





I went to people we knew in search of clues.



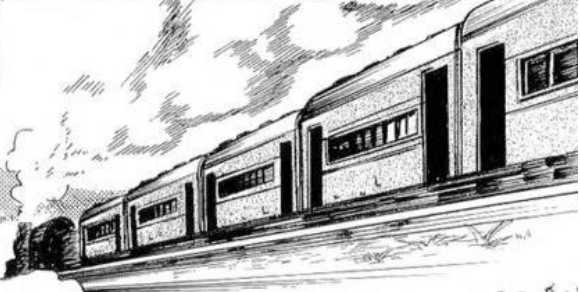
SENSEI, WHERE HAVE YOU GONE?  
IN YOUR CONDITION...

YOU CAN'T HANDLE ...



SENSEI!

Wounded both bodily and spiritually, Ichiren had disappeared...



I eventually tracked down Ichiren's sister...

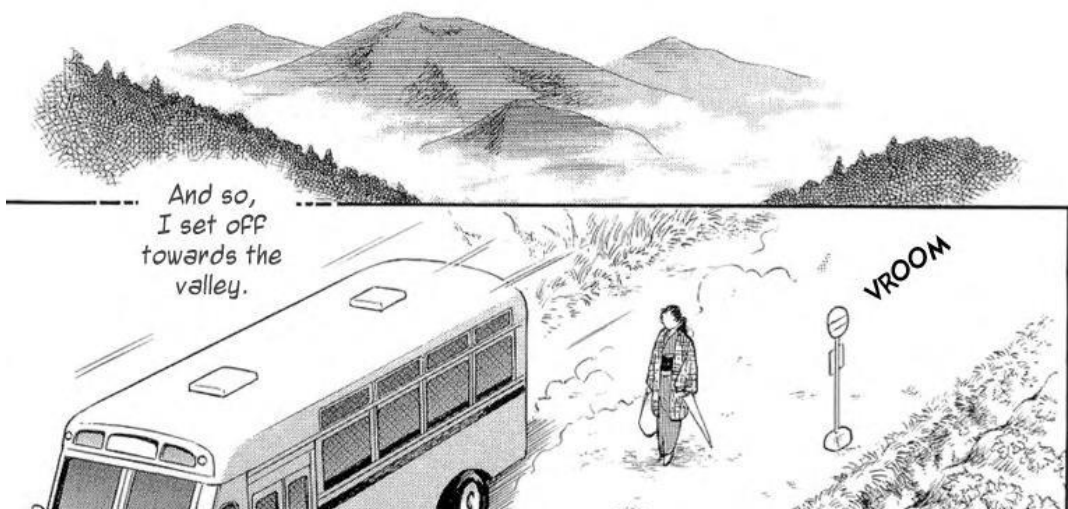
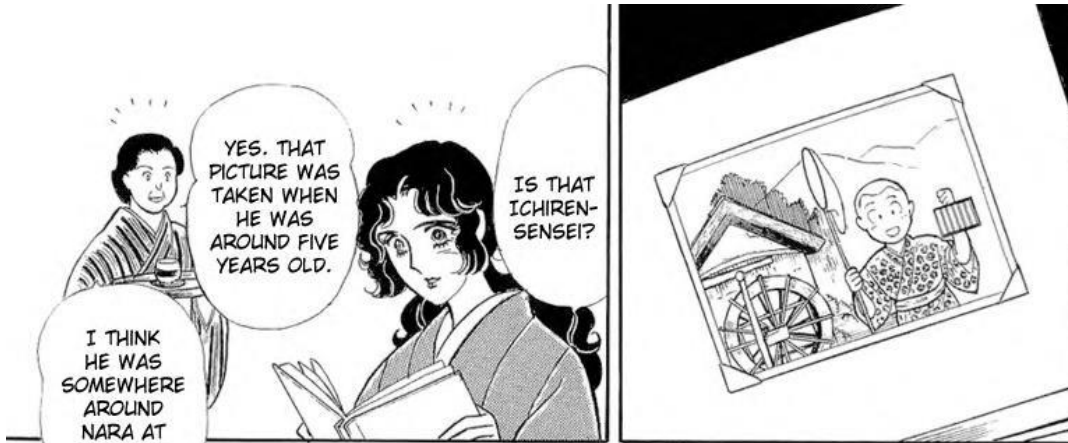


I UNDERSTAND. SHE HAS GONE BACK TO HER FAMILY...

WITHOUT ICHIREN-SENSEI...

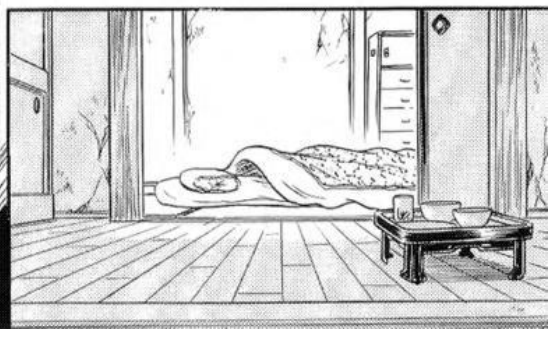
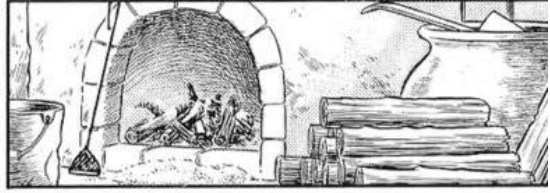
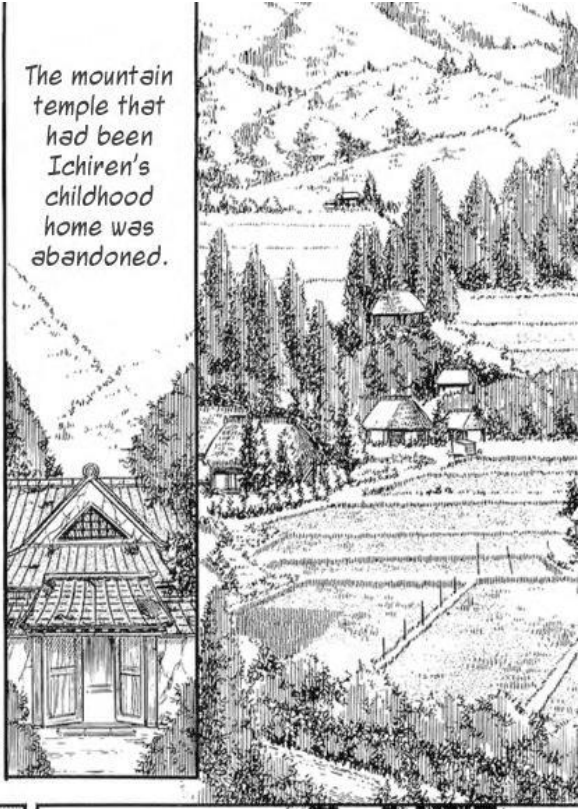


