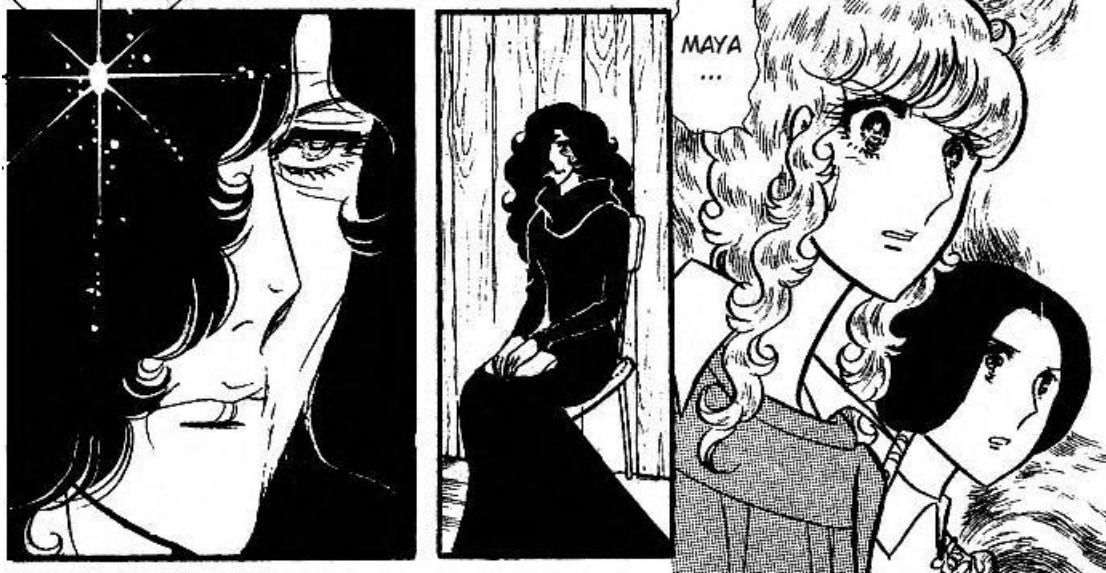


WE ARE STILL IN THE SHED, RIGHT?

I COULD HAVE SWORN THAT I SAW VENICE

WHAT... WHAT WAS THAT?



BUT STILL ...

BESIDES, SHE'S ALONE. WHAT CAN SHE DO?

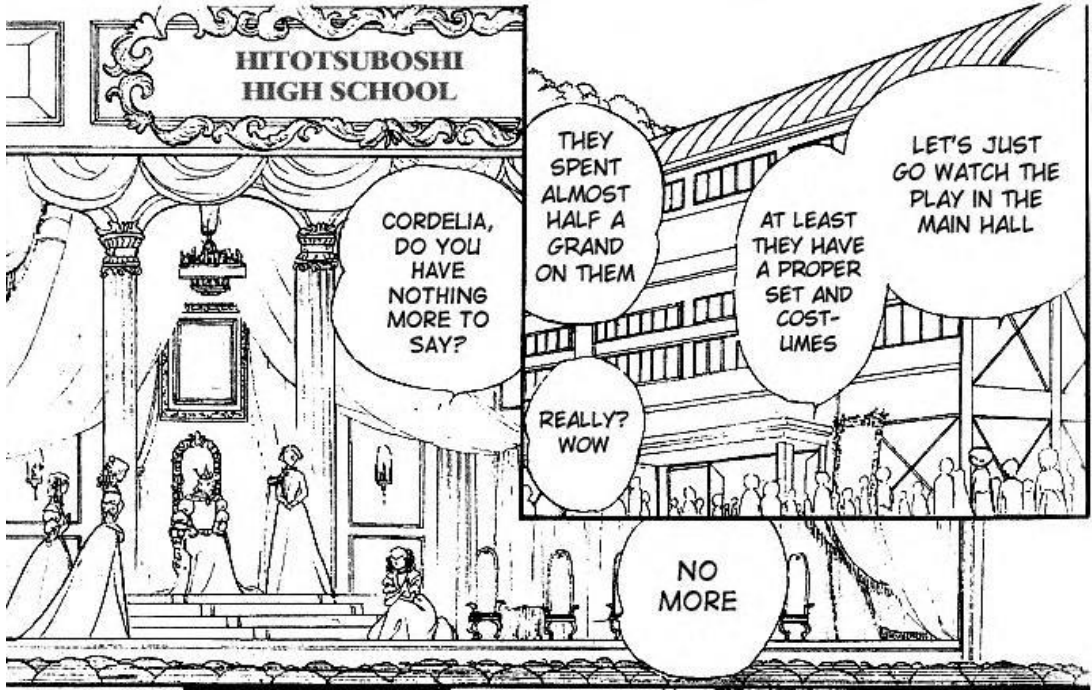
WE'LL HAVE TO SIT ON THE FLOOR. THE STAGE IS JUST A BUNCH OF JUNK

AW, COME ON, DO WE HAVE TO?

LET'S GO SEE FOR A WHILE

HEY, THIS IS WHERE MAYA IS DOING THAT SOLO PIECE

Bianca, the Female Pirate



HITOTSUBOSHI HIGH SCHOOL

CORDELIA, DO YOU HAVE NOTHING MORE TO SAY?

THEY SPENT ALMOST HALF A GRAND ON THEM

REALLY? WOW

AT LEAST THEY HAVE A PROPER SET AND COSTUMES

LET'S JUST GO WATCH THE PLAY IN THE MAIN HALL

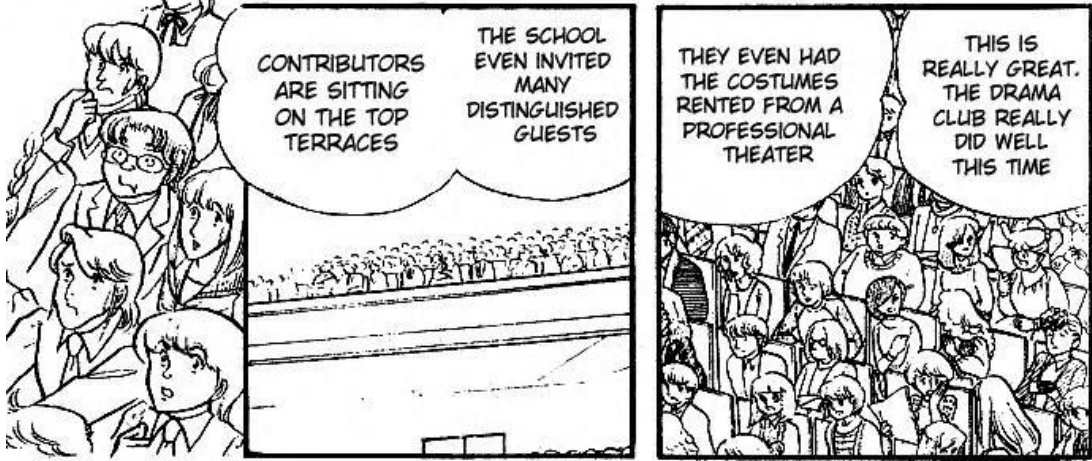
NO MORE



IS THAT YOUR EXCUSE? SIMPLY BEING A GOOD DAUGHTER?

BY FOLLOWING FATHER'S ORDERS, I AM SIMPLY BEING A GOOD DAUGHTER

I ONLY DO WHAT I AM ASKED TO DO



CONTRIBUTORS ARE SITTING ON THE TOP TERRACES

THE SCHOOL EVEN INVITED MANY DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

THEY EVEN HAD THE COSTUMES RENTED FROM A PROFESSIONAL THEATER

THIS IS REALLY GREAT. THE DRAMA CLUB REALLY DID WELL THIS TIME



TO MEET
A FIANCÉ
THAT I HAVE
NEVER
EVEN ONCE
SEEN

PRINCE
LORENCHIO,
WHO IS A
YEAR
OLDER
THAN I

FINALLY, WE
HAVE LEFT
THE CANALS
OF VENICE

WE HAVE
ARRIVED IN
VALENCIA

AND
AFTER
A LONG
HORSE
RIDE...



AND
YET MORE
GUARDS
AND
KNIGHTS
AWAIT

AROUND
THE CASTLE,
THE DIGNI-
TARIES AND
ROYALTY
OF GENOVA



YET TO ME,
ON THIS DAY,
IT HOLDS
NO APPEAL

VALENCIA,
THE
BEAUTIFUL
TOWN OF
FLOWERS

I AM
SO
WORRIED



WITH 200
GUARDS
AT MY
SIDE,

AND
KNIGHTS ALL
AROUND ME,
WE FINALLY
MAKE IT TO
THE CASTLE



Shock

RIGHT YOU ARE !

