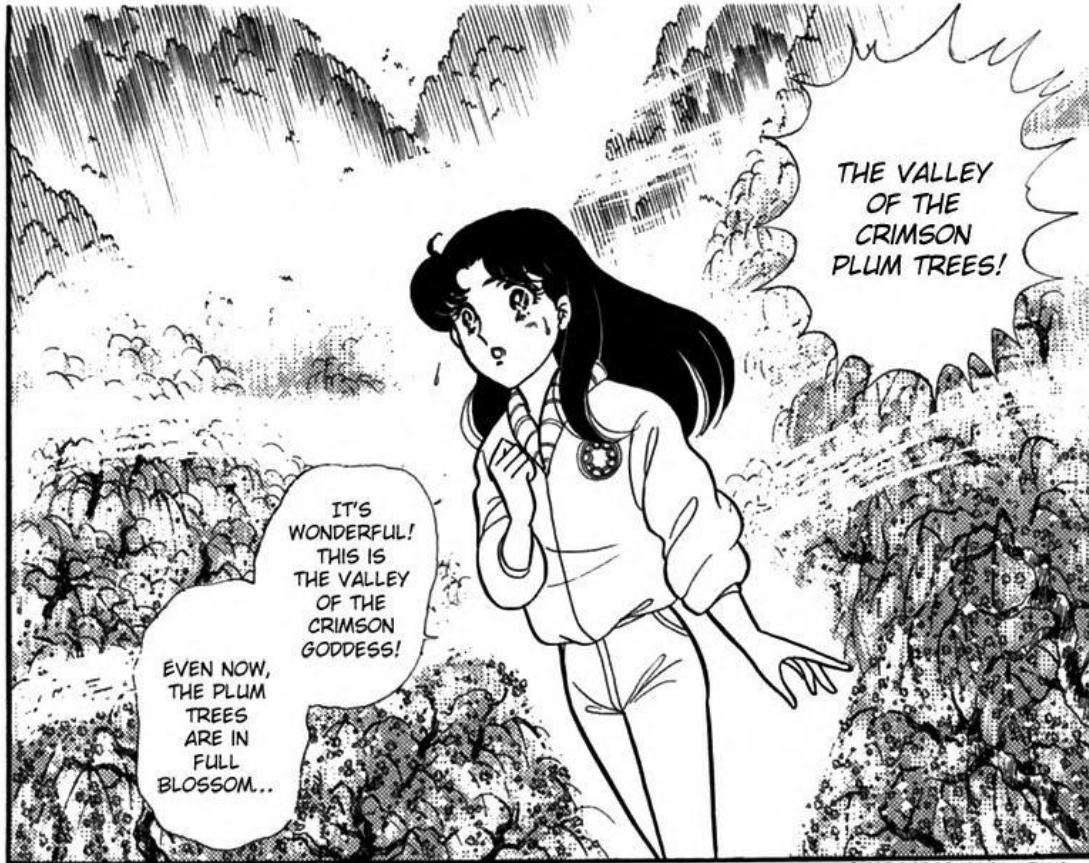
MAYBE THEY WENT FOR A WALK?









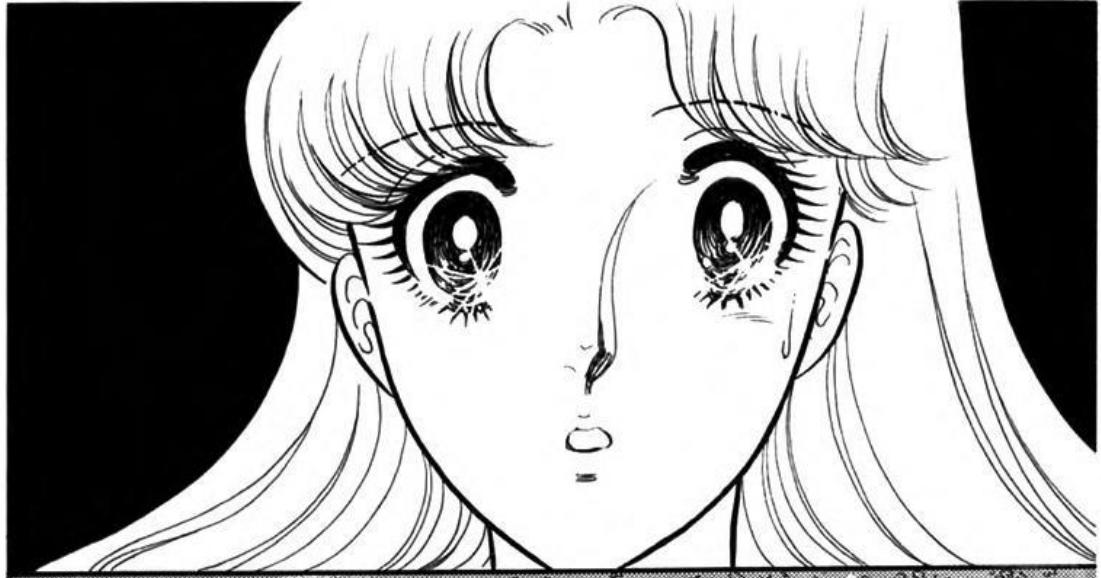


* JAPANESE HAND DRUM.





*The
Crimson
Goddess!*





The wind
isn't
blowing...!

That's...

No,
that's
not
it!





Chapter 188





WELCOME
TO THE
BIRTHPLACE
OF THE
CRIMSON
GODDESS...

...MAYA AND
AYUMI-SAN.



THANK YOU FOR MAKING ME REMEMBER SUCH A NOSTALGIC SIGHT, TSUKIKAGE-SAN.

AH!

TSUKIKAGE -SENSEI!

PRESI -DENT!

GENZO-SAN!

SO, BEFORE YOU KNEW IT, YOU ALL GATHERED HERE?

I AM GLAD TO SEE YOU ALL.

ME TOO.

I FOLLOWED THE SOUND OF THE TSU-ZUMI...

WHEN I WOKE UP I COULDN'T FIND ANYONE SO I DECIDED TO GET UP AND LOOK FOR THEM.



YOU LOOK FINE TOO, PRESIDENT.

THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE.

AND ALSO FOR BRINGING THESE TWO GIRLS HERE.

IT'S BEEN A WHILE, TSUKIKAGE-SAN.

I AM HAPPY TO SEE THAT YOU ARE IN GOOD HEALTH.



THANK YOU, AYUMI-SAN.

I KNEW YOU'D COME.



Maya...



TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI

I AM HAPPY TO BE HERE...

...AND TO FIND YOU IN GOOD HEALTH...

...IN THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS...



I AM SO NERVOUS! SOON, IN THIS PLACE, YOU WILL BEGIN TEACHING ME THE ROLE OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS.



SEEING YOU IN THIS VALLEY MAKES ME EXTREMELY HAPPY, TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI!



THE PLUM TREES ARE IN FULL BLOOM FOR HALF A YEAR.

THIS VALLEY IS A MYSTERIOUS PLACE.

THIS IS NOT THE TREE FROM WHICH THE SACRED STATUE WAS CARVED, BUT...

IT IS SPLENDID. I CAN'T TELL HOW OLD IT IS, BUT IT SHOULD BE AS OLD AS THE ONE FROM THE LEGEND.

COULD THIS BE THE CRIMSON PLUM TREE WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS DWELLS?

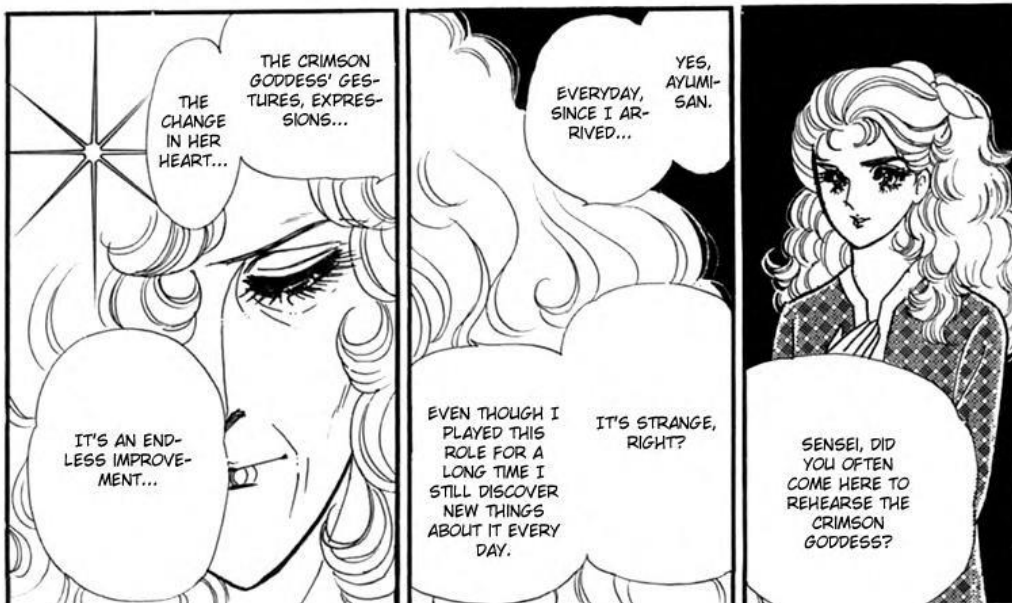
IT MUST BE DUE TO THE CONSTANT TEMPERATURES AND UNCHANGING CLIMATE.

AS IF THE SEASONS HAD STOPPED.

ICHIREN GOT HIS INSPIRATION FROM THIS TREE TO WRITE THE CRIMSON GODDESS!

IT KEEPS LIVING AND OFFERING US THESE MANY CRIMSON BLOSSOMS.

IT SURELY IS A SACRED TREE.



THE CRIMSON GODDESS' GESTURES, EXPRESSIONS... THE CHANGE IN HER HEART...

IT'S AN ENDLESS IMPROVEMENT...

EVERYDAY, SINCE I ARRIVED...

EVEN THOUGH I PLAYED THIS ROLE FOR A LONG TIME I STILL DISCOVER NEW THINGS ABOUT IT EVERY DAY.

IT'S STRANGE, RIGHT?

YES, AYUMI-SAN.

SENSEI, DID YOU OFTEN COME HERE TO REHEARSE THE CRIMSON GODDESS?



YOUR PERFORMANCE EARLIER WAS WONDERFUL.

I'M READY TO DO ANYTHING.

FOR A LONG TIME I DREAMED OF THE DAY WHEN I COULD BE TAUGHT BY YOU.

DON'T EVER GET TIRED OF TRYING.

BUT YOU HAVE YOUR OWN CRIMSON GODDESS.

IT LOOKED AS IF THE WIND WAS GENTLY CARESSING THE PLUM TREE BLOSSOMS ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO WIND BLOWING.

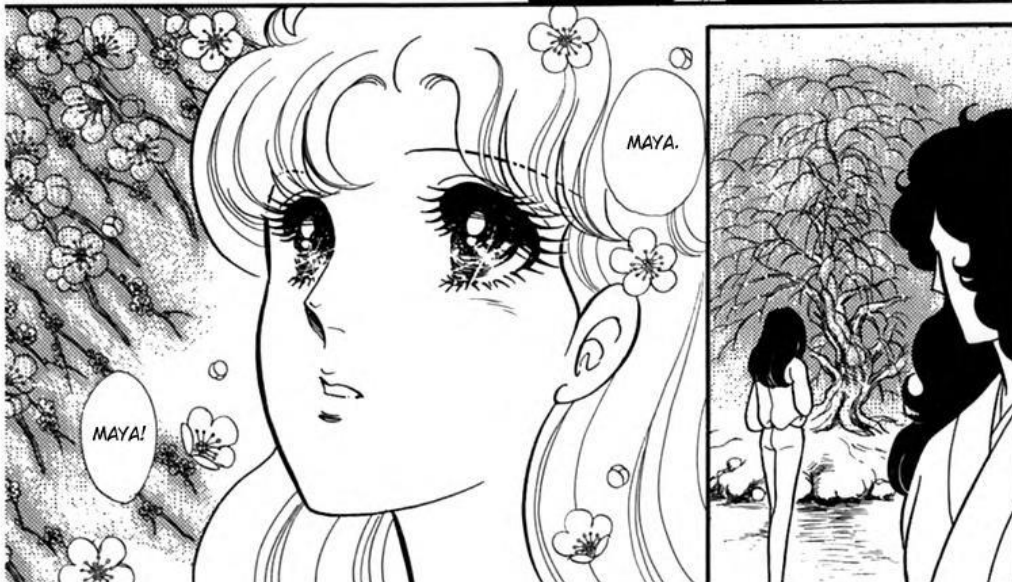
I FEEL HONOURED TO BE GUIDED BY YOU, TSUKI-KAGE-SENSEI.

YES, TSUKI-KAGE-SENSEI.

YOU MUST AIM FOR PERFECTION.

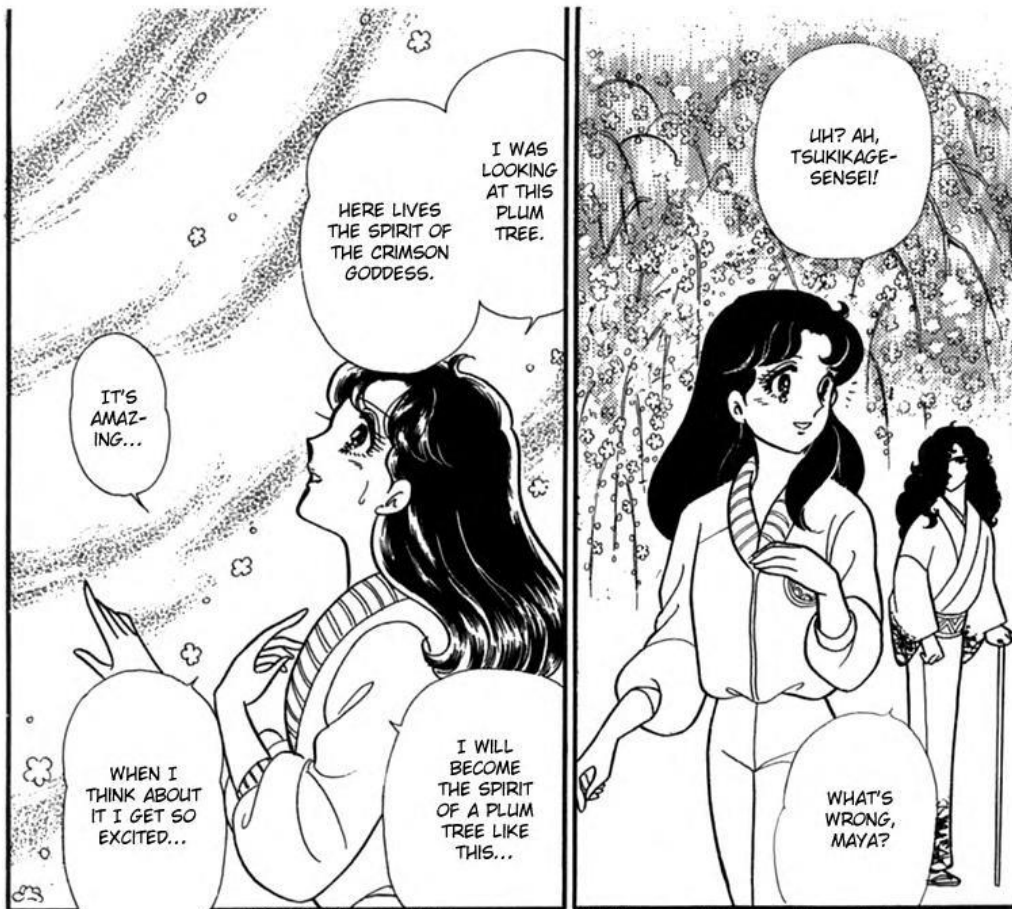


THANK YOU, AYUMI-SA...



MAYA.

MAYA!

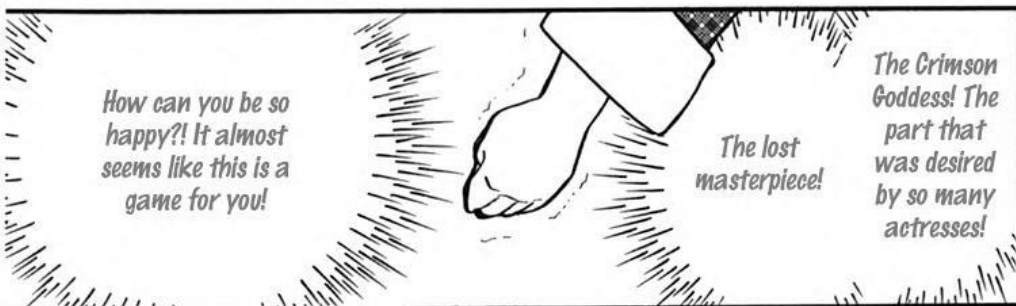




While I'm filled with tension at the thought of the challenge the Crimson Goddess is!

What kind of person are you!

You are excited to become the spirit of a plum tree!



How can you be so happy?! It almost seems like this is a game for you!

The lost masterpiece!

The Crimson Goddess! The part that was desired by so many actresses!



Ah, why do you exist...?!

When I compare myself to you I notice how futile my efforts are.

If I look at you I start to feel self conscious.

NOW I SHALL TELL YOU A BIT OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS' STORY.

Why...?!

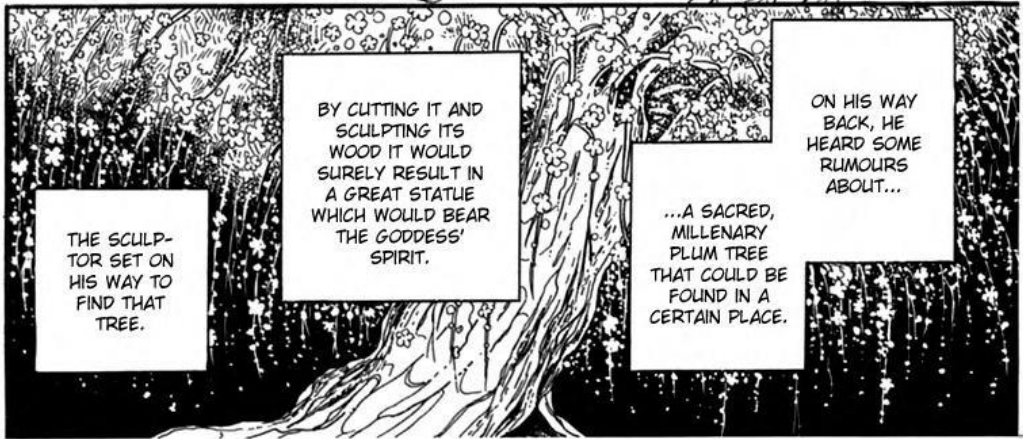


A LONG TIME AGO
WHEN THE COUNTRY WAS TORN APART BY WAR...

...THE EMPEROR ORDERED A SCULPTOR THAT SPECIALISED IN SACRED IMAGES TO MAKE THE STATUE OF A GODDESS TO PLEAD TO HER FOR PEACE.

HE WONDERED HOW HE COULD MAKE A STATUE IN WHICH THE SPIRIT OF THE GODDESS WOULD LIVE.

THE SCULPTOR MADE SEVERAL ATTEMPTS BUT NONE SATISFIED HIM.



THE SCULPTOR SET ON HIS WAY TO FIND THAT TREE.

BY CUTTING IT AND SCULPTING ITS WOOD IT WOULD SURELY RESULT IN A GREAT STATUE WHICH WOULD BEAR THE GODDESS' SPIRIT.

...A SACRED, MILLENNARY PLUM TREE THAT COULD BE FOUND IN A CERTAIN PLACE.

ON HIS WAY BACK, HE HEARD SOME RUMOURS ABOUT...



IT WAS THE CRIMSON GODDESS, THE MILLENNARY SPIRIT OF THE PLUM TREE...

THEN HE MET WITH A YOUNG MAIDEN.



ALL RIGHT.



...SO THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND HER AND EXPRESS YOURSELVES...

STARTING FROM NOW I SHALL TEACH YOU SOMETHING ABOUT THE CRIMSON GODDESS ...



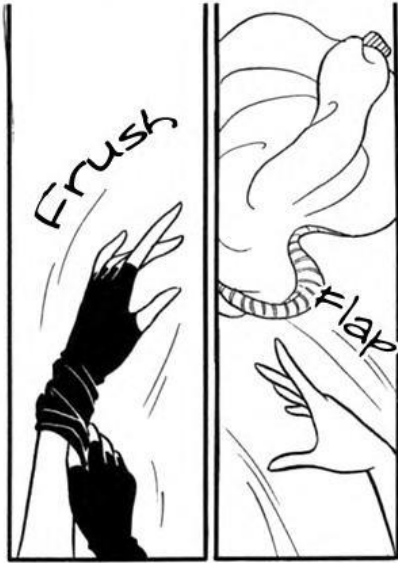
COME NOW!



A PLUM TREE?

SO, YOU TWO, BECOME A PLUM TREE.

...AS THIS CHARACTER AND THUS ACT IN THE PLAY.







My hips and right leg are aching! My arms feel heavy and my body is stiff!

How...how much longer must we continue to hold this pose..?!

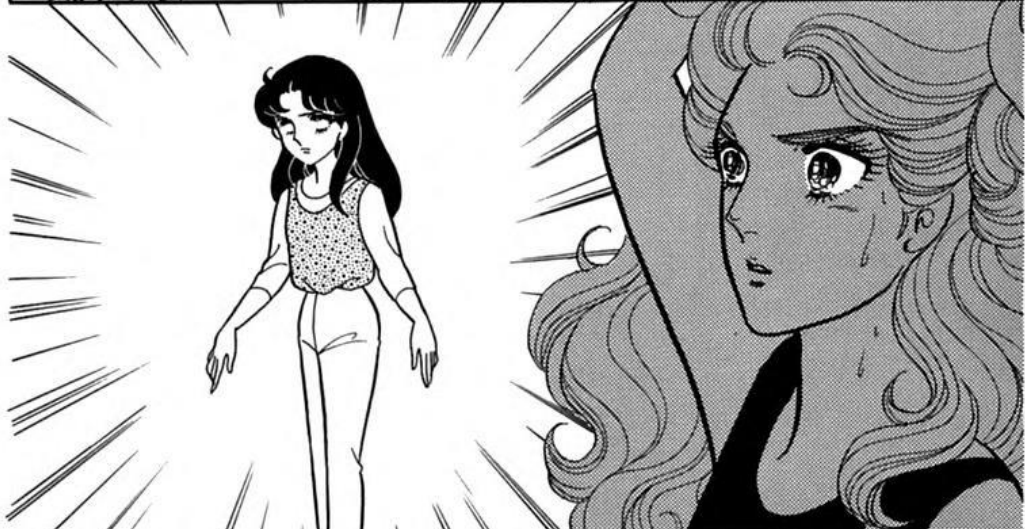
We've been like this for a long time.

I am not a true plum tree...



Ah!

A true plum tree...





Clap

OKAY!
THAT'S
ENOUGH!

Why..?

Maya...!
She looks so
natural!

She is able to
stand still and
not even get
tired!

WHAT DO
YOU THINK,
PRESIDENT
?

HMM.

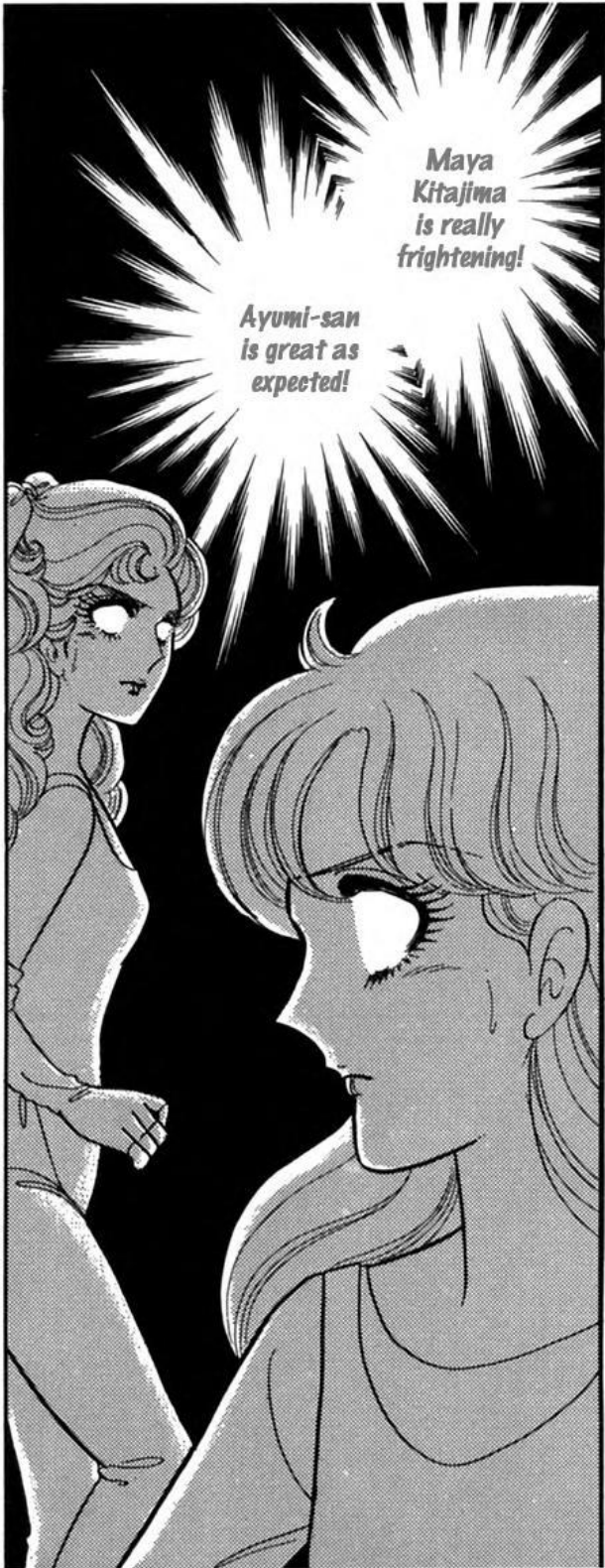
...BUT WHICH,
WITH THE
PASSING OF
TIME, MADE HER
BEAR MORE
RESEMBLANCE
TO A TREE...

ON THE
OTHER HAND,
KITAJIMA-KUN
HAS CHOSEN AN
EXTREMELY
SIMPLE AND
ORDINARY
POSE...

IT HAS
BROUGHT
FORWARD
THE TIRED-
NESS OF
A HUMAN
BEING.

AYUMI-SAN'S
POSE WAS
BEAUTIFUL
BUT HARD
TO MAINTAIN
FOR LONG.

...AND AS
A RESULT
TRANSMITTED
THE FEELING OF
BEING ONE.



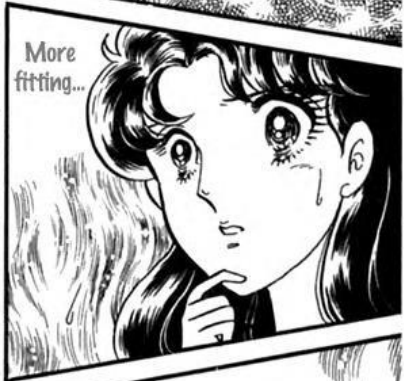
Ayumi-san
is great as
expected!

Maya
Kitajima
is really
frightening!



IN THIS CASE
AYUMI'S POSE
SEEMS MORE
FITTING.

BUT ON THE
STAGE YOU
WON'T HAVE
TO MAINTAIN
IT FOR SO
LONG.

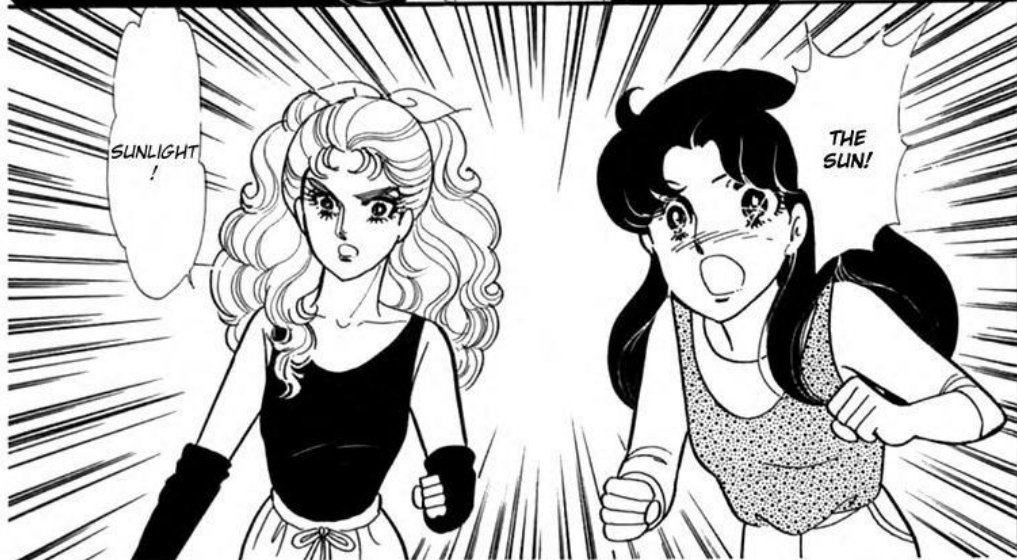


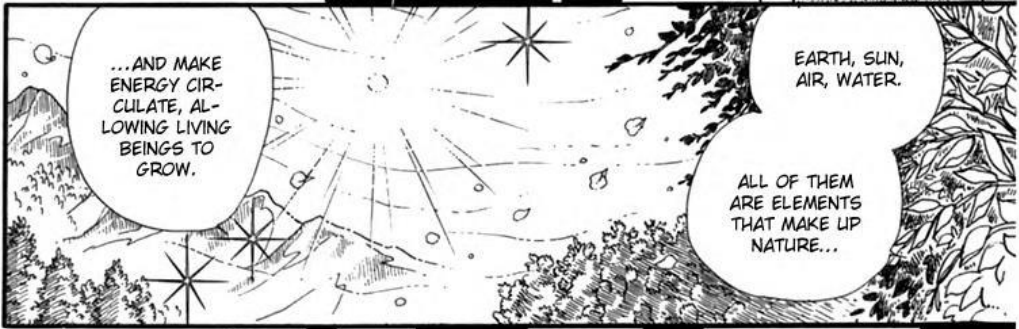
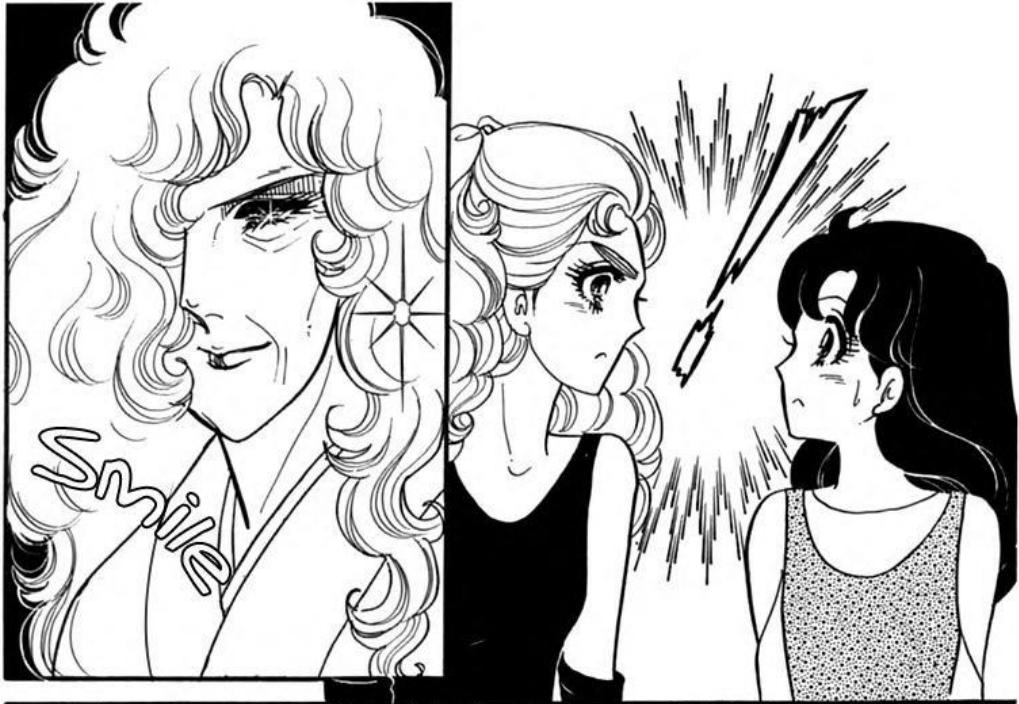
More
fitting...

