



YOU'RE NOT BAD AT ALL...

...FIGHTING AGAINST ME HEAD ON.

YOU'RE QUITE A FIGHTER!

I COULD SAY THE SAME ABOUT YOU, AYUMI!

NOTHING LIKE THE FANCY RICH GIRL I THOUGHT YOU WERE.

TO TO TO
AHHAHA
TO TO TO

TO TO TO
AHHAHA
TO TO TO

あはあはあは
あはあはあは
あはあはあは





IT'S ALREADY BEEN TWO MONTHS SINCE WE CAME TO THE VILLAGE TO LEARN ABOUT THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

BUT IT FEELS LIKE THAT TIME WENT BY IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE GOING BACK TO TOKYO ALREADY.



あははは
 ははは
 ははは
 ははは
 HAHAHA
 HAHAHA
 AHHAHAHA

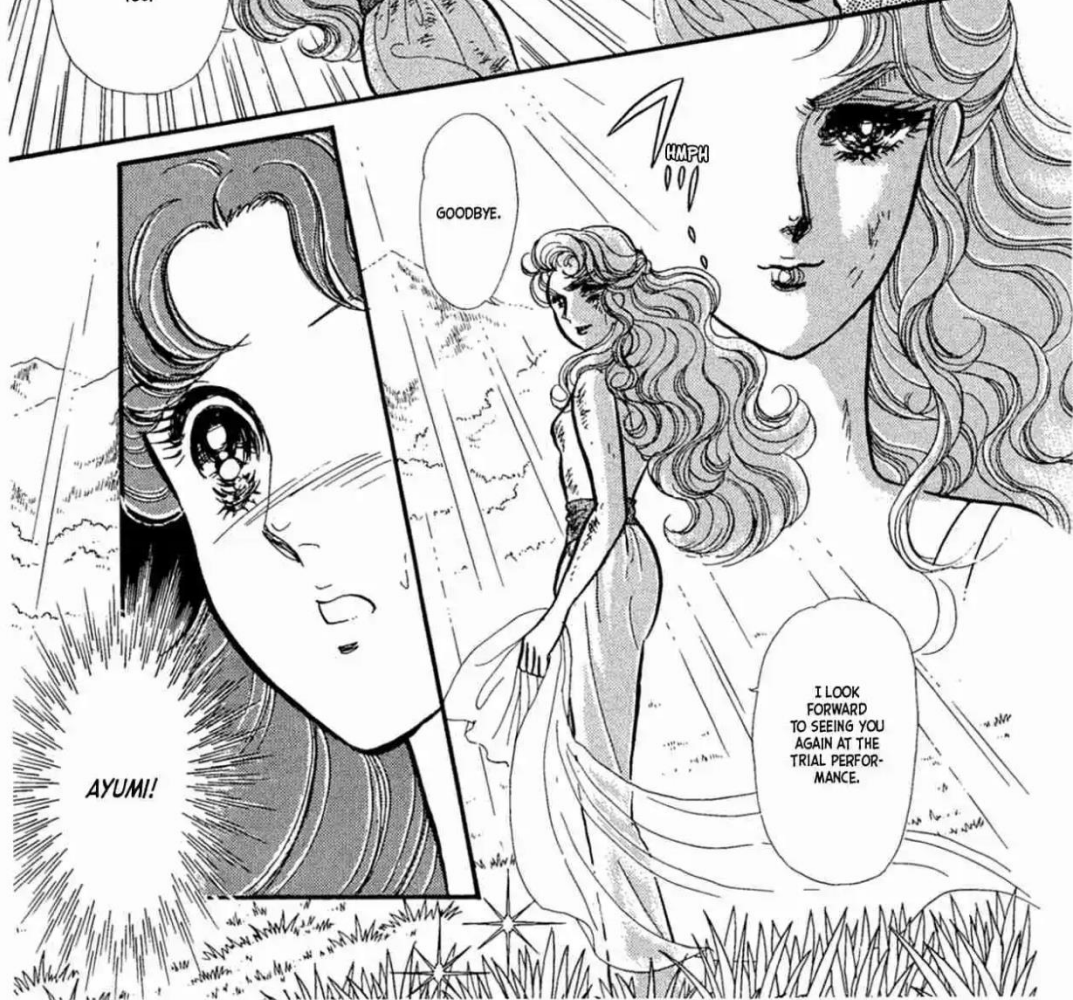




I WILL TAKE THE STAGE AS THE ONE WHO INHERITS THE CRIMSON GODDESS FROM TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI!

AYUMI!!

AND ONE DAY, I WILL SURPASS HER TOO!