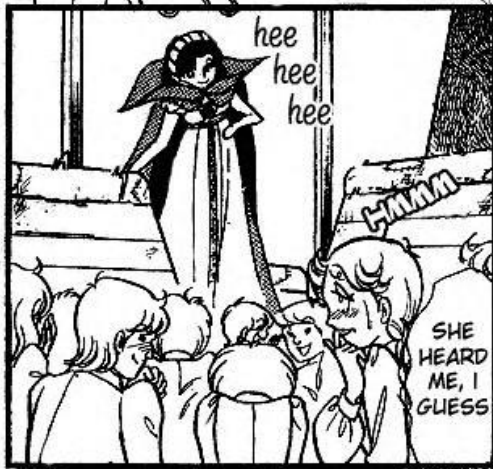
RIGHT?

AND NOW SHE'S ASCENDING THE STAIRS TO THE GATES



OH, SO THAT'S GOTTA BE THE CASTLE GATES

AM I RIGHT ?



hee hee hee

JUST AS SHE SAID, AND BEYOND THE GATES WAS A MAGNIFICENT LOBBY

SHE HEARD ME, I GUESS



SHE'S AMAZING

SHE INCORPORATED THE AUDIENCE'S DISTRACTION INTO HER ACT



AND ALL THE ROYALTY OF GENOVA WELCOMED ME



FEARED BY OTHER NATIONS

TWO POWERFUL NAVAL COUNTRIES. COMBINED, THEY WILL BE UNSTOPPABLE

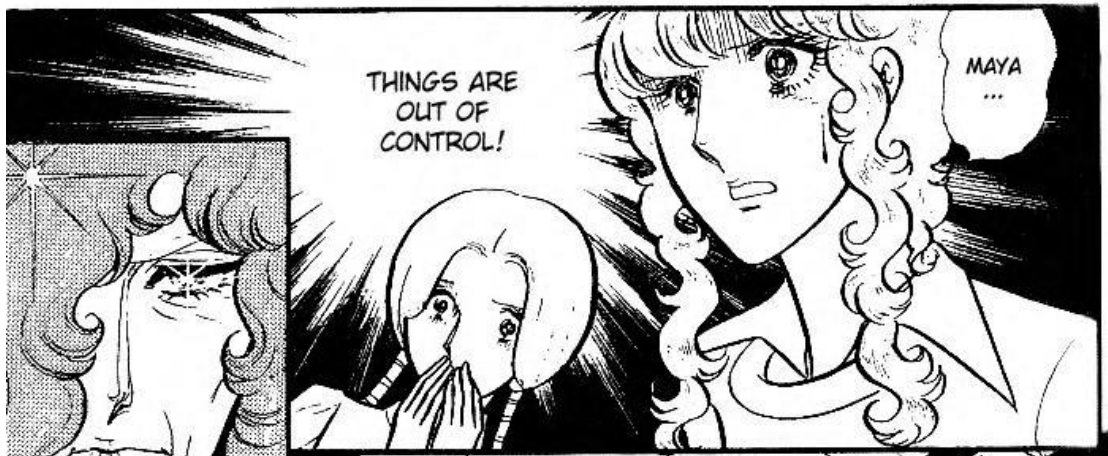
GENOVA AND VENICE ...

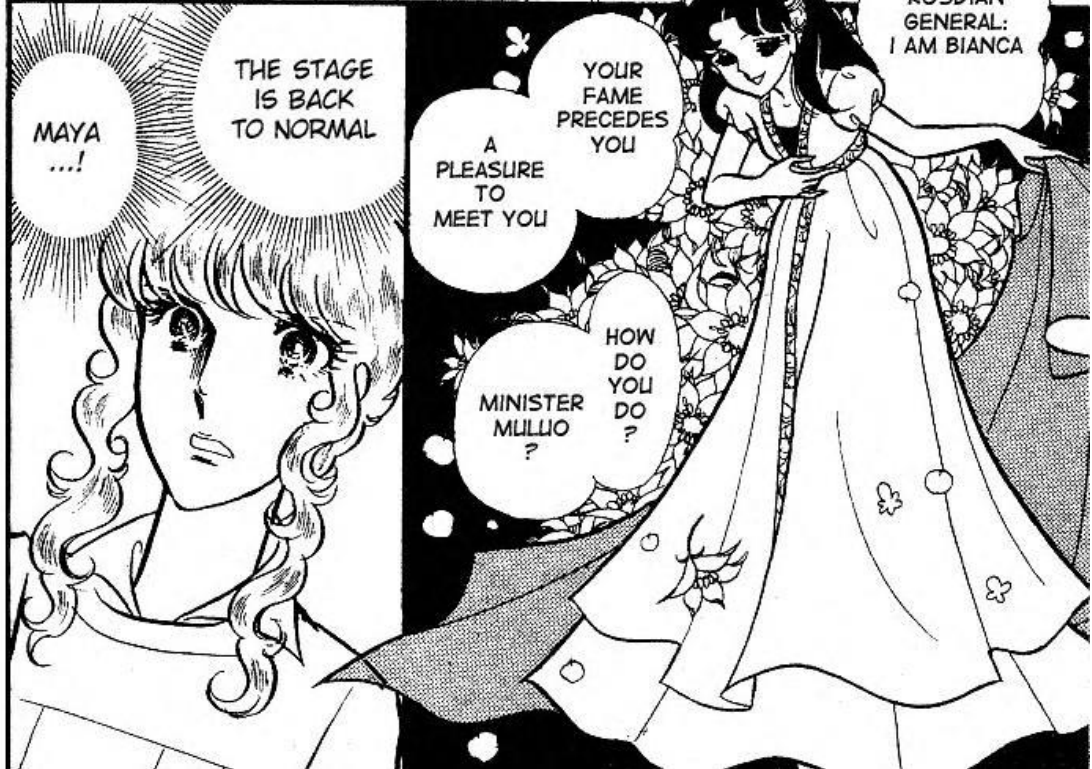
BY SPAIN AND TURKEY, WITH THEIR FORMIDABLE ARMIES
BY THE EAST ROMAN EMPIRE AND MILAN



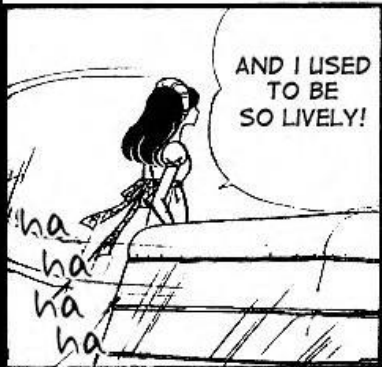
hmmm











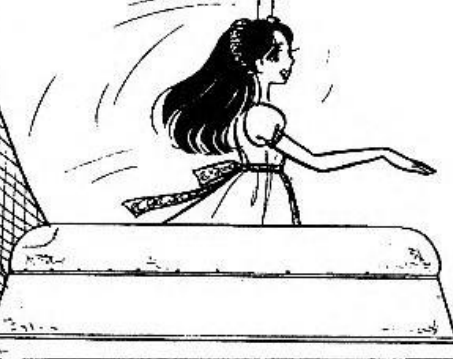
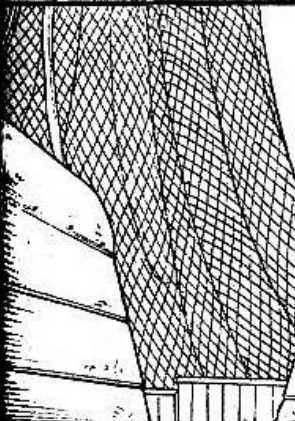
AND I USED TO BE SO LIVELY!



STAND UP FOR YOURSELF

NO, BIANCA, YOU MUST NOT FALTER

I AM THE DAUGHTER OF THE FAMOUS CASTINIS OF VENICE



NOW, I ENTER THIS CHAMBER TO AWAIT PRINCE LORENCHIO



THE DOORS OPEN BEFORE ME

CREAK



booh



rub

rub

WHAT THE ...?



EH?



COULD THAT BE LORENCHIO?

IS IT ...?



gulp



THE MEN AROUND HIM BACKED UP AND CLEARED A PATH FOR HIM

I FOUND MYSELF BREATHLESS

A MAN ROSE FROM HIS SEAT AS HE GAZED AT ME

THERE CAN'T BE ANYONE BACK THERE

DUMMY, IT'S A ONE-WOMAN ACT!

OH YEAH!