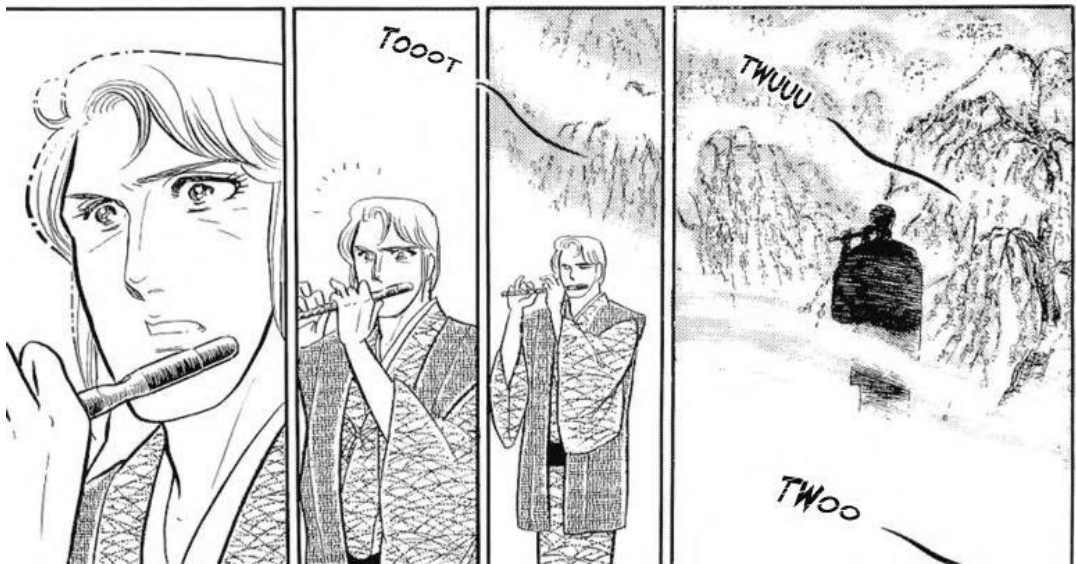
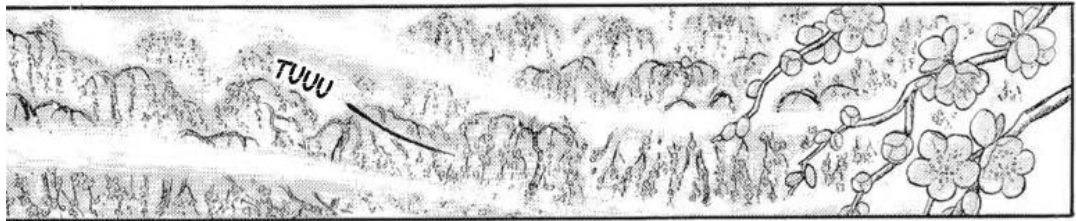
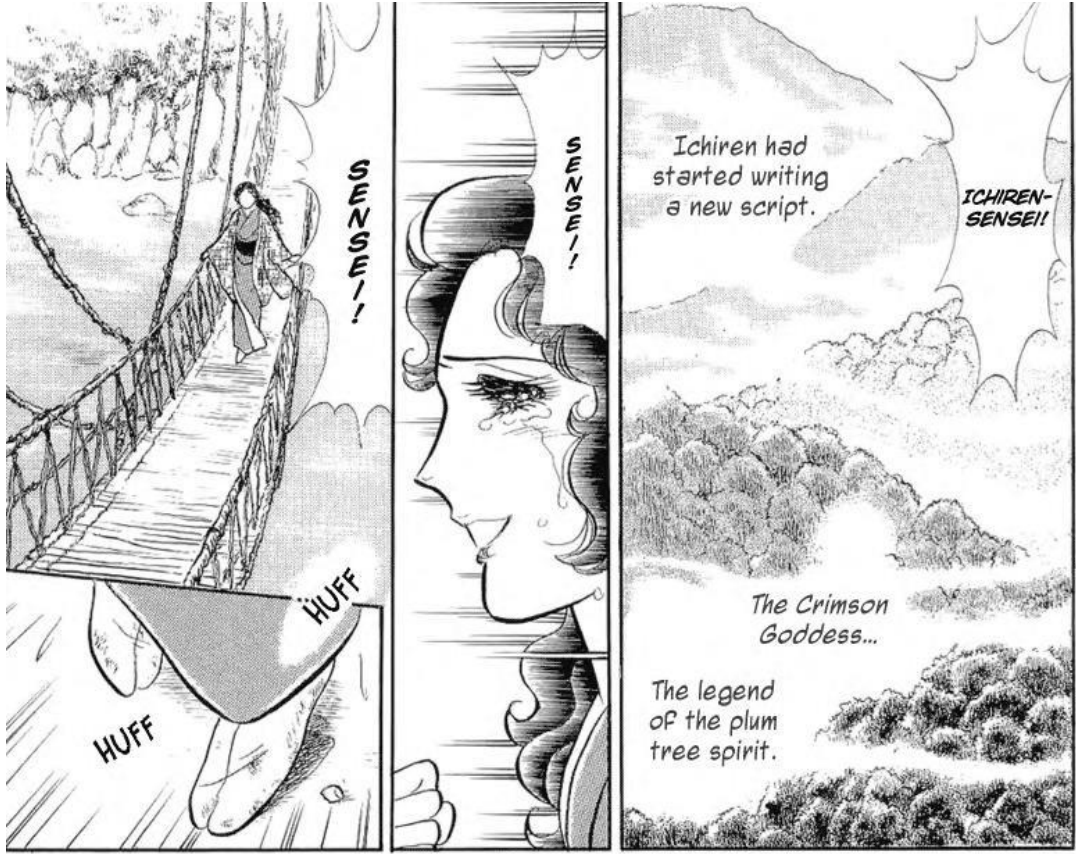
I even looked for his wife, who had fled the city during the war, but she wasn't there.





The mountain temple that had been Ichiren's childhood home was abandoned.











I AM ...  
SO GLAD TO HAVE FOUND YOU SAFE AND SOUND ...

CHI-GUSA ...

ICHIREN-SENSEI ...



About how he saw the unmistakable figure of the goddess emerging from the crimson mist...

It was much later that Ichiren told me about that time.

He told me that I was the only one for the part...

He told me he came to the Valley of the Plum Trees with mixed feelings of hope...

confusion and desire to escape from the feeling of sudden loss. And how at the time he was gradually coming to be at peace with himself...

SENSEI ...

THANK YOU FOR COMING TO FIND ME...  
SORRY TO HAVE MADE YOU WORRY, CHIGUSA ...







The love of the ancient plum tree spirit...

The Crimson Goddess ...

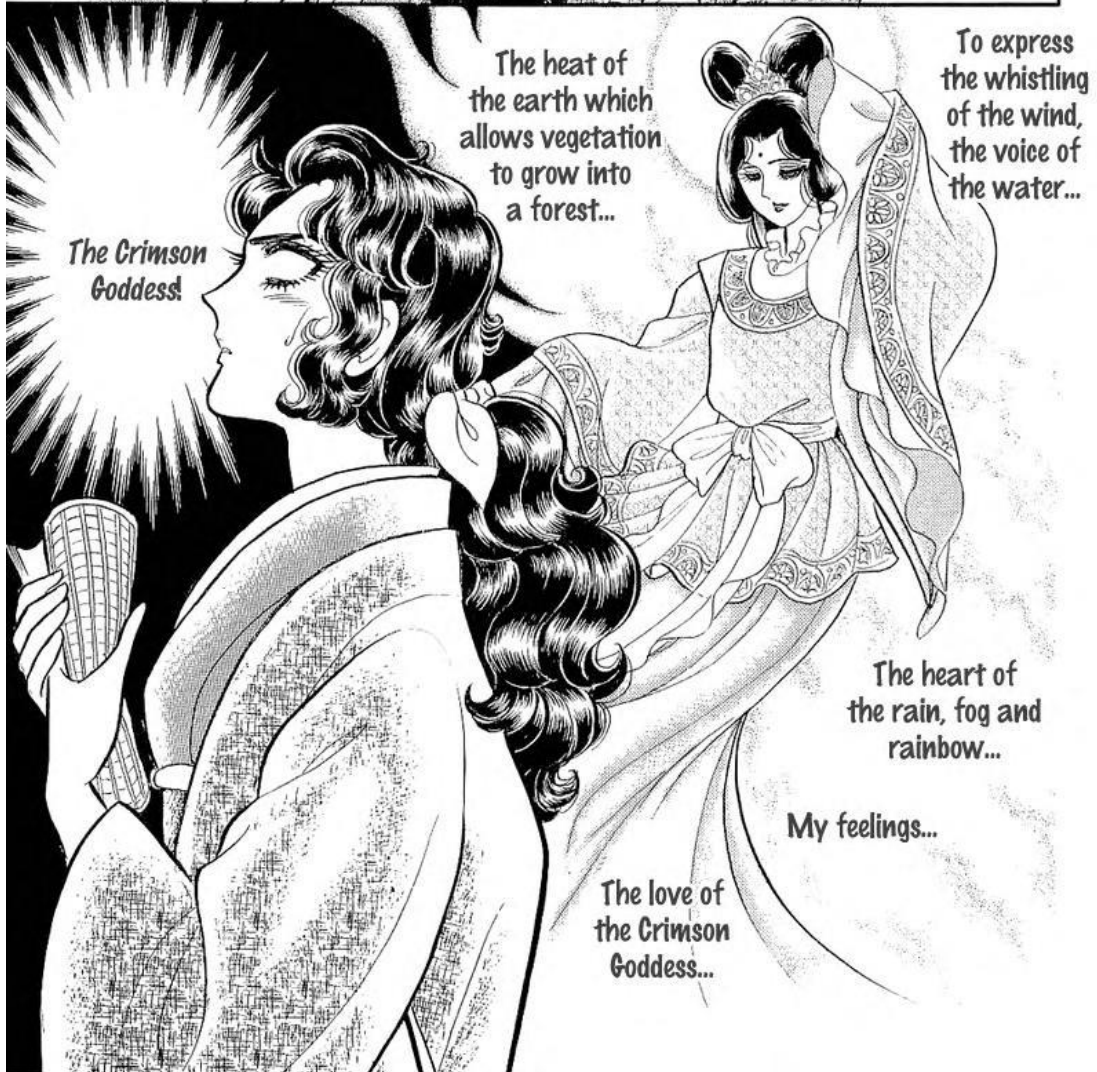
ONLY YOU CAN DO IT...