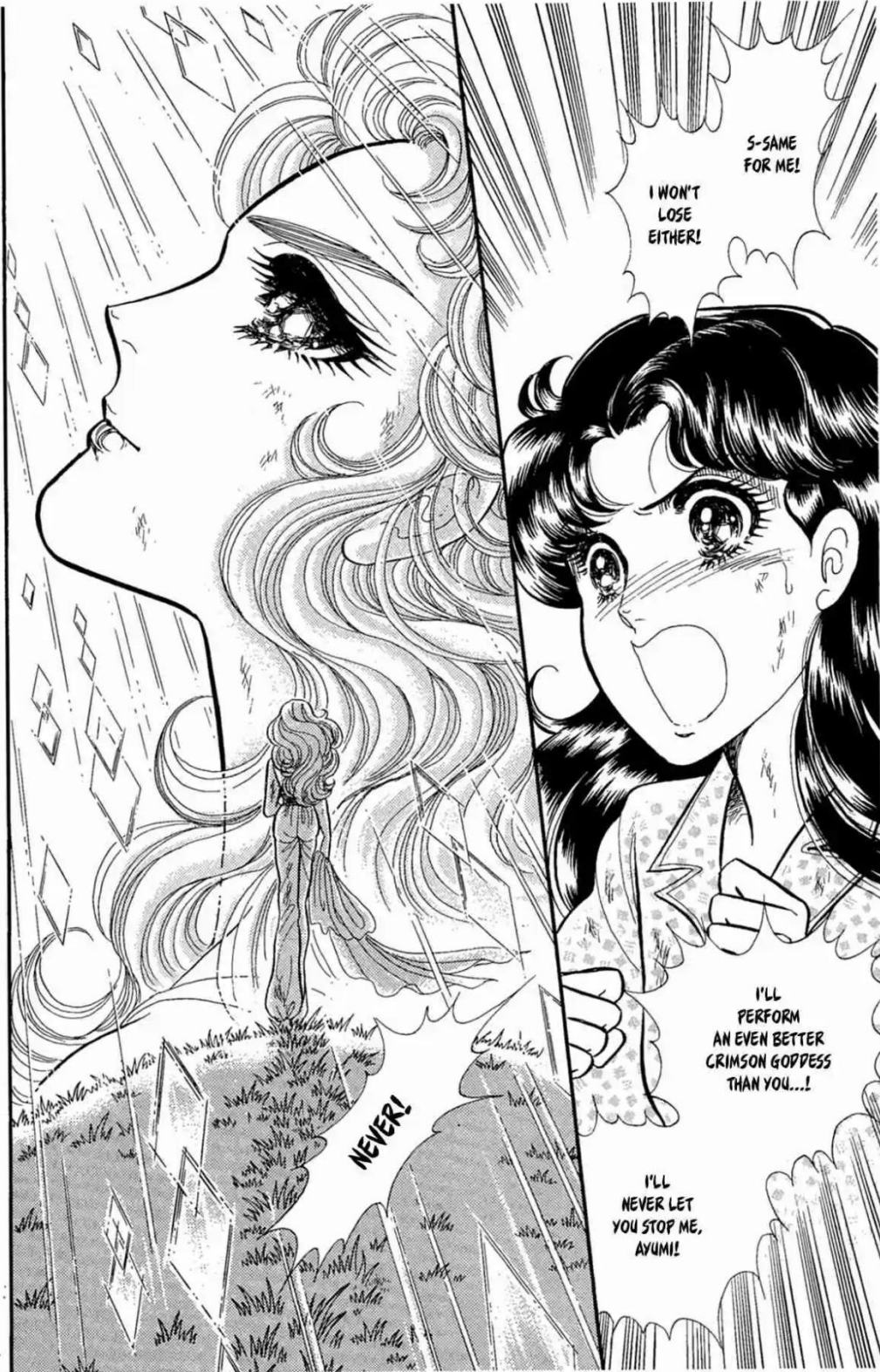


GOODBYE.

WMPH !!

AYUMI!!

I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AGAIN AT THE TRIAL PERFORMANCE.



S-SAME
FOR ME!
I WON'T
LOSE
EITHER!

I'LL
PERFORM
AN EVEN BETTER
CRIMSON GODDESS
THAN YOU...!

I'LL
NEVER LET
YOU STOP ME,
AYUMI!

NEVER!





I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE TRIAL PERFORMANCE IN TOKYO.

SHE'S COVERED IN INJURIES AGAIN...

I WILL PUT ALL MY EFFORT INTO PERFECTING THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

I WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR ALL THE THINGS YOU'VE TAUGHT ME.

WHAT KIND OF TRAINING ARE THEY MAKING HER DO?

AYUMI'S BEAUTY...

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

TAKE CARE, TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI!

YOU MAY FIND THAT EVEN THE SMALLEST THING CAN BE OF USE.

DON'T FORGET WHAT YOU LEARNED HERE IN THE MOUNTAINS.

YOU HAVE MY THANKS AS WELL.



IT'S TIME TO GO NOW.

THANK YOU.

I'LL BE SURE TO KEEP THAT IN MIND.



MY TRAINING FOR THE TRIAL PERFORMANCE IN TOKYO...

THIS WAS MY LAST DAY...

...IN THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

... WILL BEGIN TOMORROW.



SLAM

VRRRR



I KNEW YOU'D BE ABLE TO HANDLE IT.

WELL, THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR.

NO, IT ACTUALLY WASN'T THAT BAD.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN BRUTAL

AYUMI, WHAT DID YOU THINK OF TSUKIKAGE CHIGUSA'S INSTRUCTION?



WHAT DID YOU JUST...

HUH?



NO, I WAS THE ONE WHO HAD AN AWFUL TIME.



HAH! I BET SHE HAD AN AWFUL TIME COMPETING AGAINST YOU.

SO, WHAT DID YOU THINK OF KITAJIMA?

HAHAHA



SHE HAS THE POWER TO CREATE MIRACLES ALL ON HER OWN!

YOU'VE EXPERIENCED IT TOO, MR. ONODERA. YOU TOOK KITAJIMA MAYA LIGHTLY, ONLY TO HAVE THE TABLES TURNED ON YOU.



A-AYUMI...



IF NOTHING ELSE, I HAVE NEVER UNDERESTIMATED HER. NOT EVEN ONCE.



AND I AM LIKELY THE ONLY ONE WHO TRULY UNDERSTANDS WHO YOU ARE ON STAGE.

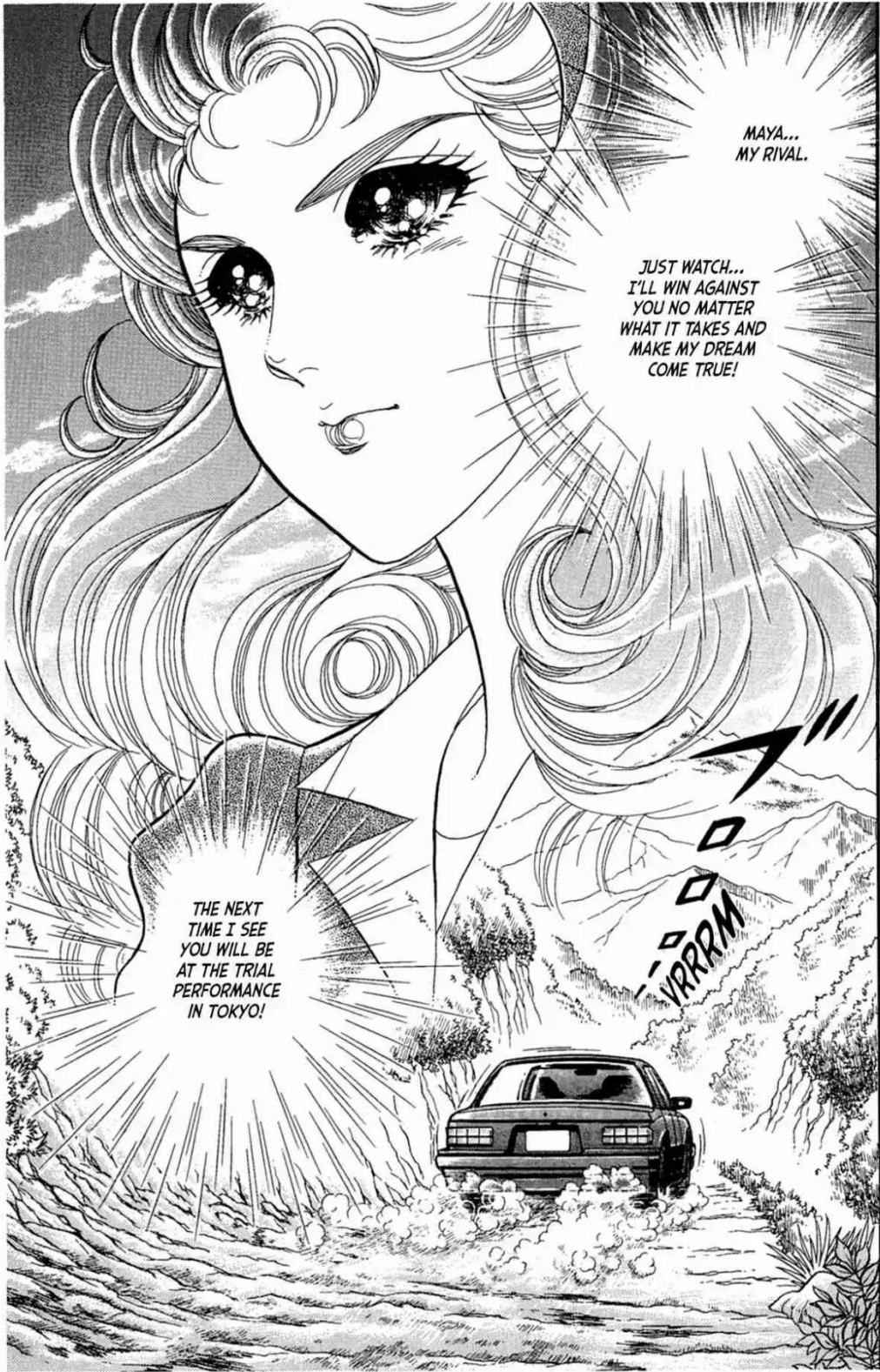
YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS WHO I REALLY AM.