I PLAIN FORGOT



LIPON HIS CHEST
WAS A MEDAL OF
EMERALDS, GREEN
AS THE SHALLOW
SEAS

HE WORE
A CAPE
OF BLUE,
ADORNED
WITH GOLD
AND
PEARLS

SLOWLY HE
WALKED
TOWARDS
ME

HE
SEEMED
SO TALL
...
EVEN THOUGH
HE WAS ONLY
A YEAR OLDER
THAN I



HIS HAIR, LONG
AND BLONDE,
LIKE LONG
STRANDS OF
SHIMMERING
GOLD

HIS SKIN,
WHITE AS
NEW-
FALLEN
SNOW

EYES THAT
SHONE AS
BRILLIANTLY
AS DIAMONDS



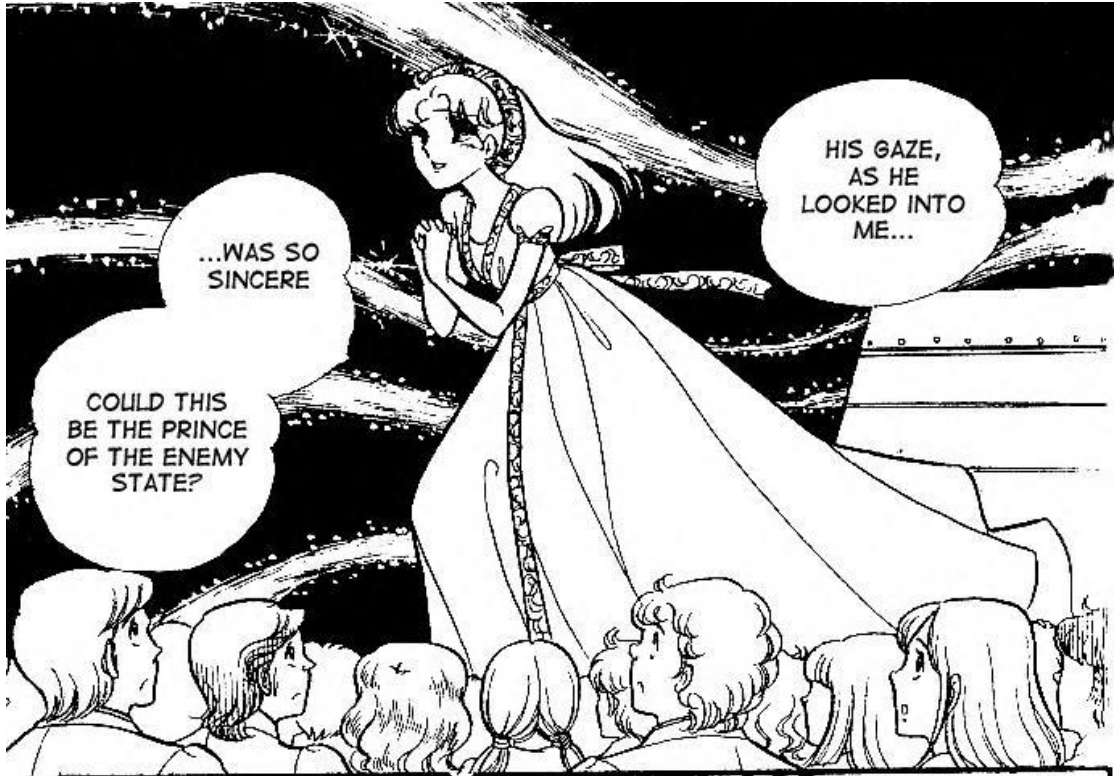
HOW
HAND-
SOME

IS THIS
LOREN-
CHIO
?



A
PERFECT
SMILE

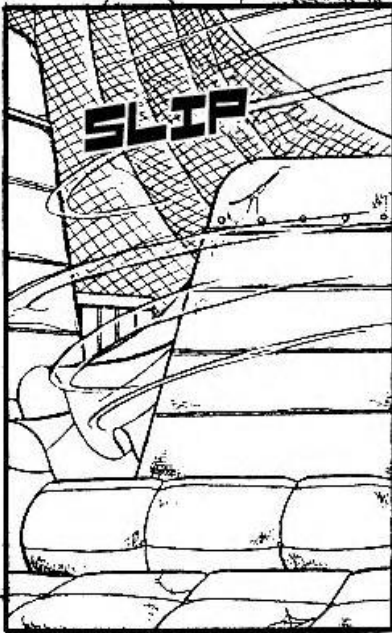
LIPS
OF
RED...



...WAS SO SINCERE

COULD THIS BE THE PRINCE OF THE ENEMY STATE?

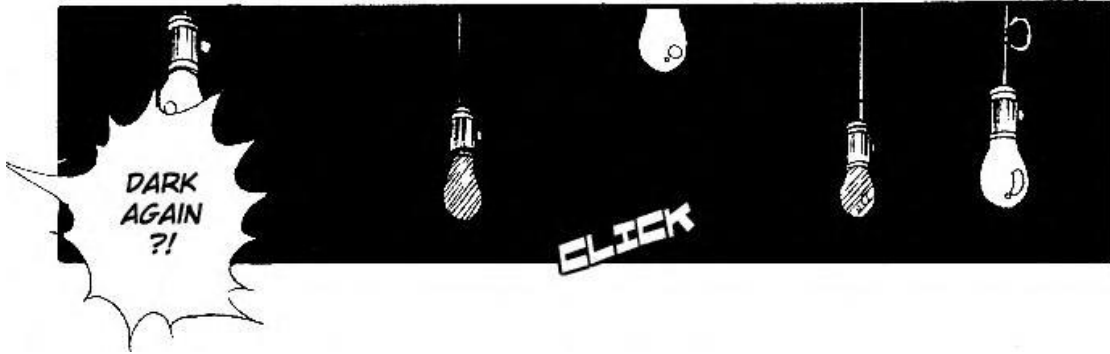
HIS GAZE, AS HE LOOKED INTO ME...



SLIP

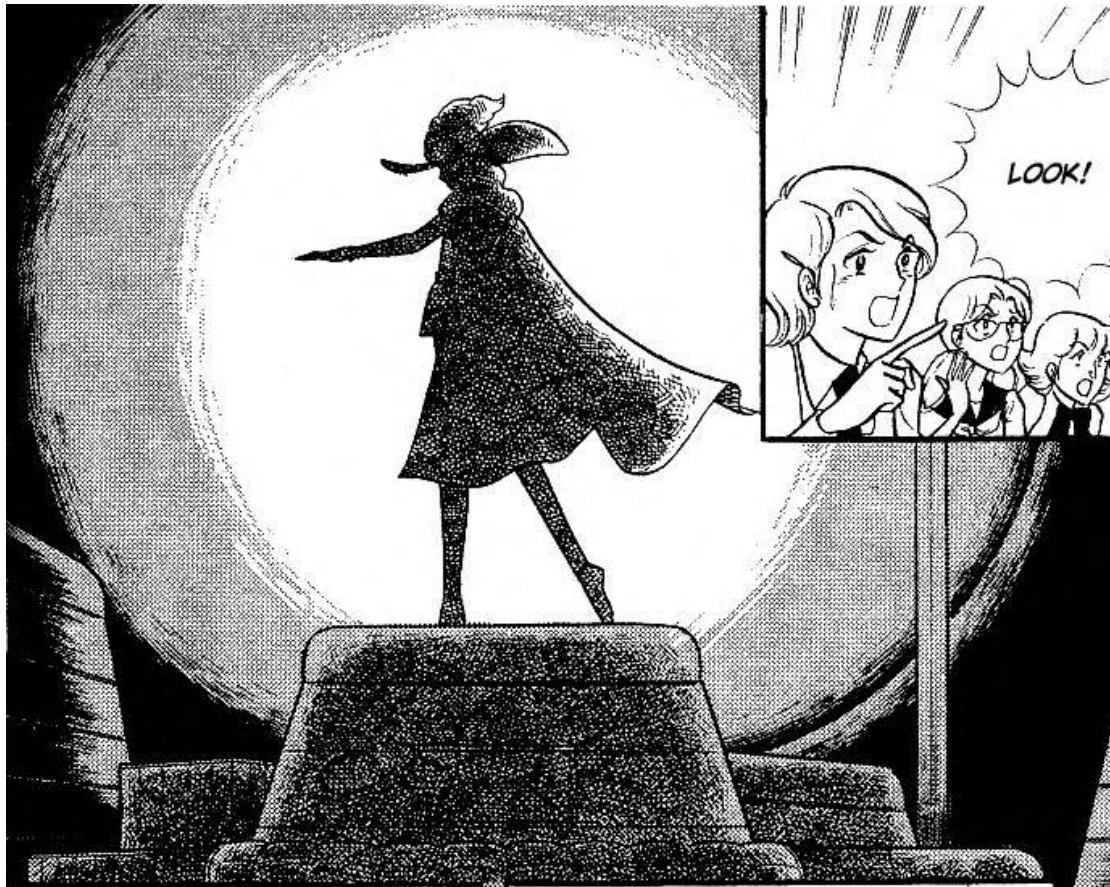


Whirl



DARK AGAIN ?!

CLICK



LOOK!



BACKLIT
FROM
BEHIND



LOREN-
CHIO
?