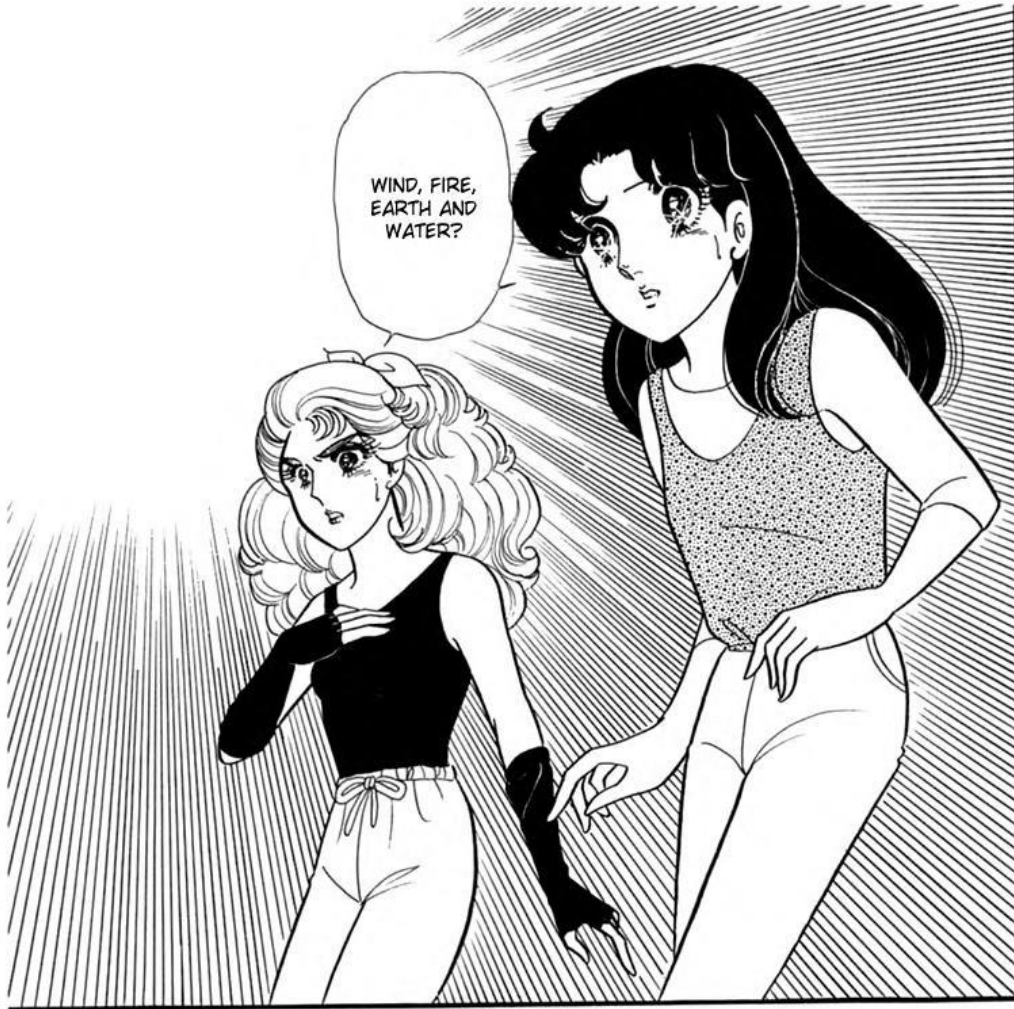


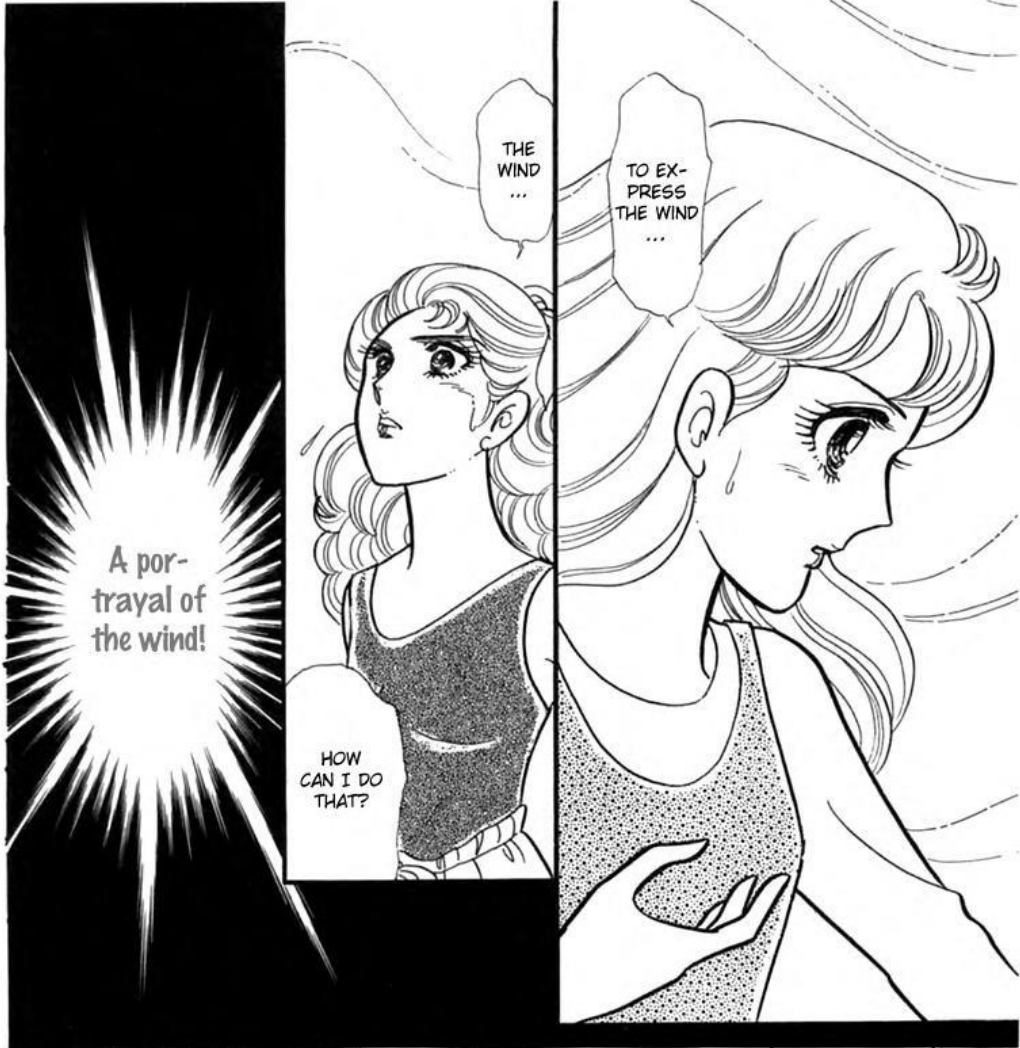
With the passing time my
plum tree has brought for-
ward the fragility of a
human being while on the
contrary Maya seemed
even more like a tree...

Why...
?













Until I've
trained the girls
for the part of
the Crimson
Goddess!

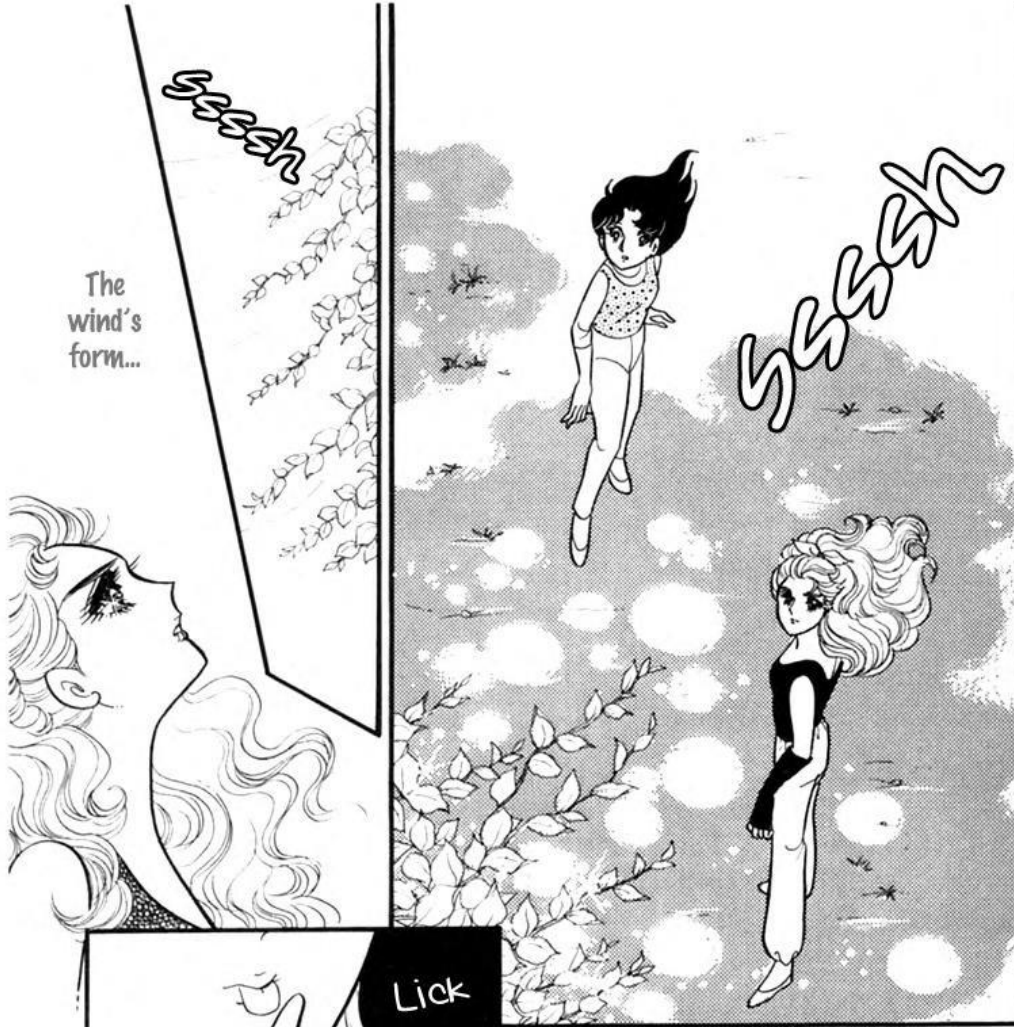


The wind
...

Portraying
the wind!

How can I
express the
wind...?!

Whoosh!



The wind's form...

Ssssh

Ssssh



Lick



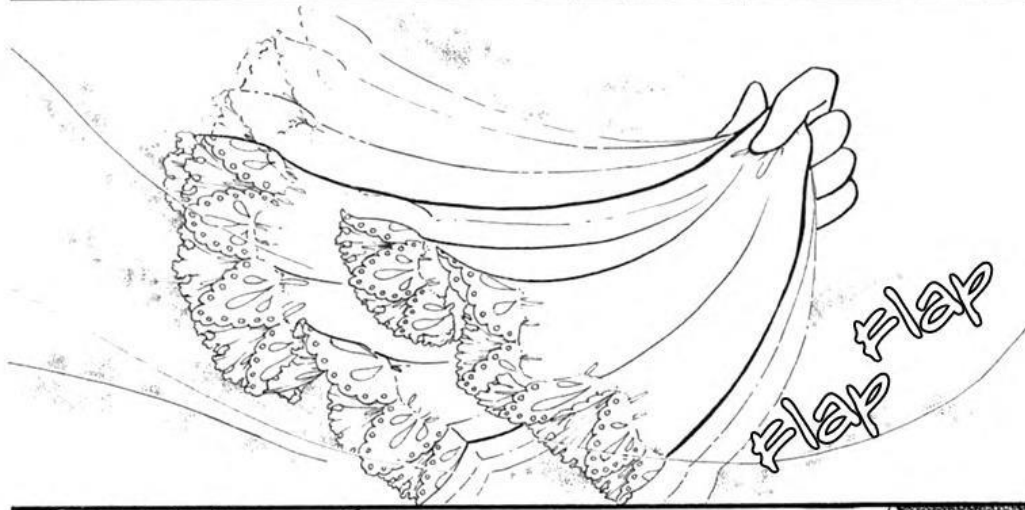
Ssssh

Ssssh



The tip of the finger gets dry...

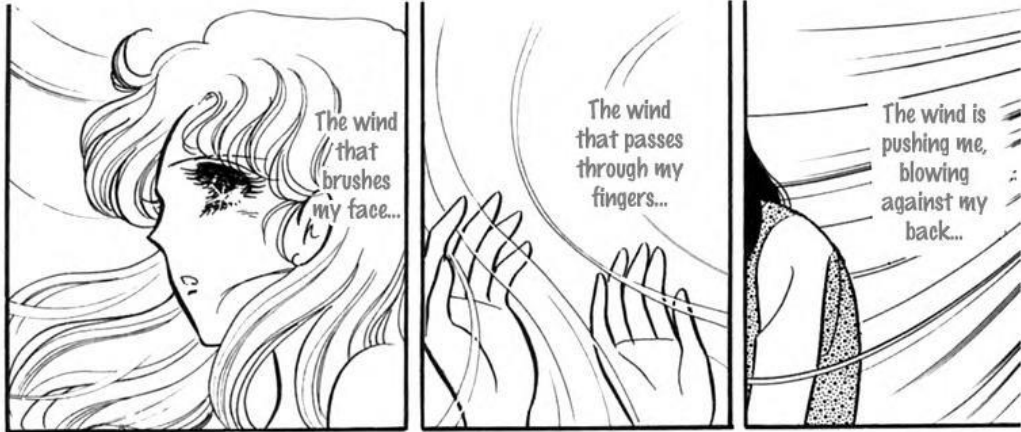
The wind is blowing from the mountain...





The mass
of air is
moving...

It's so
loud...the
sound of the
wind...





The clouds moving rapidly by...

The power of the wind...

The wind...



To portray the wind...

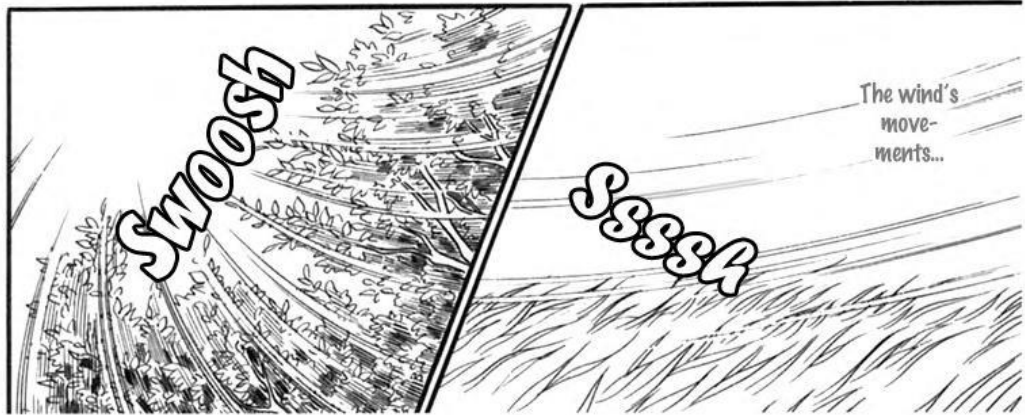


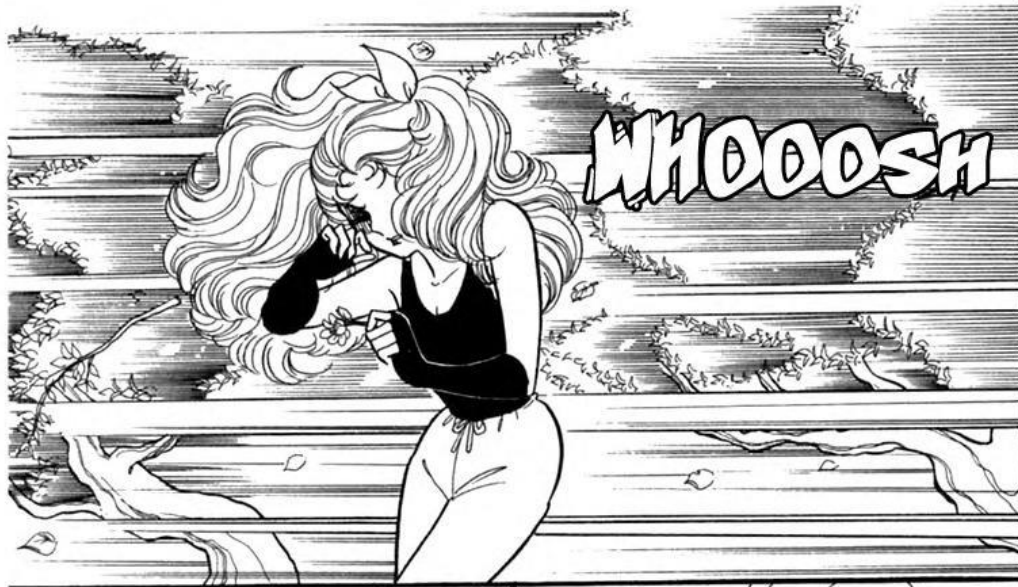
What is the wind...?

How does it come into this world...?

The wind that causes a small swirl at my feet and pushes the clouds in the sky...

The essence of the wind...





WHOOOSH



EVEN IF IT WAS FOR A MOMENT IT SEEMED TO HAVE THE STRENGTH OF A TYPHOON!

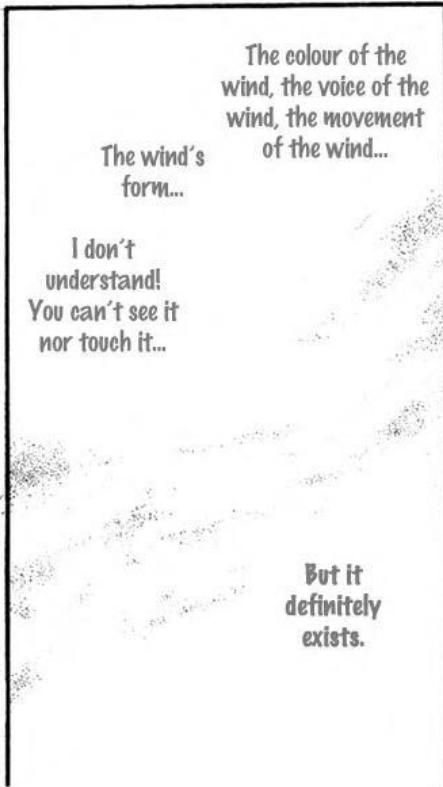
SWOOSH

AAH, WHAT A SURPRISE!
A SUDDEN BREEZE!



...Using my body!

There must be a way to express the wind's form...

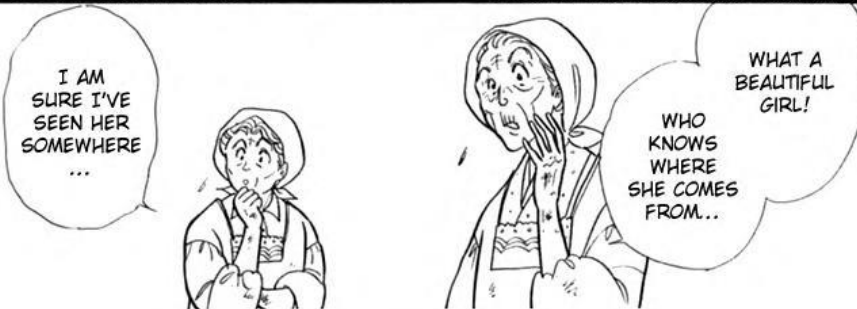
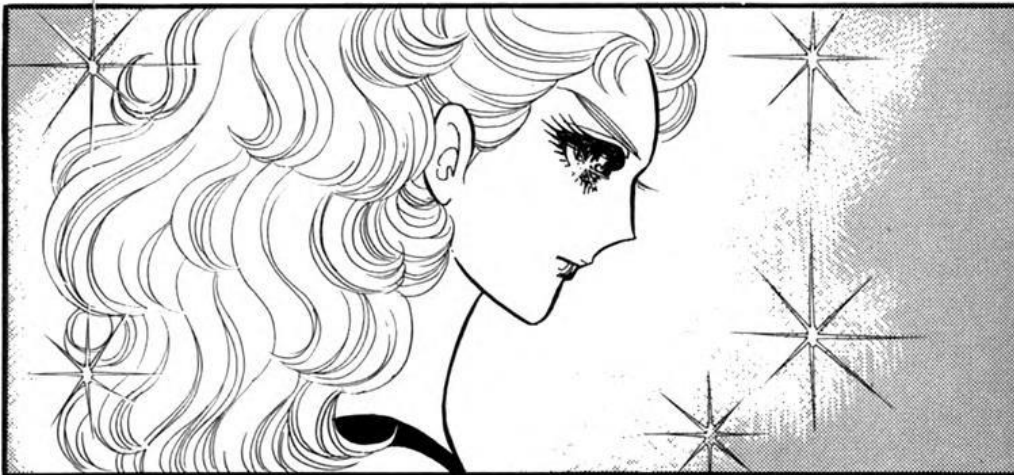


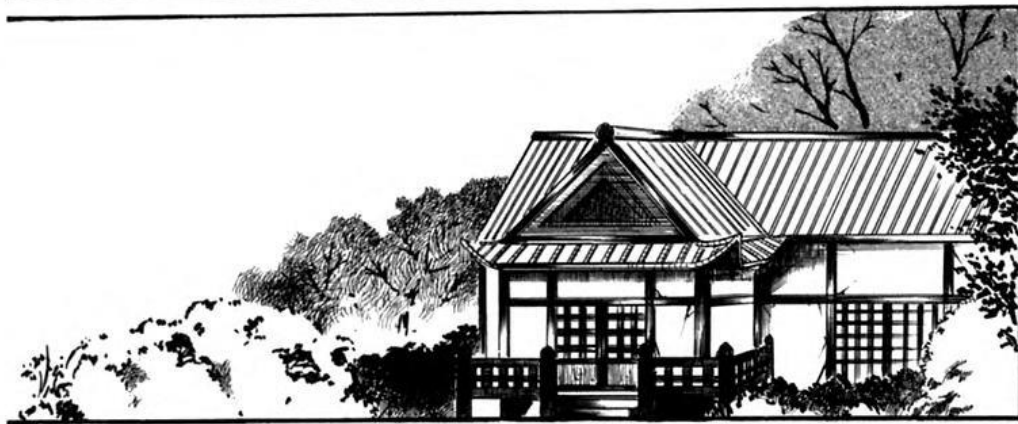
The colour of the wind, the voice of the wind, the movement of the wind...

The wind's form...

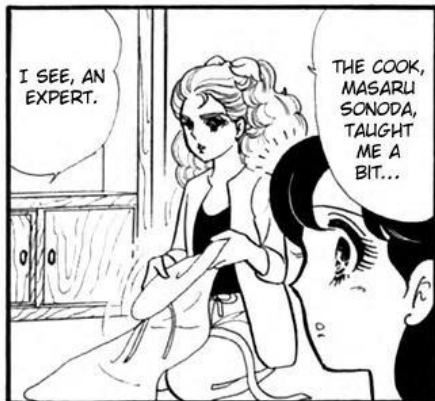
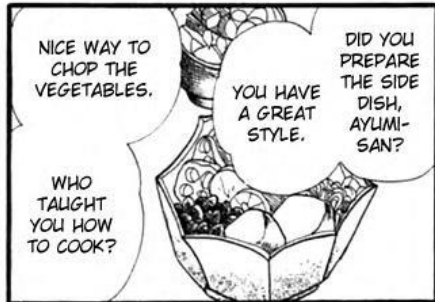
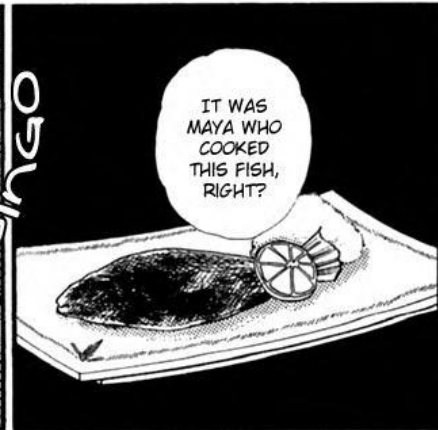
I don't understand!
You can't see it nor touch it...

But it definitely exists.

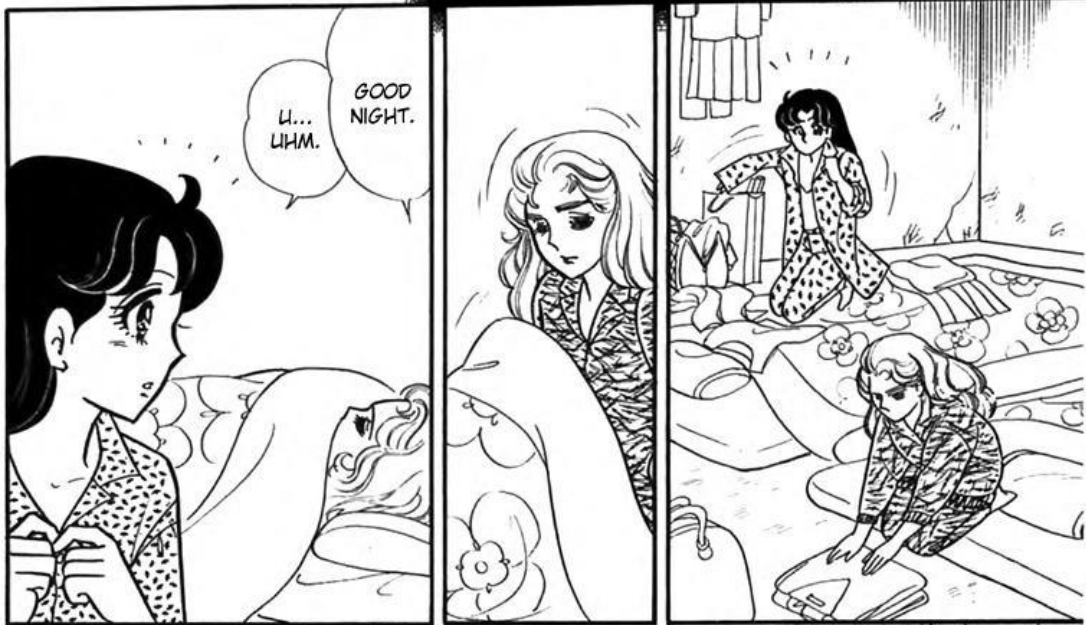








Chapter 189

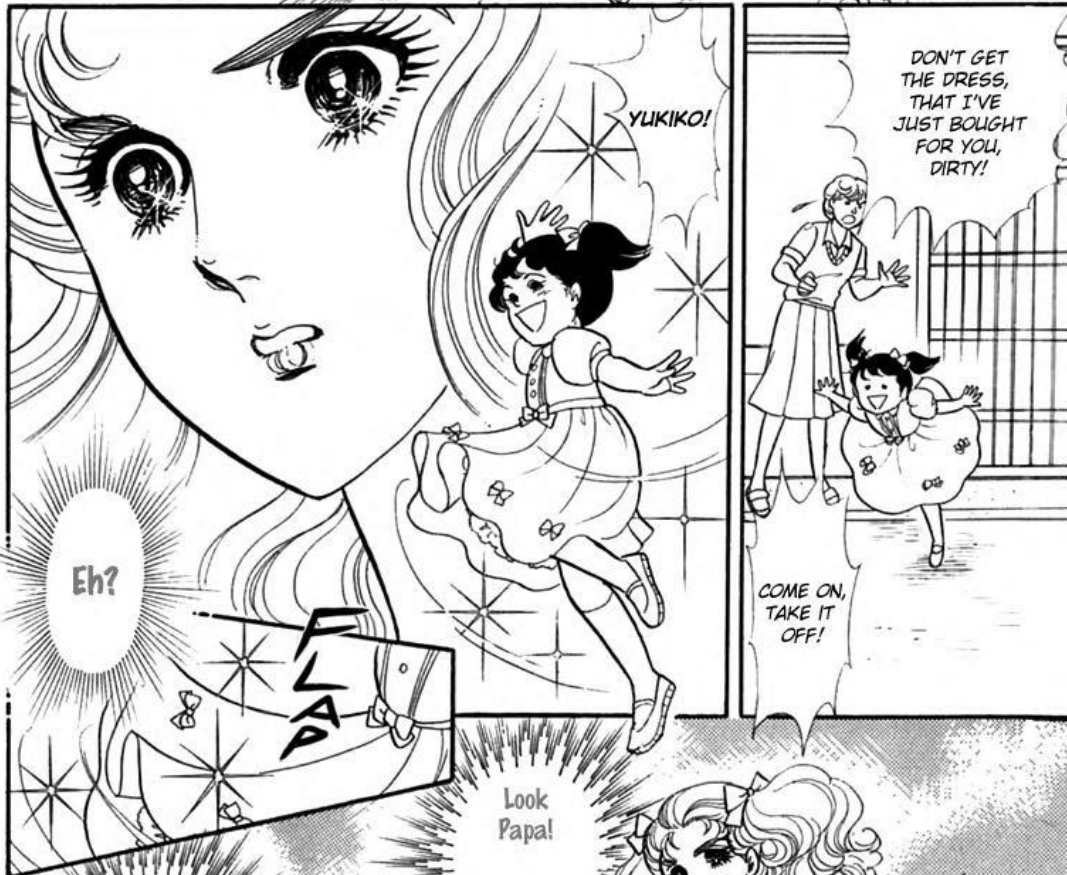






WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

WAIT, YUKIKO!



YUKIKO!

Eh?

DON'T GET THE DRESS, THAT I'VE JUST BOUGHT FOR YOU, DIRTY!

COME ON, TAKE IT OFF!



Look Papa!

Look Mama!

Don't I look like a princess with this dress?

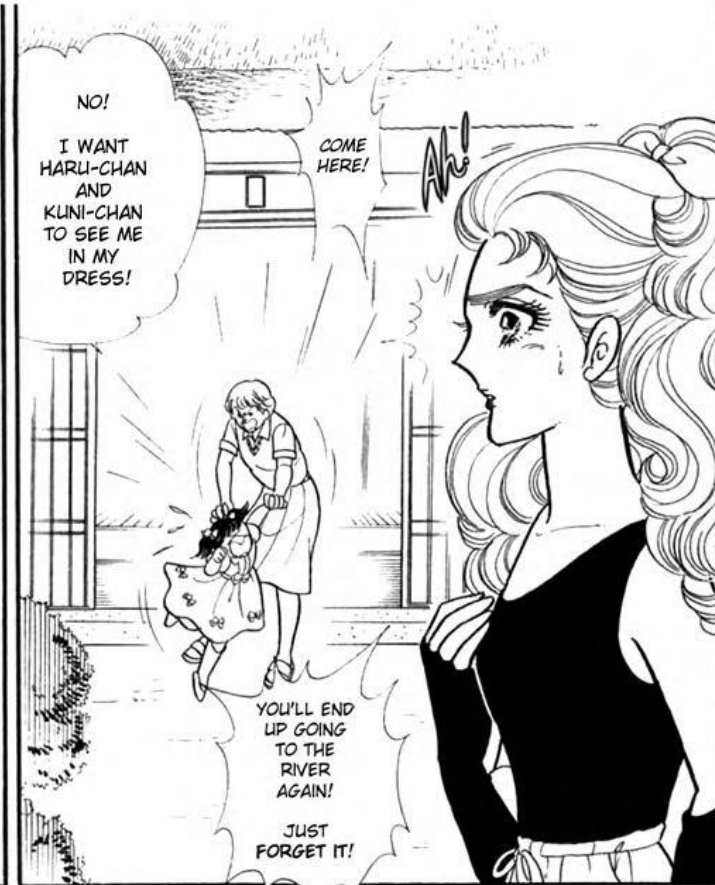
Look!

Now that I think about it...

When I was little, they gave me a dress covered with lace and I showed it off all day...



I was so happy when the wind blew through my dress...



NO!
I WANT HARU-CHAN AND KUNI-CHAN TO SEE ME IN MY DRESS!

COME HERE!

Ah!

YOU'LL END UP GOING TO THE RIVER AGAIN!

JUST FORGET IT!

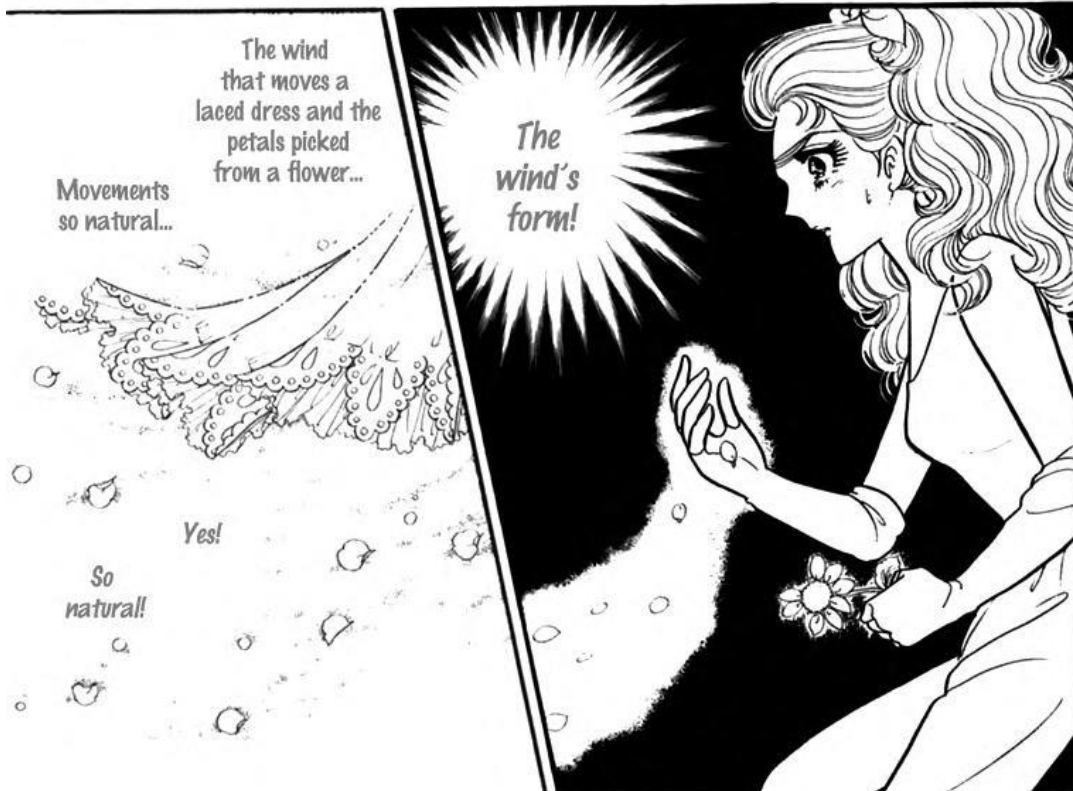
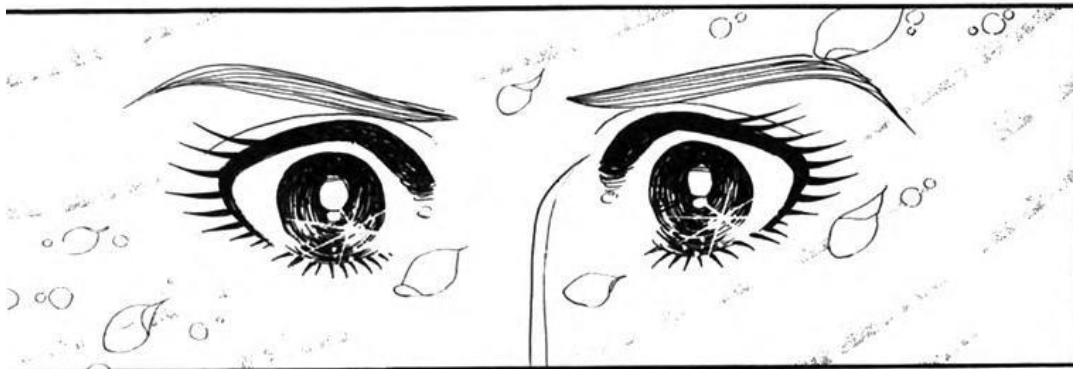


Pick.
THAT'S RIGHT, I USED TO SEEK ANSWERS BY PICKING THE PETALS OFF FLOWERS LIKE THIS...