...YET FURTHER FROM ME THAN ANYONE ELSE...

YOU ARE CLOSEST TO ME...

YOU ARE CLOSER TO ME THAN ANYONE ELSE.

KITAJIMA MAYA...



MAYA...
MY RIVAL.

JUST WATCH...
I'LL WIN AGAINST
YOU NO MATTER
WHAT IT TAKES AND
MAKE MY DREAM
COME TRUE!

THE NEXT
TIME I SEE
YOU WILL BE
AT THE TRIAL
PERFORMANCE
IN TOKYO!

VRRM



CRASH!

MY RIVAL!

AYUMI...

MY RIVAL!

MY CRIMSON
GODDESS WILL
NOT LOSE TO
YOURS!







IF I HAD TO MAKE THE CHOICE...

WOULD I CARRY OUT MY MISSION?

THE THOUSAND-YEAR PLUM TREE CONTAINS THE SOUL OF HIS BELOVED.

IF I WERE ISSHIN, WHAT WOULD I DO?

...OR WOULD I RISK MY LIFE FOR LOVE?

IF HE CARVES THE STATUE FROM ITS WOOD, SHE DIES.



I MUST THANK YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU'VE DONE.

MY FATHER SENDS HIS MOST SINCERE REGARDS.

TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI, I CAME TO SAY GOODBYE BEFORE I RETURNED TO TOKYO.



I'M SURE HE INTENDS TO FULLY RECOVER BY THE TIME THE TRIAL PERFORMANCE BEGINS IN TOKYO.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE THE TYPE OF THING HE WOULD DO.

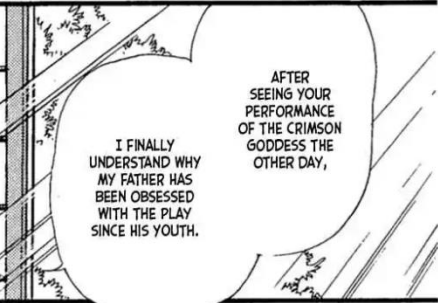


IS YOUR FATHER GOING TO REMAIN IN THE VALLEY?

YES, WE'VE RECOMMENDED HE STAY AT A HOSPITAL IN TOKYO...
...BUT HE SAYS HE WANTS TO RECOVER HERE FOR A WHILE.



IT ALL MAKES SENSE NOW.



AFTER SEEING YOUR PERFORMANCE OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS THE OTHER DAY, I FINALLY UNDERSTAND WHY MY FATHER HAS BEEN OBSESSED WITH THE PLAY SINCE HIS YOUTH.



ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI?

AND ALSO THE FACT THAT THE "ILLUSION" COMES WITH SUCCESS, FAME, AND INCREDIBLE PROFITS.



THE PROBLEM IS THAT HE WANTS TO TURN THAT ILLUSION INTO REALITY.

DOES IT, NOW?
THAT MAN FELL IN LOVE WITH AN ILLUSION THAT DOESN'T EXIST ANYWHERE EXCEPT ON STAGE.



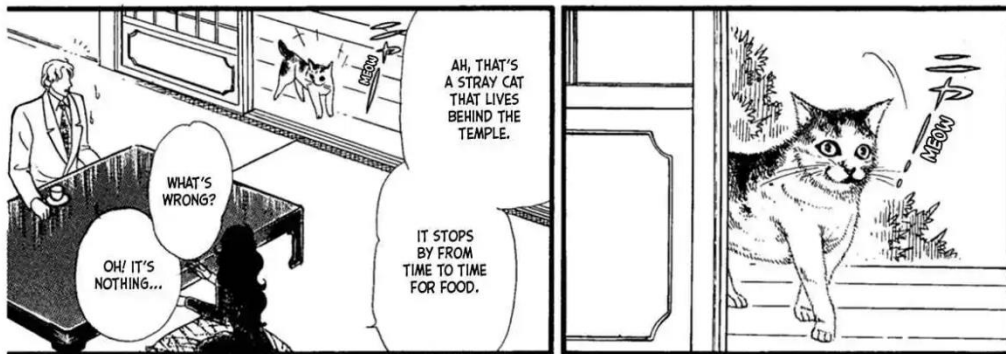
WHO KNOWS ...

PERHAPS ALL I WANT IS TO TAKE WHAT MY FATHER WANTS THE MOST...

HAYAMI MASUMI. WHY DO YOU WANT THE PRODUCTION RIGHTS FOR THE CRIMSON GODDESS?

AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT I WANTED UNTIL I SAW YOUR PERFORMANCE...

YOUR MOTIVATION DIFFERS FROM YOUR FATHER'S, DOES IT NOT?