A
SILHOU-
ETTE



I ASK FOR
YOUR HAND
AND YOUR
HEART

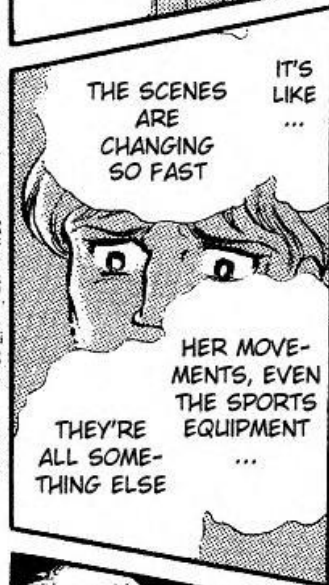
KNOW THAT
THIS
MARRIAGE
IS NOT ONLY
FOR PEACE,
BUT FOR
LIFE

I HAVE
DECIDED TO
LOVE YOU
FOR AS LONG
AS I LIVE

BIANCA, I
HOPE YOU'LL
BELIEVE ME
...

SOUNDS
LIKE
A MAN





TRUST ME, AND COME WITH ME

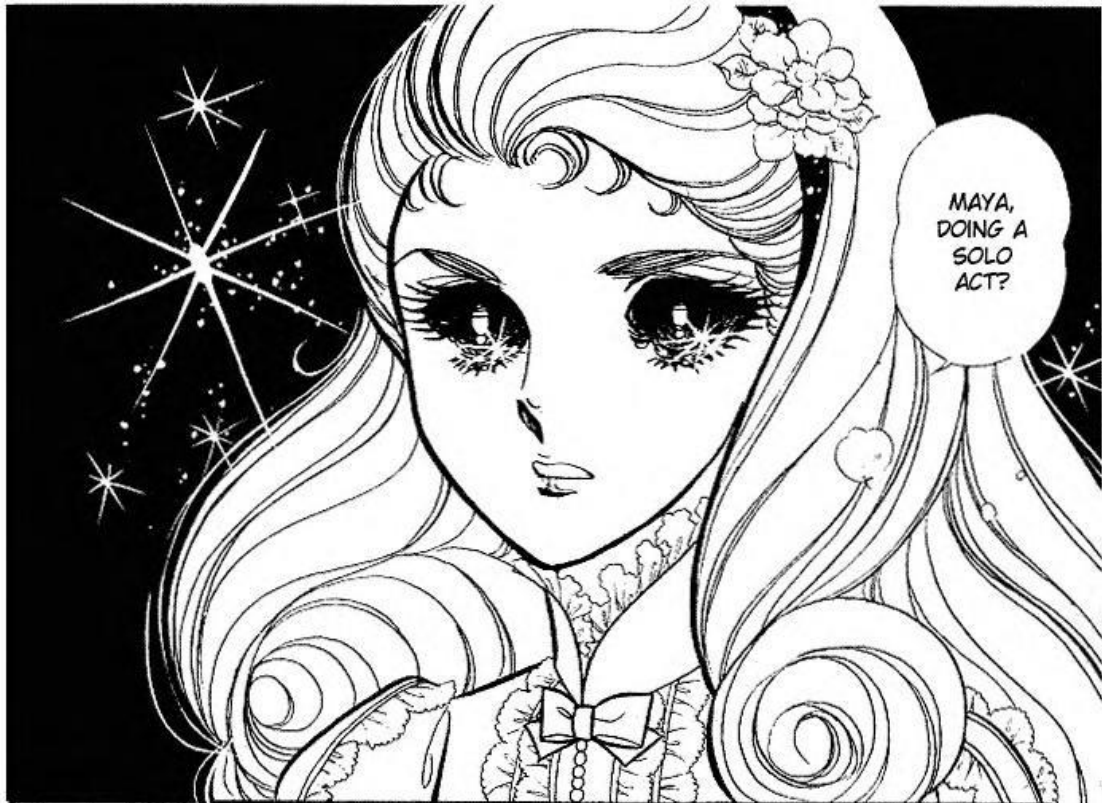
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR

MANY OPPOSE THIS UNION, THAT IS TRUE

THERE ARE THOSE AFTER MY LIFE

WE STILL HAVE TWO YEARS, AND WHATEVER HAPPENS I HOPE THAT YOU WILL TRUST ME

AS I TRUST YOU



MAYA,
DOING A
SOLO
ACT?



TO GO FROM
ACTING ON
PRIME TIME
TV...
TO
SCHOOL
PLAYS

IT'S AT
HITOTSUBOSHI
HIGH SCHOOL

THAT'S RIGHT,
AT A SCHOOL
FESTIVAL

HIMEKAWA
RESIDENCE



I'LL BET SHE
WASN'T EVEN
ALLOWED TO JOIN
THE DRAMA GROUP
AND THAT'S WHY
SHE HAS TO DO
IT ALONE

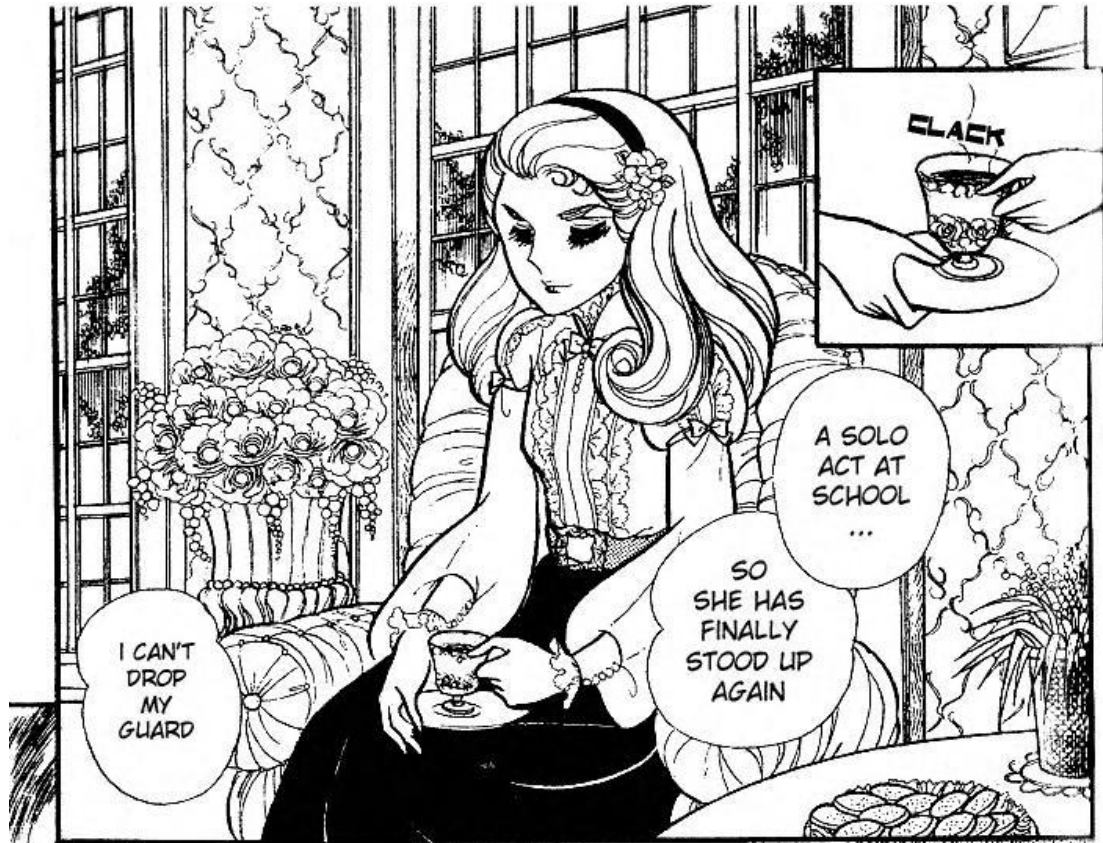
SHE'S
EVEN
PERFORM-
ING IN AN
OLD GYM
SHE DOESN'T
LEARN, DOES
SHE?



LAME
!



THE
AUDIENCE
HAS TO
SIT ON
THE FLOOR
!



I CAN'T
DROP
MY
GUARD

SO
SHE HAS
FINALLY
STOOD UP
AGAIN

A SOLO
ACT AT
SCHOOL
...



AYU-
MI?

I WILL
CATCH UP
TO YOU

I WILL
CATCH UP
TO YOU

JUST
WAIT,
AYUMI

DON'T
SPEAK
THAT
WAY TO
MISS
AYUMI!

TO COMPETE
FOR THE
CRIMSON
GODDESS



ALRIGHT,
FATHER

WHY DON'T
YOU GO
SEE THEM?

THE GUESTS ARE
ALL WAITING FOR
YOU IN THE
GARDEN



HOW
ACCURATE
A
DESCRIPTION

EASY ON
THE EYES,
HUH?