CHIGUSA, YOU ARE THE ONE...

He started to talk enthusiastically about the plot of his new play, *The Crimson Goddess*, and about its title character.

SENSEI ...

ONLY YOU CAN PLAY THE CRIMSON GODDESS...



The Crimson Goddess!

The heat of the earth which allows vegetation to grow into a forest...

To express the whistling of the wind, the voice of the water...

The heart of the rain, fog and rainbow...

My feelings...

The love of the Crimson Goddess...

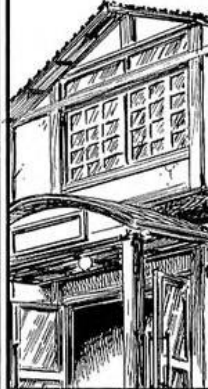
Ichiren was even more strict than before.

To make me understand the part of the Crimson Goddess, he had me interpret wind, fire, air and earth...



The elements of nature.

We rented a small building.



After the war, The Crimson Goddess was the first show to make the headlines in the reborn Moonlight Theater.



Look at me! This is my fire!



I brought to life the love of Yaoya Oshichi, overcome with passion...

My passion for you!

I was willing to go to any length to make that wish come true!

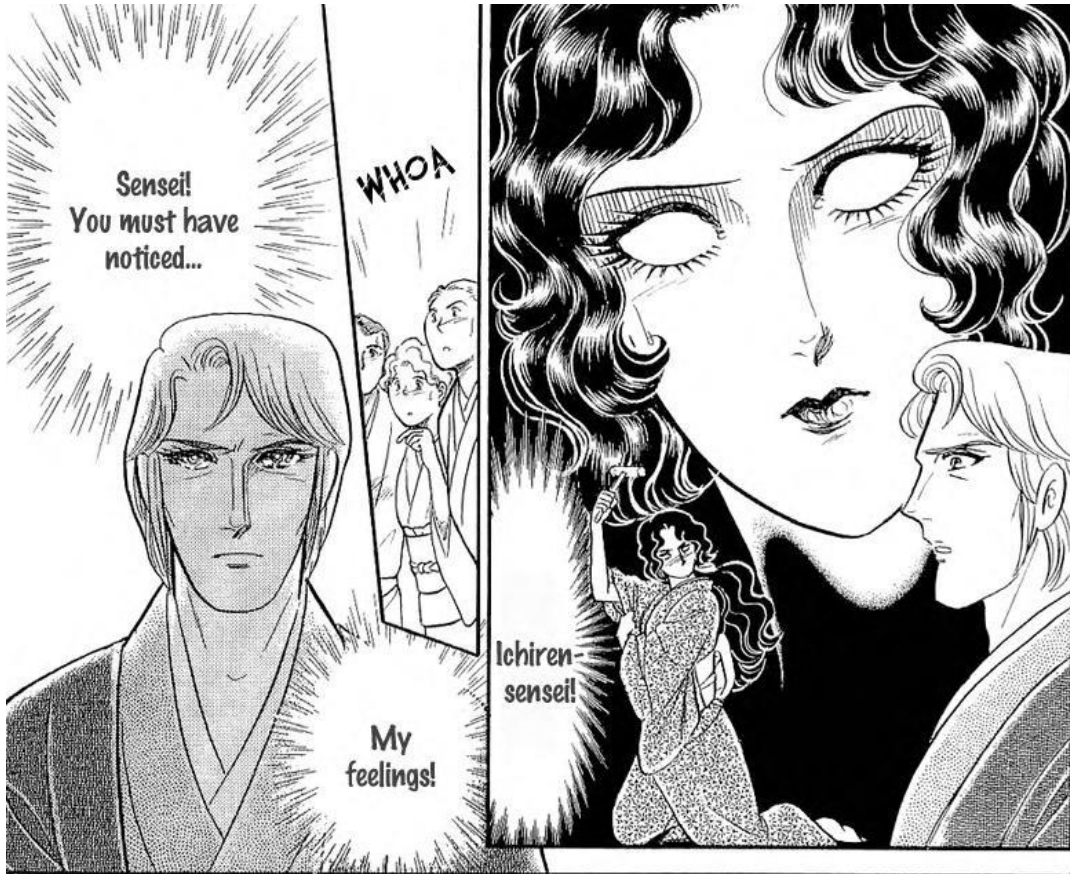


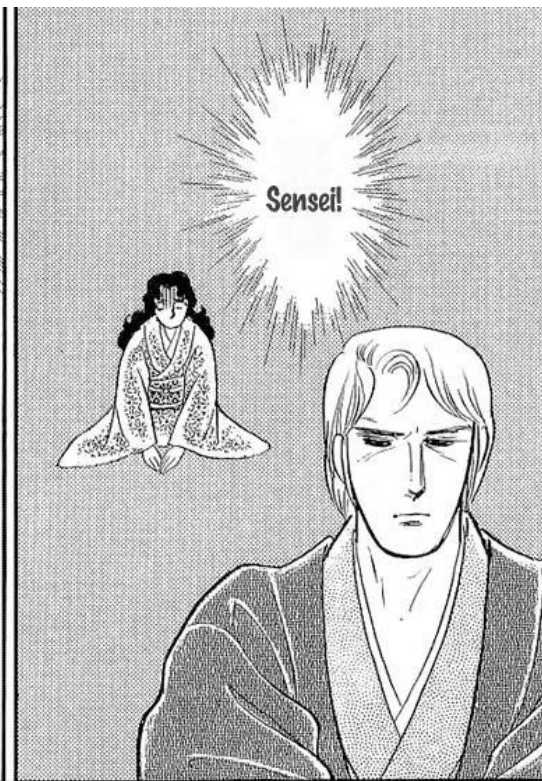
How much I wished for him to see me as a woman, even if only for a second!