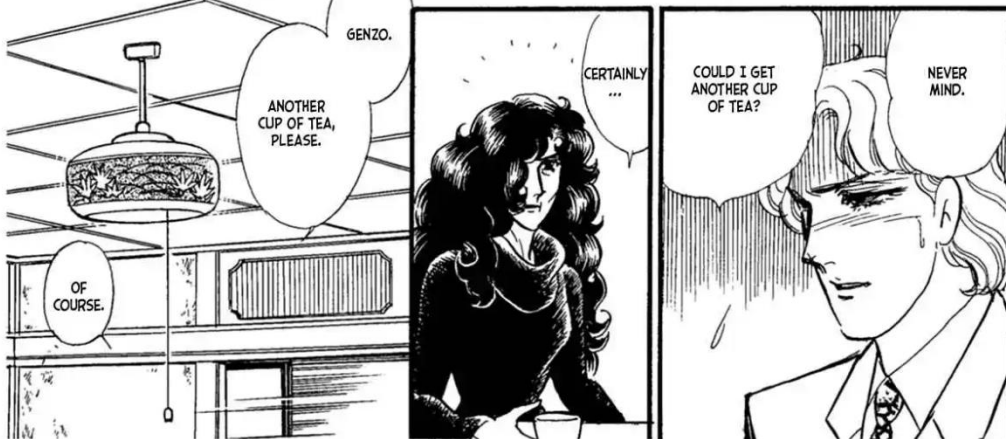
WHAT'S WRONG?

OH! IT'S NOTHING...

AH, THAT'S A STRAY CAT THAT LIVES BEHIND THE TEMPLE.

IT STOPS BY FROM TIME TO TIME FOR FOOD.

MEOW



OF COURSE.

GENZO.

ANOTHER CUP OF TEA, PLEASE.

CERTAINLY ...

COULD I GET ANOTHER CUP OF TEA?

NEVER MIND.



ALL OF A SUDDEN I FIND MYSELF LOOKING FOR HER.

SOMEWHERE IN MY HEART, I HAD EXPECTED TO SEE HER AGAIN...

... THAT EVEN GETTING A GLIMPSE OF HER WOULD BE ENOUGH.



THERE'S NO SIGN OF HER ANYWHERE...

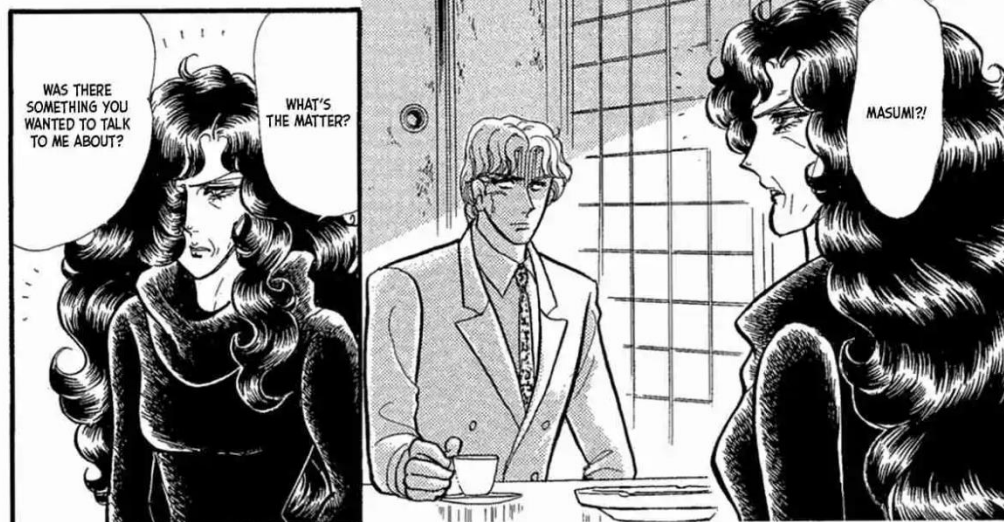
IT'S QUIET...

I WONDER IF SHE WENT OUT TO THE MOUNTAIN...



IT'S LIKE THERE'S A COLD WIND BLOWING IN MY HEART.

... BUT WHAT IS THIS LONELINESS I FEEL...
... JUST BECAUSE I HAPPENED TO MISS HER?



WAS THERE SOMETHING YOU WANTED TO TALK TO ME ABOUT?

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

MASUMI?!



WAIT, THAT CAR! DOESN'T IT BELONG TO...

VRRRM

VRRRM



MR. GENZO! WAS THERE A VISITOR JUST NOW?

MAYA!



I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR TO DISCUSS.

NO...

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?

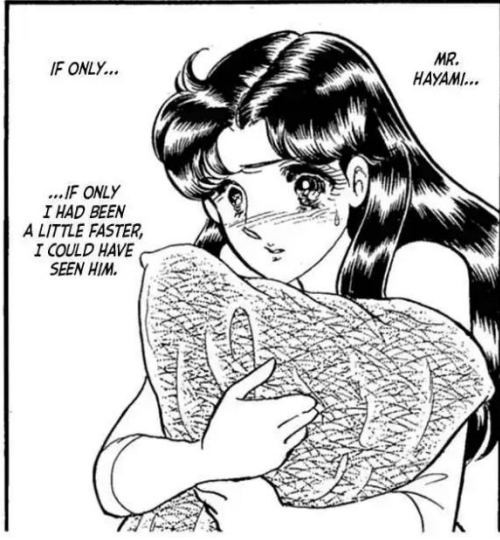
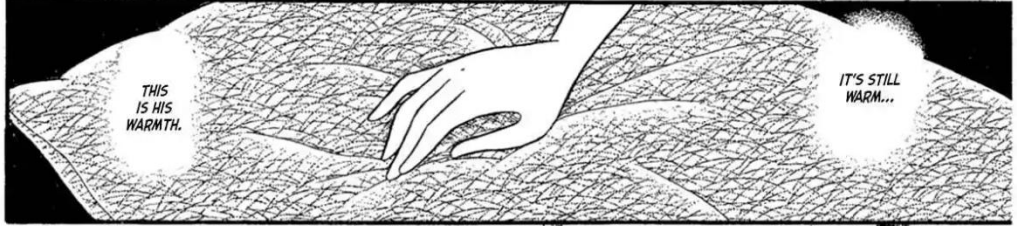
THIS ISN'T LIKE ME...

WELL, IT'S TIME...

I'LL BE TAKING MY LEAVE NOW.

TAKE CARE.

THANK YOU.





I'VE NEVER FELT THIS WAY BEFORE...

...HOW COULD I BE LONELY?

I CAN'T BELIEVE MYSELF...

ZOOM



...EVER SINCE THE DAY I SAW THE CRIMSON GODDESS IN THE VALLEY OF THE PLUM TREES.