SHE
GROWS
MORE
BEAUTIFUL
EACH DAY

HELLO,
AYUMI



NOTHING LESS
FROM THE CHILD
OF DIRECTOR
HIMEKAWA

ha ha ha

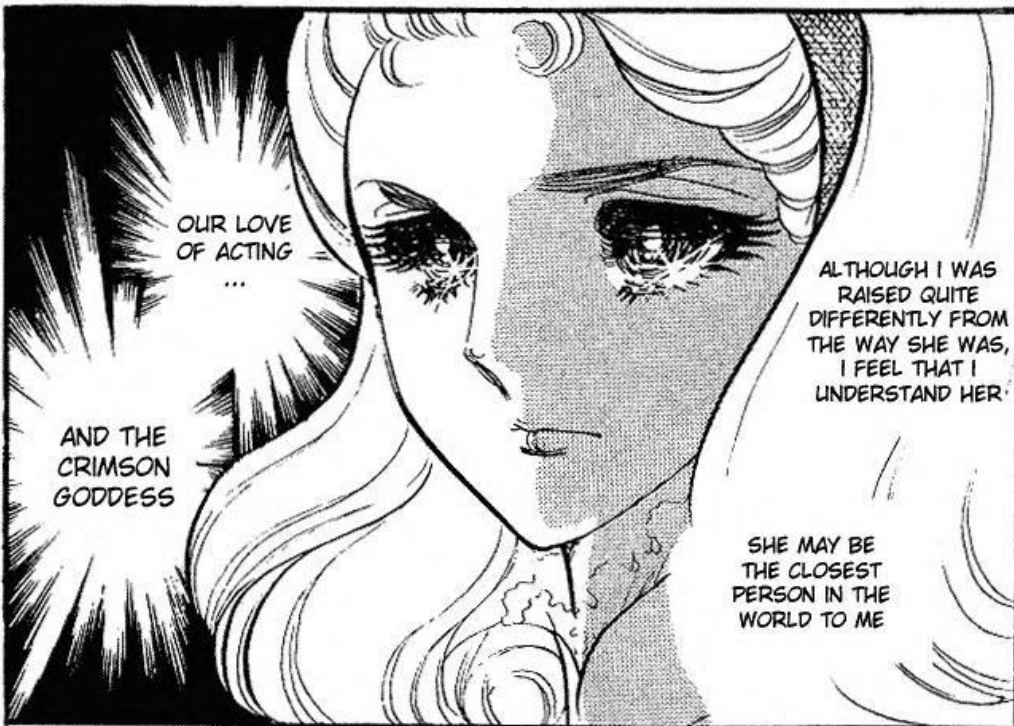
I WOULD
PREFER TO
BE PRAISED
FOR MY
ACTING SKILLS,
THOUGH

THANK
YOU

ha ha ha



KITAJIMA
MAYA...
SHE IS
INDEED A
PRODIGY



OUR LOVE
OF ACTING
...

AND THE
CRIMSON
GODDESS

ALTHOUGH I WAS
RAISED QUITE
DIFFERENTLY FROM
THE WAY SHE WAS,
I FEEL THAT I
UNDERSTAND HER

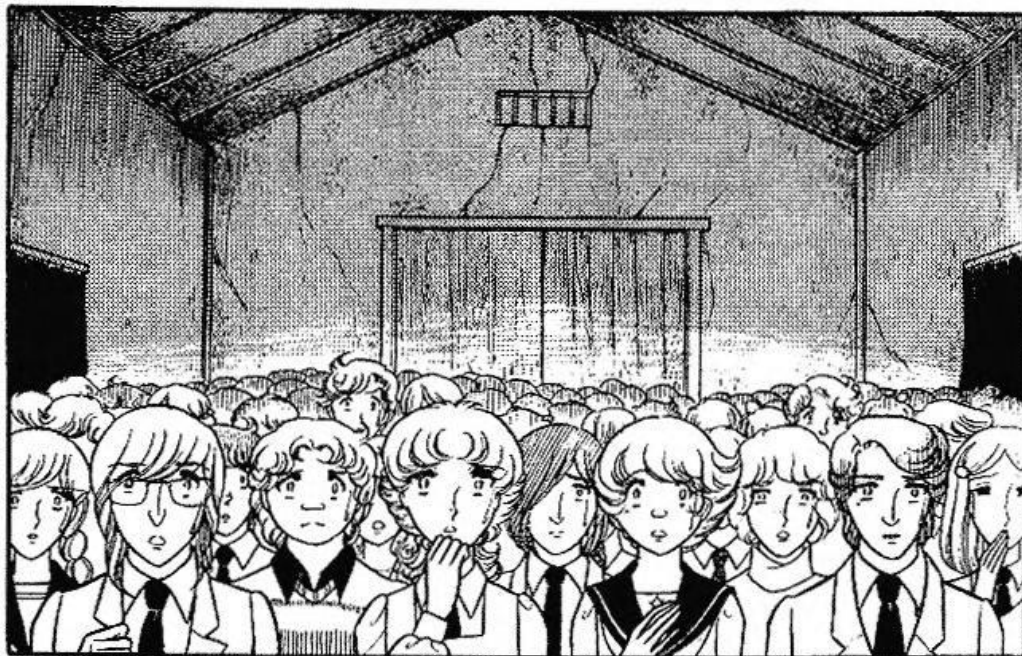
SHE MAY BE
THE CLOSEST
PERSON IN THE
WORLD TO ME

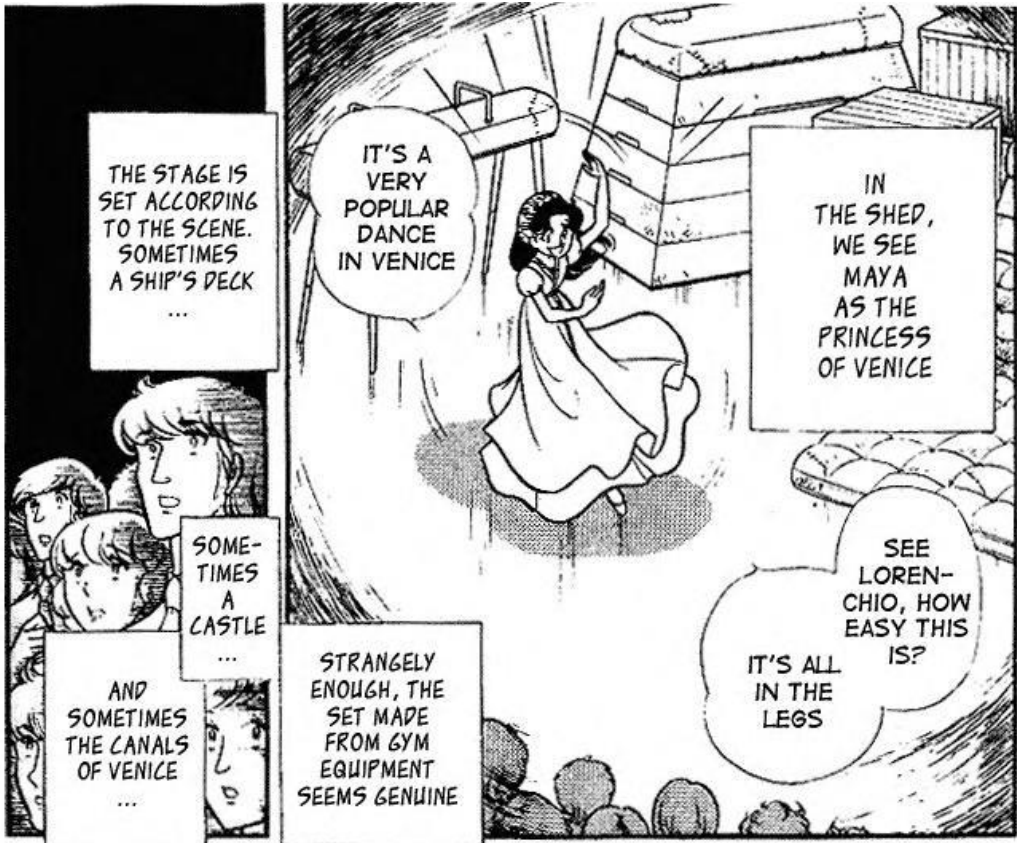


I
AWAIT
YOU,
MAYA

SHE'S
ALWAYS
RIGHT
BEHIND
ME

I'LL
BE
HERE





THE STAGE IS SET ACCORDING TO THE SCENE. SOMETIMES A SHIP'S DECK ...