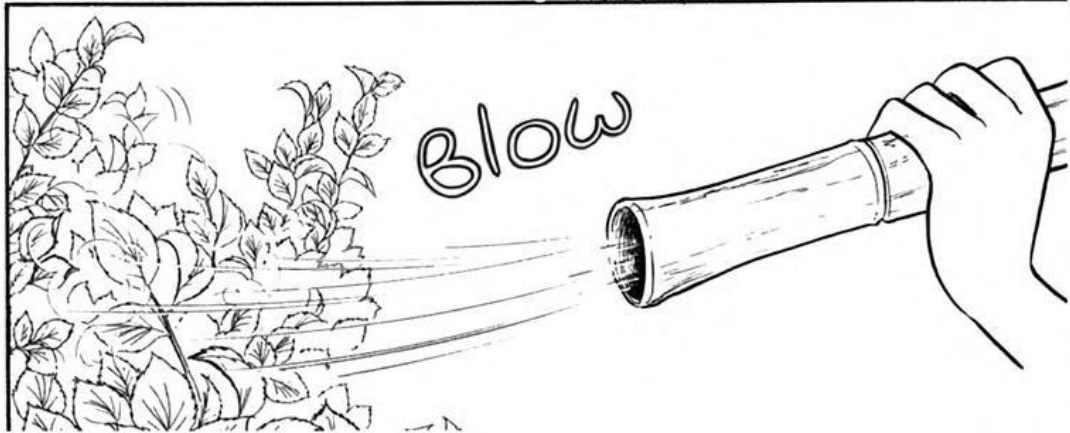
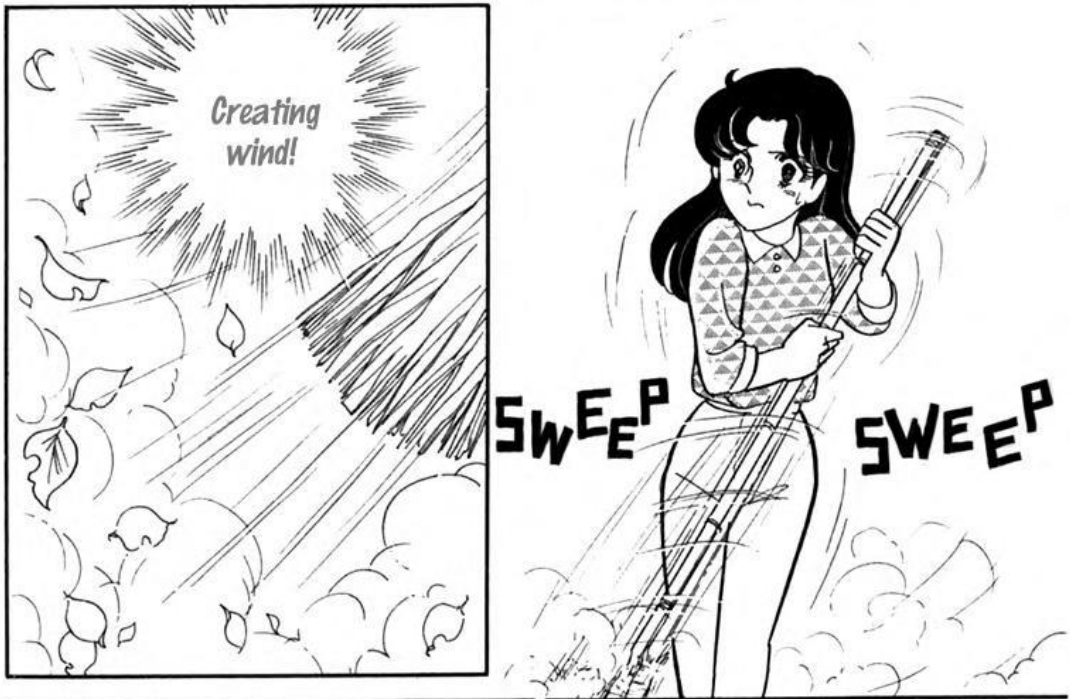


The childhood...

A dress that rustled in the wind...









**Creating
wind!**

FAN

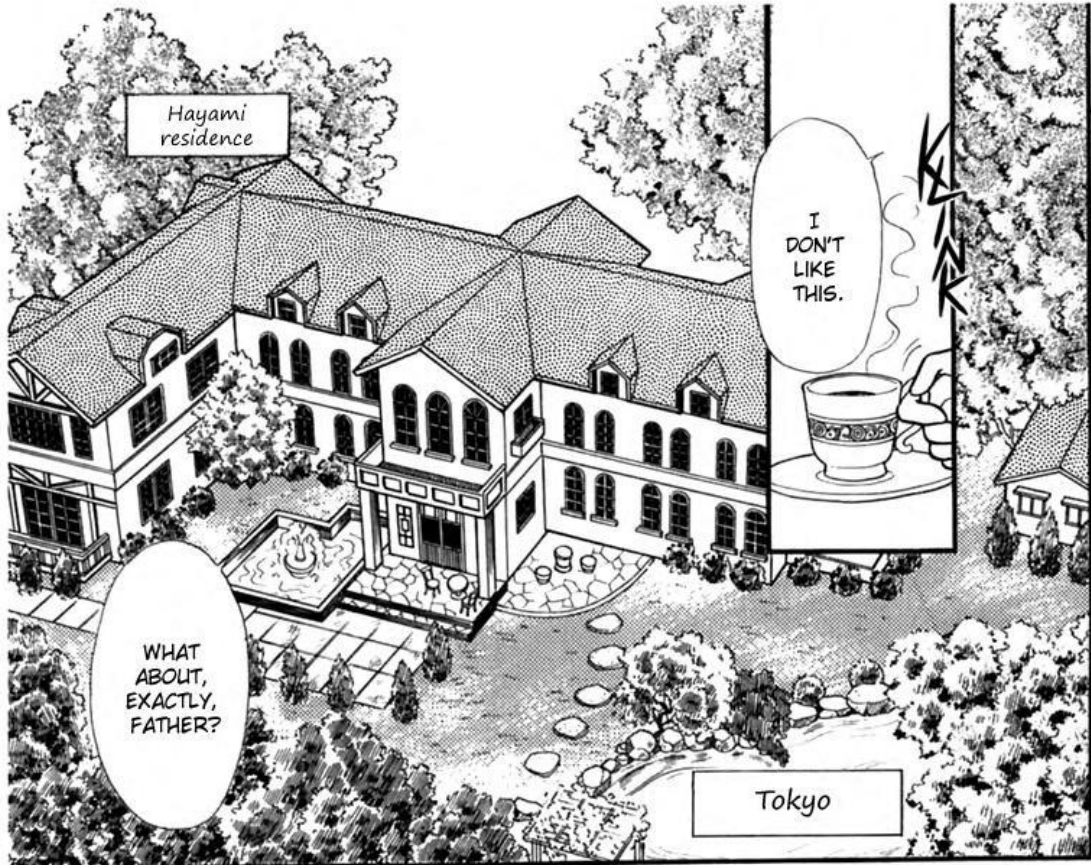


and rapidly moves
the clouds in
the vast sky...

The wind
that moves
in small
whirlpools
at my feet...

WHOOOSH







AND ALSO DECIDED UPON A TEST STAGING, ALL ACCORDING TO DAITO'S PLANS...

THE ALL-JAPAN ACTING ASSOCIATION HAS PICKED TALENTED PEOPLE FOR THE PARTS AND STAFF...

AND SHOULDN'T I?

THE EXCLUSIVE HANDLING OF THIS ISSUE BY THE ALL-JAPAN ACTING ASSOCIATION...

YOU ARE TOO CALM CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT THE STAGING RIGHTS FOR THE CRIMSON GODDESS...

WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING?
YOU CAN TELL ME.

STILL BELONG TO CHIGUSA TSUKIKAGE AND THE PRODUCTION IS MONOPOLISED BY THE ALL-JAPAN ACTING ASSOCIATION.

I HAVE NO MOTIVE TO BE UNSATISFIED.

HAS STOPPED OTHER PRODUCTION HOUSES, SUCH AS HOCHIKU, WHICH ARE ALSO OUR COMPETITORS, FROM GETTING THEIR HANDS ON THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

HOW CAN YOU TOLERATE THIS SITUATION WITHOUT REACTING IN ANY WAY?

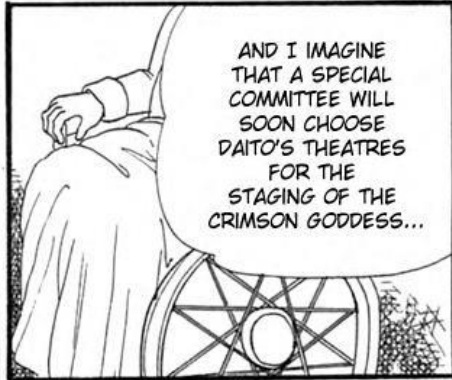


WAS IT ALL YOUR DOING?

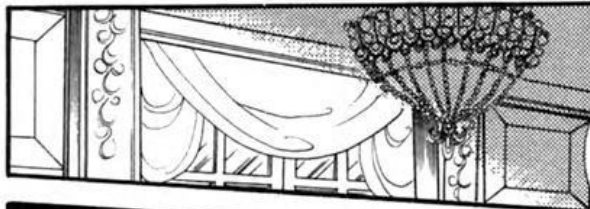
I SEE.
IS THAT SO?



WHO KNOWS, IT JUST MIGHT WORK THAT WAY...



AND I IMAGINE THAT A SPECIAL COMMITTEE WILL SOON CHOOSE DAITO'S THEATRES FOR THE STAGING OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS...



I DON'T THINK THAT THEY'LL GO WITH DAITO BEING THE ONE TO STAGE THE PLAY.

AND HOW DO YOU THINK CHIGUSA TSUKIKAGE AND THAT GIRL WILL REACT?



THEY ARE ABOUT TO FALL INTO MY TRAP.

DON'T WORRY...

FATHER.

YOUR TRAP?



What are you planning, Masumi?!

To fall into a trap?

You've become more cautious!



IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE YOUNG LADY OF THE TAKAMIYA FAMILY HAS TAKEN A LIKING TO YOU.

CONSIDERING THAT YOU DON'T HAVE A CLUE WHEN DEALING WITH WOMEN, YOU DID JUST FINE.

BY THE WAY, MASUMI...

SHIORI-SAN SENT A MESSENGER ASKING FOR AN ANSWER REGARDING THE MARRIAGE.



YOU CAN'T DELAY YOUR ANSWER TO SHIORI-SAN, MASUMI.

THE TAKAMIYA FAMILY HAS APPROVED OF THIS UNION.



Why
am I so
attracted
to that
girl..?

Sssh..



She's
the
right
age to
perform
the
Crimson
Goddess'
love...

She's
grown up
before
I realised
it...

The
Crimson
Goddess...



To that
girl who
is eleven
years
younger
than me..?

Sssh..

Even though I knew that she wouldn't look at me...

In my heart, I was waiting for her to become an adult...



When I'm together with her I can at last relax...

She is honest and has no ulterior motives, more so than any other.



No other actress has ever awoken these kinds of feelings inside me...

When she is on the stage her movements, her gestures make me forget myself, without even noticing...



I should be ashamed...

Will I be able to send her a bouquet of purple roses and my heartfelt regards...?

No...



And when that day comes she'll belong to another.

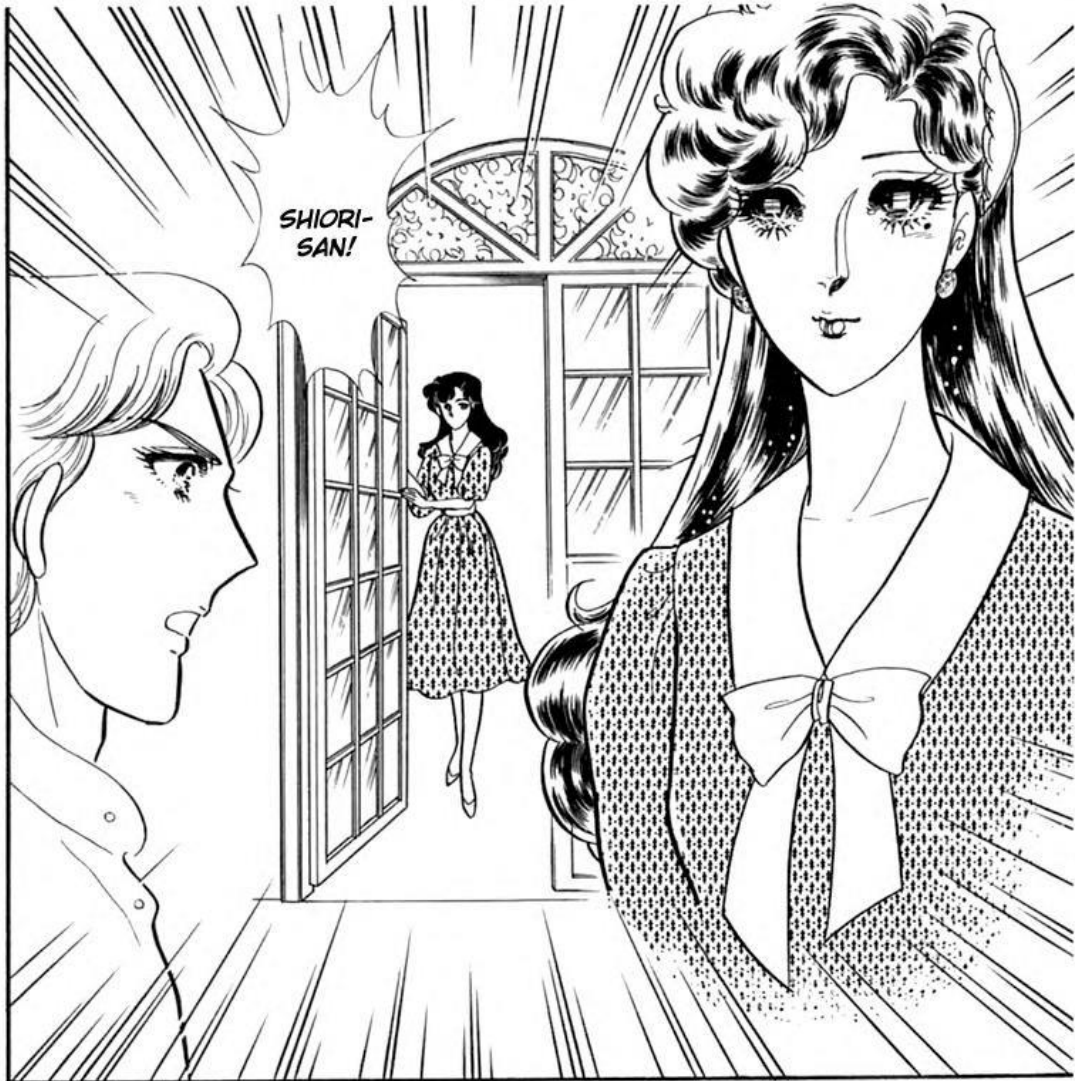
Probably one day she'll also learn to love...

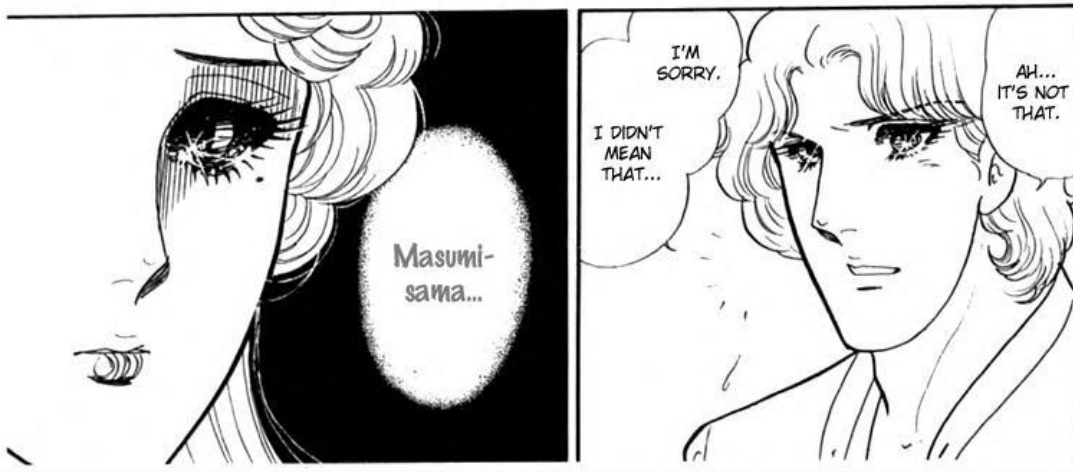
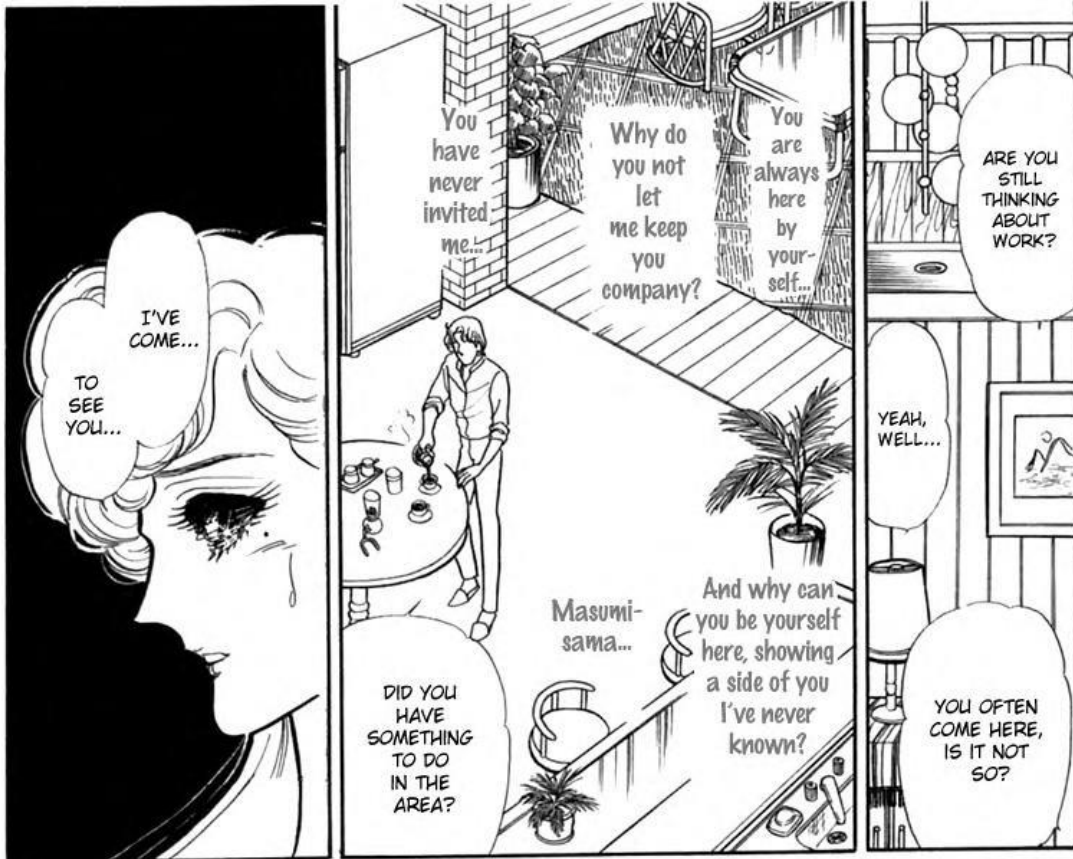
Will I be able to keep my cool then..?



*If that
were
to happen
I might lose
my mind!*

*I'll never
give her to
anyone else!*







YESTERDAY,
THE MESSENGER
I SENT TOLD
ME THAT
NO ANSWER
WAS SENT FROM
THE HAYAMI
HOUSEHOLD.

EH?

MASUMI-
SAMA...



Stop
with all
these
formalities...

KLINK
KLINK

MY... THE
TAKAMIYA
HOUSEHOLD'S
ANSWER WAS
SENT QUITE
A WHILE
AGO...

WHEN WILL
YOU GIVE
ME AN
ANSWER?



SHIORI-
SAN!



AM
I..
NOT TO
YOUR
LIKING?



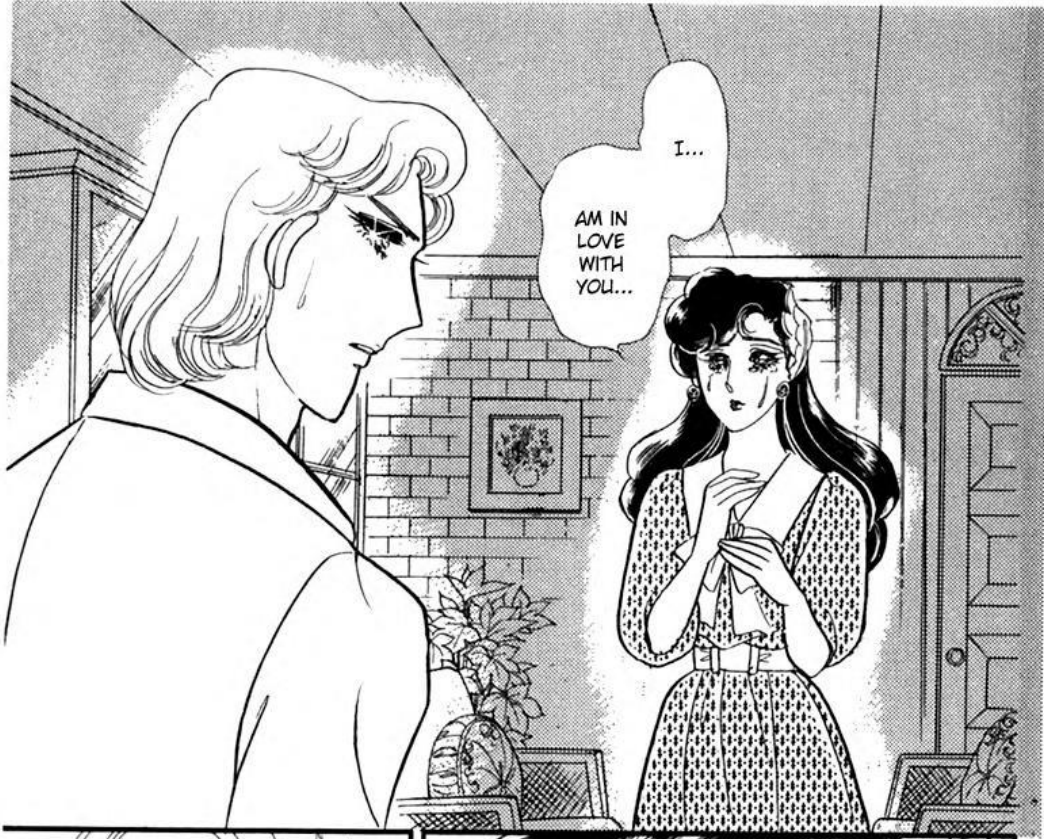
Shiori-
san...

WHY DO
YOU DELAY
ANSWERING
ME?!

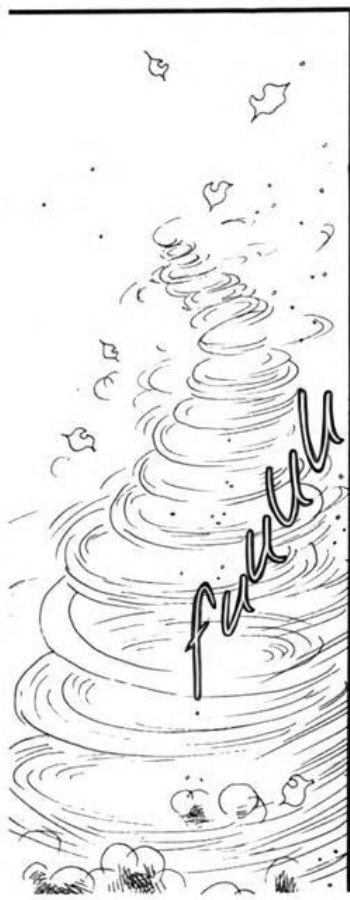
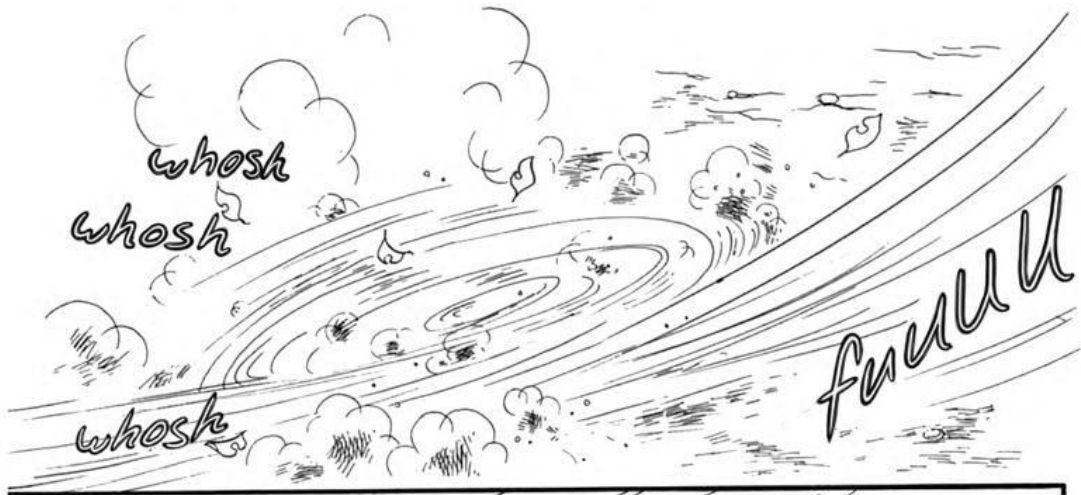
THEN
WHY?!

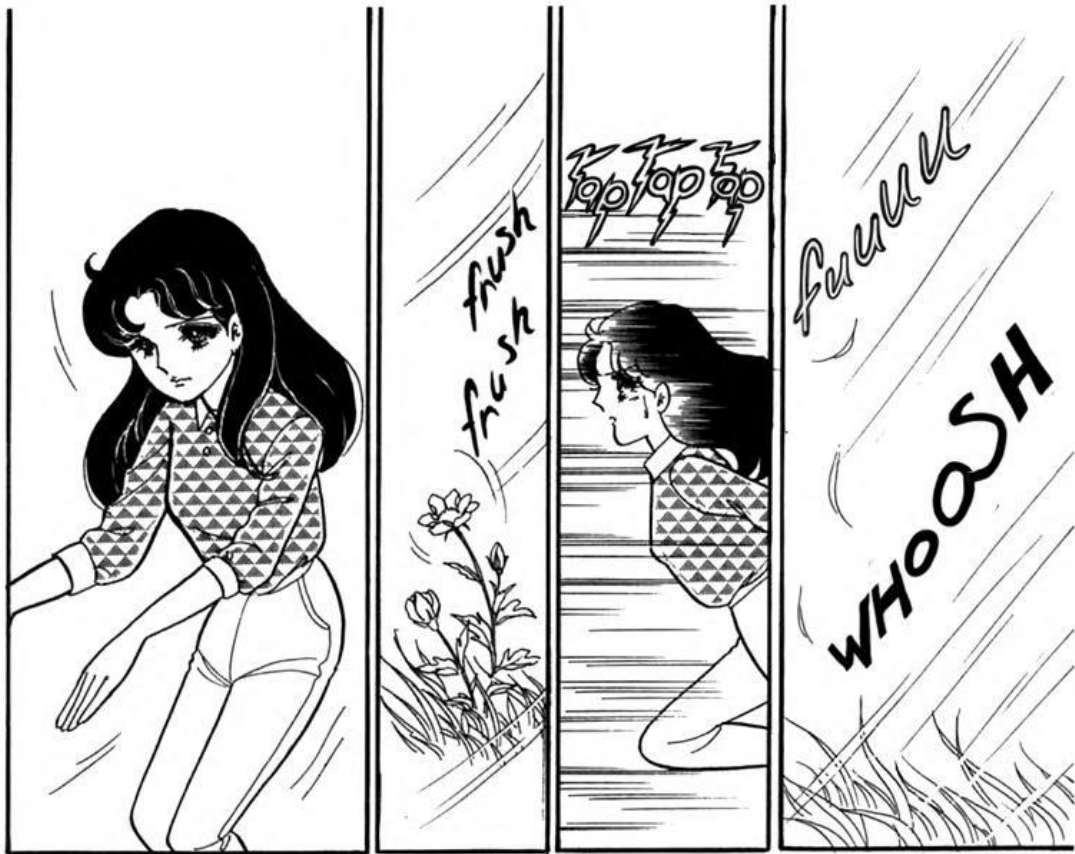
BUT OF
COURSE,
YOU'RE A
WONDERFUL
PERSON!

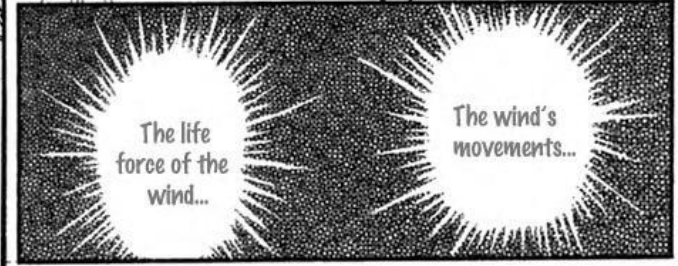
ARE YOU
IN LOVE
WITH
SOMEONE
ELSE?

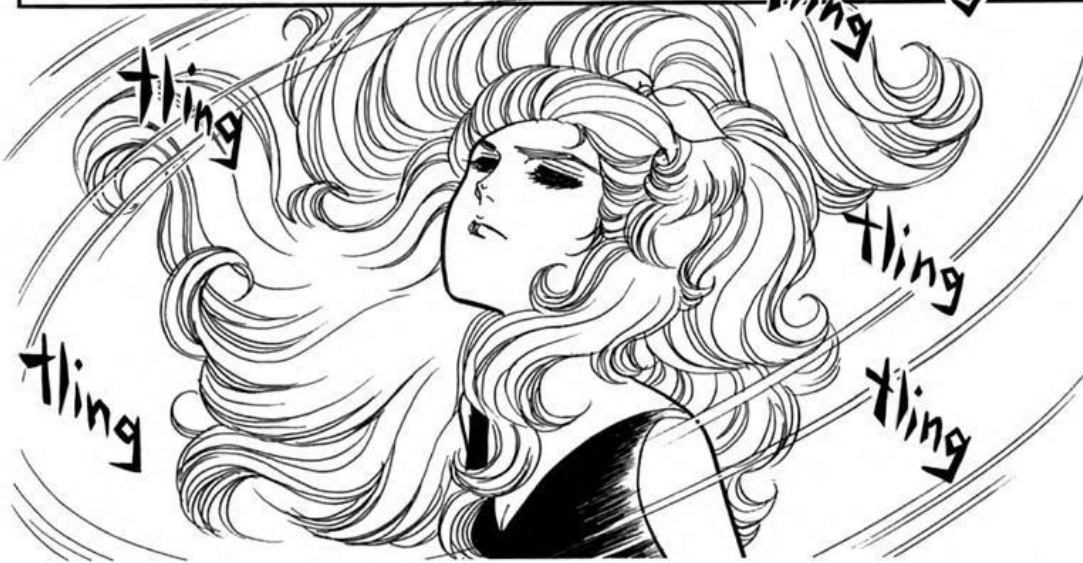


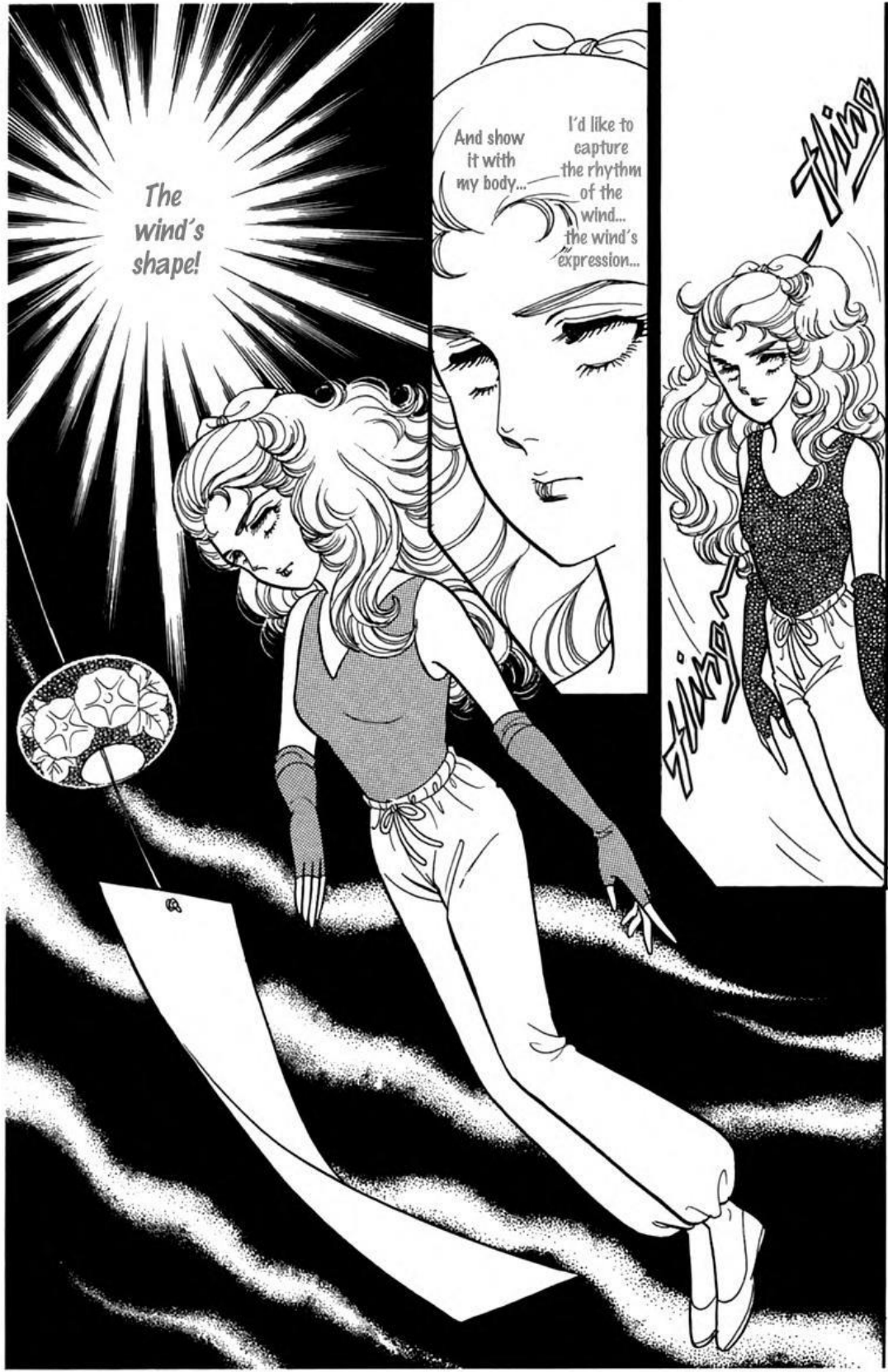












The
wind's
shape!