SOMETHING'S BEEN WRONG WITH ME...



COULD IT BE THAT SHE...

THE OTHER HALF OF ONE'S SOUL...

THE LOVE OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS...



MAYA!

LEAVE THEM BOTH BEHIND.
YOUR NAME AND YOUR PAST.

NO!
THAT COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE TRUE.



ZOOM



DOES IT TRULY HAVE SOME MYSTICAL POWER?

WHAT ON EARTH IS THE VALLEY OF THE PLUM TREES...?

TO YEARN FOR THE OTHER HALF OF A SOUL THAT WAS ONCE ONE.

THAT...

...IS LOVE



...OR WAS SHE JUST ACTING OUT A PART OF THE PLAY?

WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT, ANYWAY?

WAS SHE MAKING FUN OF ME?

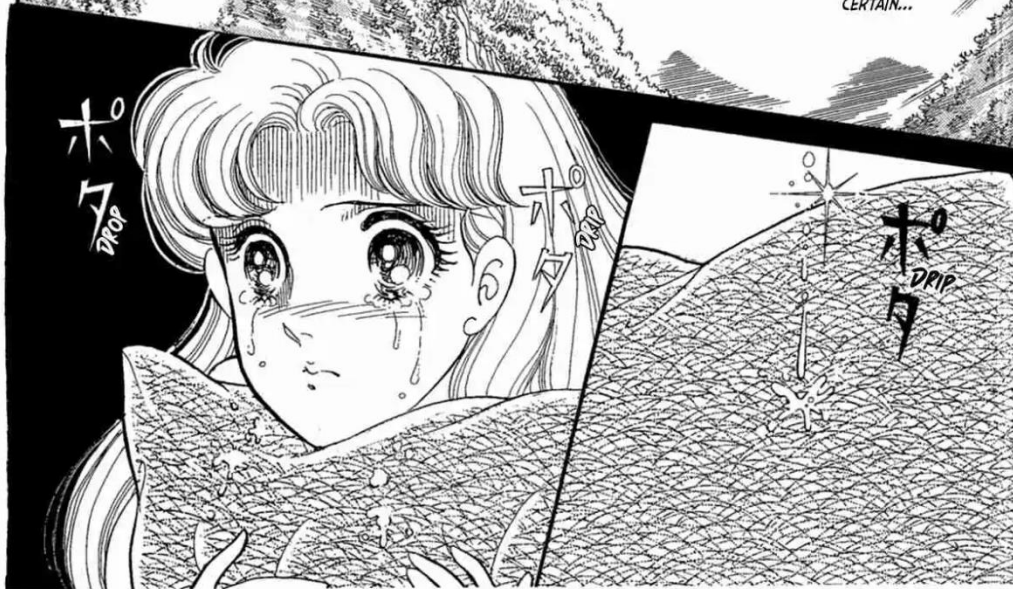
MAYBE THAT REALLY WAS AN ILLUSION...



...AND OF MY HEART!

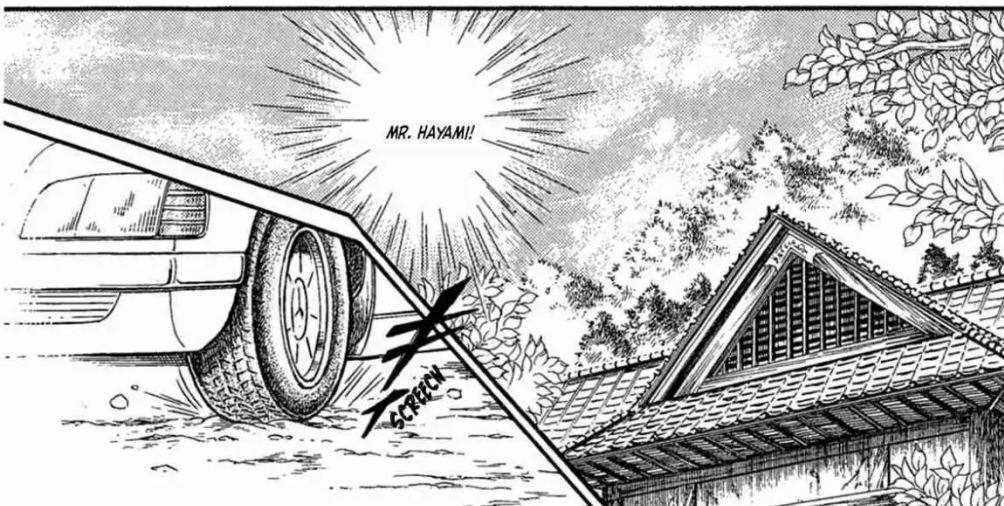
...OF HER FEELINGS...

I NEED ONE MORE CHANCE TO BE CERTAIN...



DRIP

DRIP







I SAW HER SET FIRE TO THE BRIDGE MYSELF.

SHE SURE DID. IT WAS A SIGHT TO BEHOLD.

MR. KURO-NUMA!

WELL, IF IT ISN'T THE YOUNG BOSS!

YO!

YEP.

DID TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI DO THIS...?



IT WAS ALL AN ILLUSION?



THAT VALLEY ONLY EXISTED IN OUR HEARTS, AND NOWHERE ELSE.

IT WAS ALL AN ILLUSION.

...WASN'T A REAL PLACE.

SHE WANTED TO SHOW THAT THE CRIMSON VALLEY WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE PLUM TREE LIVED...



SHE FORCED US TO FACE THAT REALITY BY REMOVING THE BRIDGE.

PUT ANOTHER WAY, THOSE EVENTS WERE PART OF A WORLD THAT'S NOW BEYOND OUR REACH.

...NONE OF IT WAS REAL.

...ARE LITTLE MORE THAN THE MEMORIES IN OUR HEARTS.

ALL OF THE THINGS WE SAW, FELT, AND EXPERIENCED IN THAT VALLEY...



I CAN'T EVEN DIS-AGREE.
BECAUSE THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE ARE.

TO BE-COME THE BRIDGE...

HOWEVER, THAT "ILLUSION" CAN TRANSCEND THE STAGE AND MANIFEST IN REALITY...
...IF THERE EXISTS A BRIDGE TO CONNECT OUR WORLD AND THE ILLUSIONARY VALLEY OF THE PLUM TREES.

IT SEEMS OUR ROLE WILL BE TO BECOME THAT BRIDGE.

I ONLY SAW THE PLAY THE OTHER DAY, BUT IT ALREADY FEELS NOS-TALGIC FOR SOME REASON.



I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER NOW.

