



WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING ON?  
WOULD TELL ME ABOUT YOUR PROGRESS TODAY?

I'VE MADE YOU WORRY...  
BUT NOW EVERYTHING IS FINE.



IF I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THE LINES, THEN I CAN'T EXPRESS THEM...



AND THE SPIRALING FORCE OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS...  
ABOUT HEAVEN'S AND EARTH'S VOICE...  
THE TREE AND THE SPIRIT...

I THOUGHT ABOUT THESE THINGS WHILE I WALKED IN THE MOUNTAINS.



AYUMI ...?

AH... I HAVE BEEN THINKING ON HOW TO INTERPRET THE LINES YOU GAVE US YESTERDAY.



AND?  
How the Crimson Goddess would be feeling!

EHM... I STILL DON'T GET IT...



I'VE ALSO... THOUGHT ABOUT THE CRIMSON GODDESS...  
I SEE ...  
AND YOU, MAYA?

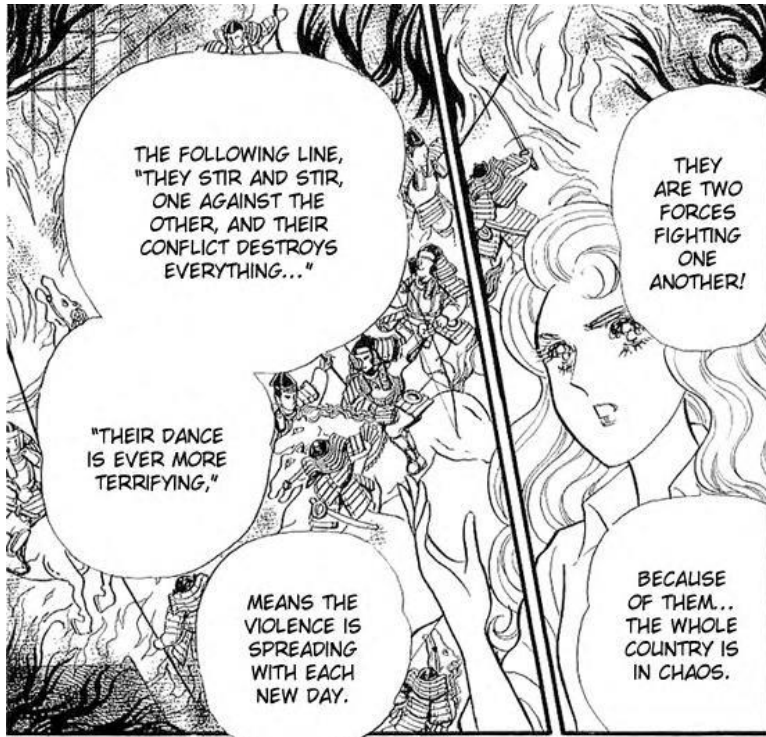
ABOUT HOW SHE WOULD BE FEELING WHEN SHE SPOKE THOSE LINES...



NO, NOT YET...

AND?  
DID YOU FIND THE MEANING?





THE FOLLOWING LINE,  
"THEY STIR AND STIR,  
ONE AGAINST THE  
OTHER, AND THEIR  
CONFLICT DESTROYS  
EVERYTHING..."

THEY  
ARE TWO  
FORCES  
FIGHTING  
ONE  
ANOTHER!

"THEIR DANCE  
IS EVER MORE  
TERRIFYING,"

MEANS THE  
VIOLENCE IS  
SPREADING  
WITH EACH  
NEW DAY.

BECAUSE  
OF THEM...  
THE WHOLE  
COUNTRY IS  
IN CHAOS.



AND  
WHAT ABOUT  
"THE RED  
WHIRLPOOL  
AND THE WHITE  
WHIRLPOOL,  
LIKE TWO  
SPINNING TOPS  
THAT WREAK  
HAVOC UPON  
THE WORLD"?



I DIDN'T  
GIVE THEM  
A LOT OF  
THOUGHT  
...

"THE RED  
WHIRLPOOL  
AND THE WHITE  
WHIRLPOOL"  
ARE JUST AS  
THEY SAY...

EHM...

WHAT  
DO YOU  
THINK,  
MAYA?



I THINK... THEY  
ARE THE VOICES  
OF THE GODS OF  
HEAVEN AND  
EARTH.

AND  
THE "VOICE  
OF THE  
HEAVENS"  
AND "CRY  
OF THE  
EARTH"?

Pfft!

HOW  
ABOUT  
YOU,  
MAYA?

THEY  
ARE THE  
SOULS OF  
HUMANS.

AND "THE  
PEARLS OF  
LIFE"?