And show
it with
my body...

I'd like to
capture
the rhythm
of the
wind...
the wind's
expression...

Wind



THE SLIGHTEST MOVEMENT REVEALS THE INCREDIBLE TENSION OF HER BODY.

SHE'S MOVING TO THE SOUND OF THE WIND CHIME.

SHE'S COMPLETELY CONCENTRATED ON THE WIND.



AYUMI-SAMA... SHE'S DRENCHED IN SWEAT.



IT'S TRUE! IT'S THE SAME FACE I SAW IN THE TV COMMERCIALS!

EH?! YOU SAY THAT THAT GIRL WHO APPEARS IN TV AND MAGAZINES IS AT THE MOUNTAIN TEMPLE?

THAT'S WHAT GRANNY SAID!

IT SEEMS SHE'S DOING SOME ACTING PRACTICES AT THE TEMPLE.



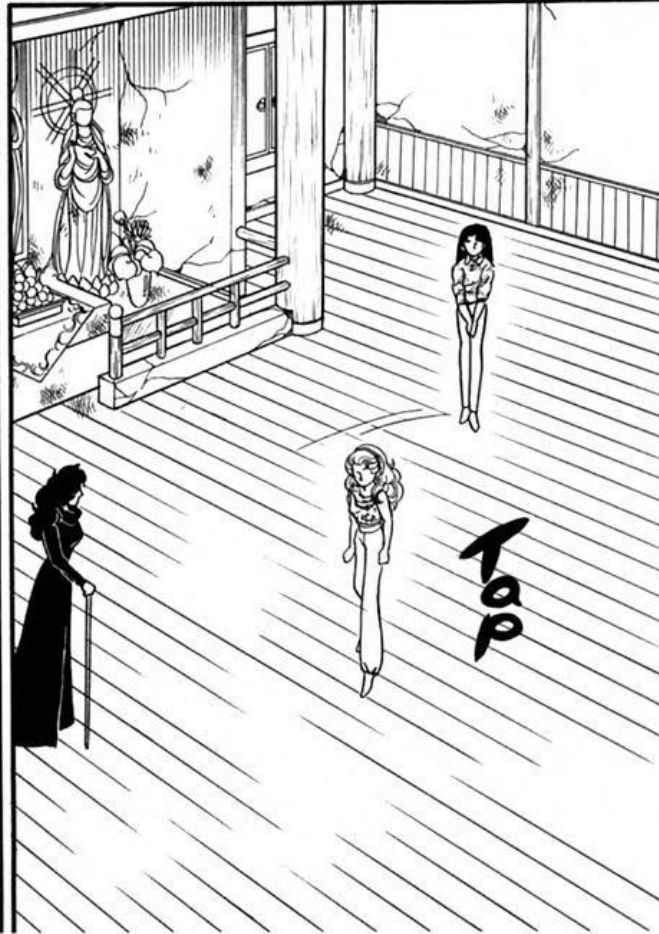
SURPRISE!

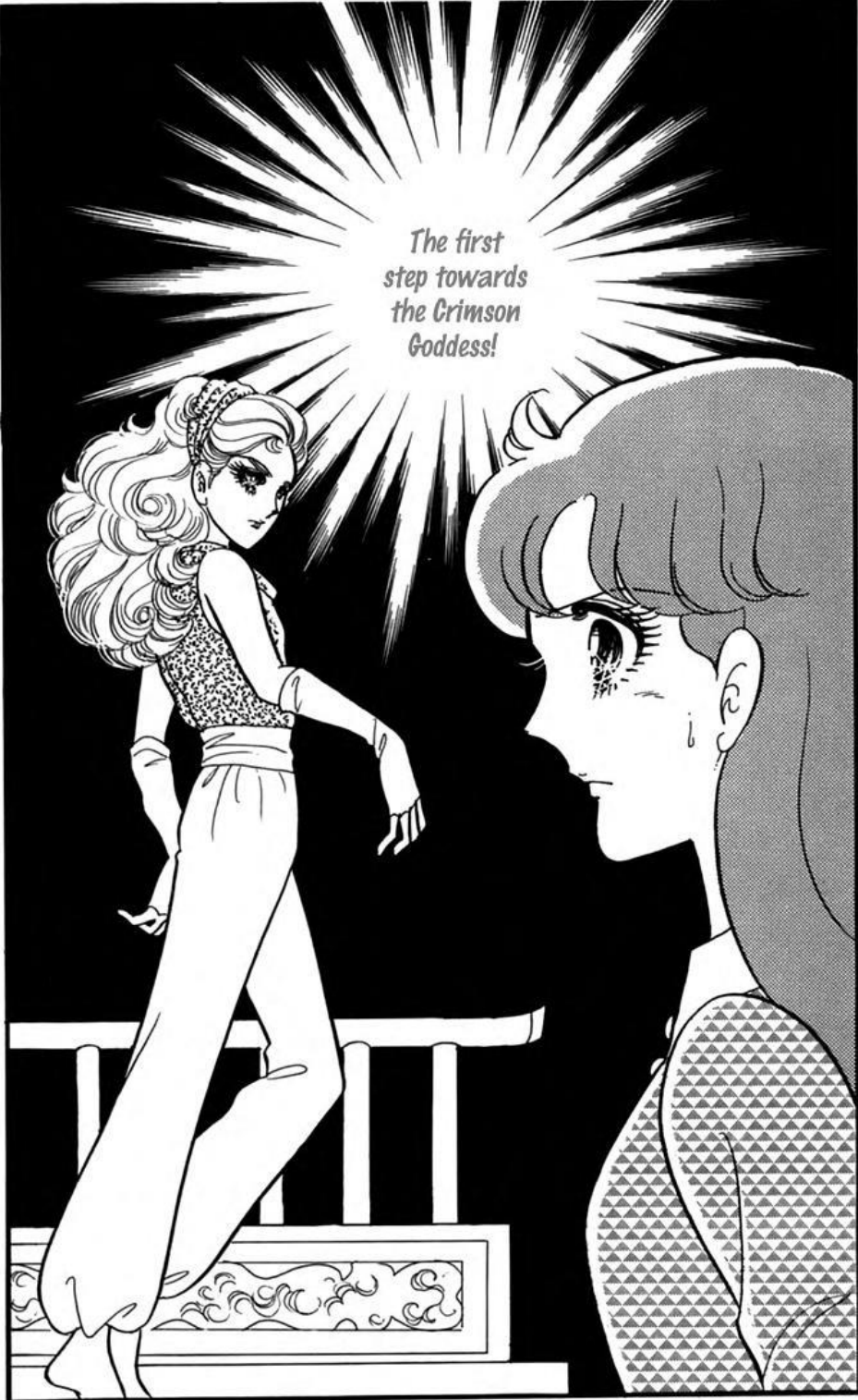


NOW YOU'LL SHOW ME YOUR PORTRAYAL OF THE FIRST THEME: WIND!

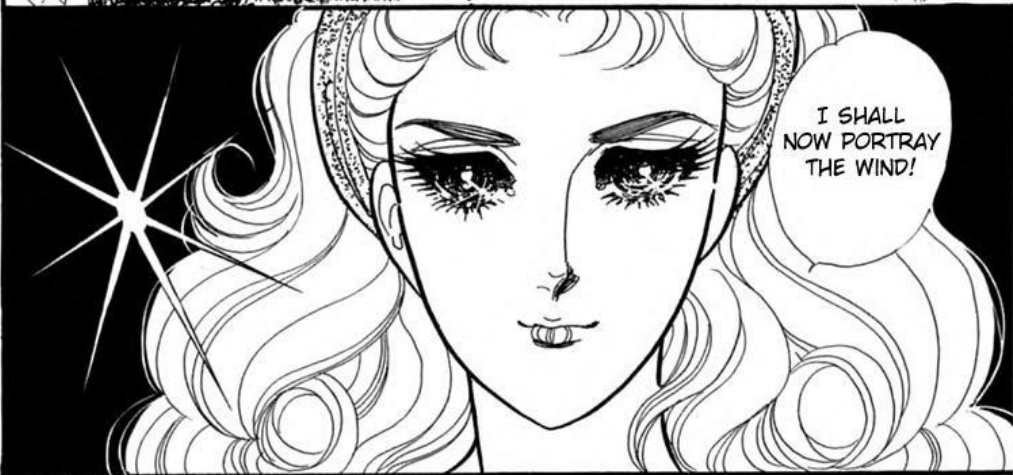


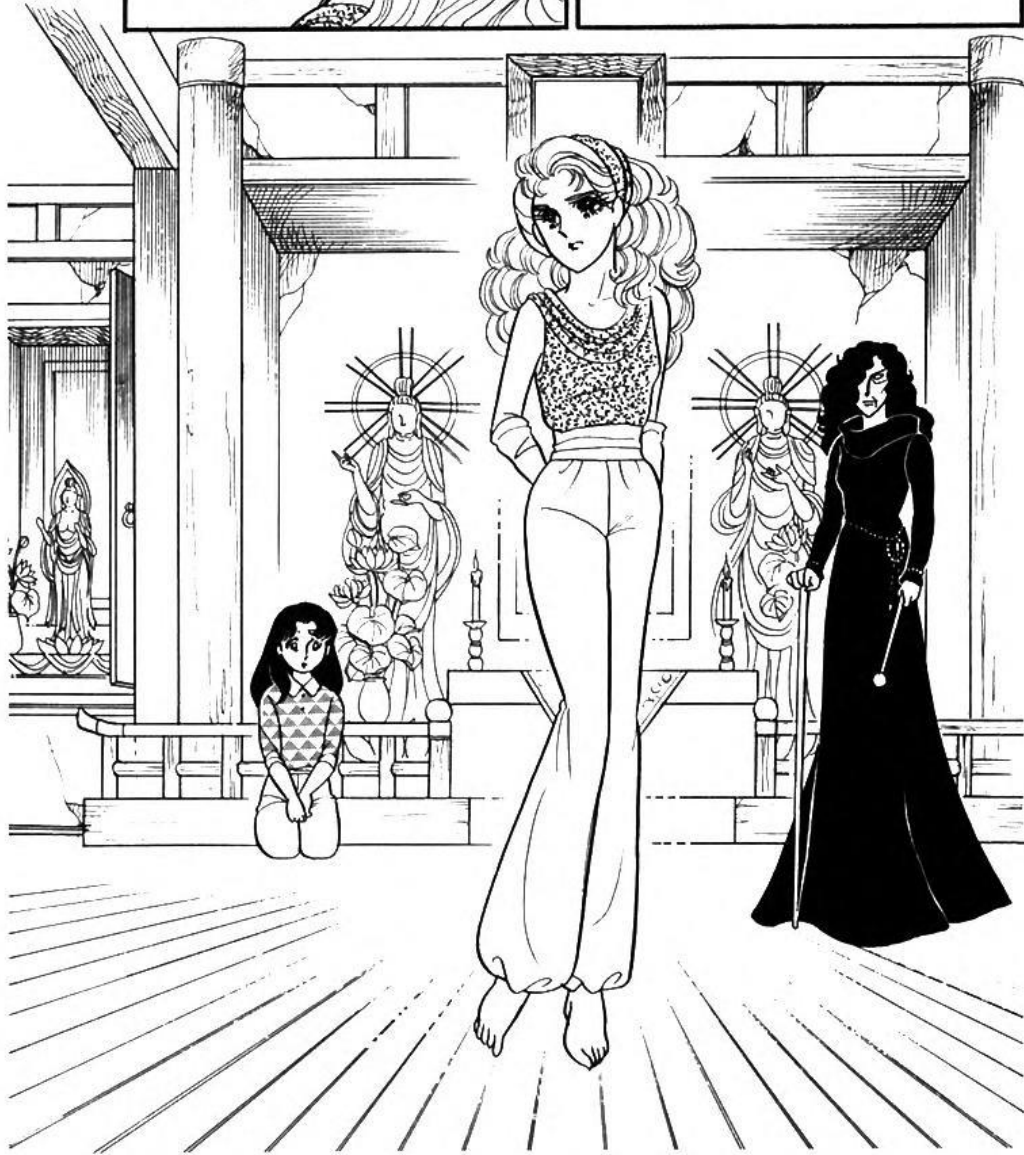
AYUMI
HIMEKAWA!

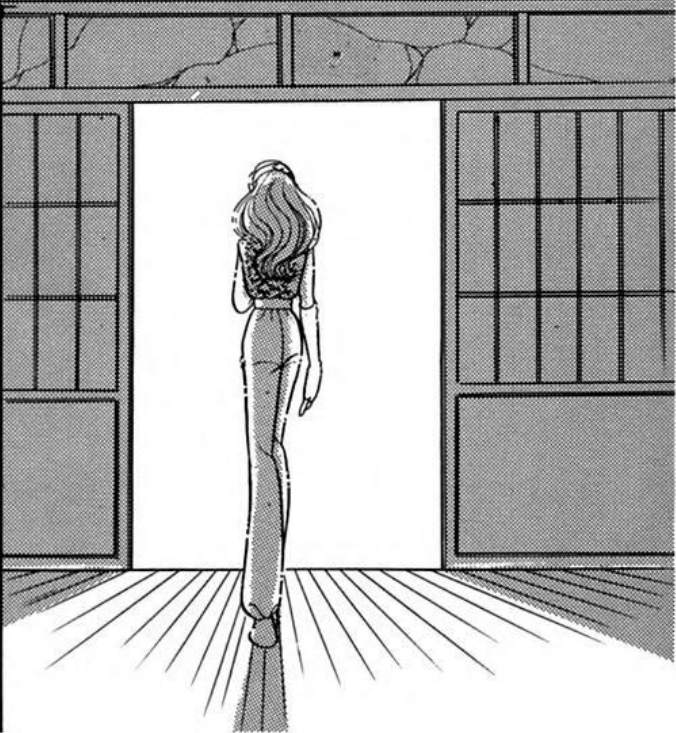
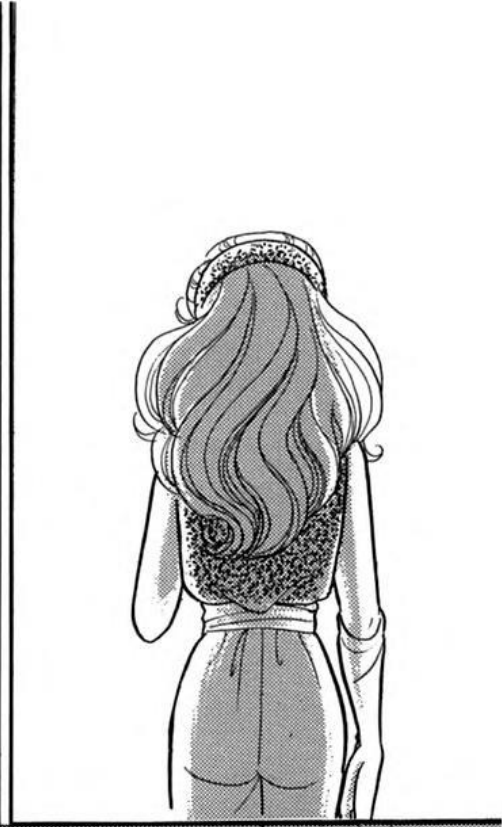


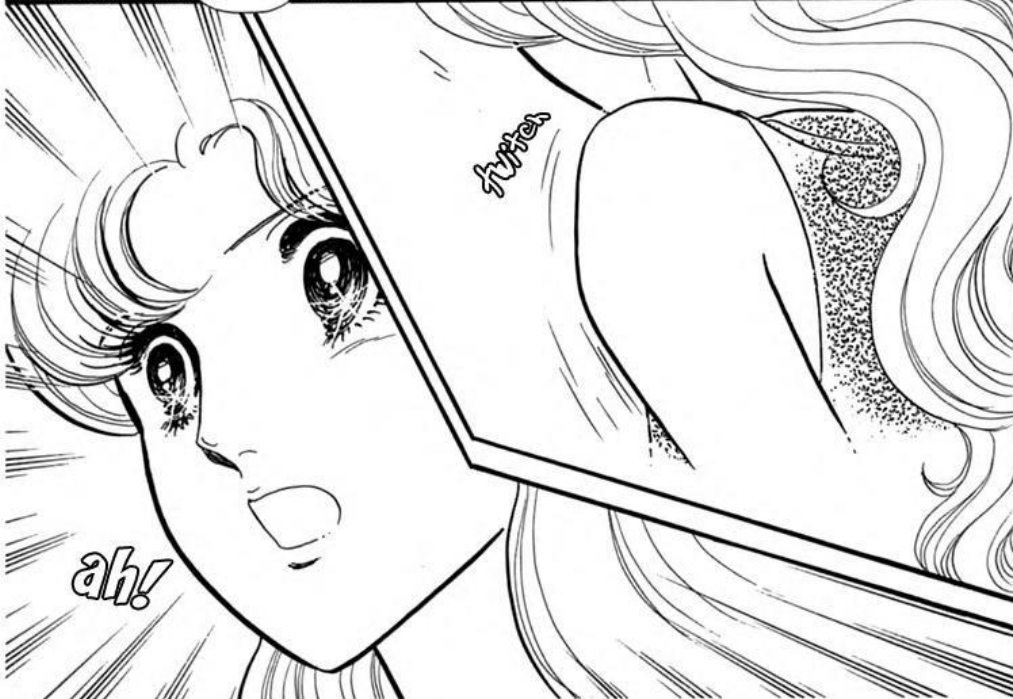


Chapter 190









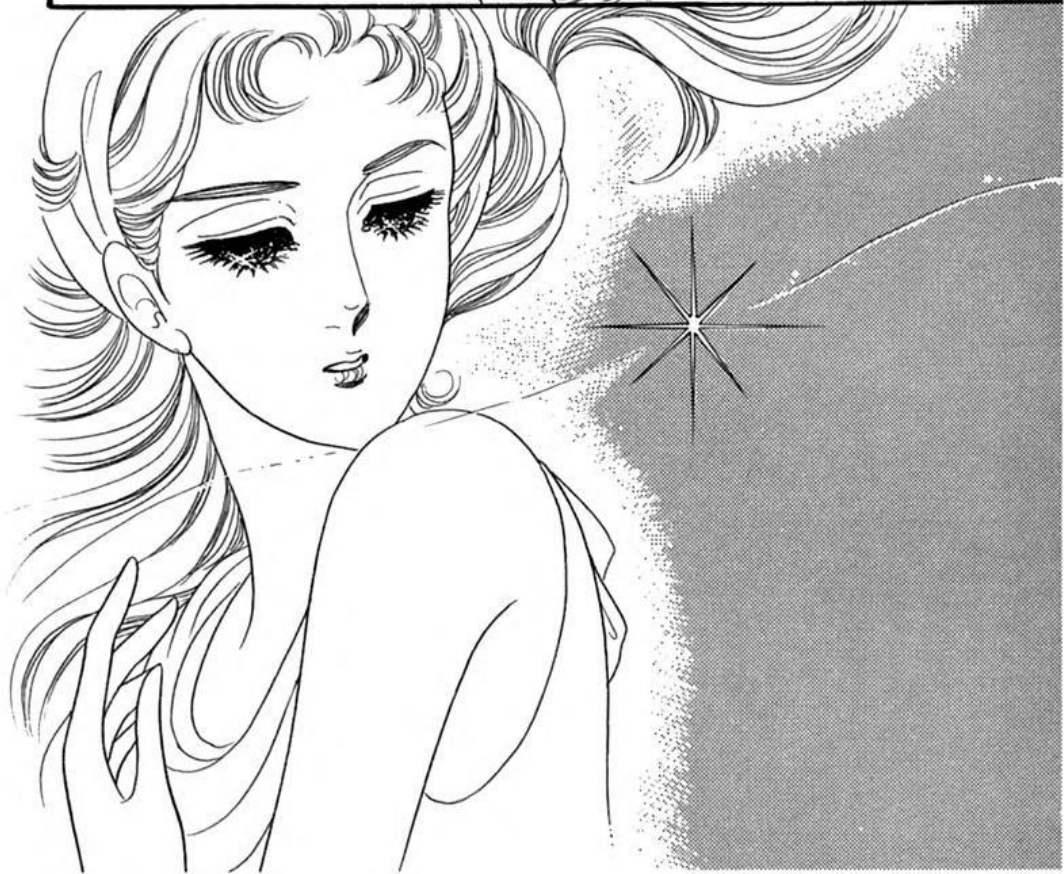
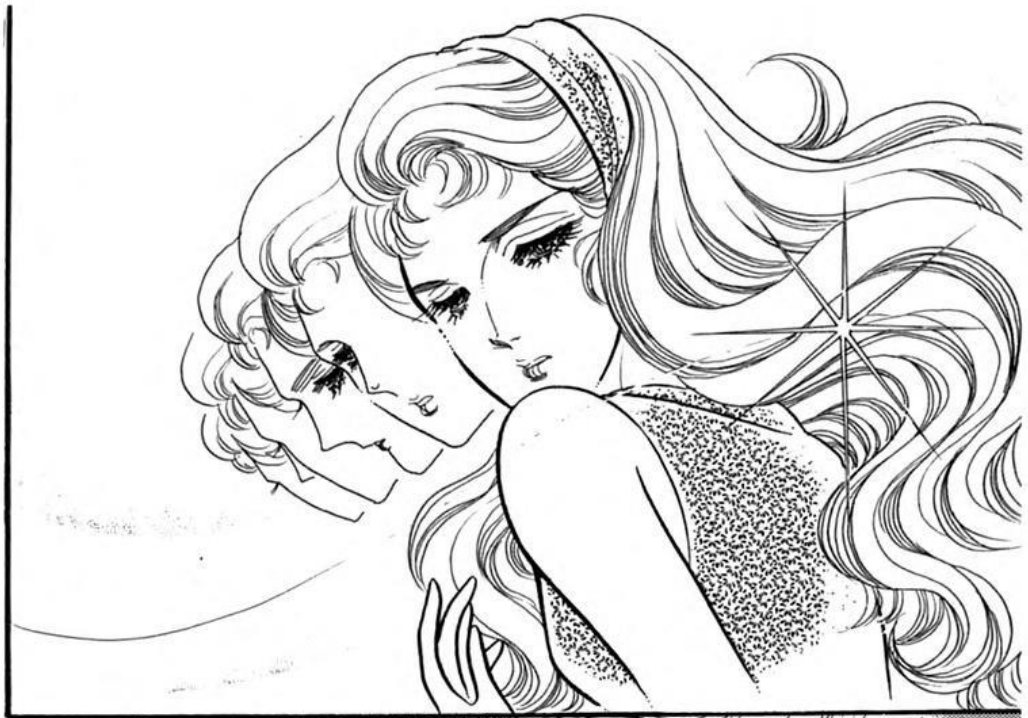
WHEN IS SHE GOING TO START MOVING?

WHAT IS SHE DOING?

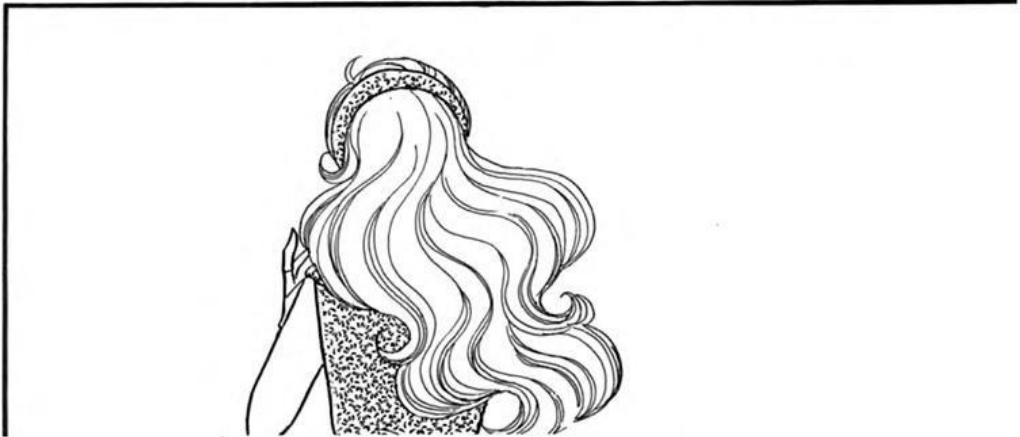
ah!

Ayumi-san?

RUSTLE









Just this?

Standing?

But she
made the
audience
perceive...

...the breeze
that just
brushed
against the
nape of her
neck!

And all this
with a light
movement of
her back!



SILENCE



EXCELLENT.

CLAP
THAT'S ENOUGH!

THE LONG PERIOD OF INITIAL IMMOBILITY...
...HIGHLIGHTED THE MOVEMENT.



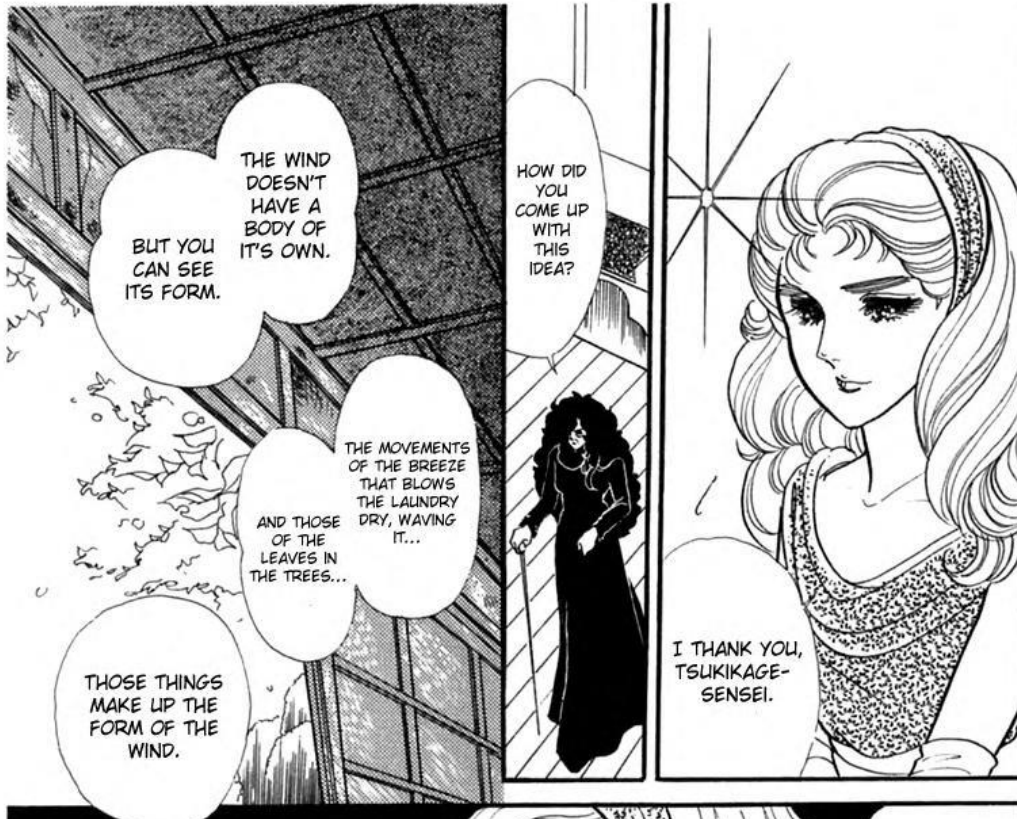
...AN EXPRESSION REDUCED TO THE BARE MINIMUM...
A HIGH LEVEL INTERPRETATION, WHICH DOESN'T HAVE EVEN ONE BIT OF SUPERFLUOUS ELEMENTS.

A SOFT BREEZE THAT TOUCHES THE NAPE OF THE NECK...
...A MINIMAL MOVEMENT OF YOUR BACK AND NECK...

WITH THE SMALL GESTURE OF RUFFLING YOUR HAIR, YOU ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF THOSE THAT WERE WATCHING AT THE TIME.



YOU WERE PERFECT, AYUMI-SAN.



BUT YOU CAN SEE ITS FORM.

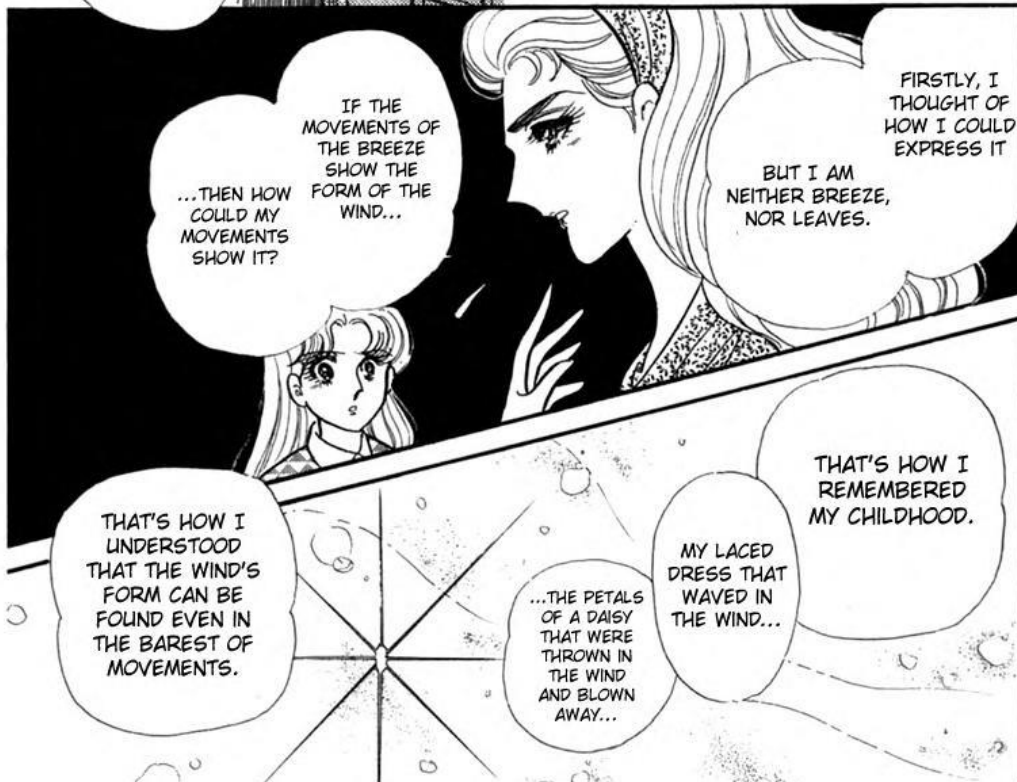
THE WIND DOESN'T HAVE A BODY OF IT'S OWN.

HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THIS IDEA?

THE MOVEMENTS OF THE BREEZE THAT BLOWS THE LAUNDRY DRY, WAVING IT... AND THOSE OF THE LEAVES IN THE TREES...

THOSE THINGS MAKE UP THE FORM OF THE WIND.

I THANK YOU, TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI.



IF THE MOVEMENTS OF THE BREEZE SHOW THE FORM OF THE WIND...
...THEN HOW COULD MY MOVEMENTS SHOW IT?