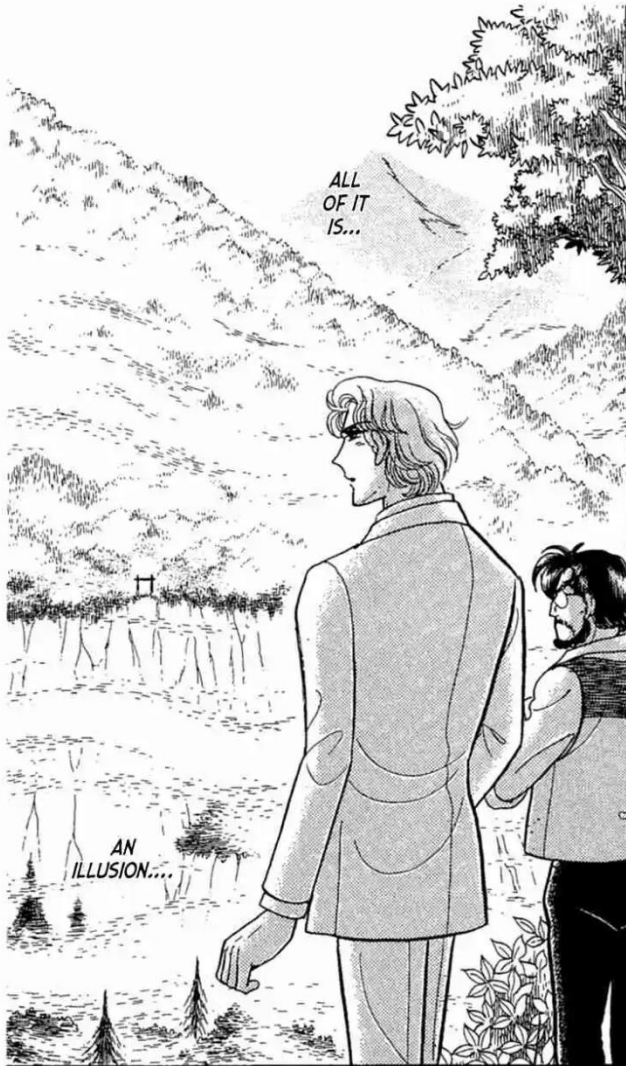
AT ANY RATE, WE JUST HAVE TO TRY OUR BEST, BOSS!
TURNING ILLUSION INTO REALITY IS OUR JOB, AFTER ALL.

NOW THAT WE CAN'T GO BACK TO THE OTHER SIDE, THE EVENTS OF THE VALLEY HAVE BEEN CEMENTED IN OUR HEARTS AS A LEGEND.

DON'T GET TOO HUNG UP ON THE VALLEY.
WE'RE MORE THAN CAPABLE OF MAKING A NEW STAGE OF OUR OWN.

TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI INTENDS TO SEE THIS PROJECT TO ITS COMPLETION.

TSUKIKAGE-SENSEI INTENDS TO SEE THIS PROJECT TO ITS COMPLETION.



ALL
OF IT
IS...

AN
ILLUSION...



THE OTHER
WORLD BEYOND
OUR REACH.

THE
ILLUSIONARY...

...VALLEY OF
THE PLUM
TREES



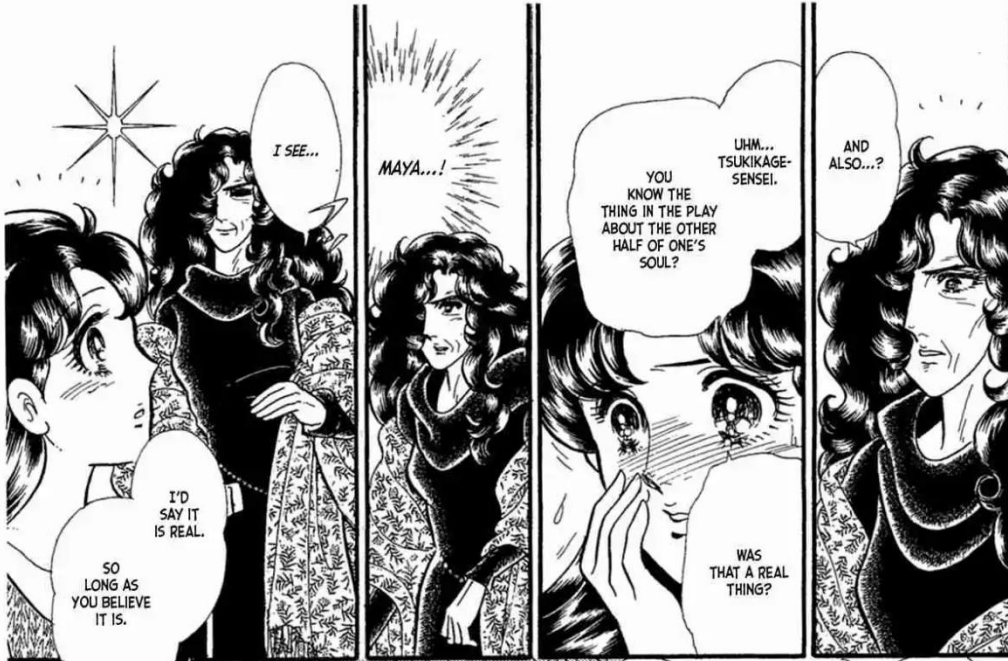
OH.

DONE
ALREADY,
MAYA?

YOU'VE
BARELY EATEN
ANYTHING...

I DON'T
THINK I CAN
EAT ANY-
MORE.







IT'S POSSIBLE THAT YOU'LL MEET THE OTHER HALF OF YOUR SOUL.

MAYA, YOU'RE STILL YOUNG.