IT'S A VERY POPULAR DANCE IN VENICE

IN THE SHED, WE SEE MAYA AS THE PRINCESS OF VENICE

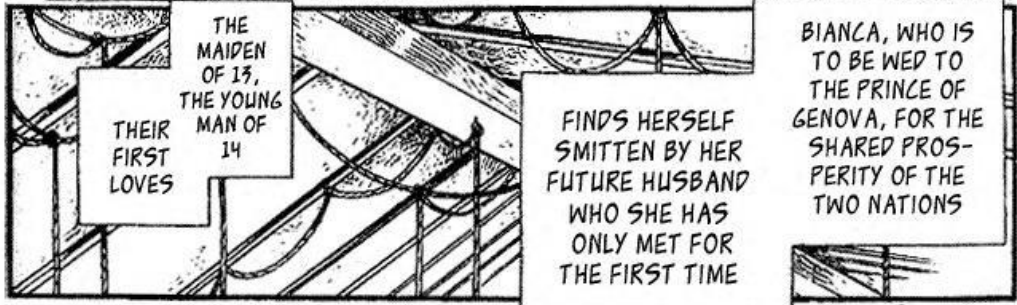


SOMETIMES A CASTLE ...

AND SOMETIMES THE CANALS OF VENICE ...

STRANGELY ENOUGH, THE SET MADE FROM GYM EQUIPMENT SEEMS GENUINE

SEE LORENCHIO, HOW EASY THIS IS? IT'S ALL IN THE LEGS



THEIR FIRST LOVES

THE MAIDEN OF 13, THE YOUNG MAN OF 14

FINDS HERSELF SMITTEN BY HER FUTURE HUSBAND WHO SHE HAS ONLY MET FOR THE FIRST TIME

BIANCA, WHO IS TO BE WED TO THE PRINCE OF GENOVA, FOR THE SHARED PROSPERITY OF THE TWO NATIONS



MY SWORD-PLAY GONE NOW ARE MY CARE-FREE DAYS

I WILL BE THE BEST WIFE TO HIM AS I CAN



HE'S SMART, STRAPPING, KNOWLEDGE-ABLE...

I FEEL AS THOUGH I WAS BORN TO BE WITH HIM

IF THIS SHOULD BE MY FATE, I THANK THE GODS FOR THIS FORTUNE

HOW PERFECT LORENCHIO IS



BUT TWO YEARS BEFORE THE WEDDING WAS TO BE, BIANCA FACED MANY TRAGEDIES OF HER OWN

BIANCA'S FIRST, FLAMING LOVE



WHAT? POISON ON THE NEEDLES ??

IN THREE YEARS, I SHALL TOTALLY ENCHANT HIM

I WANT TO BE A BEAUTIFUL WIFE

THE RING FROM LORENCHIO BECAME HER MOST PRIZED POSSESSION

HOSTILE NATIONS LAUNCHED CAMPAIGN AFTER CAMPAIGN IN HOPE OF PREVENTING THE MARRIAGE



THE WAY HE ALWAYS STANDS AT ATTENTION AS A SOLDIER DOES

FOR A MOMENT I FOUND MYSELF QUITE TAKEN WITH HIM

HIS HEAD OF BLACK HAIR, HIS MANLY FEATURES

HOWEVER, HIS COLD EXTERIOR ...

COULD HE REALLY BE A SIMPLE SWORDSMITH?

SOMETHING ABOUT HIM MAKES ME UNCOMFORTABLE

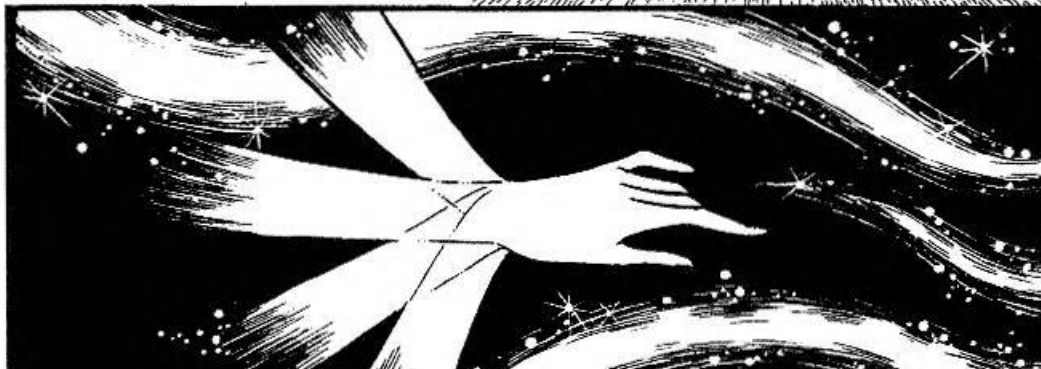
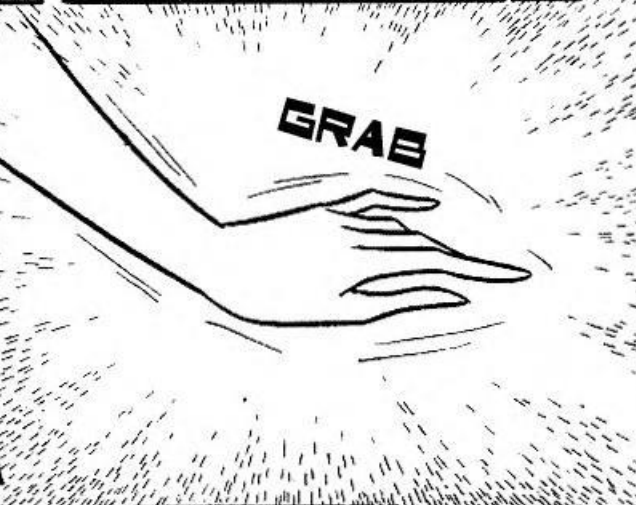
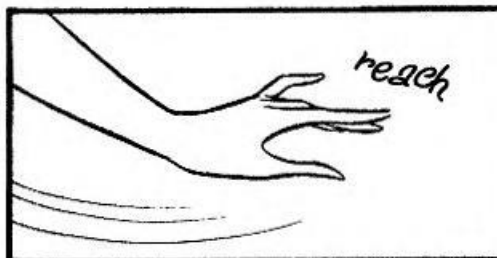
HIS EMOTIONLESS GAZE ...

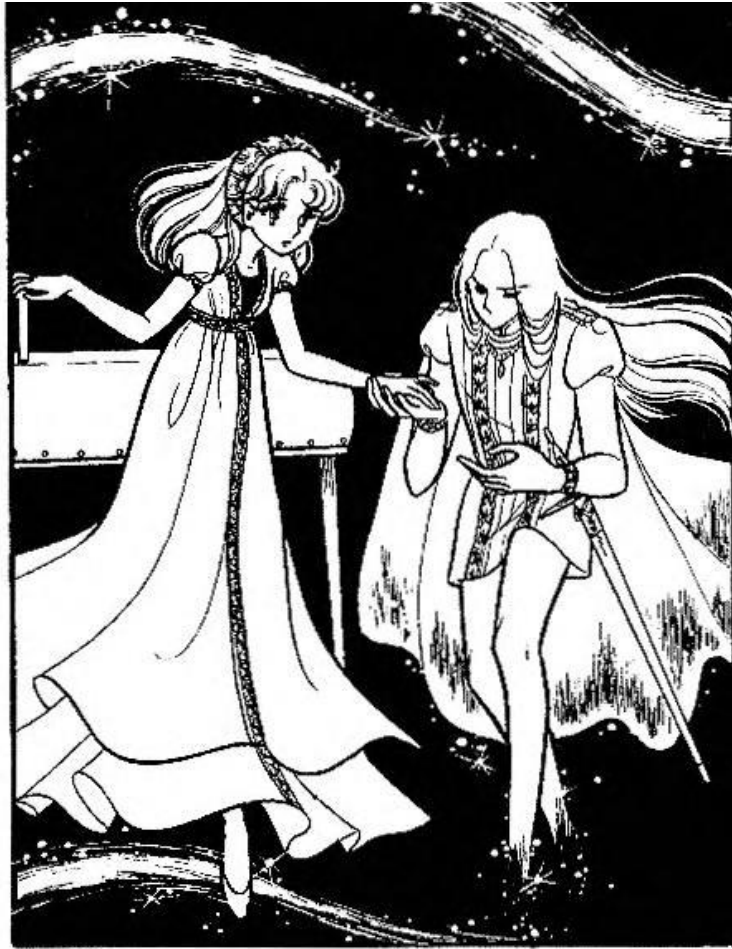


ON THE ADVICE OF HER DISTANT RELATIVE, BIANCA WAS PLACED UNDER THE PROTECTION OF A SWORDSMITH NAMED ALBERT

I WAS QUITE SHOCKED TO SEE ALBERT KNEELING IN THE YARD

HE IS OLDER THAN I AM, AT 18 YEARS OF AGE





EVERY
SMALL
MOVEMENT
SHE
MAKES
...



DO YOU
SEE
MAYA'S
RIGHT
HAND?