FIRSTLY, I THOUGHT OF HOW I COULD EXPRESS IT

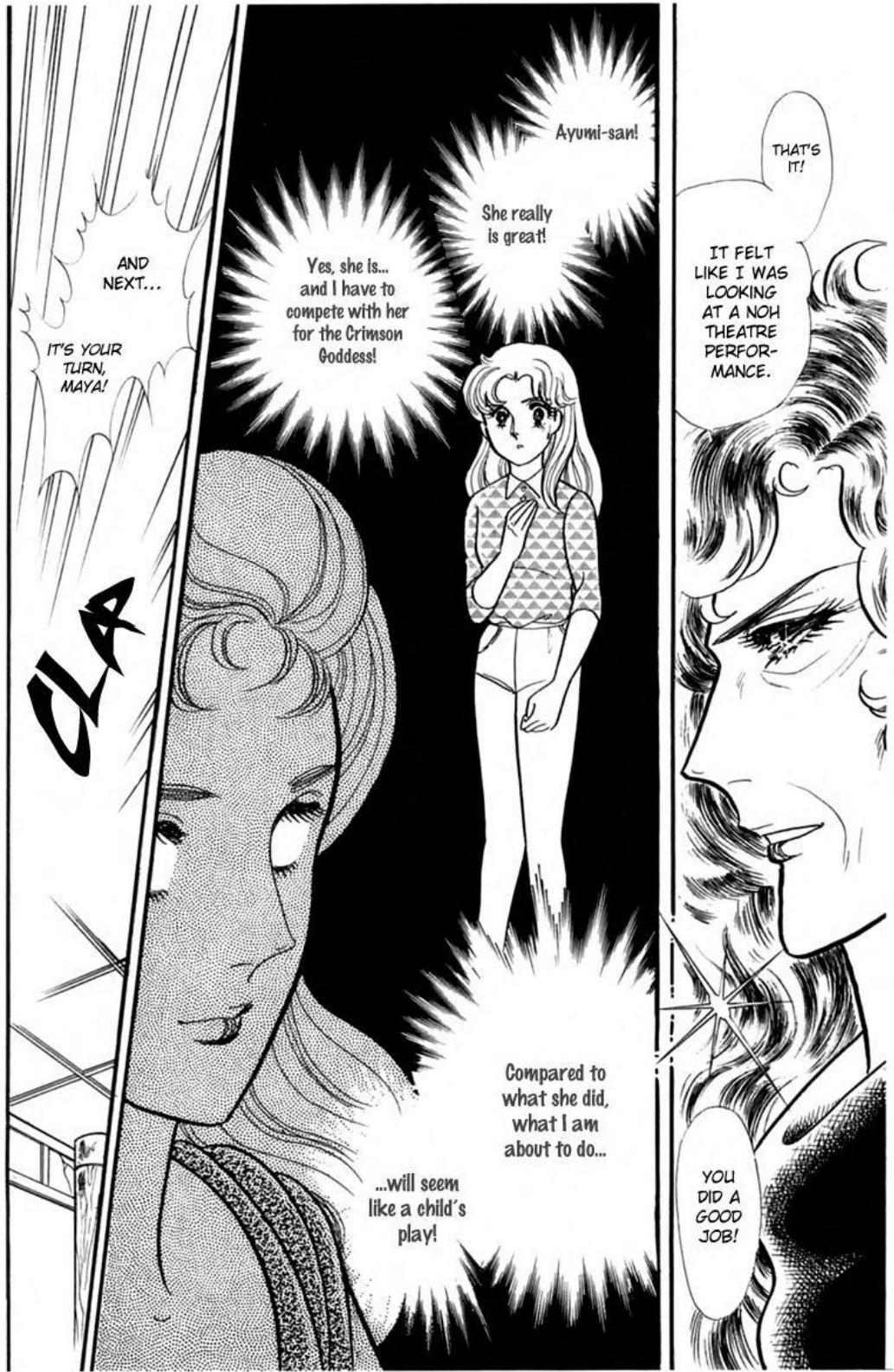
BUT I AM NEITHER BREEZE, NOR LEAVES.

THAT'S HOW I UNDERSTOOD THAT THE WIND'S FORM CAN BE FOUND EVEN IN THE BAREST OF MOVEMENTS.

THAT'S HOW I REMEMBERED MY CHILDHOOD.

...THE PETALS OF A DAISY THAT WERE THROWN IN THE WIND AND BLOWN AWAY...

MY LACED DRESS THAT WAVED IN THE WIND...



AND
NEXT...

IT'S YOUR
TURN,
MAYA!

CLASH

Yes, she is...
and I have to
compete with her
for the Crimson
Goddess!

Ayumi-san!

She really
is great!

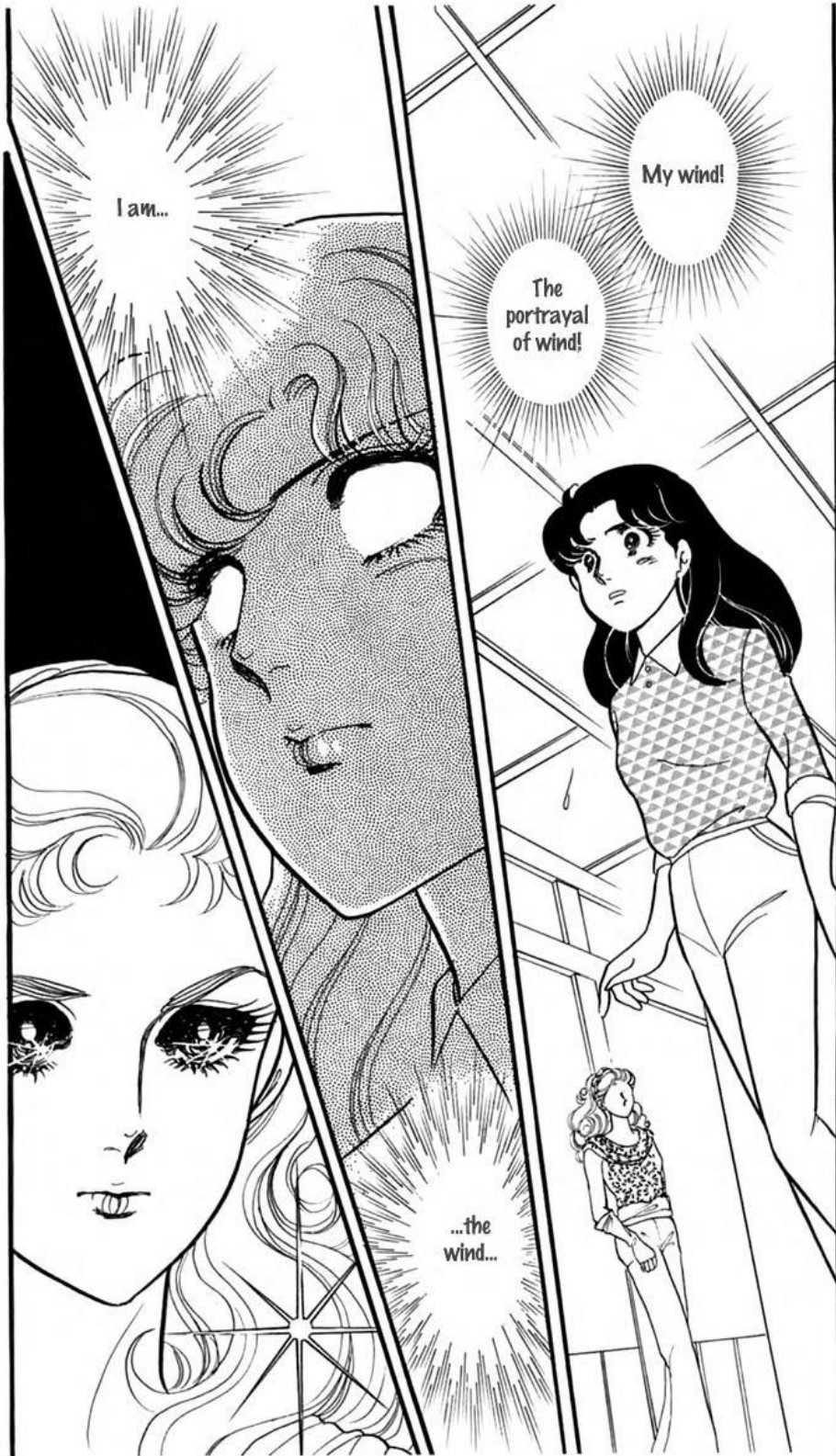
THAT'S
IT!

IT FELT
LIKE I WAS
LOOKING
AT A NOH
THEATRE
PERFOR-
MANCE.

Compared to
what she did,
what I am
about to do...

...will seem
like a child's
play!

YOU
DID A
GOOD
JOB!

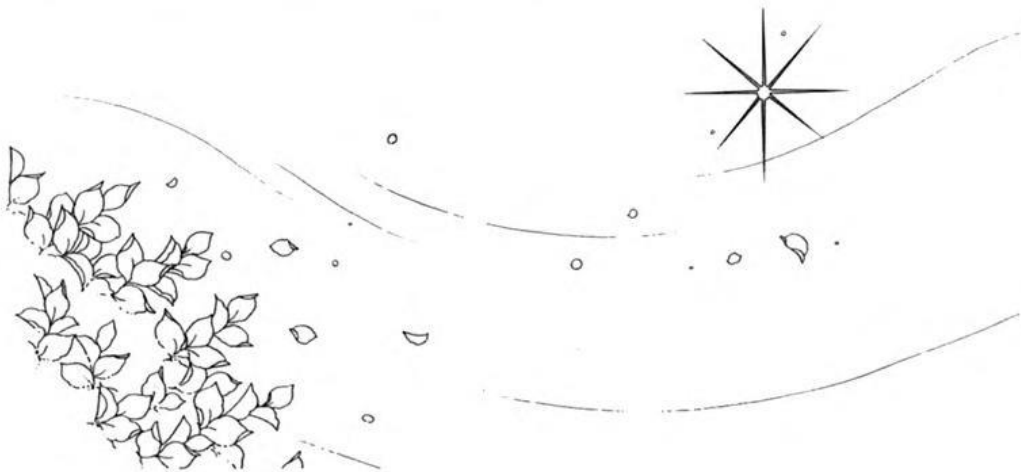
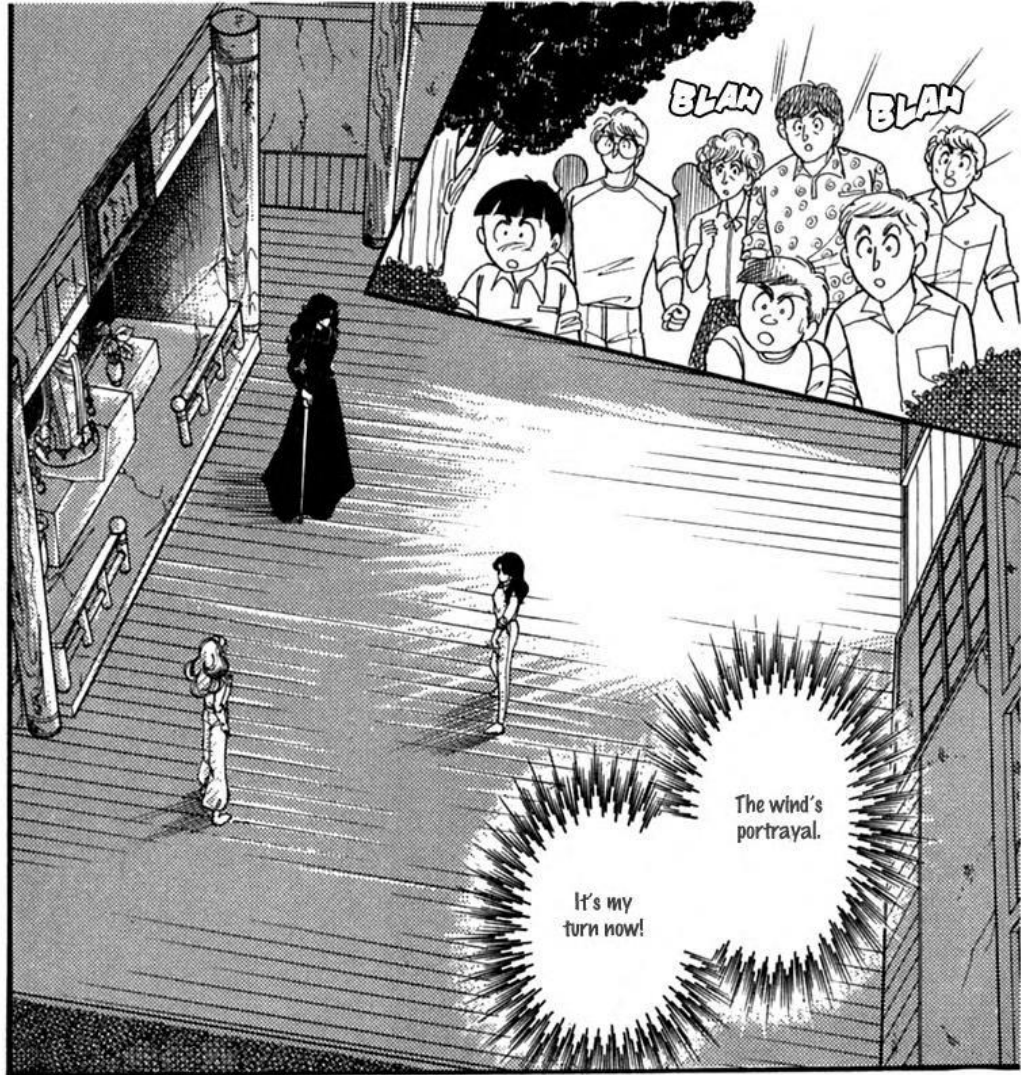


I am...

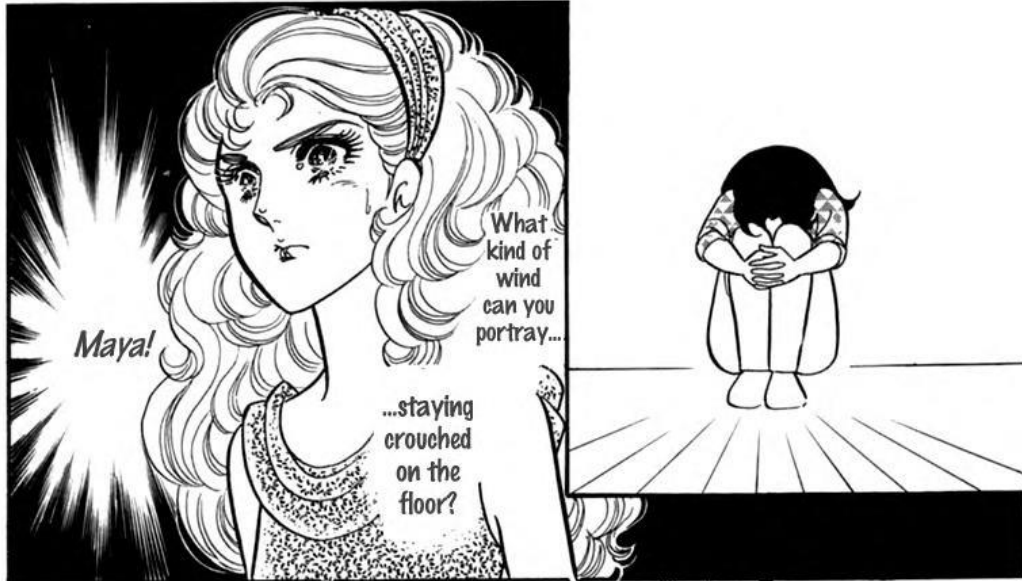
My wind!

The
portrayal
of wind!

...the
wind...





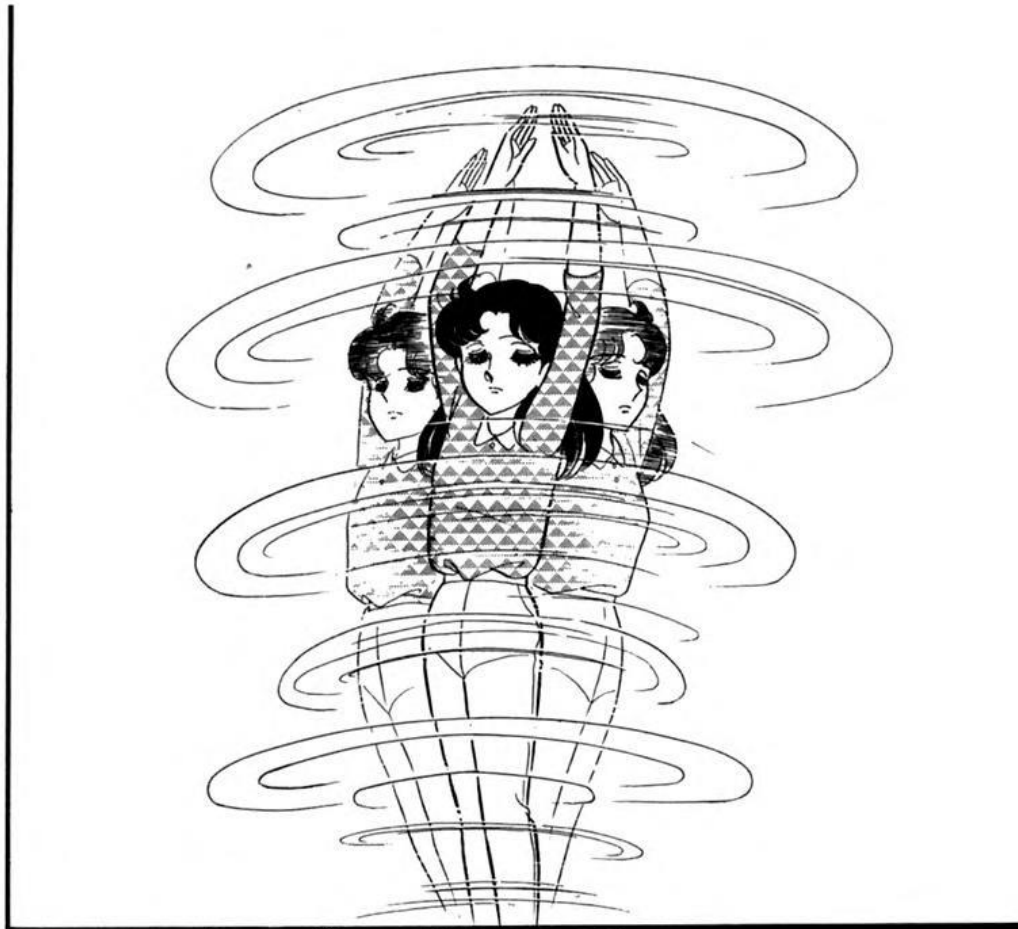


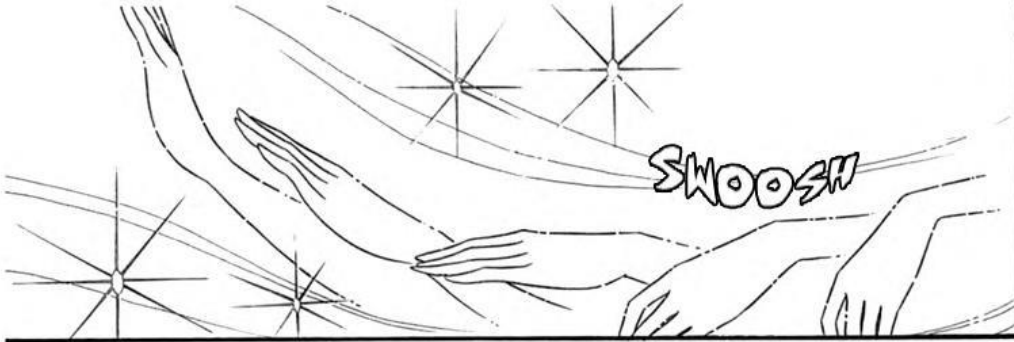


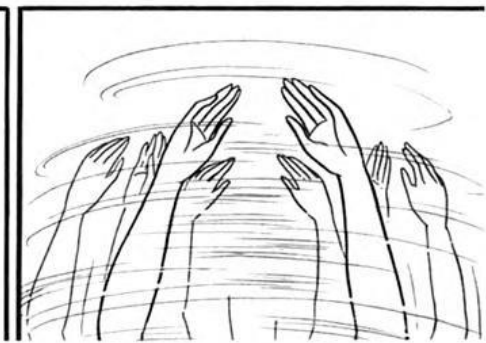
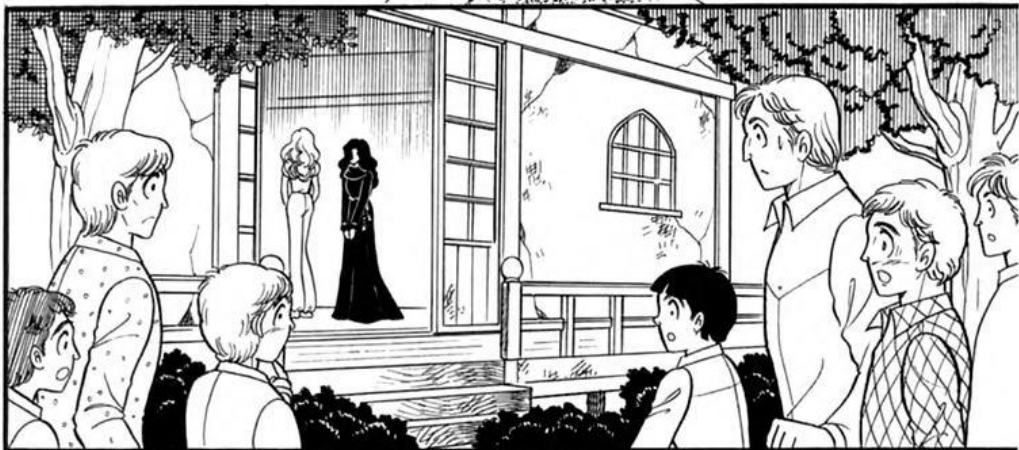
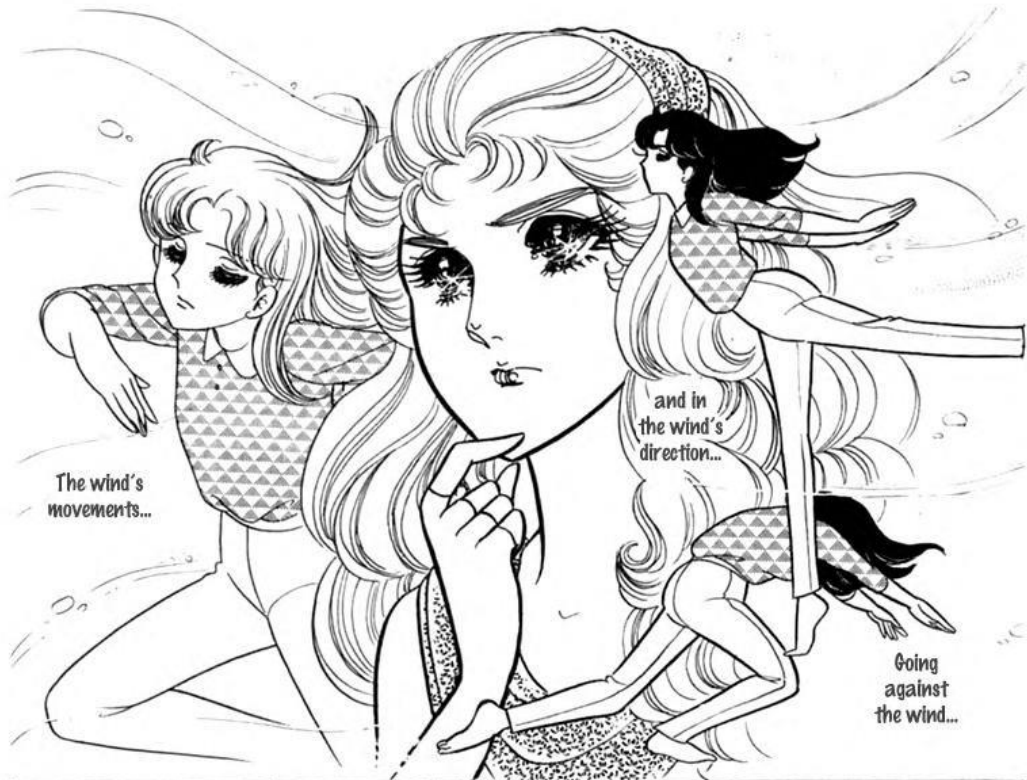
She is spinning!

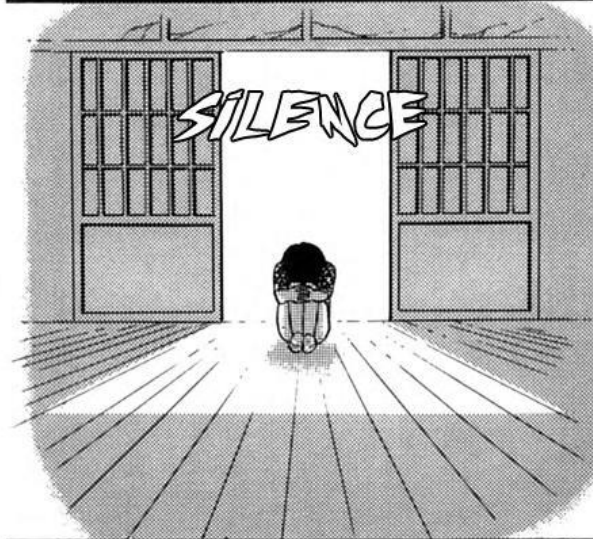
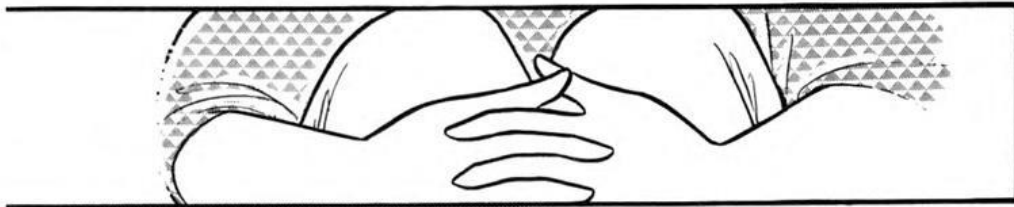
FRUSH

This is... a swirl...?













MAYA!

AN ACTOR HAS TO ACT!

ACT FOR WHOM?

FOR THEMSELVES?

FOR THE PUBLIC THAT HAS COME TO SEE HIS SHOW!

WITHOUT AN AUDIENCE, THERE IS NO POINT TO ACTING!

YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO BECOME THE WIND!

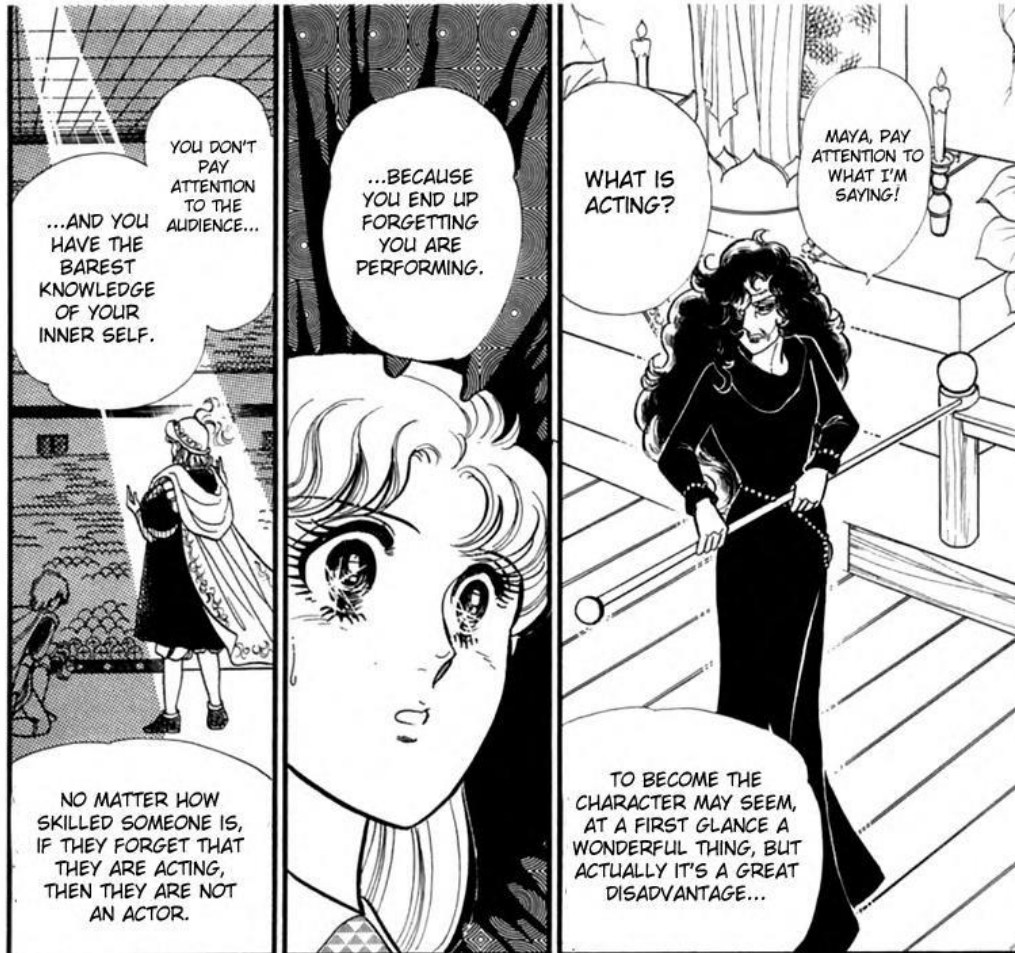
YOU HAD TO PORTRAY THE WIND!



YOUR CURRENT MOVEMENTS AREN'T AT THE LEVEL OF A PROFESSIONAL!

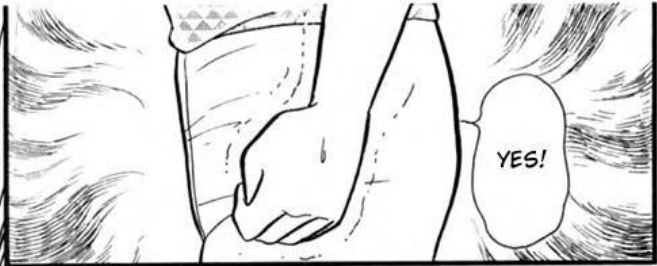
FOR THIS YOU WOULD'VE NEEDED MORE STUDY IN CLASSICAL AND MODERN DANCE!

IN THAT WAY, YOU'D BE ABLE TO APPEAR BEFORE AN AUDIENCE!





This girl is
frightening!



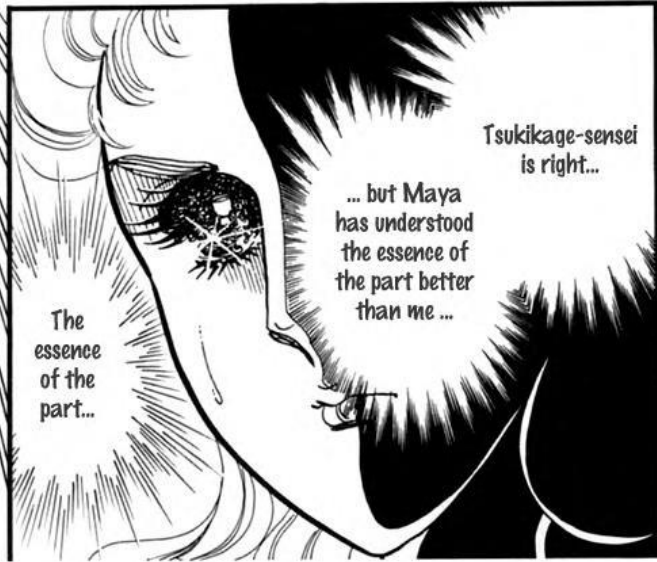
YES!



It's true your
movements
were crude and
childish, but...

To become
the wind...
Maya...

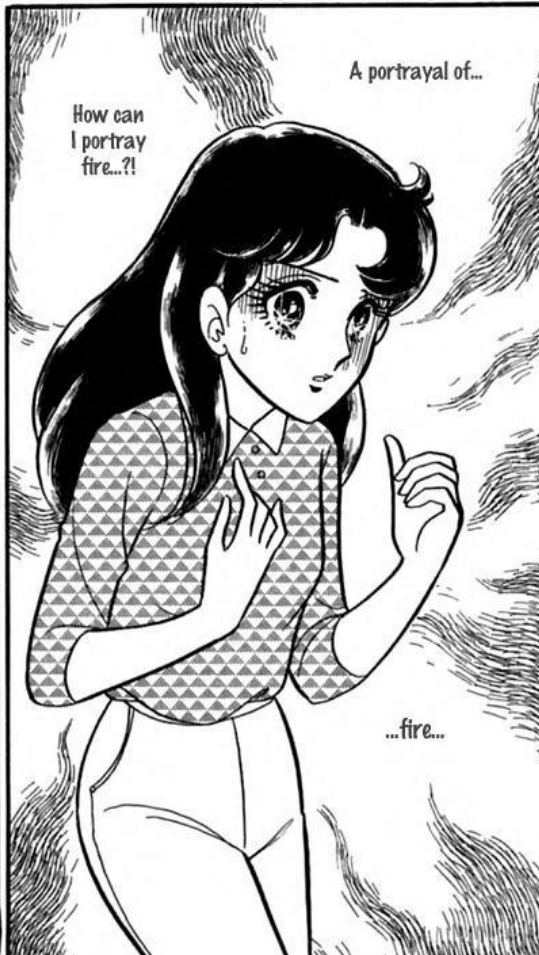
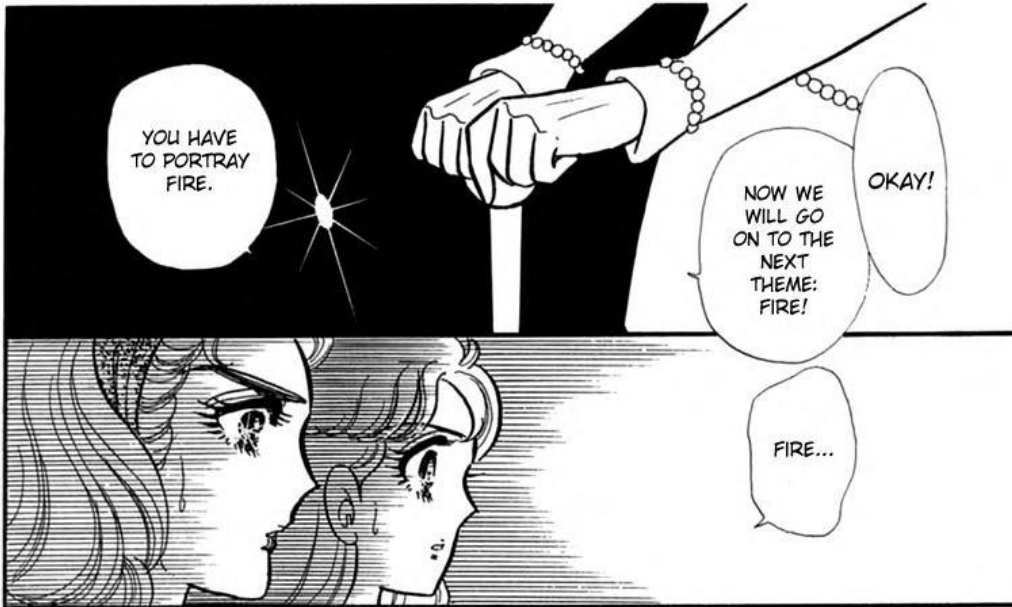
...I'd not
even
thought
about
that!