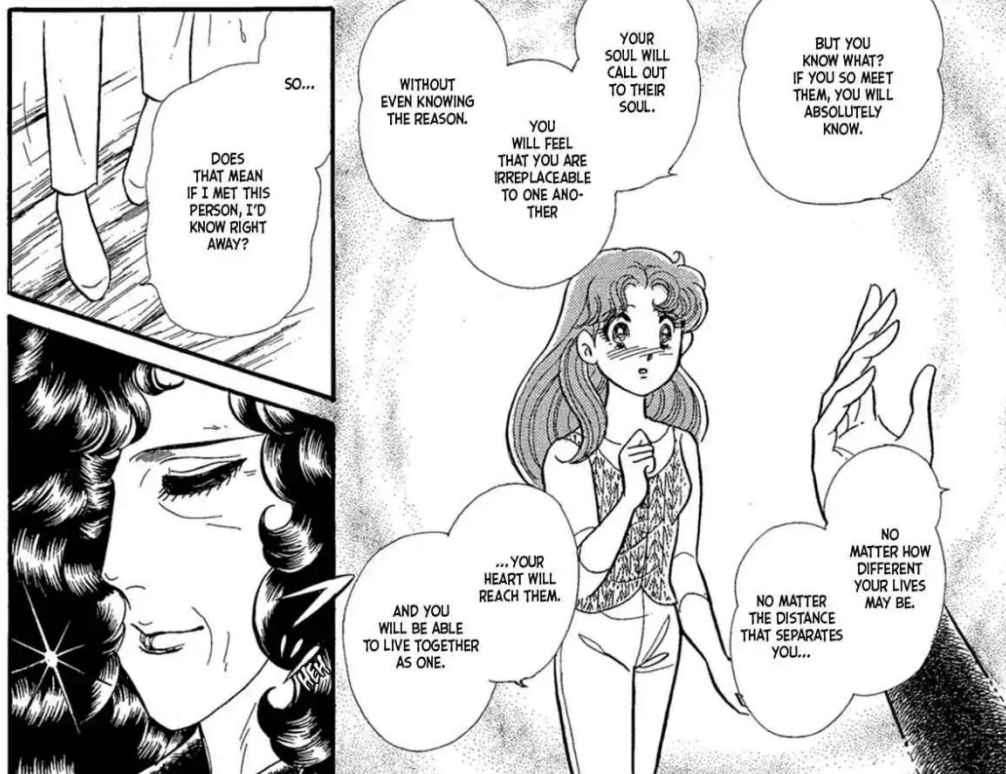
IT'S ALSO POSSIBLE THAT YOU WON'T.

YOU'LL MEET ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE IN LIFE...

...AND I'M SURE MANY WILL MAKE YOUR HEART FLUTTER.

HOWEVER...
...FINDING THAT SPECIAL PERSON IS ITSELF A KIND OF MIRACLE.

EVEN IF YOU WERE TO DIE AND REINCARNATE OVER AND OVER, THE CHANCES OF YOU ENCOUNTERING THEM ARE SLIM...



SO...

DOES THAT MEAN IF I MET THIS PERSON, I'D KNOW RIGHT AWAY?

WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING THE REASON.

YOUR SOUL WILL CALL OUT TO THEIR SOUL.

BUT YOU KNOW WHAT? IF YOU SO MEET THEM, YOU WILL ABSOLUTELY KNOW.

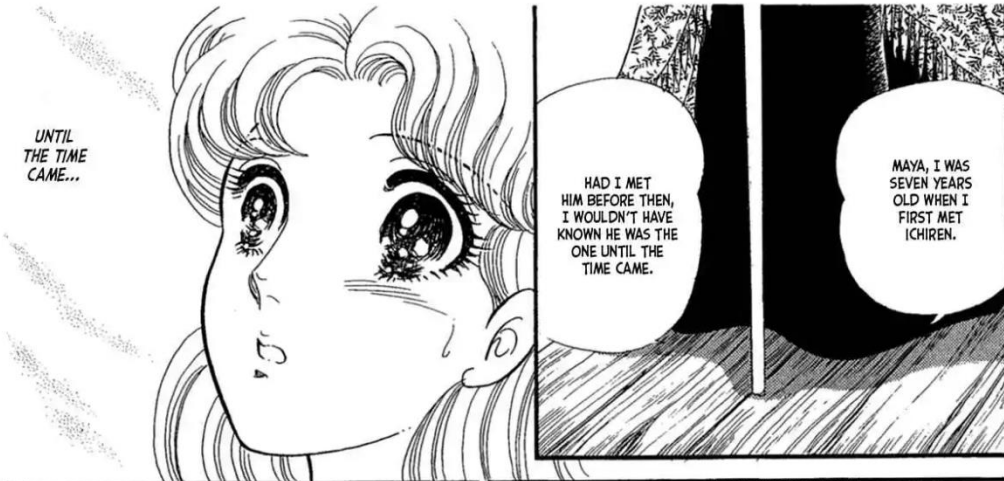
YOU WILL FEEL THAT YOU ARE IRREPLACEABLE TO ONE ANOTHER

AND YOU WILL BE ABLE TO LIVE TOGETHER AS ONE.

...YOUR HEART WILL REACH THEM.

NO MATTER THE DISTANCE THAT SEPARATES YOU...

NO MATTER HOW DIFFERENT YOUR LIVES MAY BE.



UNTIL THE TIME CAME...

HAD I MET HIM BEFORE THEN, I WOULDN'T HAVE KNOWN HE WAS THE ONE UNTIL THE TIME CAME.

MAYA, I WAS SEVEN YEARS OLD WHEN I FIRST MET ICHIREN.



THEN HE'LL DEFINITELY FEEL THE SAME WAY...

IF HE TRULY IS THE OTHER HALF OF MY SOUL...

THE SAME THING AS ME...



IF YOU FIND SOMEONE WHO YOU TRULY BELIEVE IS THE ONE... IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO THEY ARE! DON'T GIVE UP!

YOU MIGHT GET THE CHANCE TO MEET THIS PERSON ONE DAY... BUT LISTEN WELL...

BECAUSE I'M SURE YOU WERE BORN TO MEET THEM.

WITHOUT REGARD TO AGE, BACKGROUND, OR SOCIAL STATUS, YOU TWO WILL FALL FOR ONE ANOTHER.

AND IF THIS PERSON IS TRULY THE OTHER HALF OF YOUR SOUL, THEY WILL ALWAYS FEEL THE SAME WAY AS YOU.



BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE IT ALL BEGINS!