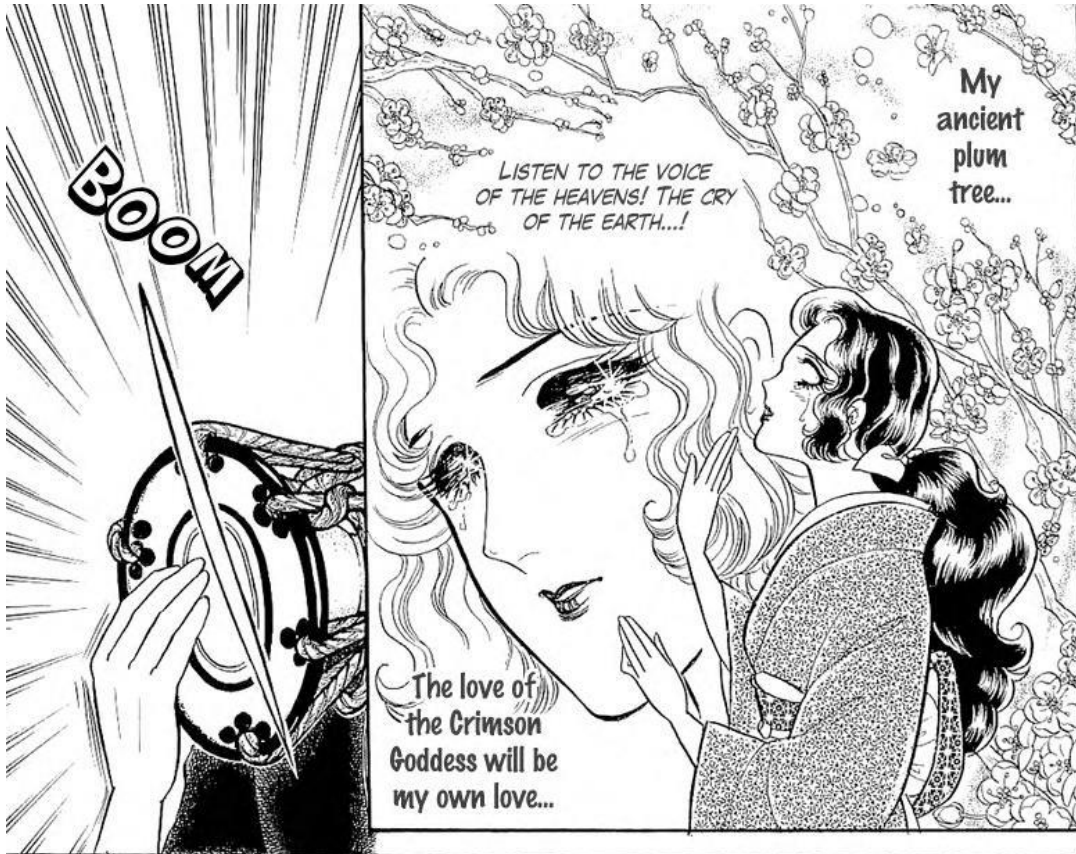
Moreso than any other!

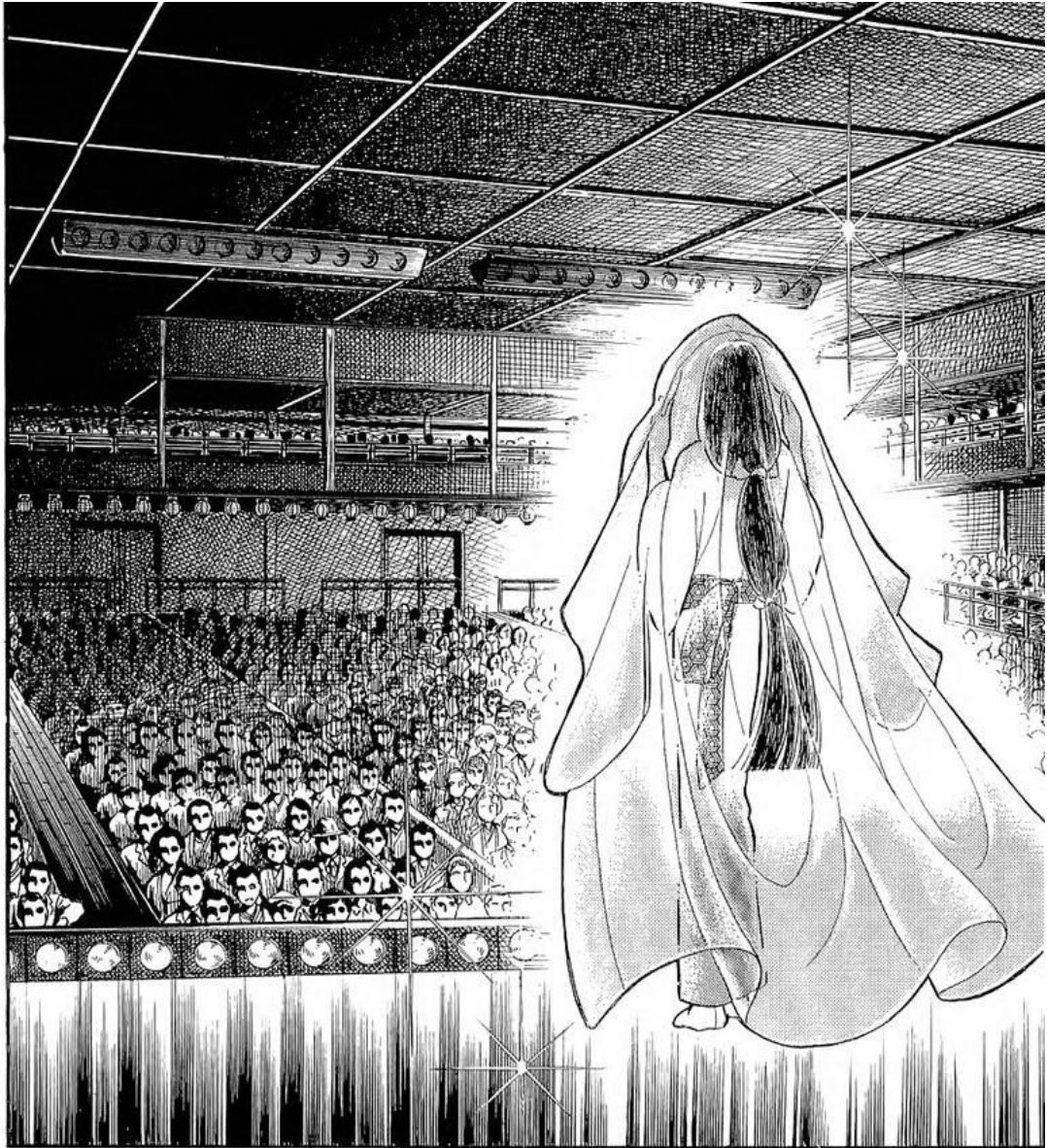
I was torn between the actress inside me and the lovestruck woman that I was.

I love you, Ichiren-sensei.









been as calm  
as I am now...

I've  
never...





The people in the audience became silent as the bottom of the sea...

A profound silence was expanding right before my eyes...



I moved through the air as though I was in the water.



The moonlight...

Where am I?  
Who am I?