IT'S
NOT
EVEN
MOVING



YOU CAN SEE
NERVOUS-
NESS AND A
BIT OF
EXCITEMENT
IN HER

I SEE IT. EVEN
THOUGH HE'S
NOT THERE,
YOU KNOW
IT'S ALBERT



IT LOOKS
SIMPLE, BUT
MAKES ALL THE
DIFFERENCE



HER
EXPRESSION
TELLS US
ALBERT'S
FEELINGS

HER EYES
TELL US
WHERE
ALBERT
IS...



LORENCHIO'S
SISTER AND THE
GOVERNOR OF
GENOVA CAME
TODAY

TO LOOK
INTO THE
MATTER

AND TO
CLARIFY THIS
RUMOR



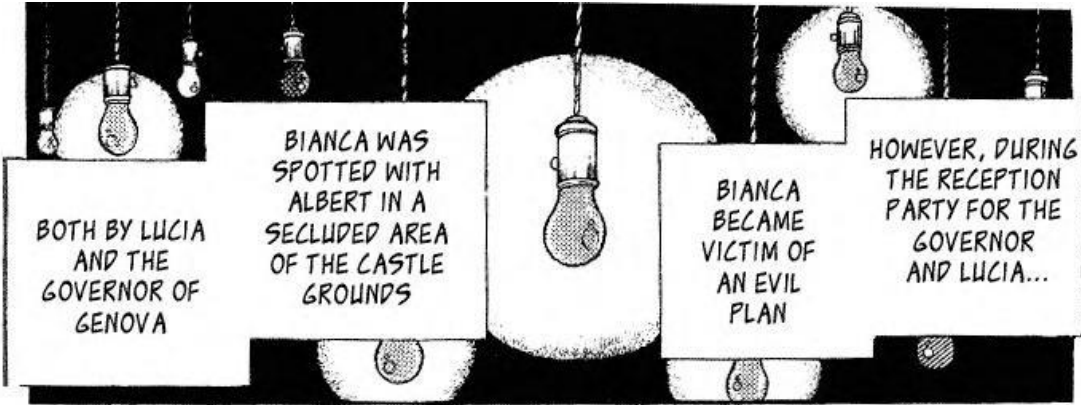
WHAT?
THAT'S A LIE!
THIS IS PURE
MALICIOUS
GOSSIP!

AS THE
RUMOURS
START
FLYING
...

TO THINK
THAT I
WOULD EVER
BETRAY MY
FIANCE FROM
GENOVA...

ABSURD
!!

...FOR ALBERT,
THAT PEASANT
BOY?



BOTH BY LUCIA AND THE GOVERNOR OF GENOVA

BIANCA WAS SPOTTED WITH ALBERT IN A SECLUDED AREA OF THE CASTLE GROUNDS

BIANCA BECAME VICTIM OF AN EVIL PLAN

HOWEVER, DURING THE RECEPTION PARTY FOR THE GOVERNOR AND LUCIA...



LITTLE DID SHE KNOW THAT SHE HAD BEEN DRUGGED

AND THIS I HAD TO BE CARRIED BY ALBERT

TRY AS I MAY, I COULD NOT MOVE MY BODY ...

THERE WAS A COMMOTION ALL OVER THE CASTLE ...



HE MEANT TO BE BURNED WITH IT, AND TO SAVE BIANCA FROM ANY HARM

FEARING THE VOLATILE TEMPER OF THE GENOVANS, HE LEFT THE ROOM IMMEDIATELY

WHEN MY FATHER CAME INTO THE ROOM, HE SAW ME AND LUCIA'S LIFELESS BODY

FATHER!

BIANCA'S FATHER BURNED DOWN THE GUEST QUARTERS WHERE LUCIA HAD BEEN MURDERED

WITH THE INTENT OF BEING BLAMED FOR THE DEATH OF LUCIA, AND SPARING HIS DAUGHTER IN THE PROCESS



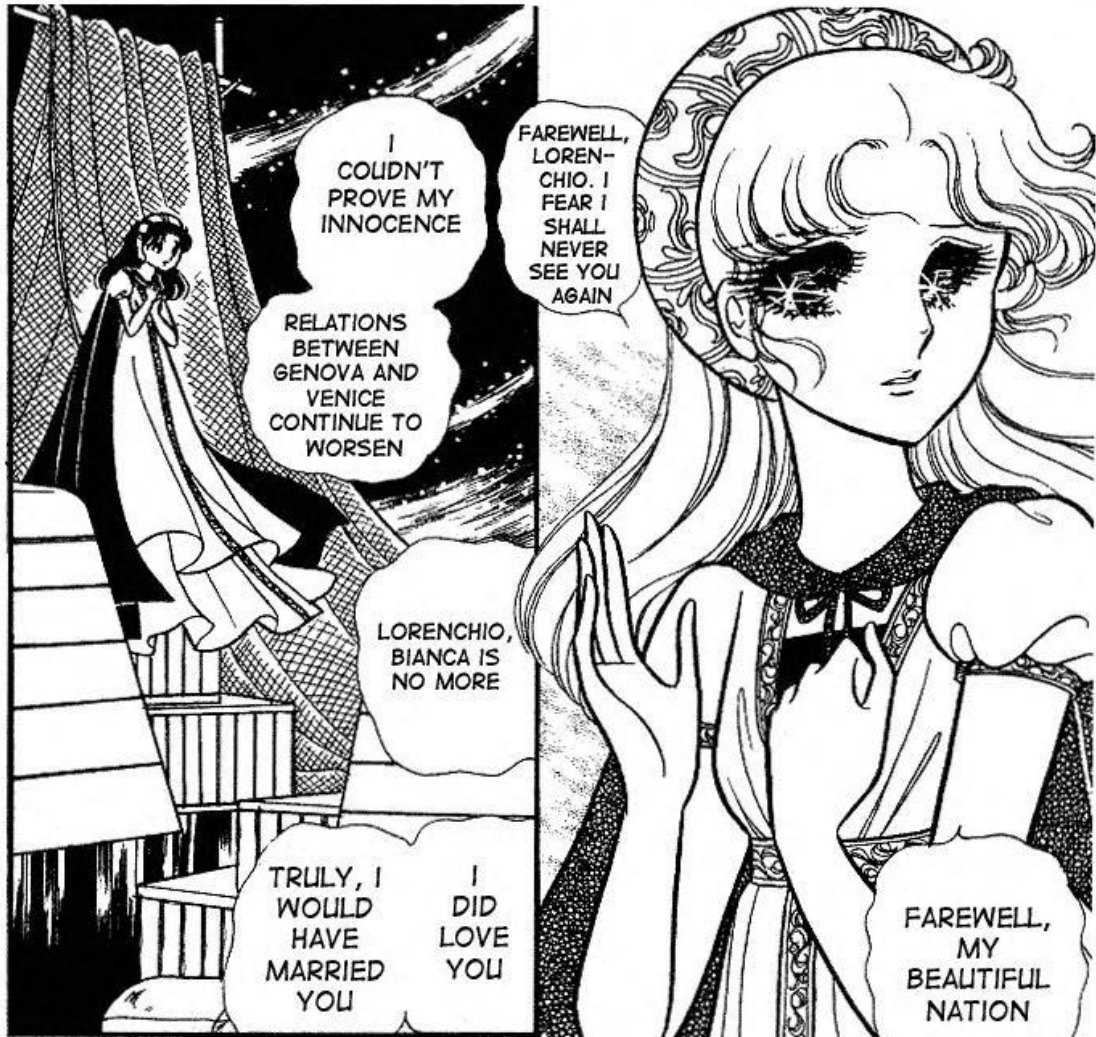
I CAME TO EXPLAIN ABOUT THE INCIDENT WITH ALBERT, AND I SAW HER ALREADY DEAD

IT WASN'T ME! I FOUND HER LIKE THIS !!

NOT LONG AFTER THAT ...

WHY WOULD I EVER MURDER LORENCHIO'S SISTER?

IT WASN'T ME!



I
COULDN'T
PROVE MY
INNOCENCE

FAREWELL,
LOREN-
CHIO. I
FEAR I
SHALL
NEVER
SEE YOU
AGAIN

RELATIONS
BETWEEN
GENOVA AND
VENICE
CONTINUE TO
WORSEN

LORENCHIO,
BIANCA IS
NO MORE

TRULY, I
WOULD
HAVE
MARRIED
YOU

I
DID
LOVE
YOU

FAREWELL,
MY
BEAUTIFUL
NATION



AND AS
THE SUN
SETS
BEHIND
THE
CASTLE...