IF YOU MEET SOMEONE LIKE THAT, WORK UP THE COURAGE AND TAKE THE STEP FORWARD

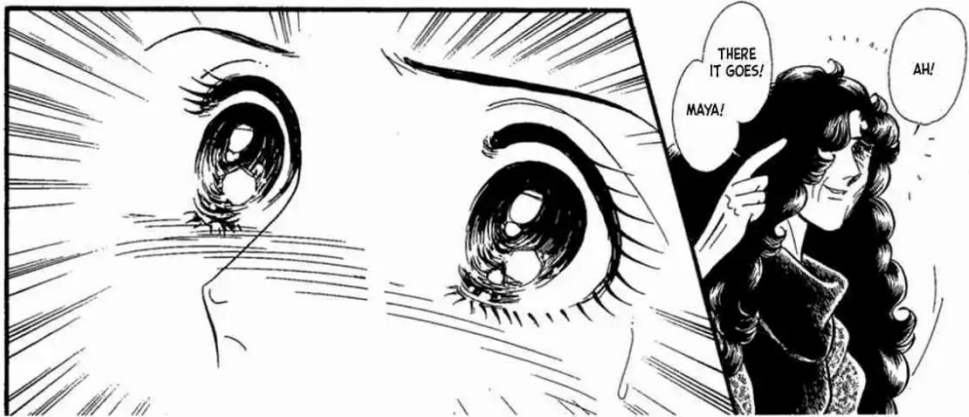
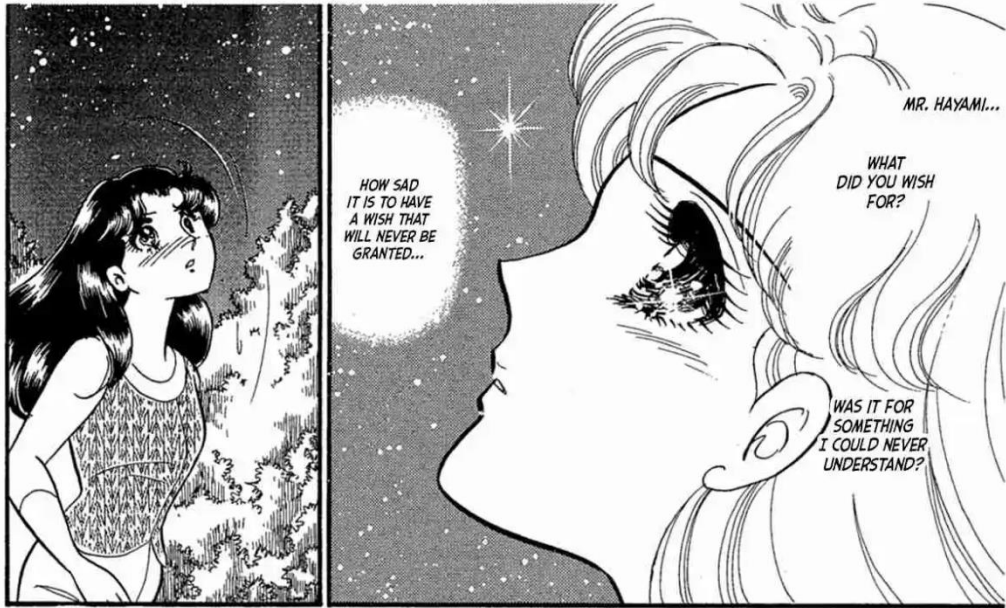
I'M SURE THE ONE YOU'RE DESTINED FOR IS THINKING THE SAME THING.

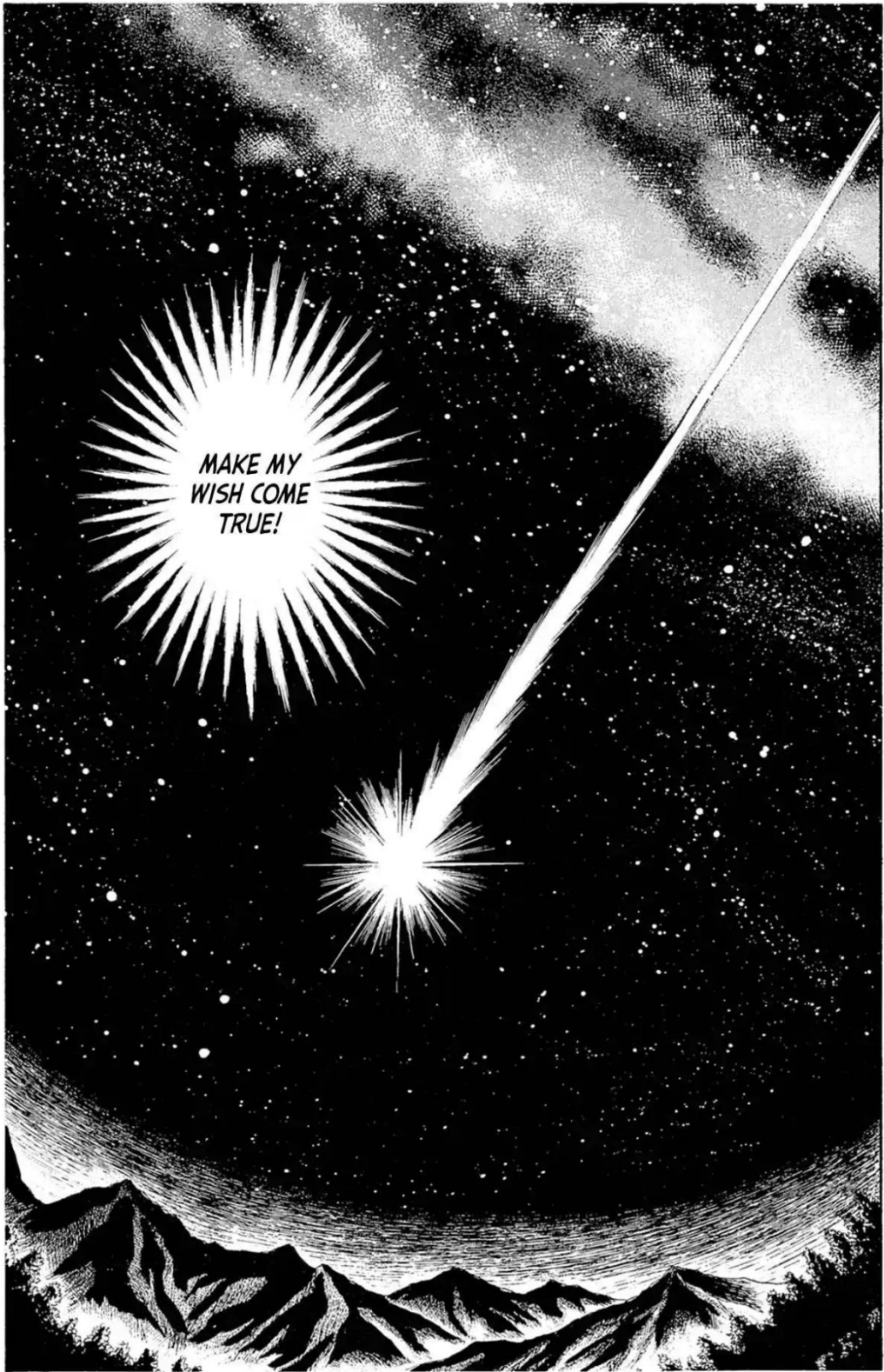
FEARING THE OUTCOME WON'T GET YOU ANYWHERE.

NO MATTER WHERE THEY ARE OR WHAT THEY'RE DOING.









*MAKE MY
WISH COME
TRUE!*