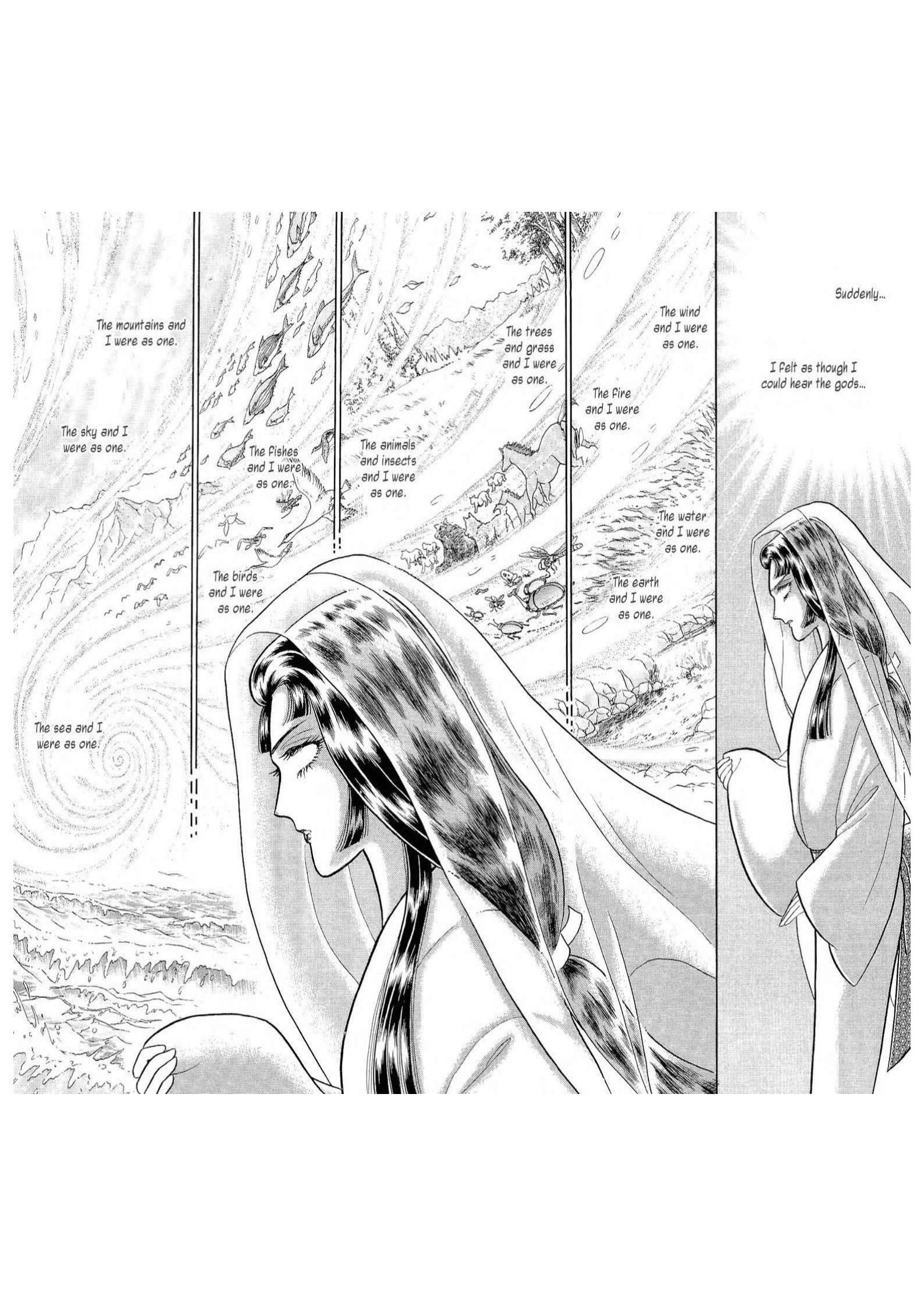


I wavered in the light...

as though I was the air itself.



I was keenly aware of myself, as though my soul had awakened...



The mountains and I were as one.

The sky and I were as one.

The fishes and I were as one.

The birds and I were as one.

The sea and I were as one.

The animals and insects and I were as one.

The trees and grass and I were as one.

The fire and I were as one.

The earth and I were as one.

The wind and I were as one.

The water and I were as one.

Suddenly...

I felt as though I could hear the gods...





The sun  
and I were  
as one.

The stars  
and I were  
as one.

All the  
universe  
and I were  
as one.

Components  
in the sea  
of life, who  
shared the  
same soul.



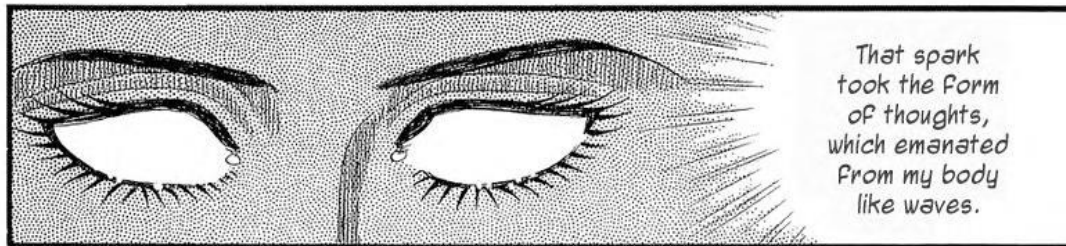
All living  
creatures  
and I were  
as one.

The whole  
of Creation  
and I were  
as one.



These thoughts entered my bosom like a ray of light, without any words or logic...

The same way a tiny spark in the darkest depths can let you see the real world, if only for a split second.



That spark took the form of thoughts, which emanated from my body like waves.



Heedless of time...

I was wandering through eternity.

The soul was life, and life was hidden in the soul...



DULL, CRUDE,  
FOOLISH  
SOULS!

LISTEN TO  
THE VOICE OF  
THE HEAVENS!

LISTEN TO  
THE CRY OF  
THE EARTH!



THEY DO  
NOT KNOW  
THAT ALL  
CREATIONS  
HAVE LIFE.

DO NOT  
KNOW THAT  
THE SOULS OF  
ANIMALS AND  
HUMANS  
ORIGINATE  
FROM THE  
SAME  
SOURCE...



HUMANS  
CANNOT  
SEE ME...

THEY  
KNOW  
NOTHING  
OF HOW  
TO LIVE.



BLOOM,  
YOU CRIMSON  
FLOWERS OF  
ETERNAL LIFE!