Tsukikage-sensei
is right...

... but Maya
has understood
the essence of
the part better
than me ...

The
essence
of the
part...





The second theme
for the Crimson
Goddess. Fire!







OUCH!



INTERPRETING
FIRE, WATER,
EARTH AND WIND,
WHAT DOES ALL
THIS HAVE TO DO
WITH THE CRIMSON
GODDESS?



FIRE
...

HOW CAN
I EXPRESS
IT..?



THERE IS
THE FIRE
THAT
GIVES US
WARMTH...

WHAT IS
FIRE?

THERE'S
THE FLAME
OF A
CANDLE...



I WONDER
WHAT
TSUKIKAGE-
SENSEI IS
PLANNING...?



I DON'T
UNDER-
STAND.

STRIKE



TOSS

FIRE THAT
COOKS
OUR
FOOD...

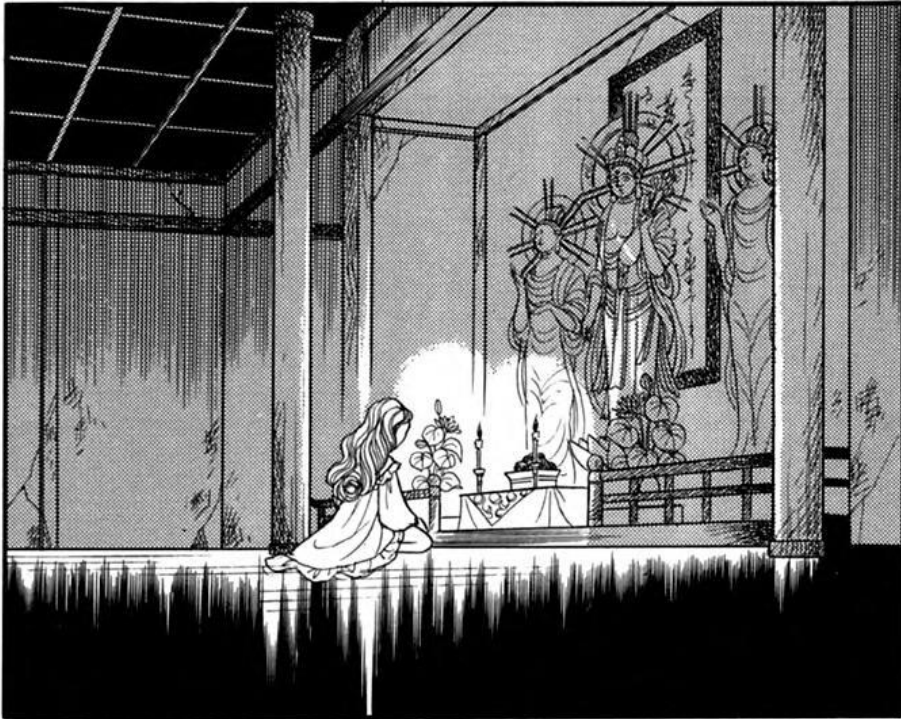
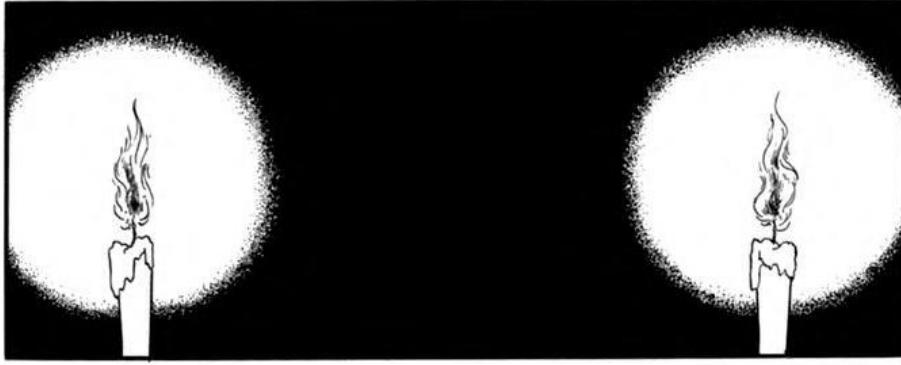


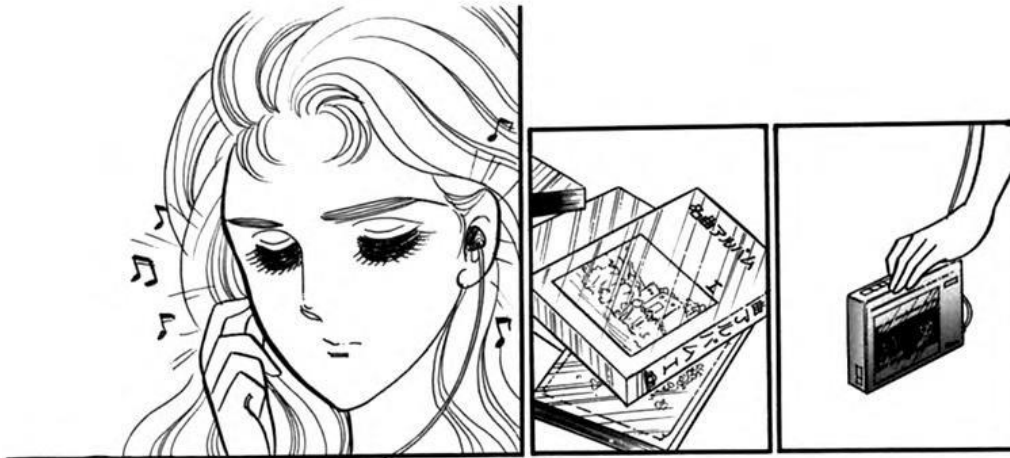
IT
BURNS
THINGS
DOWN...

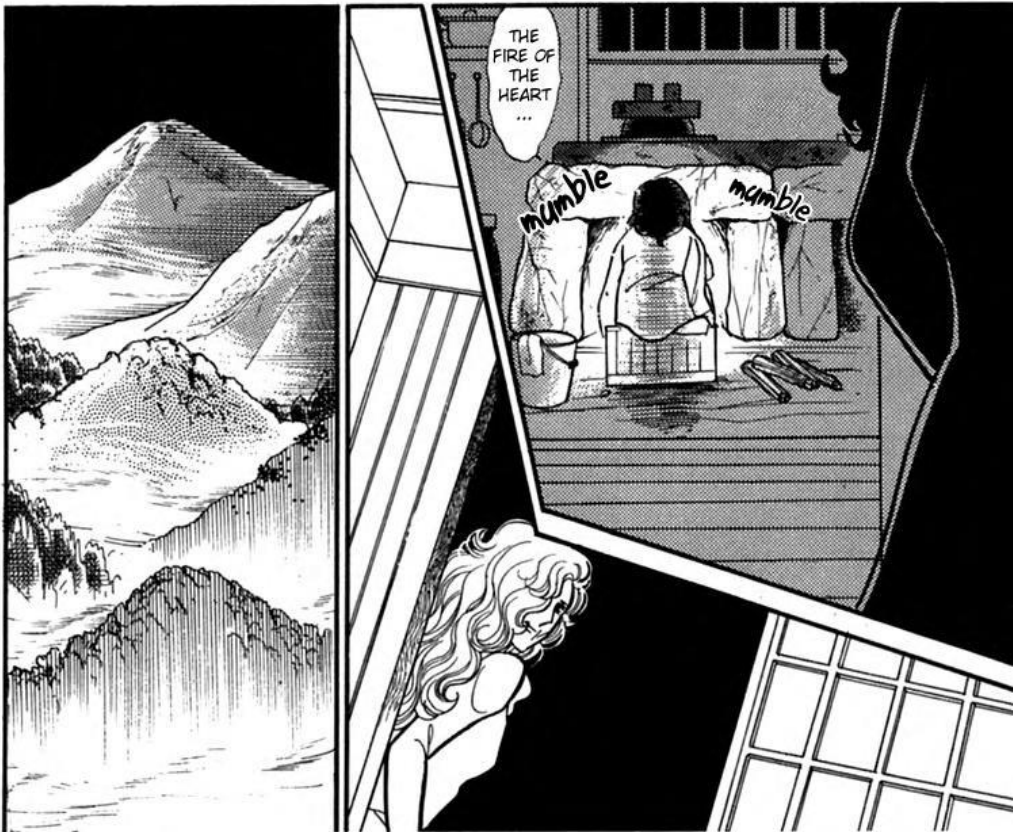
TOSS

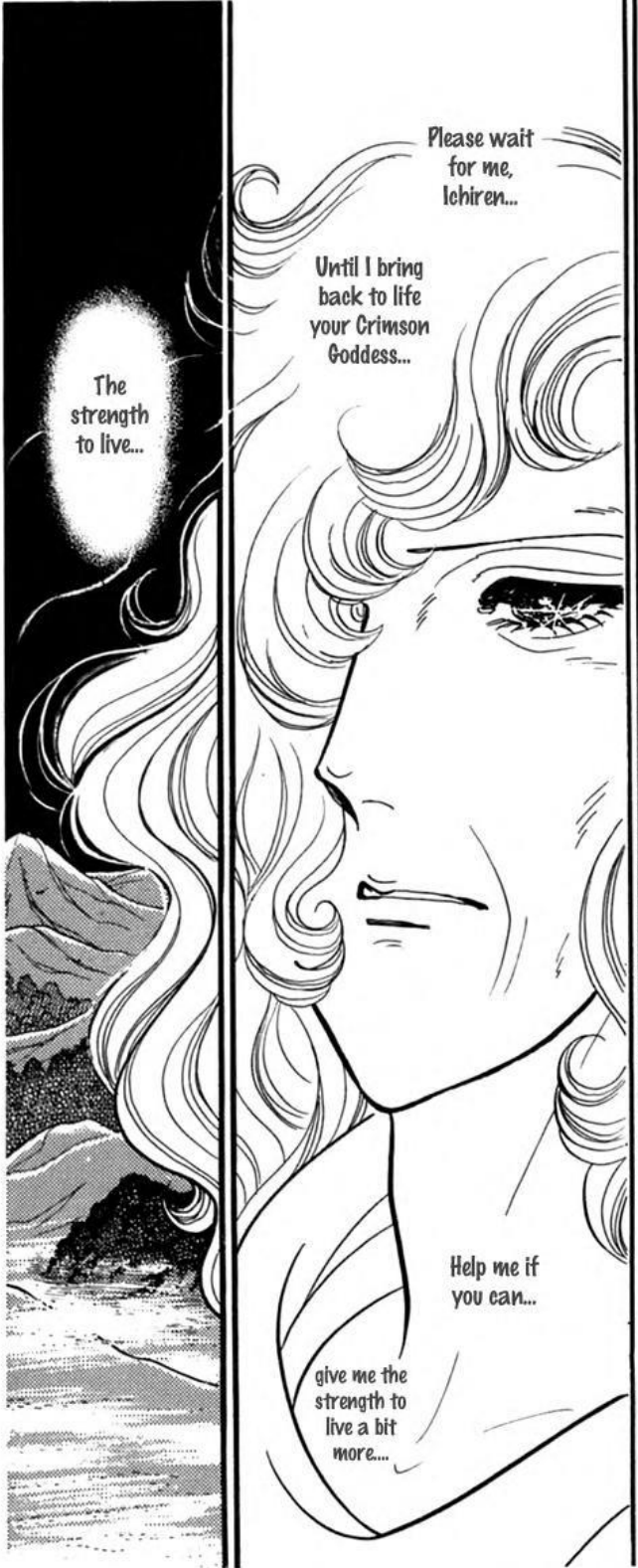
FIRE
CAN
CAUSE
A
BLAZE.











The strength to live...

Please wait for me, Ichiren...

Until I bring back to life your Crimson Goddess...

Help me if you can...

give me the strength to live a bit more....

Ichiren...

These two girls are doing their best to inherit your spirit...!

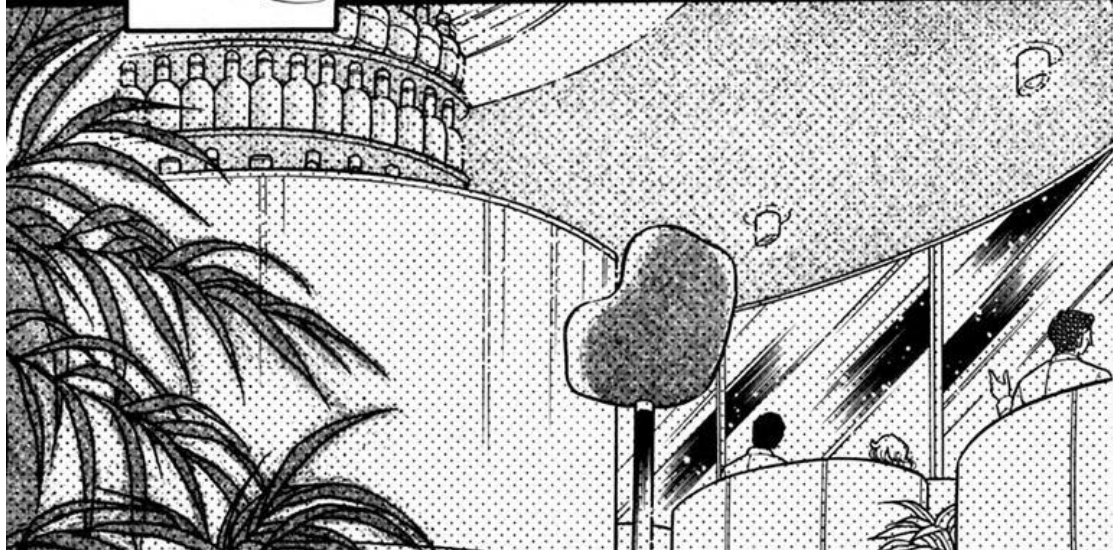
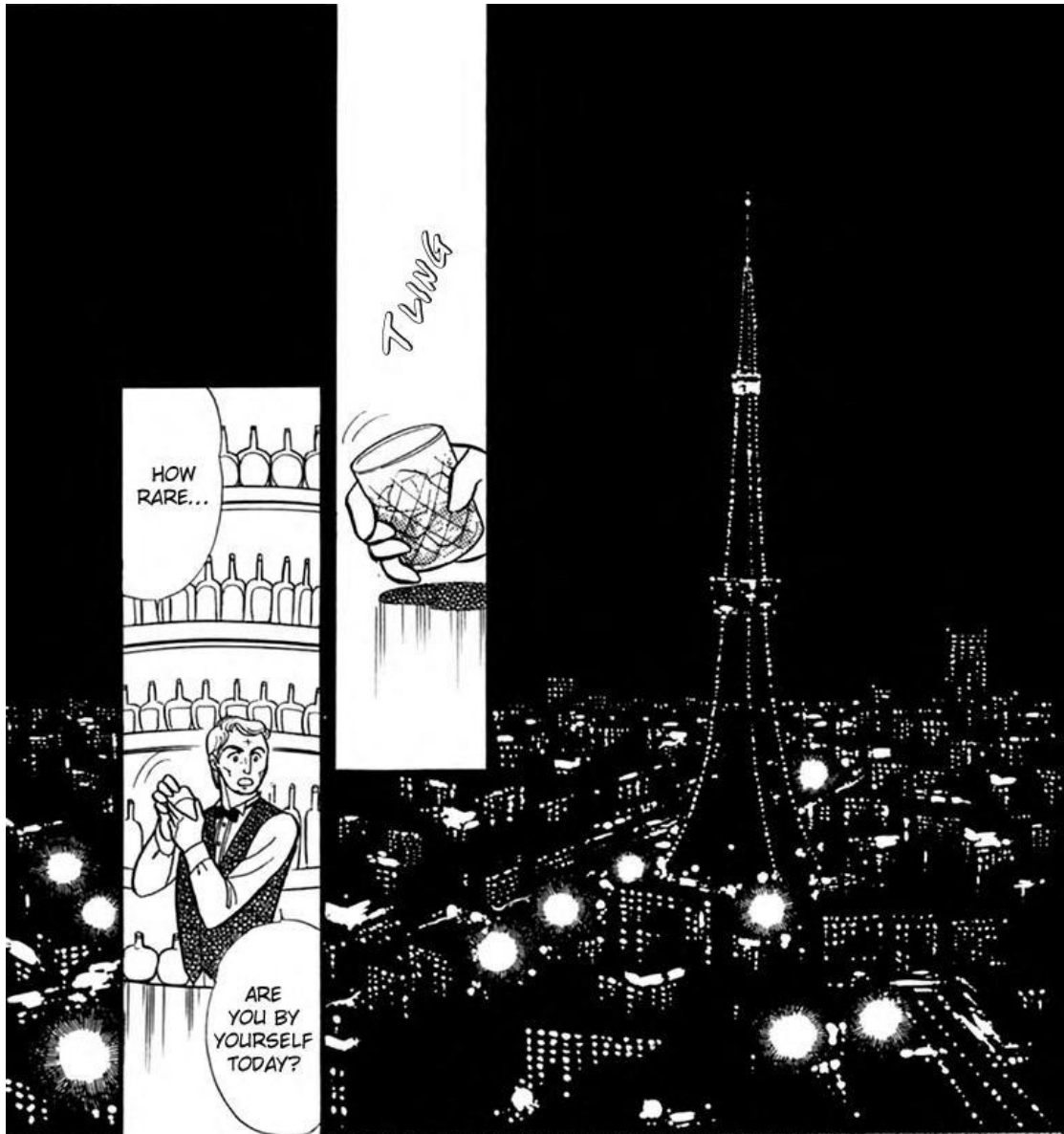


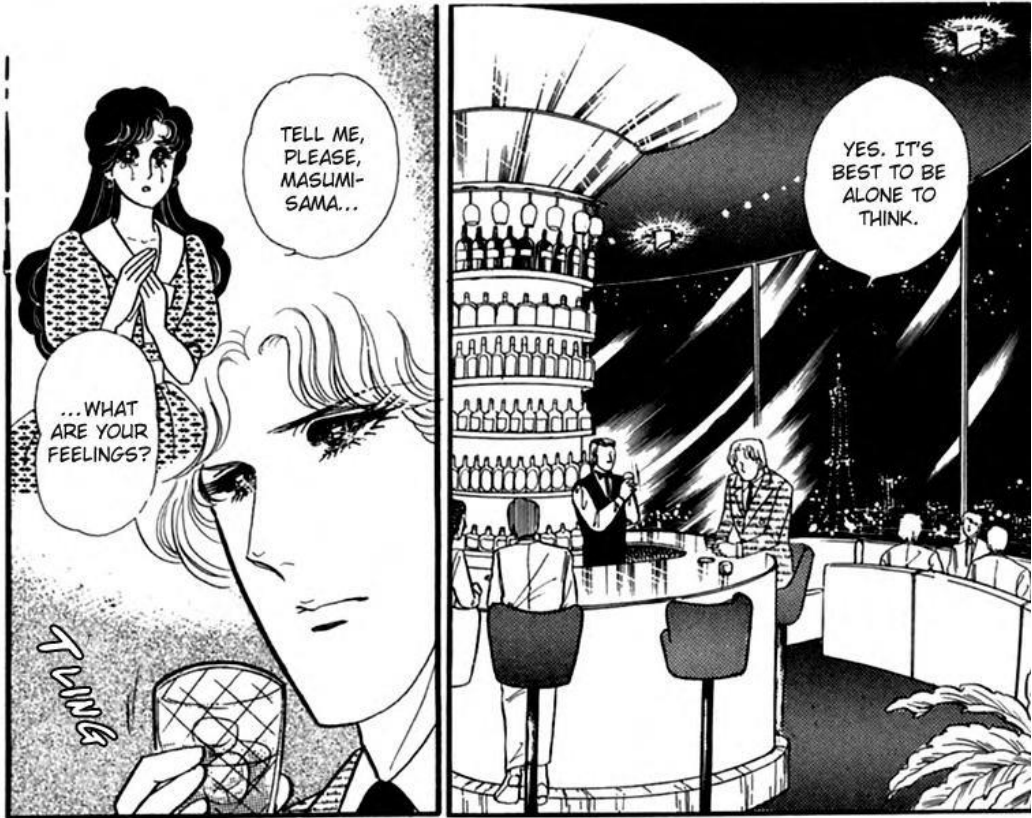
Wind, fire, water, earth...

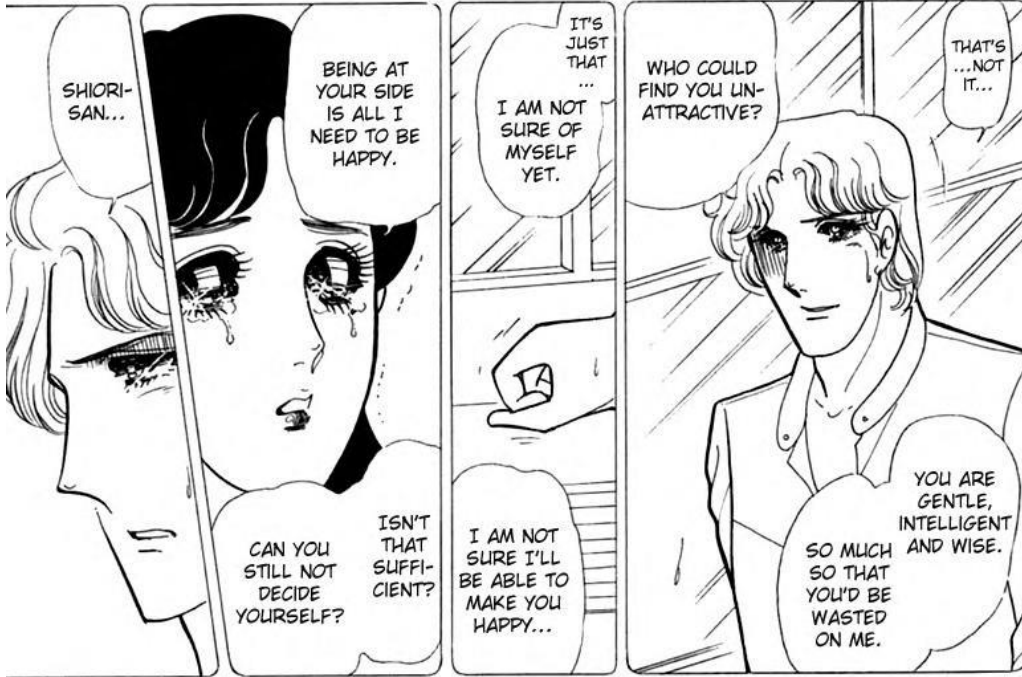
These two girls are working hard on the same themes you once gave me.

Chapter 191













Shiori Takamiya...

She is really gentle... I think she is a good person...

I don't dislike her at all.



She's a mysterious girl...

Maya...

Why does she attract me so?



...in the country of the Crimson Goddess...

Maya... she might be watching them too...



They are but a pale imitation of the stars from the depths of the night...

The city stars...

The sky is dark...

Always seeing the same image, everyone has forgotten about the true stars...



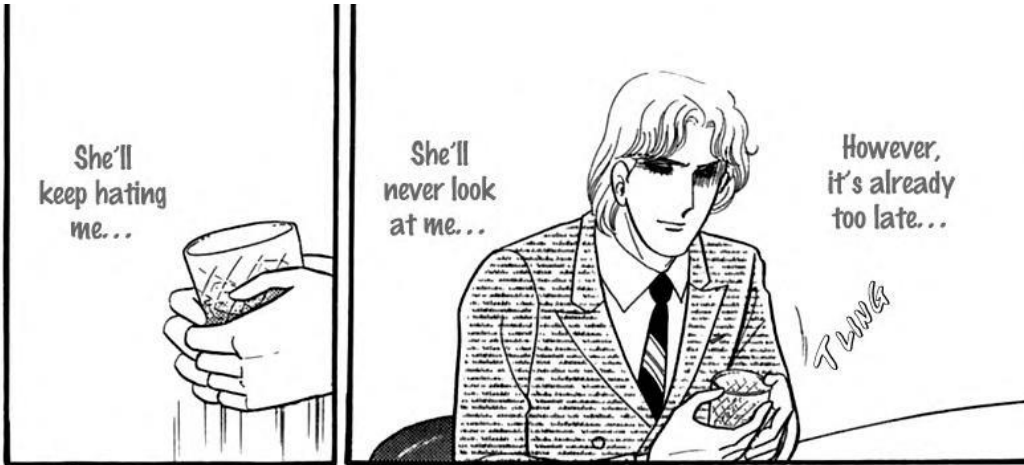
Maybe she is the only one with whom I could be completely sincere...

Maya, a girl eleven years younger than me...

But with Maya I have the feeling that our souls touch each other...



The feeling that there is no need for lies between us...

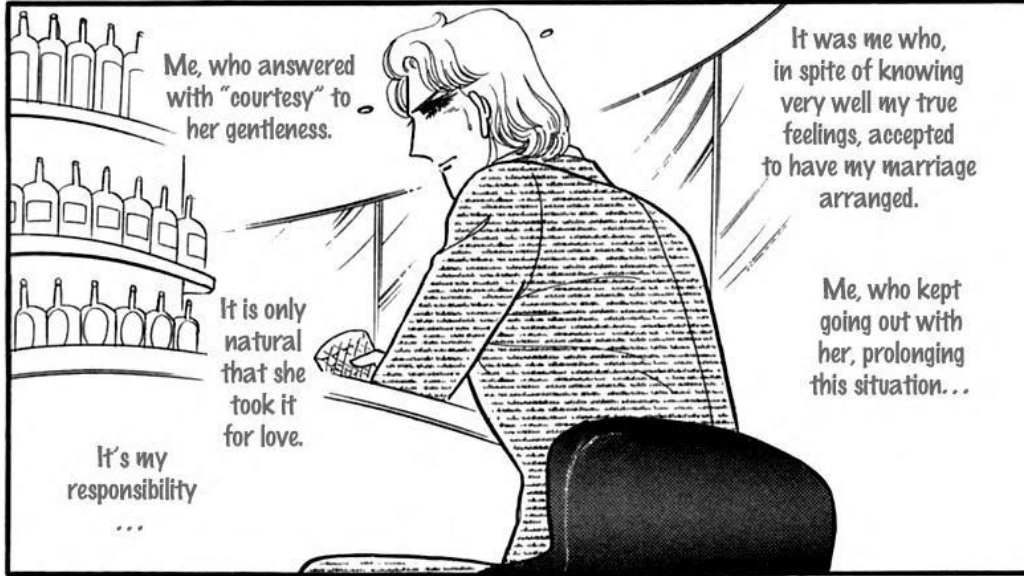


She'll keep hating me...

She'll never look at me...

However, it's already too late...

TWING



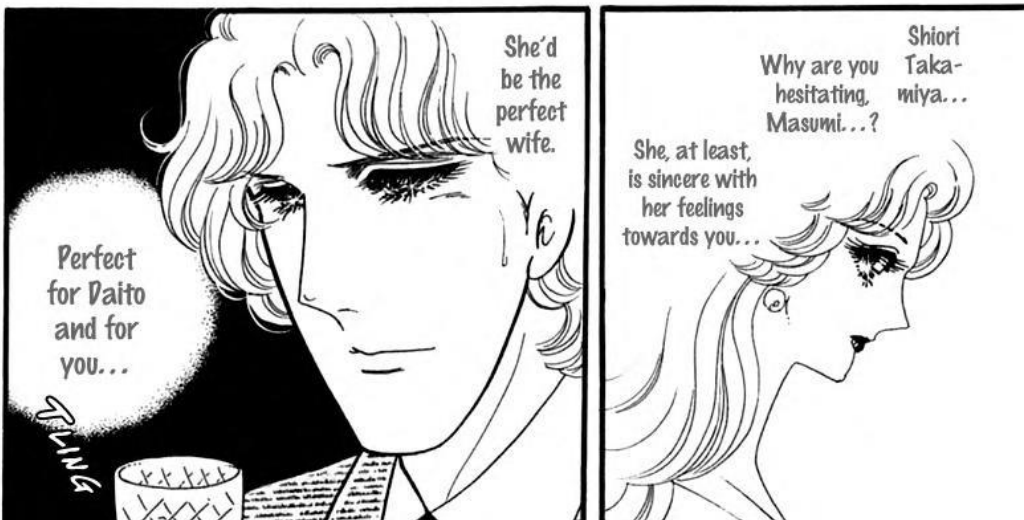
Me, who answered with "courtesy" to her gentleness.

It was me who, in spite of knowing very well my true feelings, accepted to have my marriage arranged.

It is only natural that she took it for love.

Me, who kept going out with her, prolonging this situation...

It's my responsibility
...



Perfect for Daito and for you...

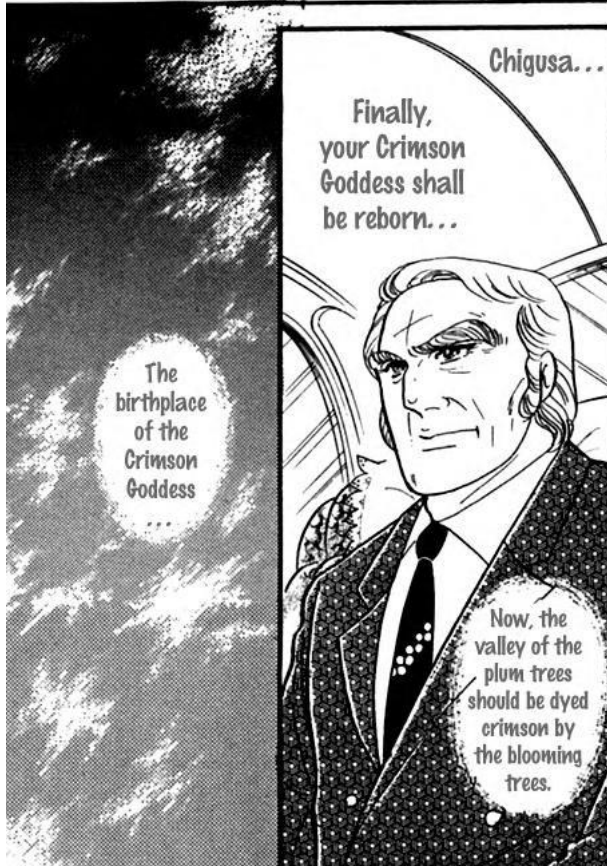
SPRING

She'd be the perfect wife.

Why are you hesitating, Masumi...?

Shiori Takamiya...

She, at least, is sincere with her feelings towards you...





Hmm...

The project for the staging of the Crimson Goddess ...?



DLAN DLAN

DLAN DLAN

HEY! NUMBER 18 ISN'T WORKING!



The birthplace of the Crimson Goddess...

HOW WOULD I KNOW!
YEAH, IT'S ME. I'LL BE GONE FOR A WHILE.
WHEN WILL I RETURN?

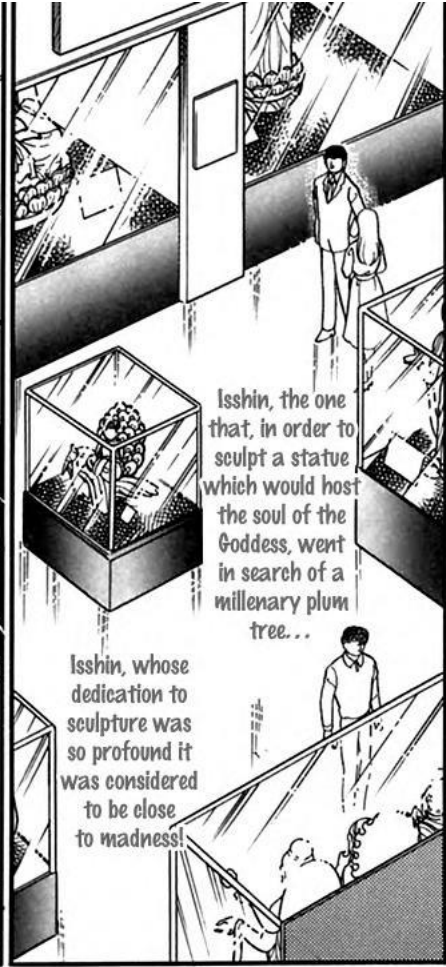
SHUT UP!

I'LL BE BACK WHEN I'VE FINISHED THE PROJECT FOR THE STAGING OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

Weak!



What statue could he have made...?

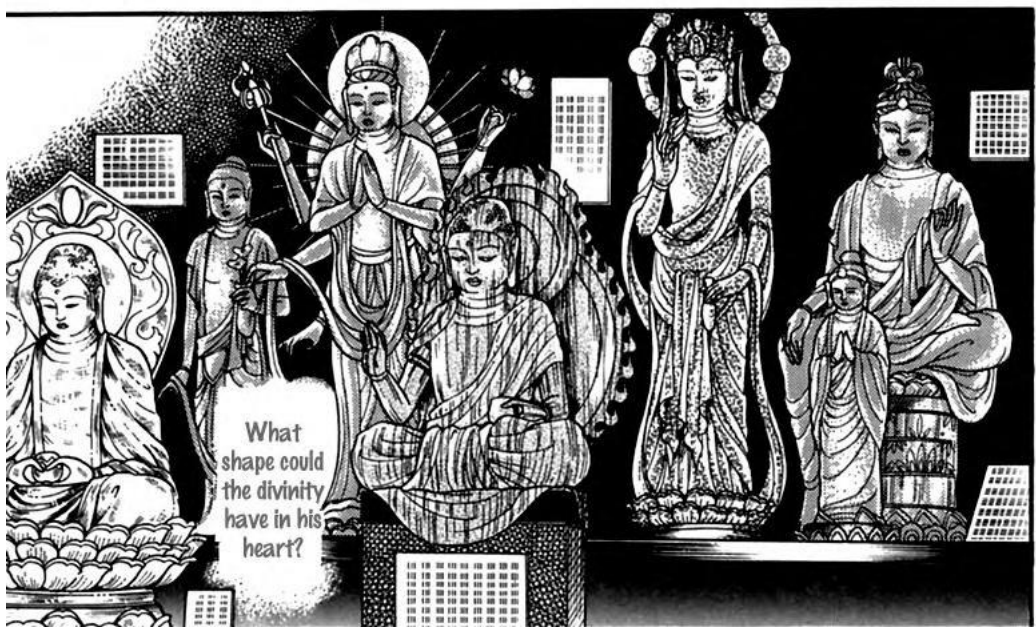


Isshin, the one that, in order to sculpt a statue which would host the soul of the Goddess, went in search of a millenary plum tree...