I CUT MY
HAIR, I
CARRIED A
SWORD AT
MY SIDE

TO REACH
GREECE, I
DISGUISED
MYSELF AS
A MAN

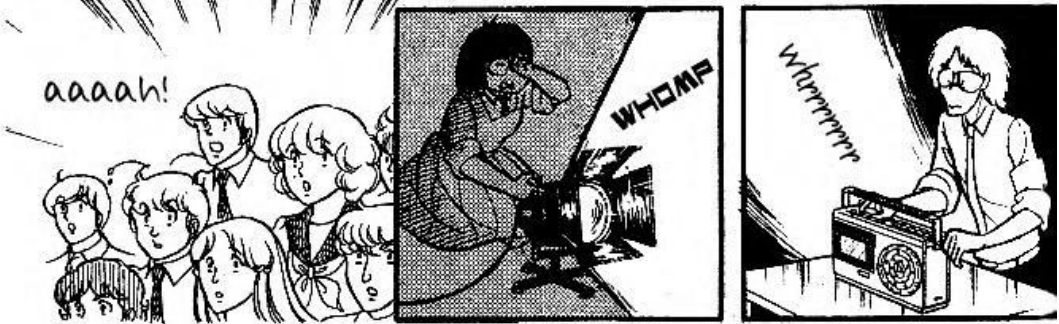
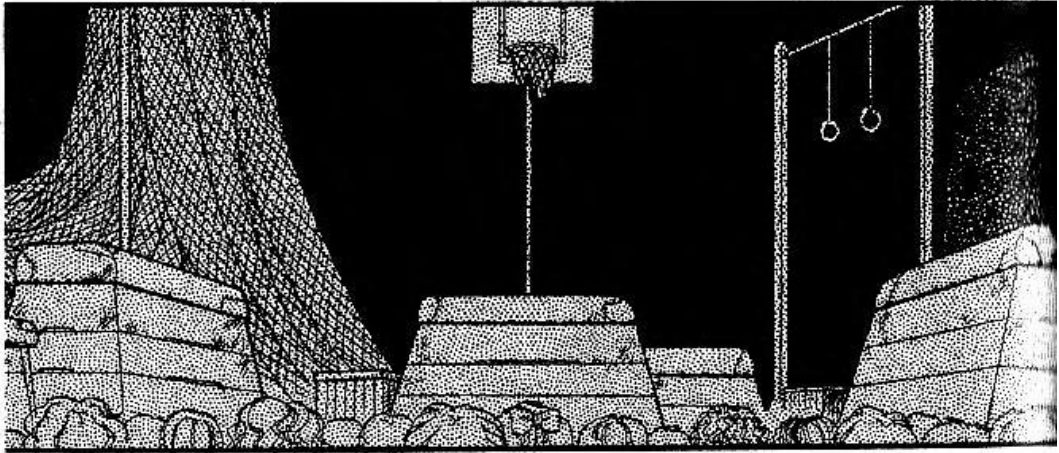
ALBERT HAS
NOTHING
TO DO
WITH THIS

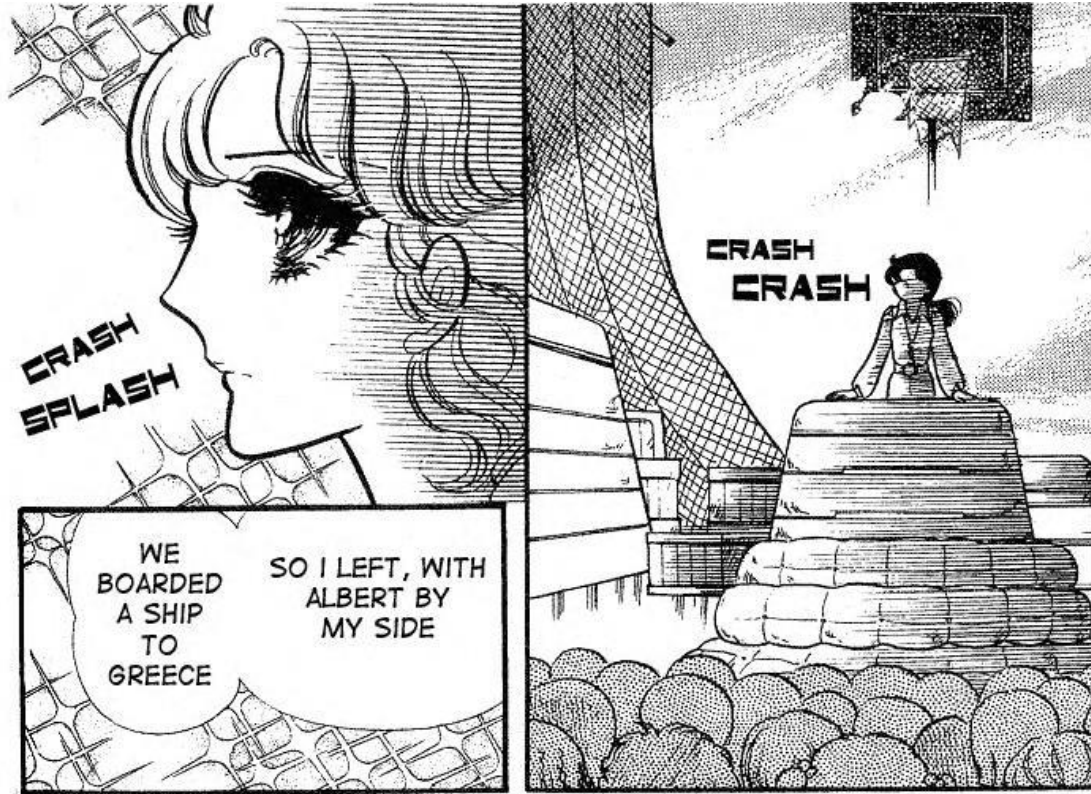
AND ALL THE
WITNESSES
WHO WOULD
HAVE
TESTIFIED
TO MY
INNOCENCE
...

I
BID
FAREWELL,
SWEET VENICE

NO ONE CAN
KNOW THAT I
WAS BIANCA
CASTANI

...HAVE
ALL BEEN
KILLED
...
OR HAVE
MYSTERIOUSLY
DISAPPEARED





**CRASH
SPLASH**

**CRASH
CRASH**

WE
BOARDED
A SHIP
TO
GREECE

SO I LEFT, WITH
ALBERT BY
MY SIDE



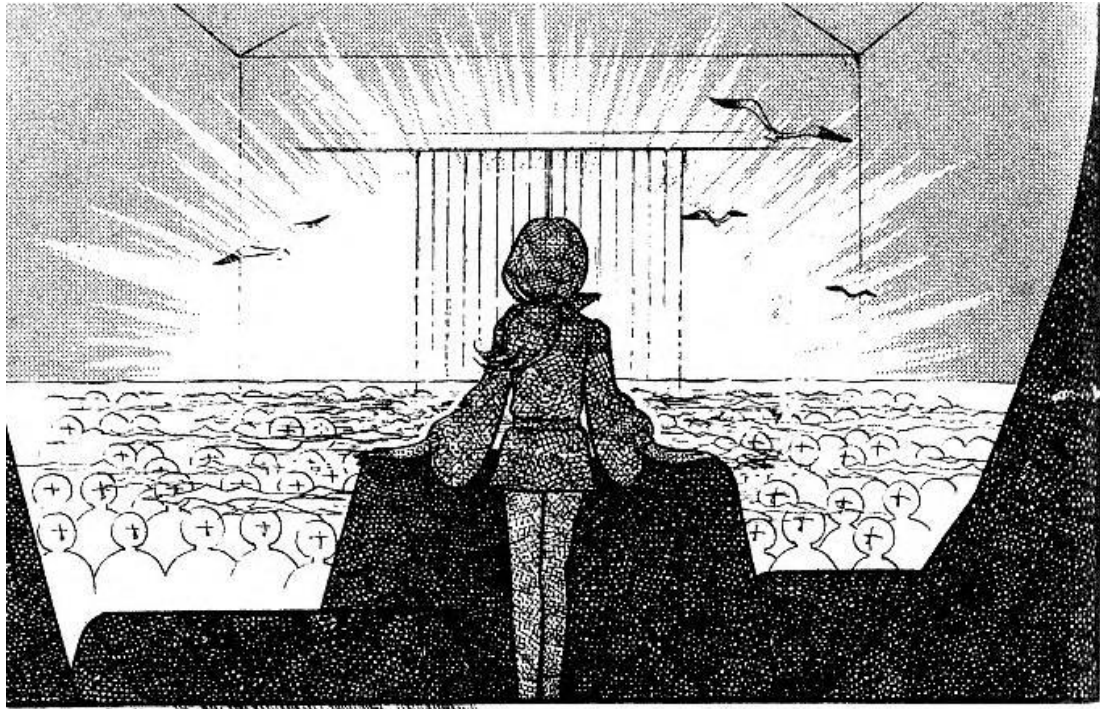
**CRASSH
CRASSH**



NOT A PERSON
MOVED FROM
THEIR UN-
COMFORTABLE
PLACES ON
THAT OLD SHED
FLOOR



NOBODY SPOKE,
NOT A
SINGLE WORD



I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS



I CAN SENSE THE VASTNESS OF THE OCEAN ...

JUST BY LOOKING AT HER

PURE TALENT



SHE ...

SHE IS VERY GOOD