BOOM

BOOM

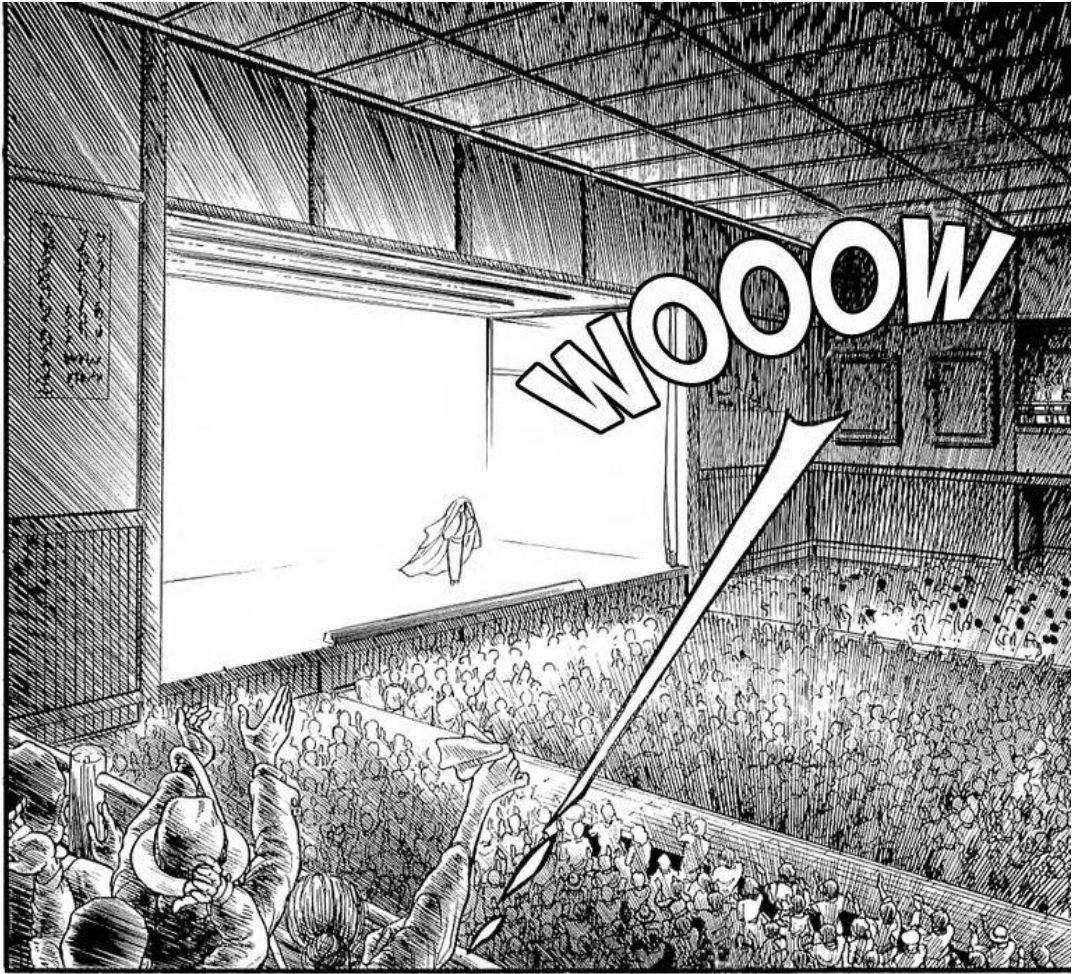


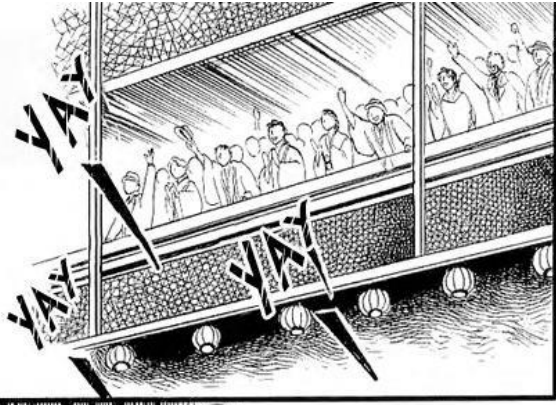
THE  
WIND IS MY  
HEART.

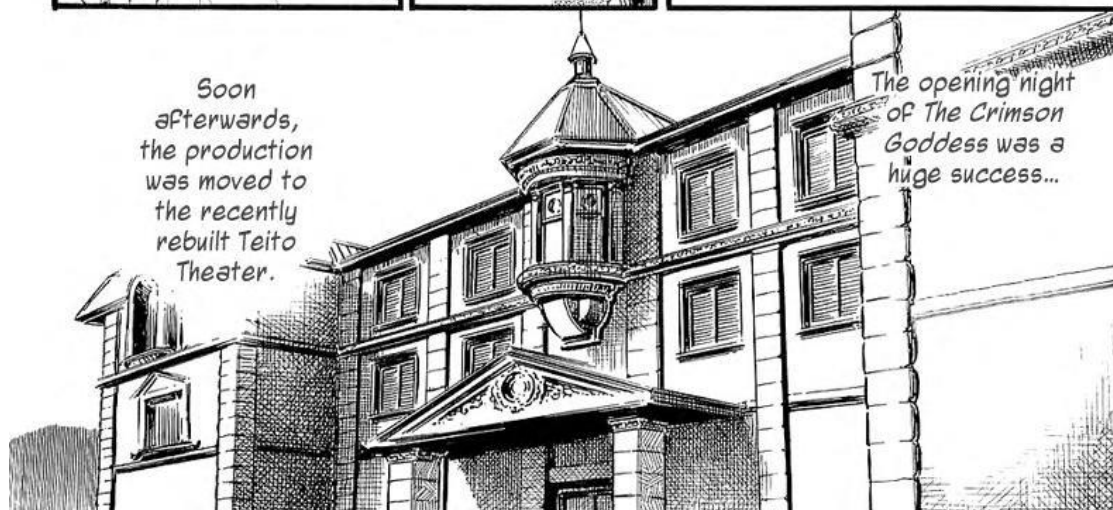
THE FIRE MY  
STRENGTH!

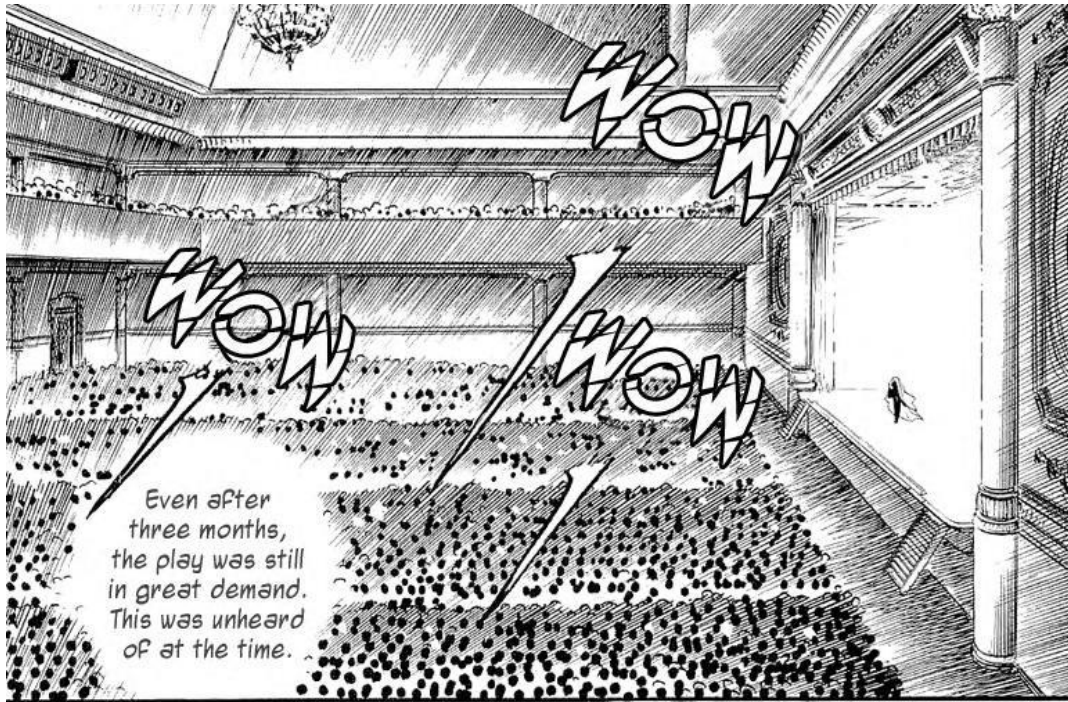
THE WATER  
MY LIFE!

THE EARTH  
MY LOVE!









Even after three months, the play was still in great demand. This was unheard of at the time.



"Chigusa Tsukikage" made headlines.

I was always the leading lady.

Inspired by his success, Ichiren began to translate foreign plays and staged them one after another.

It was then that Genzo, a background actor, became my assistant.



There were many investors. Moonlight Theater was restored to its former glory.



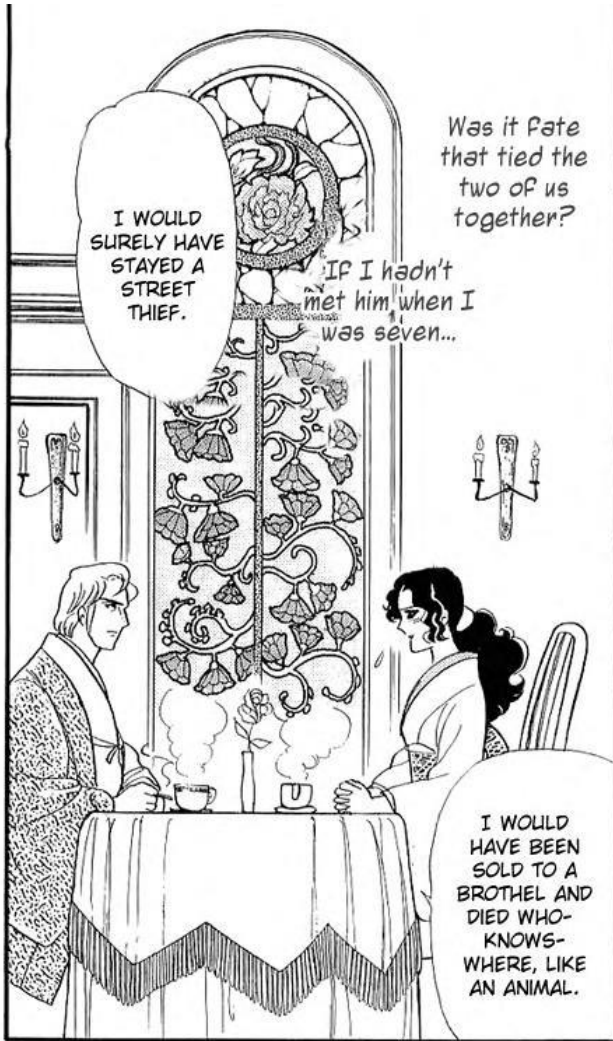
CHIGUSA! THIS IS ALL THANKS TO YOU.