Isshin, whose dedication to sculpture was so profound it was considered to be close to madness!



The sacred sculptor, Isshin, the one that received the task of making the statue of the Goddess from the Emperor...



What shape could the divinity have in his heart?





NEAR THEM
THE STATUE
OF YAKUSHI**,
FROM THE
SAME PERIOD.

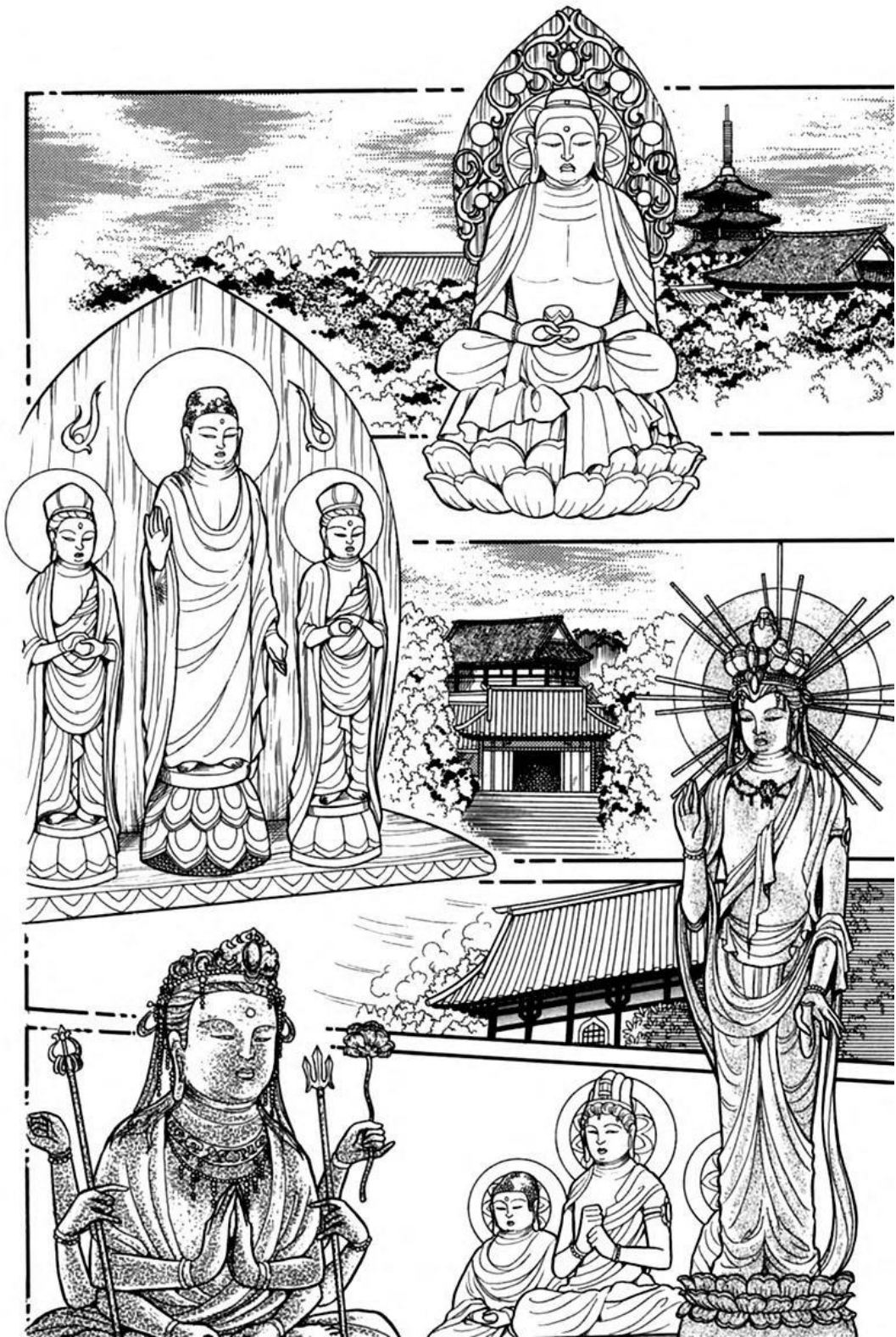
ON THE
EASTERN SIDE
OF THE TEMPLE
THERE ARE THE
STATUES OF
NIKKOU GAKKOU*
DATING BACK
TO THE MIDDLE
OF THE HEIAN
PERIOD.



THE STATUES
FROM THIS TEMPLES'
TREASURE ROOM ARE
ALL ACKNOWLEDGED
AS NATIONAL
MASTERPIECES.

THEY
WERE NAMED
IMPORTANT
CULTURAL
WORKS OF
ART.







Who knows why... even though I've seen wonderful masterpieces...

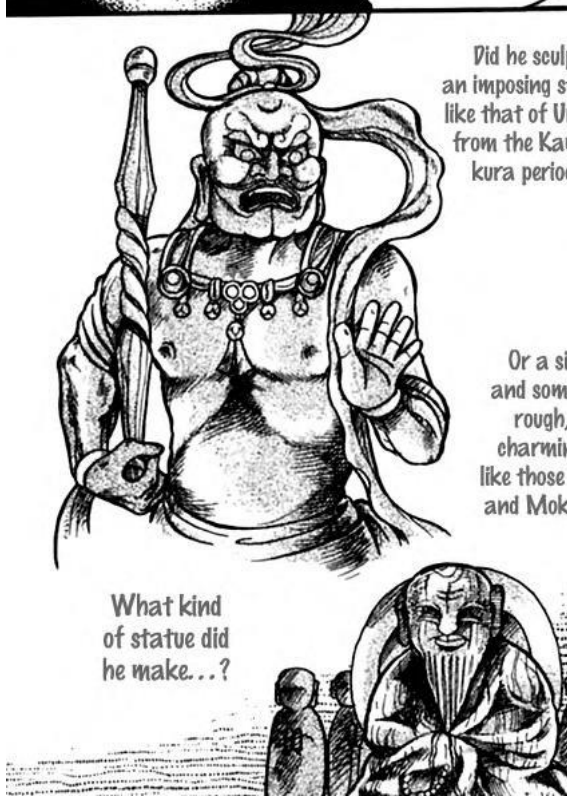
Somewhat none feels right...

...as the statue of Isshin that I am searching for...



NONE OF THEM REALLY INSPIRED ME.

THIS IS THE THIRTY FOURTH TEMPLE ALREADY...



Did he sculpt an imposing statue like that of Unkei* from the Kamakura period?

Or a simple and somewhat rough, but charming one like those of Enku and Mokujiki**?

What kind of statue did he make...?



I've got a feeling that, if I were able to see the image of Isshin's statue, I'll be able to grasp him...



*That statue is actually one of the Nio guardians by sculptor Unkei
<https://eez.uei.edu/clients/sbklein/images/RELIGION/buddhism/images/nio.jpg>
<http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/nio.shtml>
<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/taZ0061109a2.html>



I MUST THANK YOU. I FEEL BETTER NOW THANKS TO YOUR HELP.

I WALKED FOR A WHILE UNDER THE SUN AND I MUST HAVE FELT DIZZY.



ARE YOU NOT FEELING WELL?



UH!

SHAKE



THIS IS JUST A LODGE, NOT A HOUSE IN ITSELF.

THIS PLACE IS QUITE CHARMING. ARE YOU LIVING BY YOURSELF IN THIS HOUSE?

THIS IS WHERE I WRITE HAIKU* AND POETRY!



*Short Japanese poems



It is so expressive and at the same time seems to hold all the mysteries of the world!

It's somewhat rough and shows the power of the deity, yet it still gives off such a feeling of kindness!

This is the one!



The statue Isshin carved is this one!

This is it!



I want
to meet

...

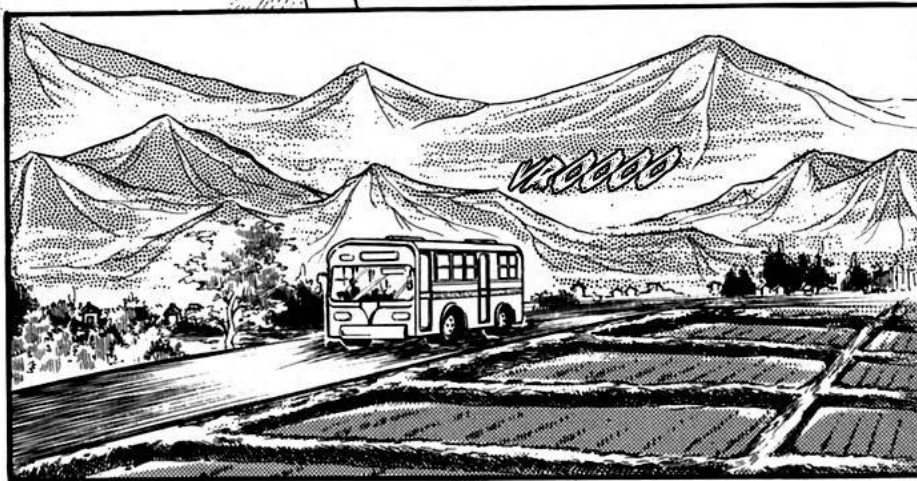
... the
sculptor
Kaikei!



Genzo-san asked me to go into town to get the medicine in his place...

I didn't know that Tsukikage-sensei was still going to the hospital.

Isn't she pushing herself with our arrival?





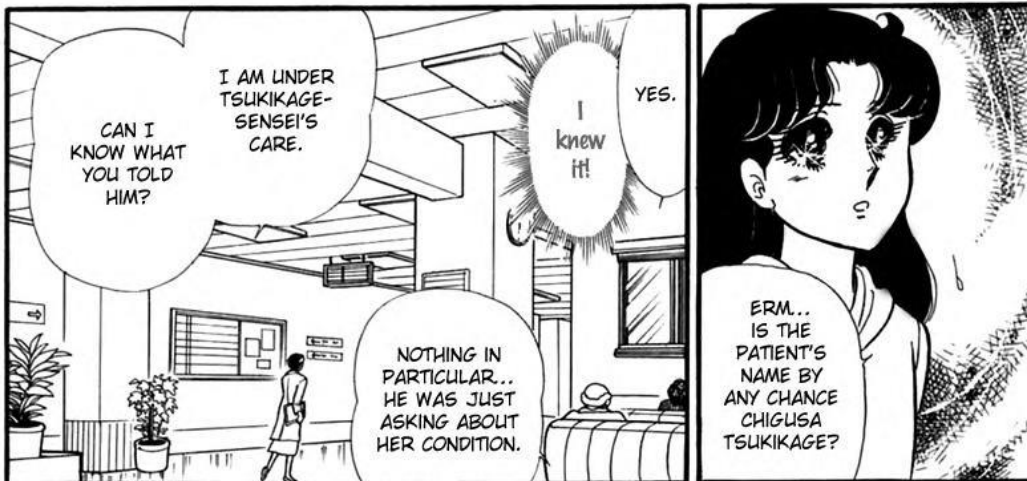


TSUKI-KAGE CHIGUSA-SAN, RIGHT?

YES ...

ERM... I'VE COME TO PICK UP A PRESCRIPTION.





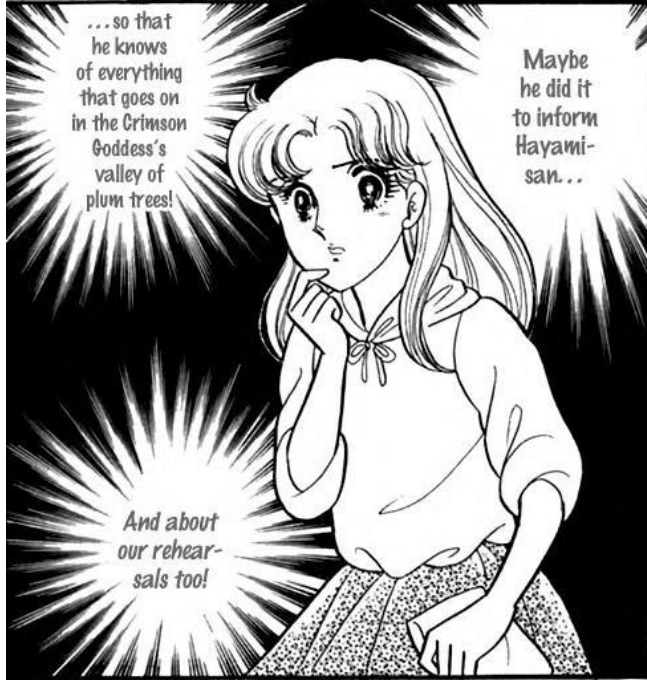


She looks so healthy...

She must have pushed herself

I didn't know...

...that Tsukikage-sensei is still in such bad shape...



...so that he knows of everything that goes on in the Crimson Goddess's valley of plum trees!

Maybe he did it to inform Hayami-san...

And about our rehearsals too!



Because of Hayami-san?!



Why would Hijiri-san inquire about Tsukikage-sensei's health..?



He came to observe Tsukikage-sensei and our actions ...!

...Hijiri-san came to the valley of the plum trees!

That's it! That's definitely the reason as to why...

For which one of them, Hayami-san?

Or for the Purple Rose?

For Daito?

But still, why? For what purpose?



Are you our enemy?

Aah... I still don't get it.

Or our ally?

Why do you need the information...

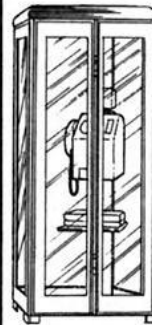
... that Hijiri-san will bring ...?!



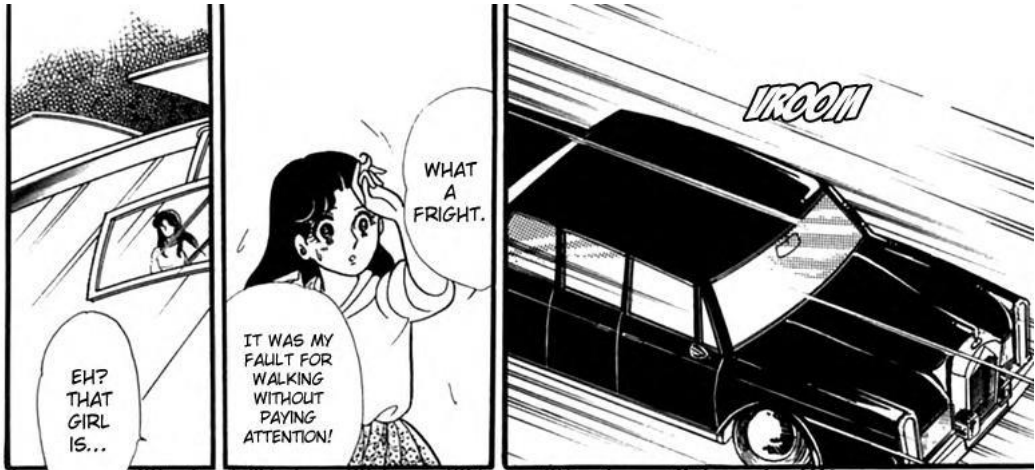
FIVE 100 YEN COINS...

I HAVE ONE, TWO, THREE 10 YEN COINS...

AND NO PHONE CARD...









I HEAR ITS WATERS ARE GOOD FOR RHEUMATISM PAINS.

I CAME TO THE ONSEN WHICH IS CLOSE BY.

WHAT ABOUT YOU YOUNG LADY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?



WHAT A COINCIDENCE!

YOU CAME TO SEE ME IN FORGOTTEN WILDERNESS, WHERE I WAS PERFORMING THE WOLF GIRL JANE.

IT'S SUCH A SURPRISE TO SEE YOU AGAIN!



THE PLAY I TOLD YOU ABOUT IS THE CRIMSON GODDESS AND I AM TRAINING WITH TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI, ABOUT WHOM WE TALKED SOME TIME AGO.

I'M REHEARSING FOR A PLAY. I'M STAYING IN A TEMPLE IN A SMALL VILLAGE, IN A VALLEY ABOUT AN HOUR AND A HALF BUS RIDE FROM HERE.

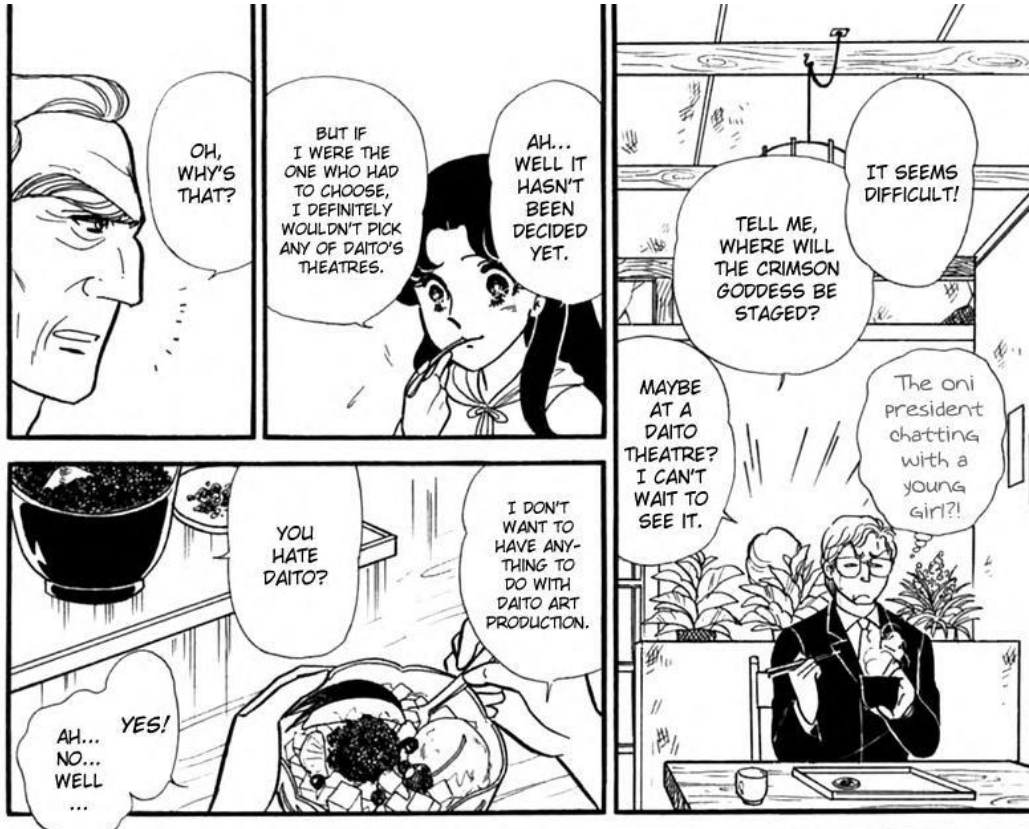


I HAVE TO COMPETE AGAINST ANOTHER CANDIDATE.

NO! I HAVEN'T BEEN CHOSEN YET.

OH! CONGRATULATIONS. SO YOU'LL BE PERFORMING THE CRIMSON GODDESS?

I AM PLEASED TO HEAR THAT.





HE DOESN'T
EVEN KNOW THE
MEANING OF THE
WORD MERCY!

HE WILL DO
ANYTHING TO GET
WHAT HE WANTS!
HE IS A HEART-
LESS MAN!

HE IS
OVERBEARING,
MALICIOUS,
ARROGANT AND
ALWAYS MAKES
FUN OF ME!

I HATE
HIM!

I'D LIKE
TO MEET THE
ONE WHO
RAISED HIM
TO BE LIKE
THIS!



AH!

I heard
nothing.



PFFF!
HA HA
HA HA!



YEAH. THE MOMENT YOU SEE HIM ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS RUN AWAY, LIKE RUNNING FROM A COCKROACH.

THIS MASUMI HAYAMI FROM DAITO YOU SPOKE OF... ...SEEMS LIKE A TERRIBLE MAN...

WITH THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BEING THAT A COCKROACH IS NOT AS EVIL AS HE IS!

I SEE, I SEE.



IT'S NOTHING YOU HAVE TO APOLOGIZE FOR, MISTER!

WELL, SORRY ABOUT THAT.

HA HA HA

THAT'S TRUE. HA HA HA.



YES, THE CUP JUST SLIPPED.

IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT, MISTER?

THAT IS WHY I'D RATHER HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH DAITO.



AND I HEARD THAT THE PRESIDENT HAYAMI, HIS FATHER, IS EVEN WORSE THAN HE IS.



PORTRAY THE ELEMENTS OF NATURE: WIND, FIRE, WATER AND EARTH...

THEY ARE TOUGH. SHE MAKES US...

...BUT WHO KNOWS WHICH IS THE BEST WAY TO DO IT...

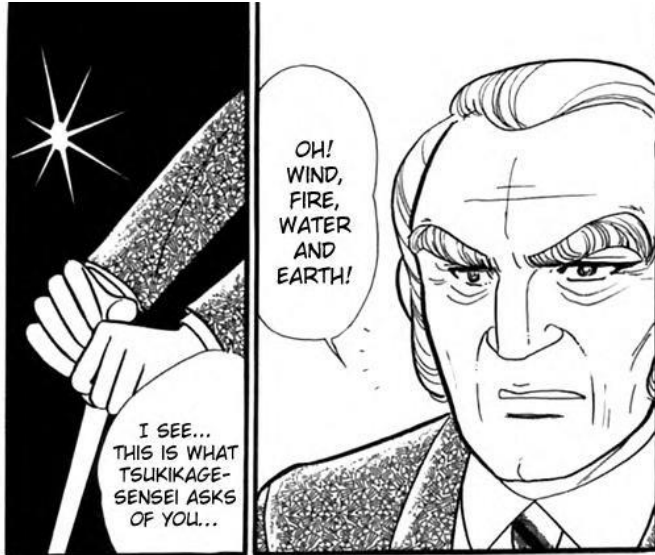


HOW ARE THE REHEARSALS WITH TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI?



That's right! I hate him, that Hayami-san!

So, how come you are the Purple Rose?



OH!
WIND,
FIRE,
WATER
AND
EARTH!

I SEE...
THIS IS WHAT
TSUKIKAGE-
SENSEI ASKS
OF YOU...



NOW, WE ARE AT THE
FIRE ELEMENT. BUT I
AM WONDERING HOW TO
EXPRESS IT. I CAN'T
SEEM TO UNDERSTAND
IT AND I AM SOMEHOW
IN A TIGHT SPOT.



YAOYA
OSHICHI?

I DON'T KNOW IF
THIS COULD HELP YOU,
BUT HAVE YOU HEARD
ABOUT A PLAY CALLED
YAOYA OSHICHI?

YOUNG
LADY...

IT IS OFTEN
DEPICTED IN
THE KABUKI
THEATRE AND
IN MARIONETTE
SHOWS.



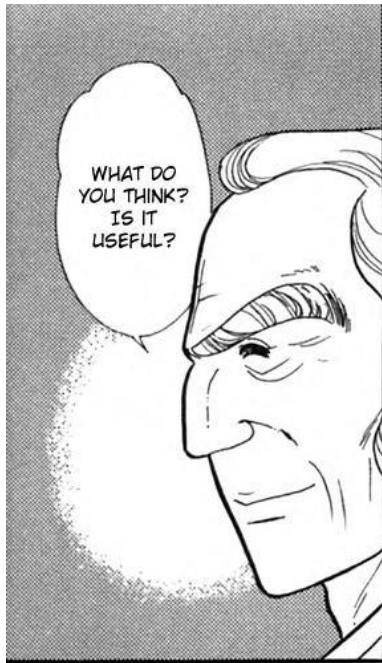
OSHICHI, THE DAUGHTER OF A GREENGROCER, LOOSES HER HOUSE IN THE MIDST OF THE FIRE THAT BURNED THROUGH THE CITY OF EDO AND SEEKS REFUGE IN A TEMPLE.

THERE SHE FALLS IN LOVE WITH A SERVANT, KICHIZA.

HOWEVER, OSHICHI WAS SO OBSESSED WITH KICHIZA THAT SHE THOUGHT A FIRE WOULD MAKE THEM SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN.

AT THE TIME, ARSON WAS A CRIME PUNISHABLE BY DEATH.

EVER SINCE THE FIRE ENDED, SHE WANTED TO SEE KICHIZA SO BADLY... IN THE END SHE COMMITTED ARSON HERSELF.



WHAT DO YOU THINK?
IS IT USEFUL?



I IMAGINE IT WAS AS STRONG AS THE ONE THAT BURNED IN THE HEART OF OSHICHI.

A FIRE SO STRONG THAT IT BURNED THE WHOLE CITY OF EDO TO ASHES.

THAT FIRE THAT IN THE END ALSO BURNED HER.

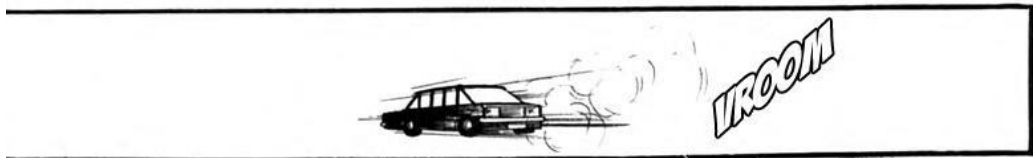


Yaoya Oshichi ...



GOODBYE, AND THANK YOU.

WELL THEN, SEE YOU AGAIN YOUNG LADY.



VROOM



Yaoya Oshichi...





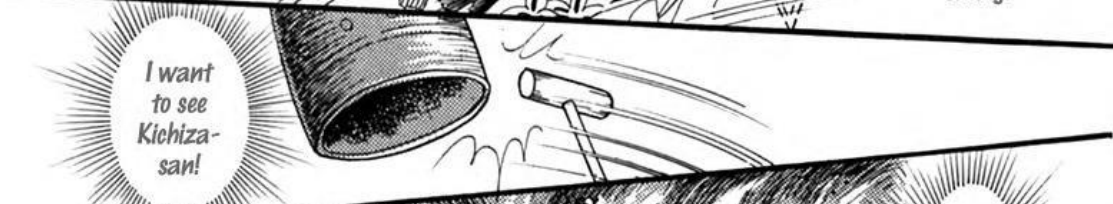
Just a glimpse would be enough ...

I long to see Kichiza-san...

I want to see Kichiza-san...

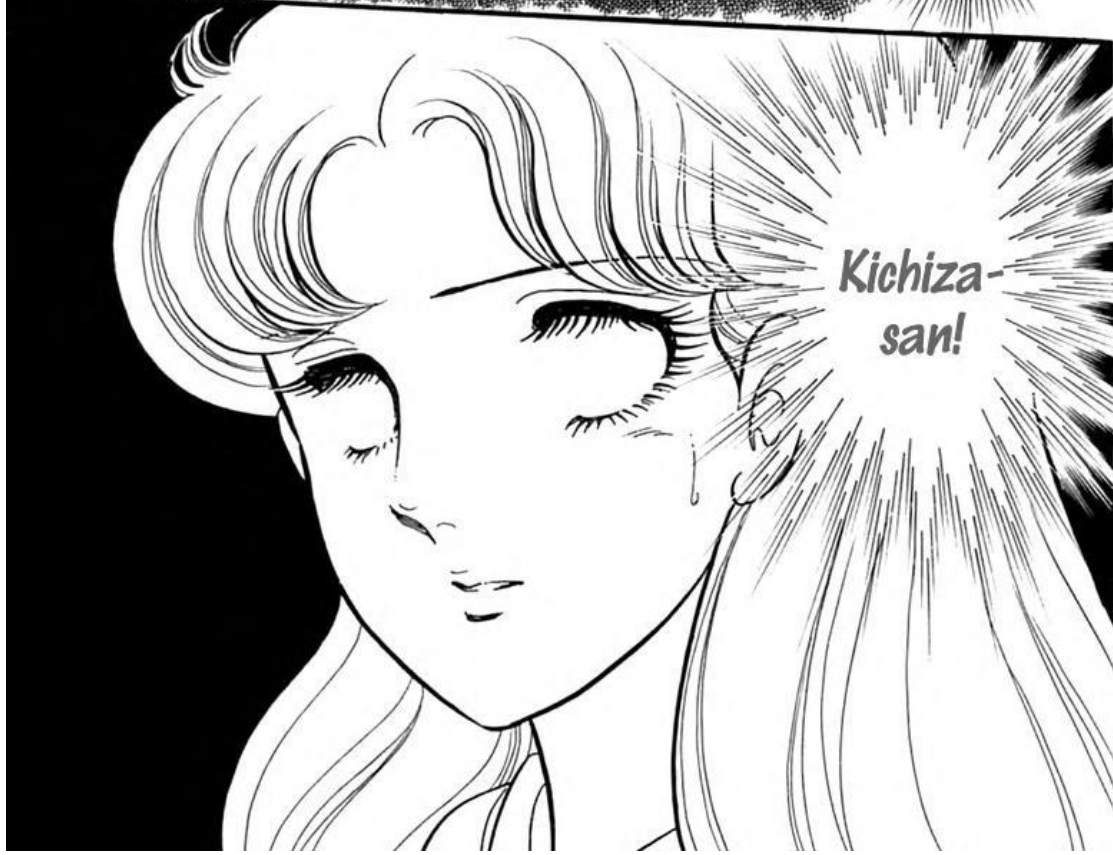


To see him I am ready to do anything!



I want to see Kichiza-san!

I want to see ...



Kichiza-san!



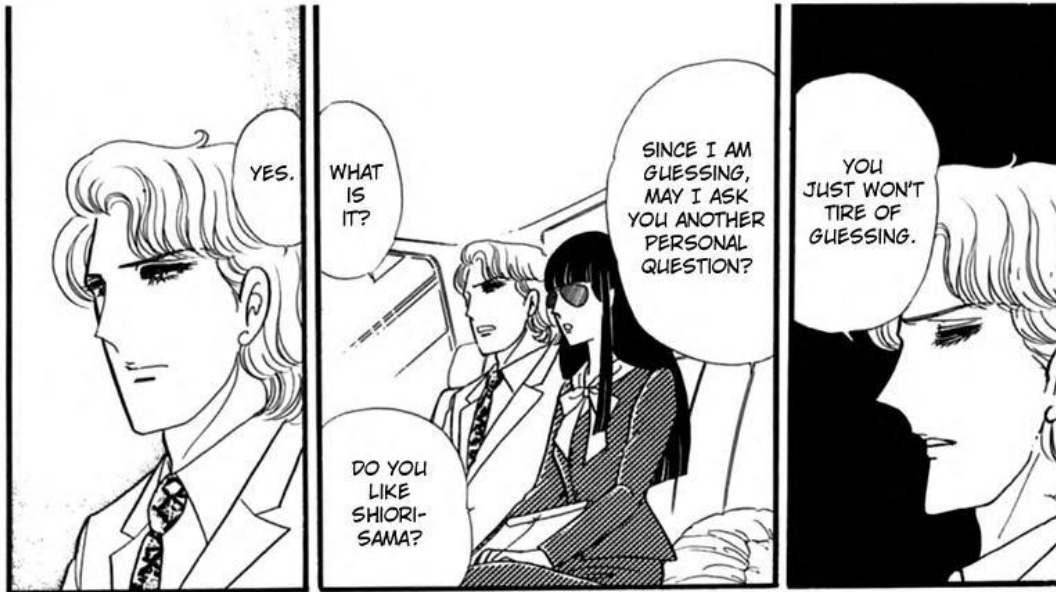
花とゆめ発売中

オシチ!

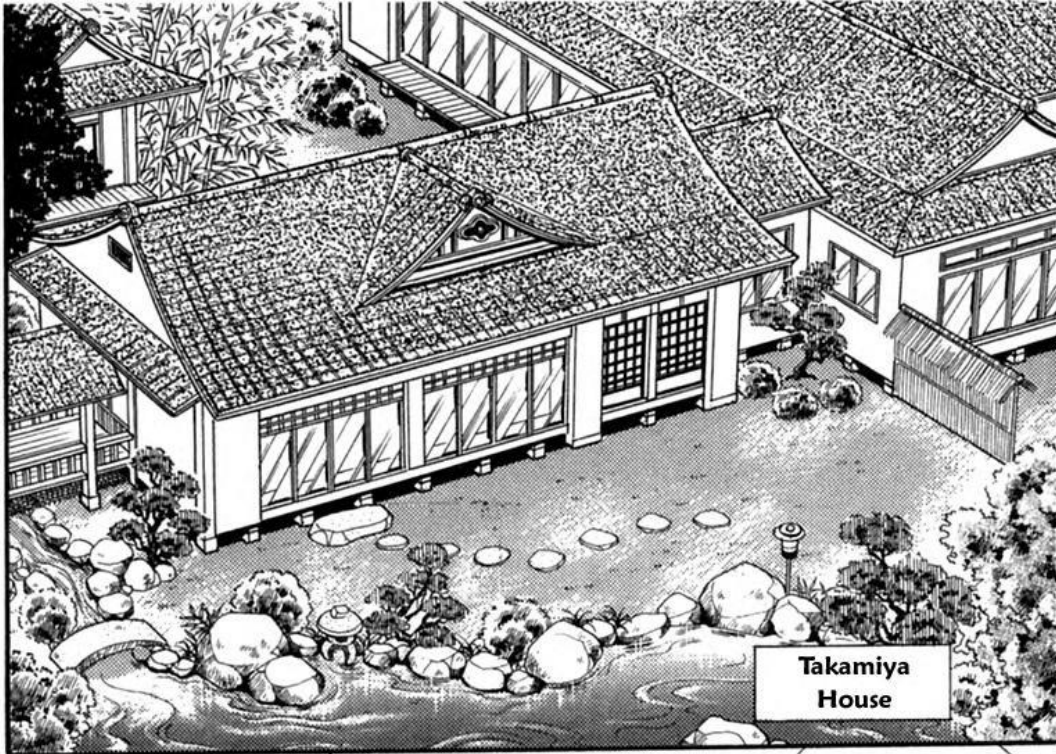
Oshichi!