YOU REVIVED THE MOONLIGHT THEATER!

I AM HAPPY, SENSEI!

AT LAST, WE CAN STAGE PLAYS LIKE WE USED TO!



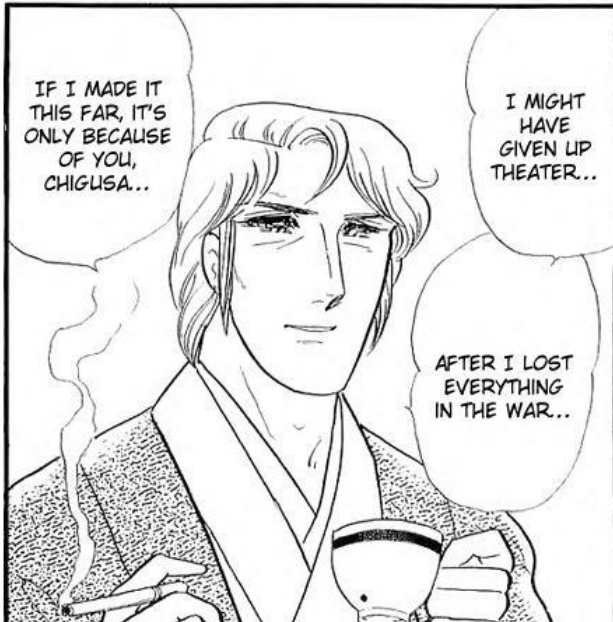


I WOULD SURELY HAVE STAYED A STREET THIEF.

Was it fate that tied the two of us together?

IF I hadn't met him when I was seven...

I WOULD HAVE BEEN SOLD TO A BROTHEL AND DIED WHO-KNOWS-WHERE, LIKE AN ANIMAL.



IF I MADE IT THIS FAR, IT'S ONLY BECAUSE OF YOU, CHIGUSA...

I MIGHT HAVE GIVEN UP THEATER...

AFTER I LOST EVERYTHING IN THE WAR...



Every time it was a success, surpassing all competition. The same thing happened when the production went on tour.

The Crimson Goddess became a staple at the Moonlight Theater and was brought back many times.

The Moonlight Theater and The Crimson Goddess were inseparable.



His soul's other half!  
I'd be his other half!

IF THERE IS A GOD, I'D LIKE TO THANK HIM FOR ALLOWING THE TWO OF US TO MEET.

YOU KNOW HOW TO EXPRESS MY SOUL.

MAYBE YOU ARE MY SOUL'S OTHER HALF.



A half you cannot exist without...

He didn't show it in front of other people, but...

We felt united, more than anyone, by a strong mutual trust.

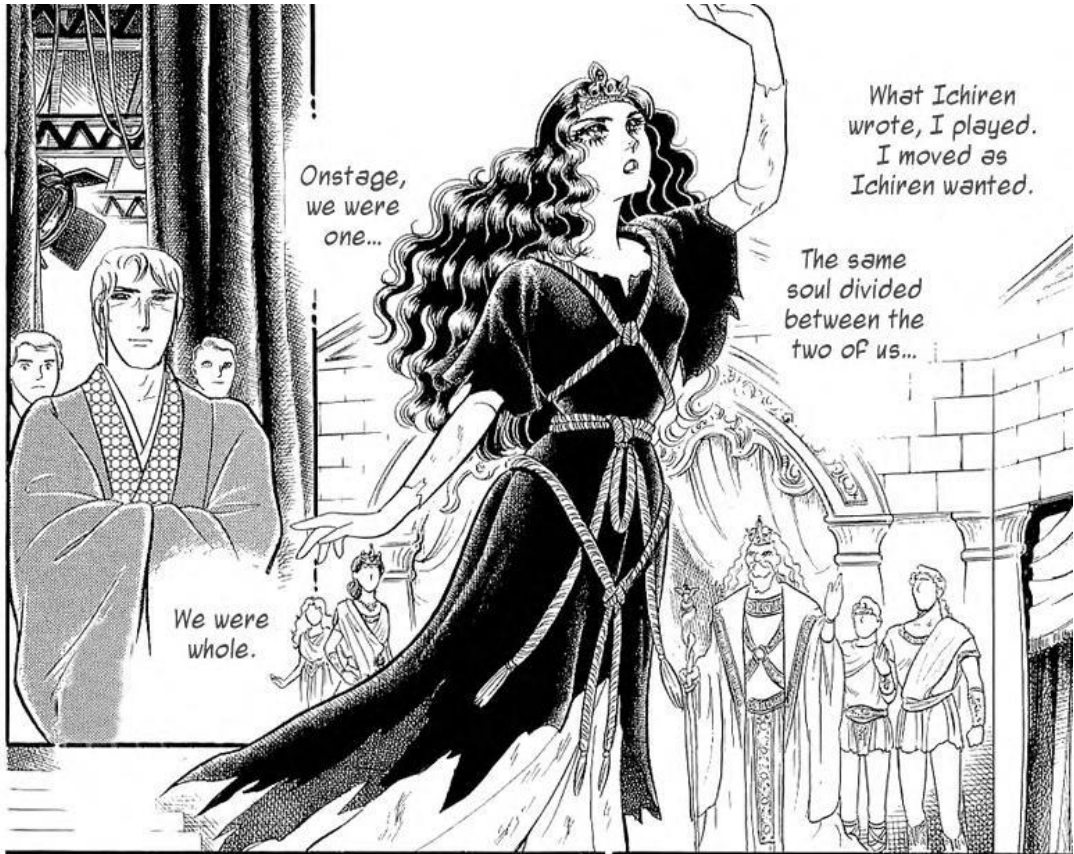


We share the same soul...

The half...

Ichiren-sensei!

Those words meant more to me than any declaration of love could have.



Onstage,  
we were  
one...

What Ichiren  
wrote, I played.  
I moved as  
Ichiren wanted.

The same  
soul divided  
between the  
two of us...

We were  
whole.



We were closer  
than we would have  
been had we been  
lovers or even  
partners in marriage.