Chapter 192









Takamiya House

SHIORI-SAMA WILL BE PLEASED TO SEE YOU.

PLEASE COME IN.

OH! WELCOME, HAYAMI-SAMA.

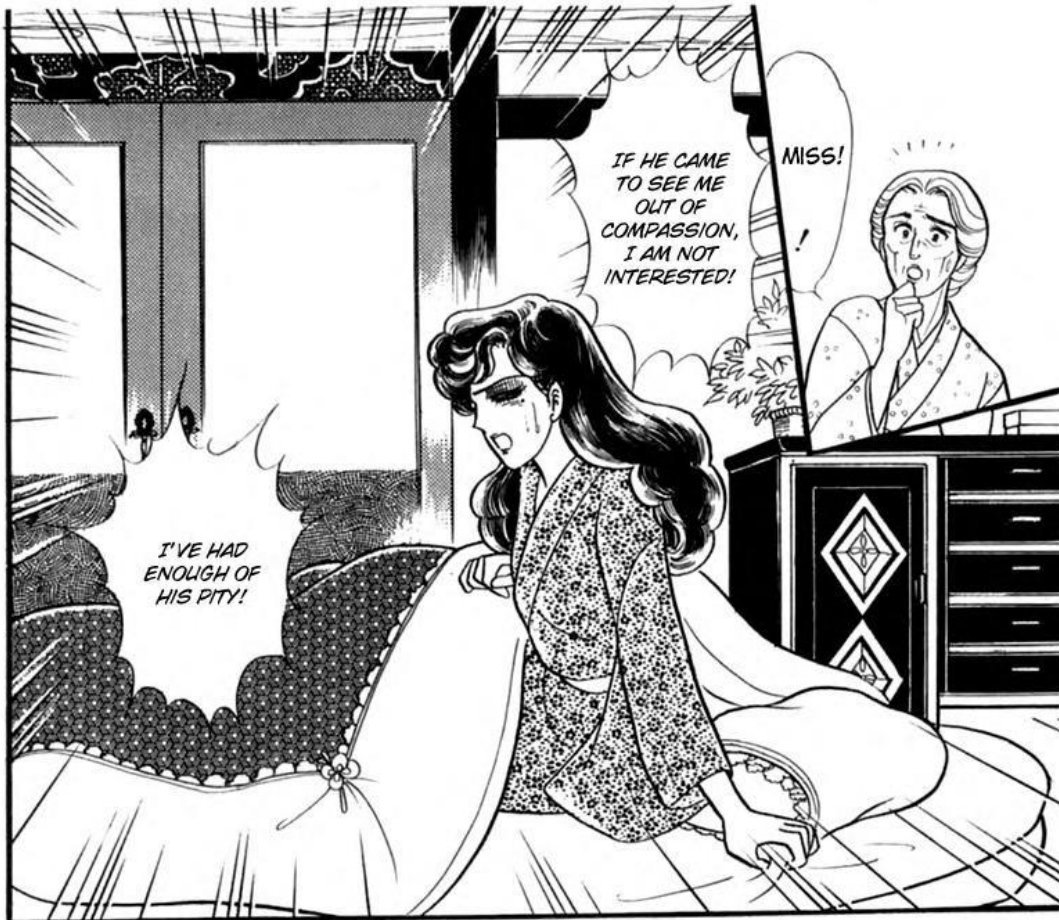


BUT I'M SURE SHE'LL RECOVER FASTER, SINCE YOU ARE COMING TO SEE HER, HAYAMI-SAMA!

SHE JUST HAD AN ANEMIA ATTACK SINCE SHE HADN'T HAD ONE FOR A WHILE.

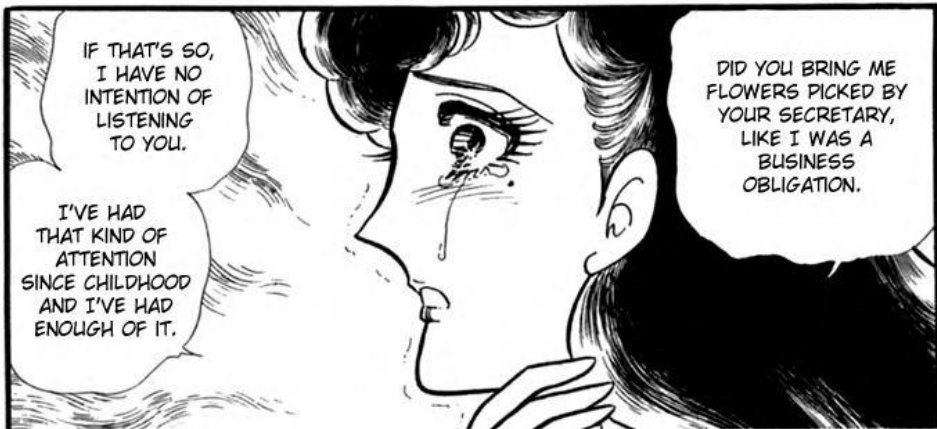
I HEARD SHE BECAME ILL VERY SUDDENLY. HOW IS SHE NOW?













EVEN
THOUGH YOU
MAY NOT
LIKE THEM.

NO.
I PICKED
THESE
FLOWERS
MYSELF.



MASUMI
-KUN

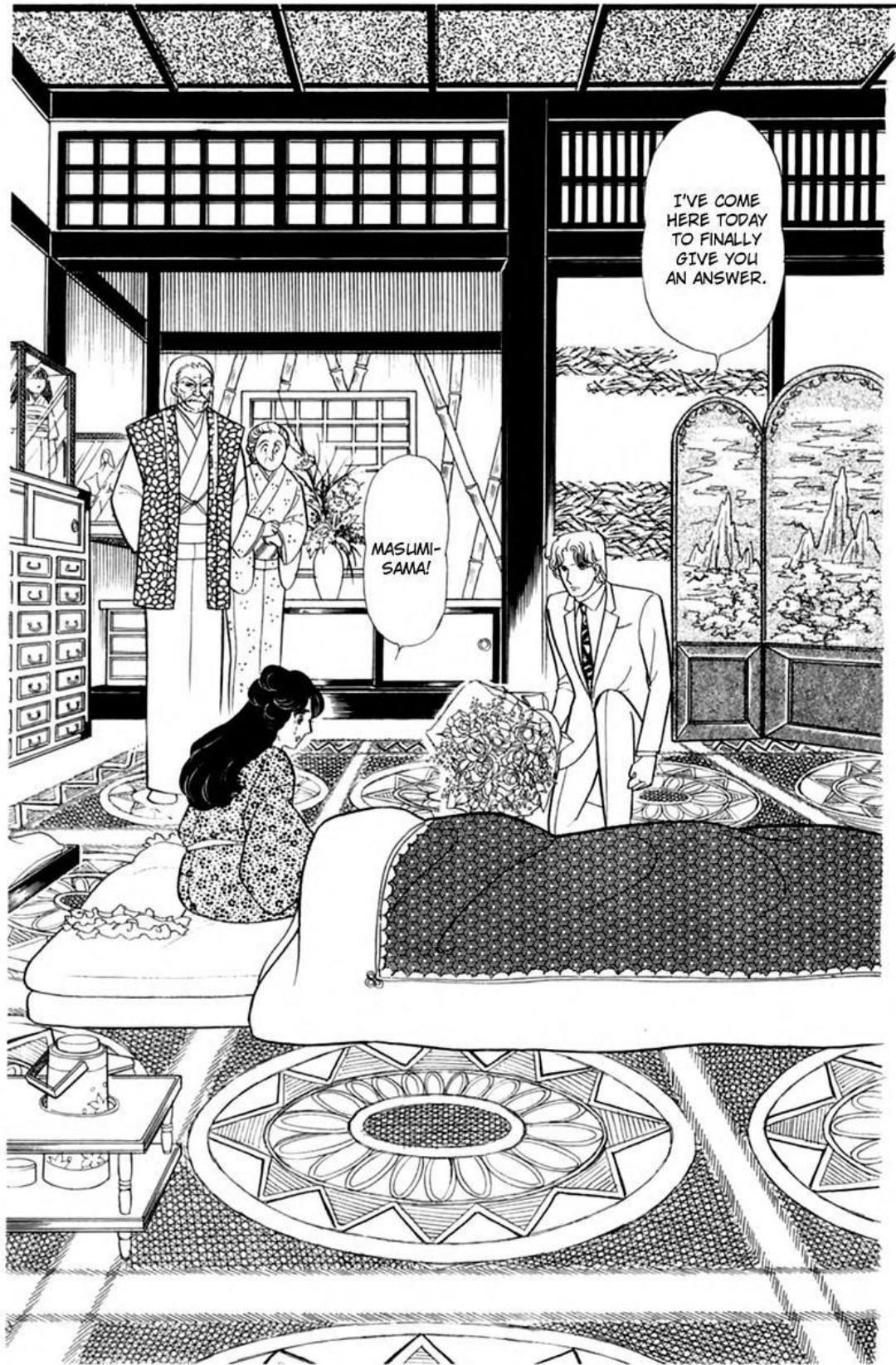


MASUMI-
SAMA!



I ASK
FOR YOUR
FORGIVE-
NESS.

FOR MAKING
YOU SUFFER
THIS LONG.





ARE YOU REALLY GOING TO STAY AT THIS ONSEN, SIR?



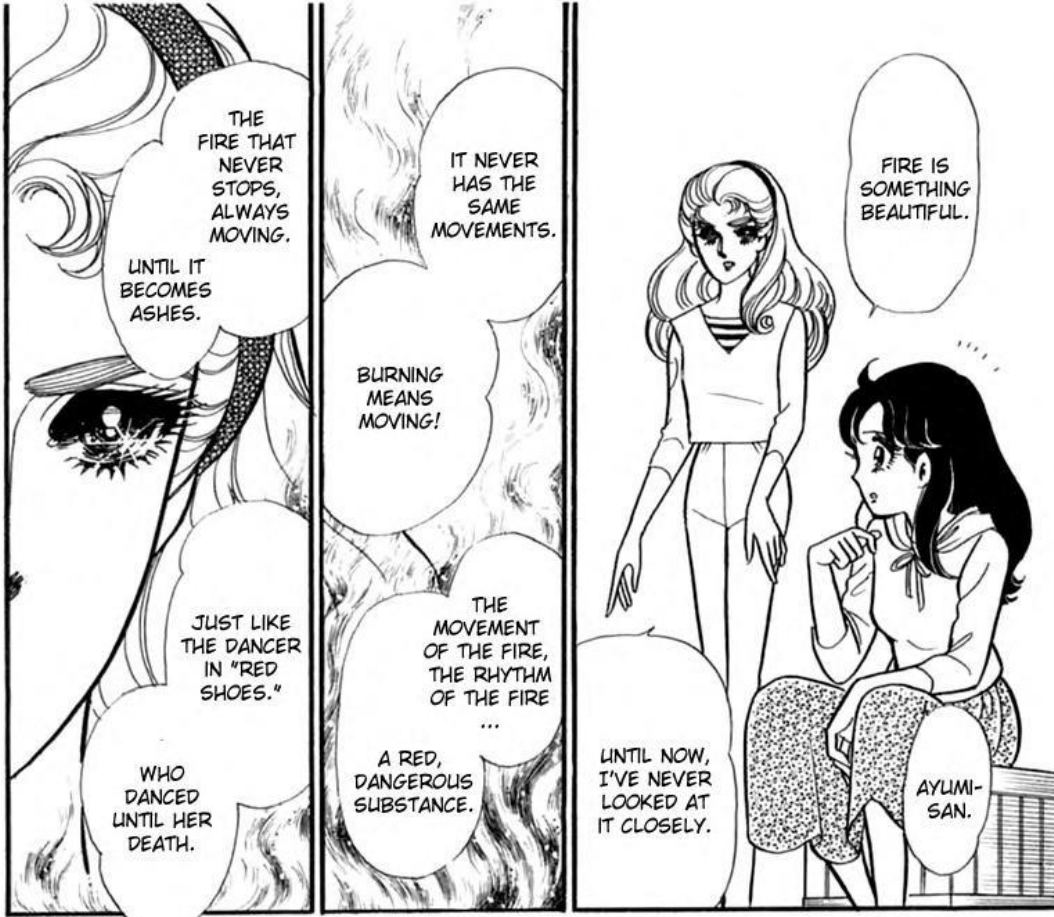
I WILL STAY HERE WHILE I WAIT FOR A GOOD OPPORTUNITY.

YES. THIS PLACE IS VERY RELAXING.



A CHANCE TO MEET THE CRIMSON GODDESS!





THE FIRE THAT NEVER STOPS, ALWAYS MOVING. UNTIL IT BECOMES ASHES.

IT NEVER HAS THE SAME MOVEMENTS.

FIRE IS SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL.

BURNING MEANS MOVING!

JUST LIKE THE DANCER IN "RED SHOES."

THE MOVEMENT OF THE FIRE, THE RHYTHM OF THE FIRE ...

WHO DANCED UNTIL HER DEATH.

A RED, DANGEROUS SUBSTANCE.

UNTIL NOW, I'VE NEVER LOOKED AT IT CLOSELY.

AYUMI-SAN.



YES, A BIT. I WAS IN LOVE ONCE, BUT IT DIDN'T END WELL.

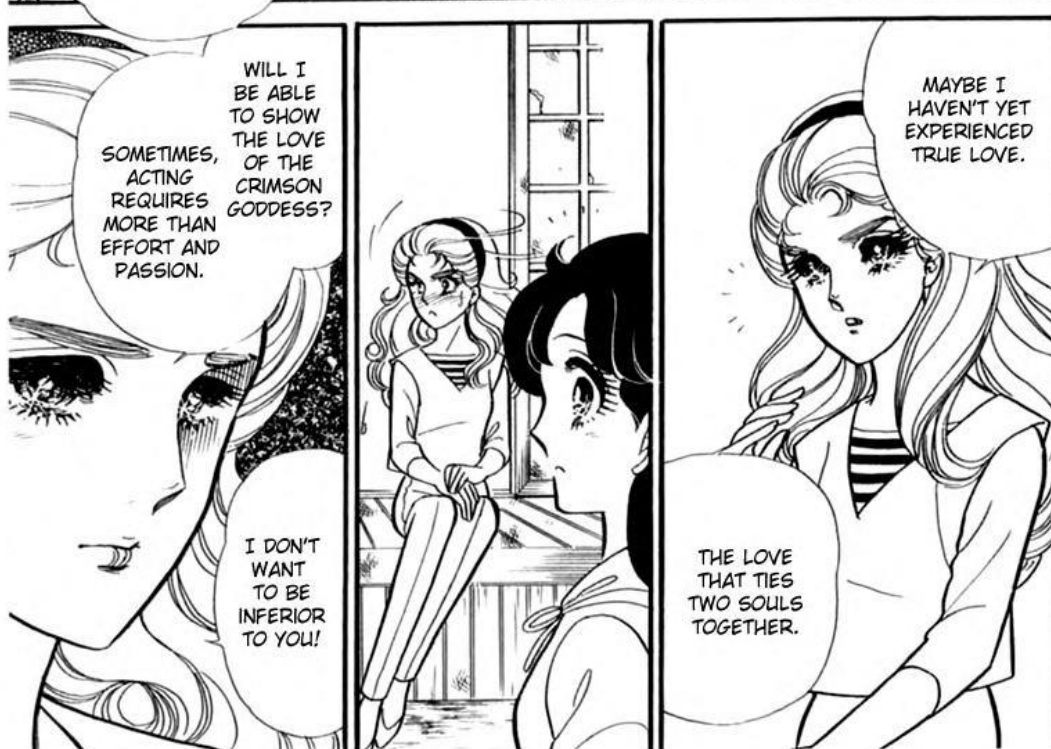
HUH?

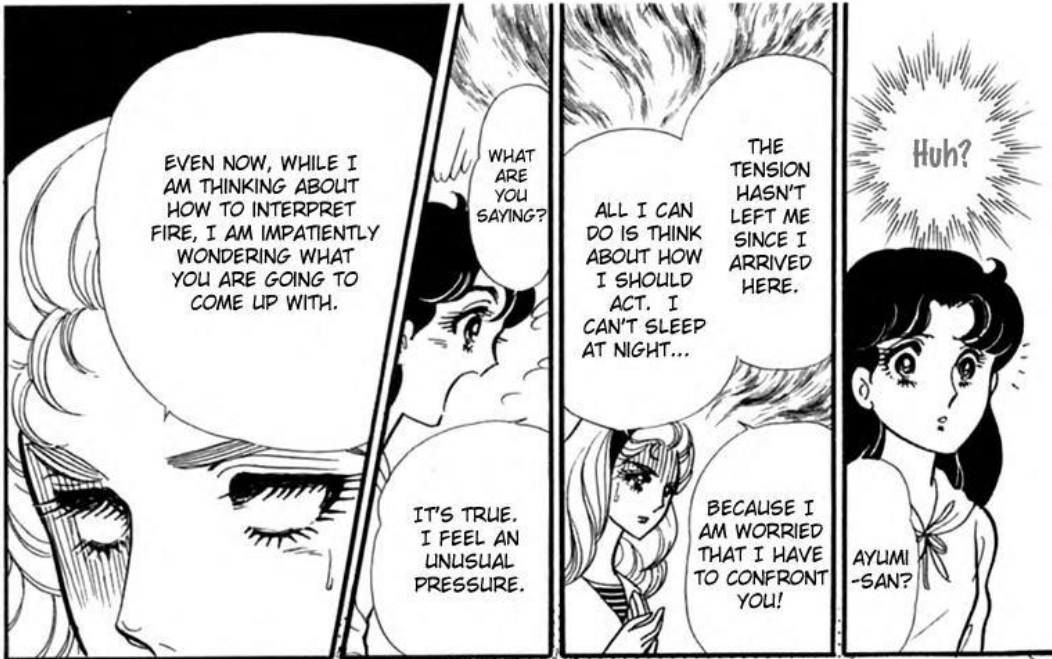
AND NOW?

FORGIVE ME. THEN IT IS TRUE THAT YOU WERE GOING OUT WITH SATOMI-KUN.



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN LOVE?





EVEN NOW, WHILE I AM THINKING ABOUT HOW TO INTERPRET FIRE, I AM IMPATIENTLY WONDERING WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO COME UP WITH.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

ALL I CAN DO IS THINK ABOUT HOW I SHOULD ACT. I CAN'T SLEEP AT NIGHT...

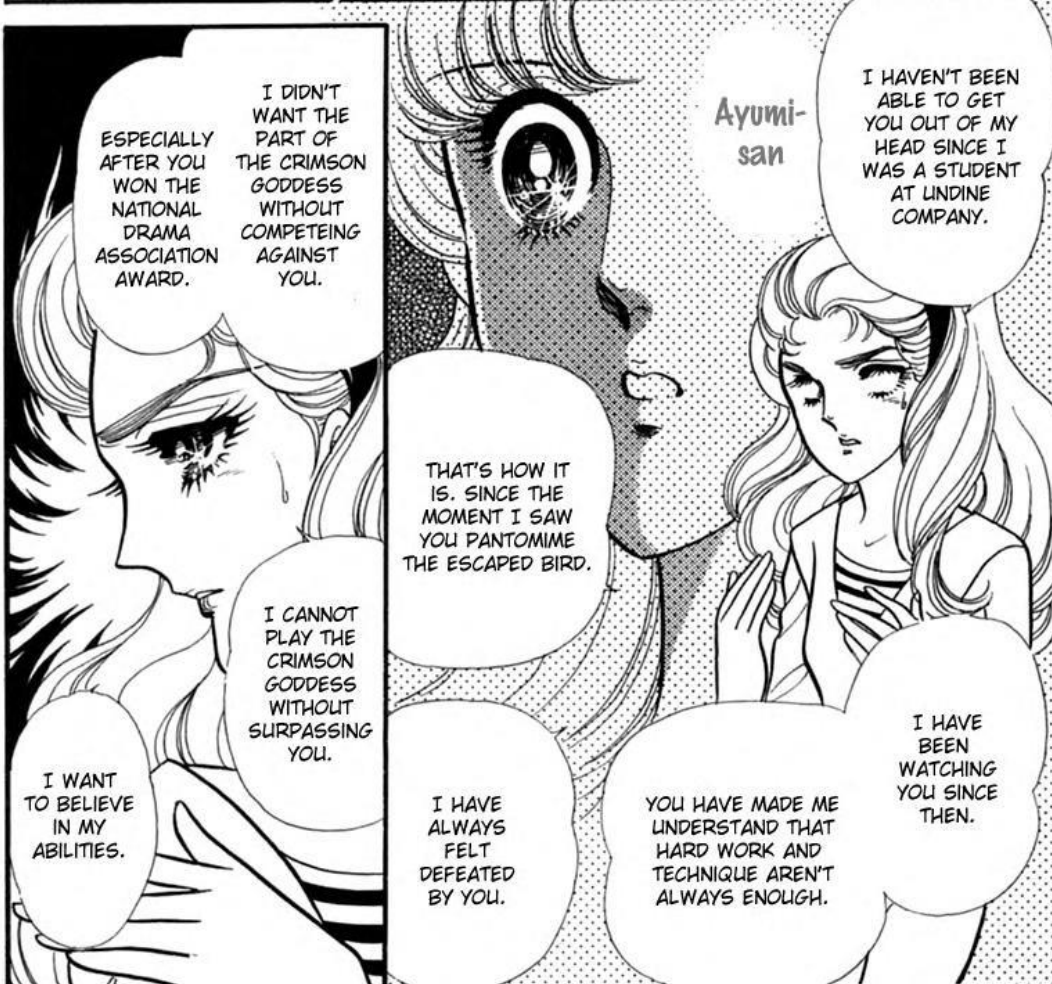
THE TENSION HASN'T LEFT ME SINCE I ARRIVED HERE.

Huh?

IT'S TRUE. I FEEL AN UNUSUAL PRESSURE.

BECAUSE I AM WORRIED THAT I HAVE TO CONFRONT YOU!

AYUMI-SAN?



ESPECIALLY AFTER YOU WON THE NATIONAL DRAMA ASSOCIATION AWARD.

I DIDN'T WANT THE PART OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS WITHOUT COMPETEING AGAINST YOU.

Ayumi-san

I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET YOU OUT OF MY HEAD SINCE I WAS A STUDENT AT UNDINE COMPANY.

THAT'S HOW IT IS. SINCE THE MOMENT I SAW YOU PANTOMIME THE ESCAPED BIRD.

I CANNOT PLAY THE CRIMSON GODDESS WITHOUT SURPASSING YOU.

I WANT TO BELIEVE IN MY ABILITIES.

I HAVE ALWAYS FELT DEFEATED BY YOU.

YOU HAVE MADE ME UNDERSTAND THAT HARD WORK AND TECHNIQUE AREN'T ALWAYS ENOUGH.

I HAVE BEEN WATCHING YOU SINCE THEN.



WAIT!
WAIT!
AYUMI-SAN!

I WILL NOT LOSE TO YOU!

Ayumi-san!

WHY ARE YOU SAYING THINGS LIKE THIS?

I WILL BE THE ONE TO PERFORM THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

I can't believe it.



SO HOW CAN YOU SPEAK LIKE THIS?

YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IN AN UNREACHABLE POSITION FOR ME!

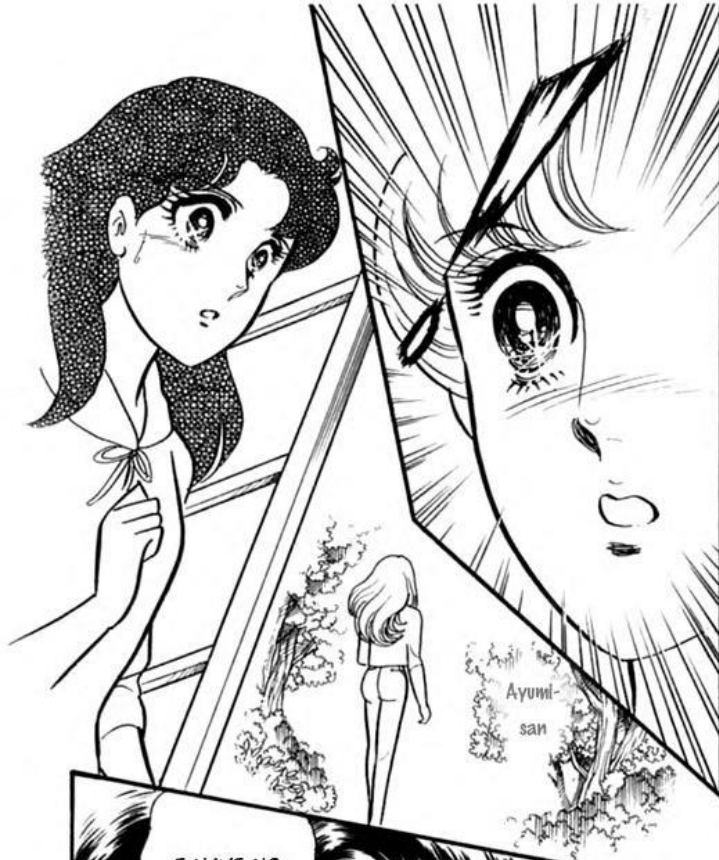
AYUMI-SAN! YOU HAVE ALWAYS SURPASSED ME!



I'VE ALWAYS ENVIED YOU!

YOU WERE ALWAYS MY IDEAL. BEING AN ACTRESS LIKE YOU IS MY GOAL!

YOU'VE ALWAYS SHONE BRIGHTLY WITH YOUR OWN LIGHT AND I HAVE NEVER COME CLOSE TO MATCHING ANY OF YOUR INTERPRETATIONS!



I HAVE NO INTENTION OF LOSING TO YOU, EITHER!

I can't believe it.

It can't be true.

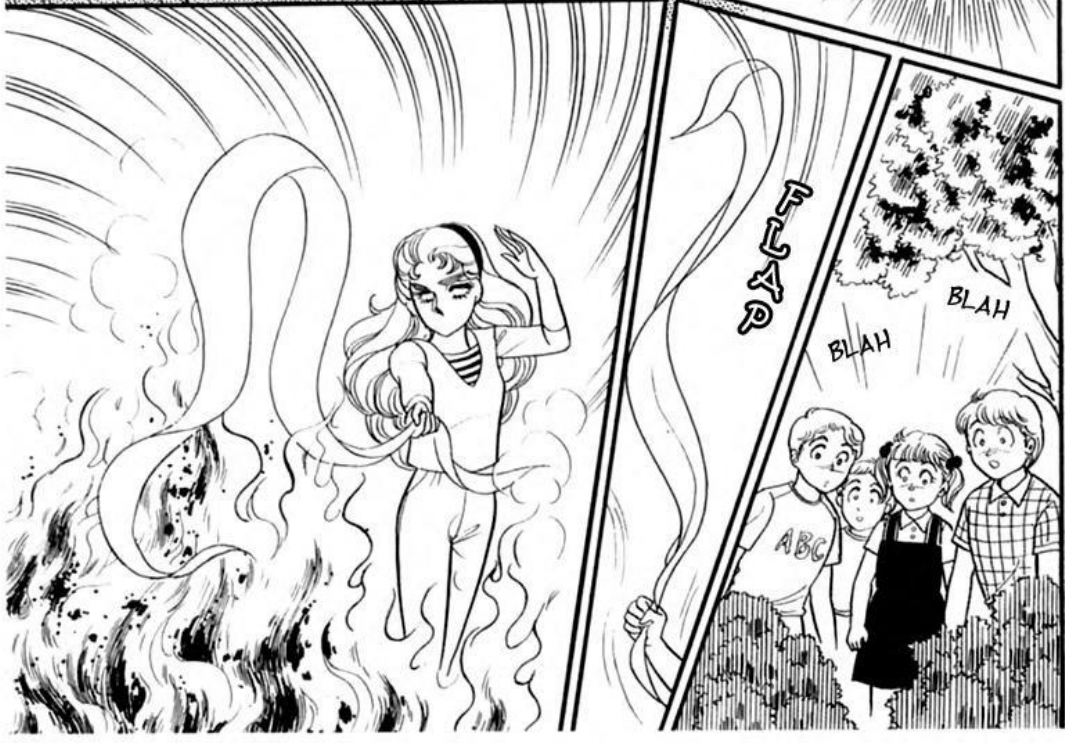
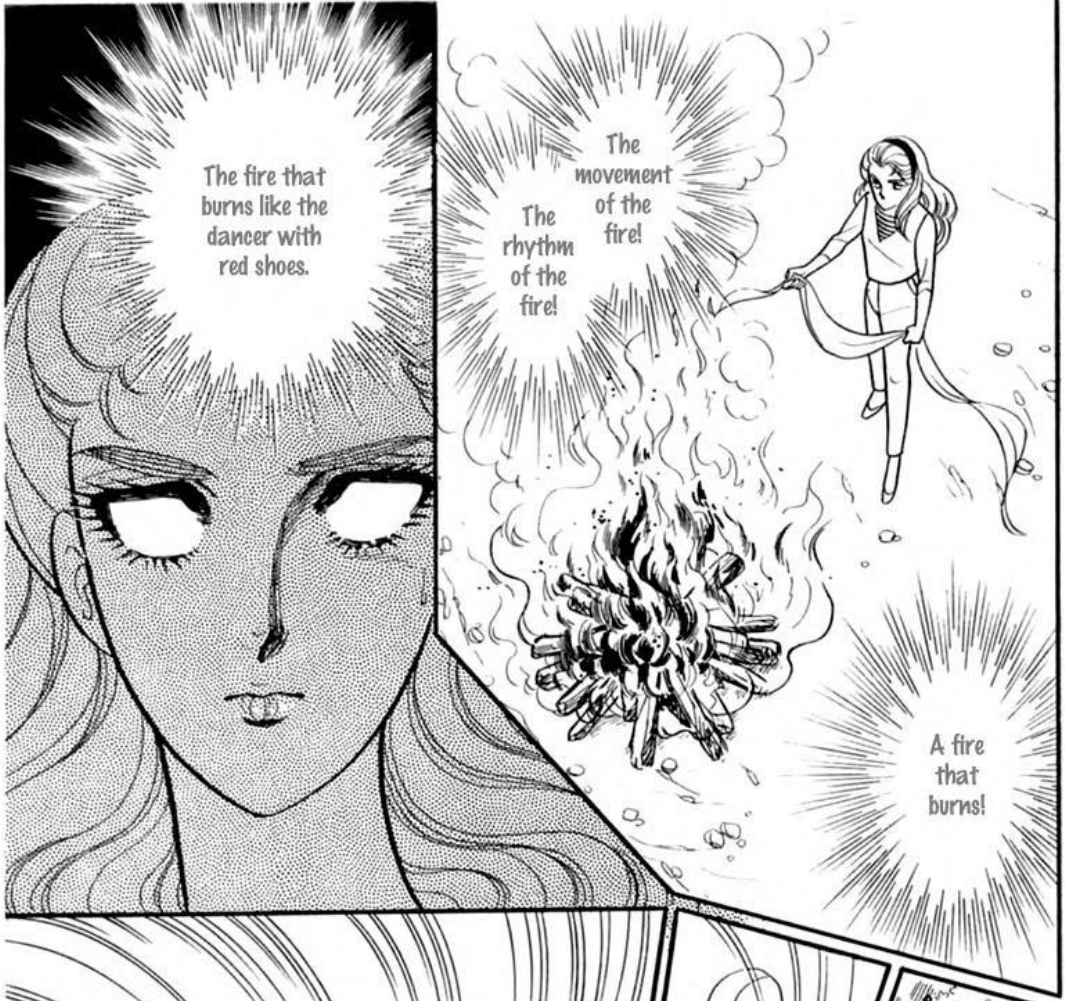
I WANT TO PLAY THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

I WILL PLAY HER.

Ayumi-san being jealous of me?



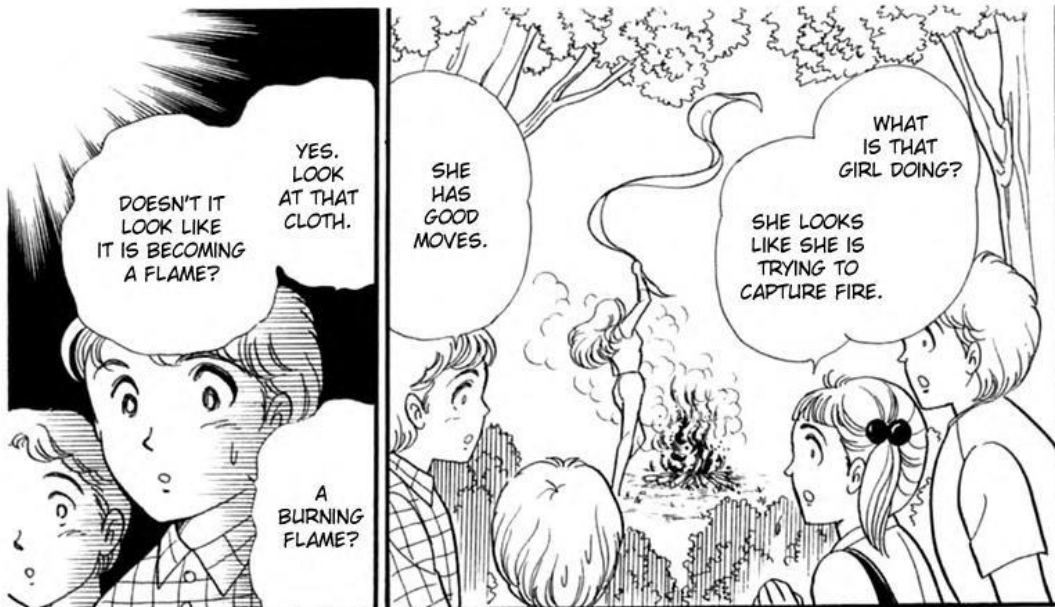
IT IS I WHO HAVE ALWAYS ENVIED YOU.





FRUSH









The
movement
of fire!

The fire
that dances
until it is
extinguished!



Yaoya
oshichi!

The fire
of the
heart!







GLASS MASK/ VOLUME 35 END