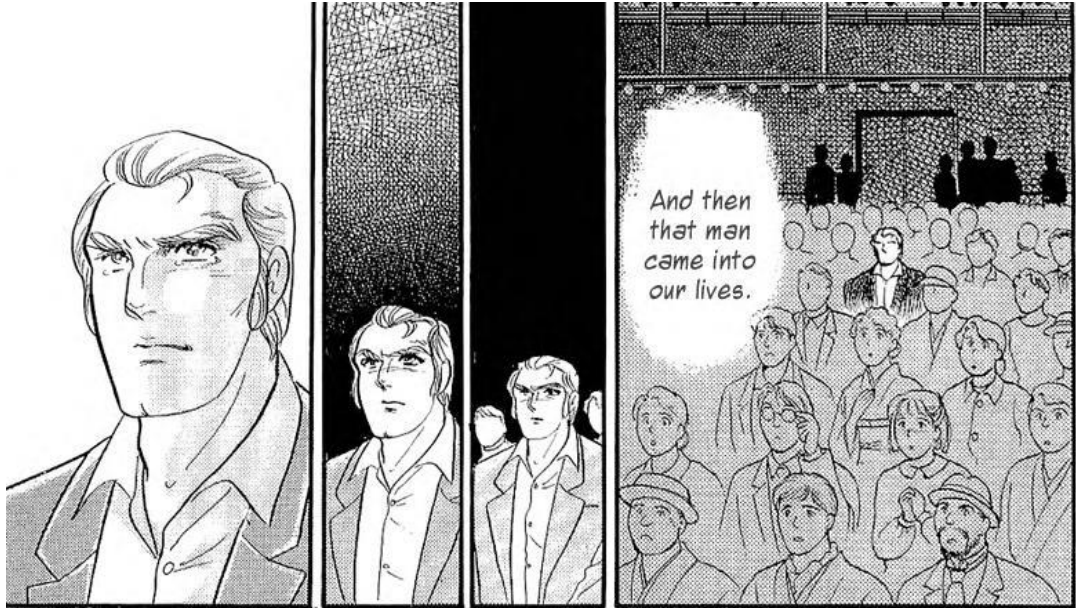
That was  
enough  
for me.

We were  
each... the  
other's  
half...

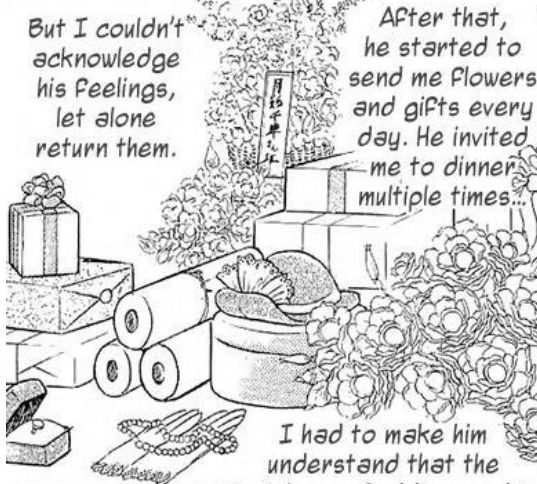


Offstage,  
we lived our  
separate  
lives.

Nonetheless,  
an invisible  
unbreakable  
thread tied  
us together.



And then that man came into our lives.



But I couldn't acknowledge his feelings, let alone return them.

After that, he started to send me flowers and gifts every day. He invited me to dinner multiple times...



I returned all his gifts with a polite note of thanks.

I had to make him understand that the Crimson Goddess and Chigusa Tsukikage were two separate entities.



When he was allowed to visit my dressing room backstage, he must have seen the Crimson Goddess, not me.

He owned a distribution company. The Crimson Goddess had moved him deeply, and he came to the theater every day.

I AM... EISUKE HAYAMI...

He was so nervous he could barely speak.



He soon changed his approach.

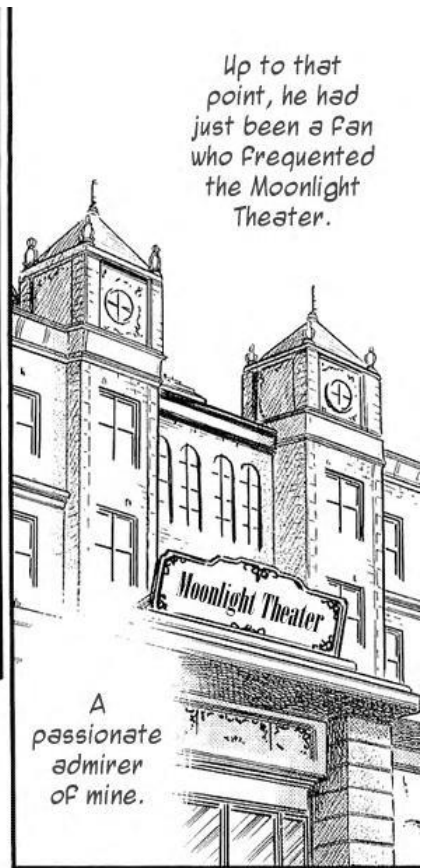
I'D LIKE TO HELP YOU STAGE YOUR PLAY ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

But things were about to change...

Since he worked in distribution,

he knew important people all throughout the country.

He made sure to obtain exclusive rights to handle the transport of our stage props and theater bookings.



Up to that point, he had just been a fan who frequented the Moonlight Theater.

A passionate admirer of mine.



Not to mention publicity and ticket sales as well.

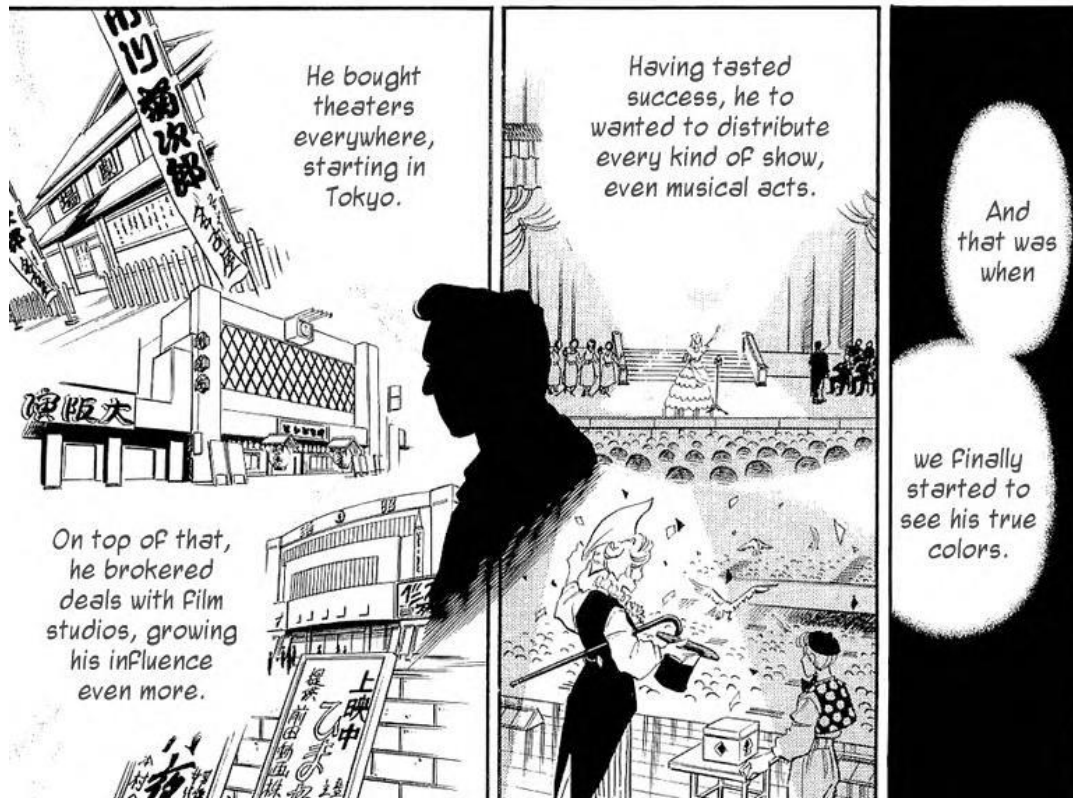
He held control over the whole production.

By doing this...



He brought  
The Crimson  
Goddess to  
the whole  
country.

He became  
indispensable  
to the Moonlight  
Theater.



He bought  
theaters  
everywhere,  
starting in  
Tokyo.

Having tasted  
success, he to  
wanted to distribute  
every kind of show,  
even musical acts.

And  
that was  
when

On top of that,  
he brokered  
deals with film  
studios, growing  
his influence  
even more.

we finally  
started to  
see his true  
colors.