YES,  
WELL  
...

I REALLY HAVE  
NO CLUE.



WHY NOT?

NO ...

YOU HAVE NO DOUBT OF IT?

YES ...

YOU MEAN LITERALLY ...?



EHM... I'M NOT REALLY SURE...

MAYA?

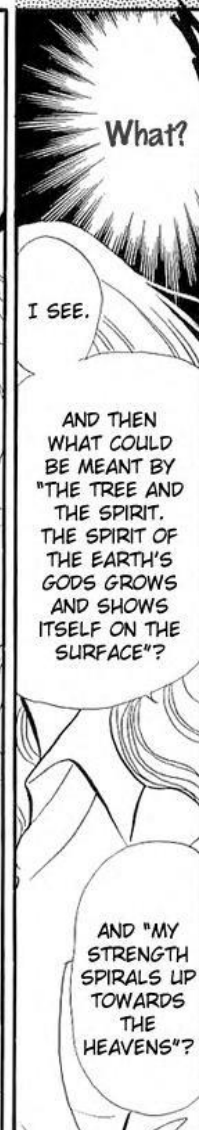
I THINK THEY REALLY ARE THE VOICES OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.



EHM... JUST LIKE IT SAYS, THE TREE IS THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH'S GODS.

Just listen to her!

I THINK THAT "MY STRENGTH SPIRALS UP TOWARDS THE HEAVENS," IS EXACTLY THAT...



What?

I SEE.

AND THEN WHAT COULD BE MEANT BY "THE TREE AND THE SPIRIT. THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH'S GODS GROWS AND SHOWS ITSELF ON THE SURFACE"?

AND "MY STRENGTH SPIRALS UP TOWARDS THE HEAVENS"?

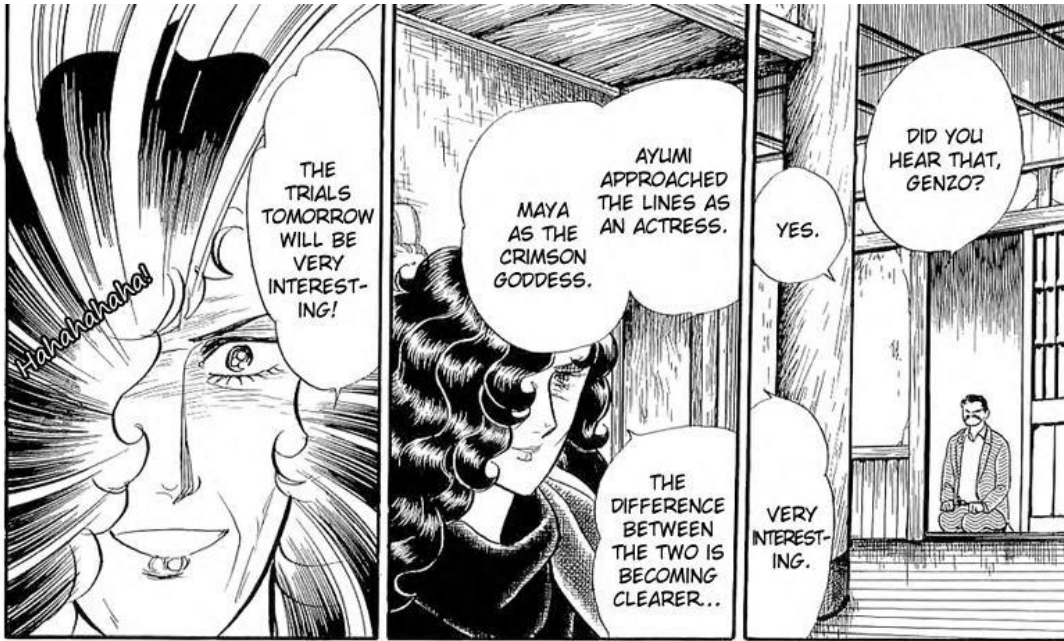


I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHY... JUST...

BECAUSE THE CRIMSON GODDESS IS SAYING SO.

I THINK... THE CRIMSON GODDESS CAN HEAR THE VOICES OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.





*Hahahaha!*

THE TRIALS TOMORROW WILL BE VERY INTERESTING!

MAYA AS THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

AYUMI APPROACHED THE LINES AS AN ACTRESS.

YES.

DID YOU HEAR THAT, GENZO?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO IS BECOMING CLEARER...

VERY INTERESTING.



If I were the Crimson Goddess I would have no doubts whatsoever!

They're the lines of the Crimson Goddess!

I underestimated that girl!



While I was trying to understand the Crimson Goddess...

Maya thought of how to express her!

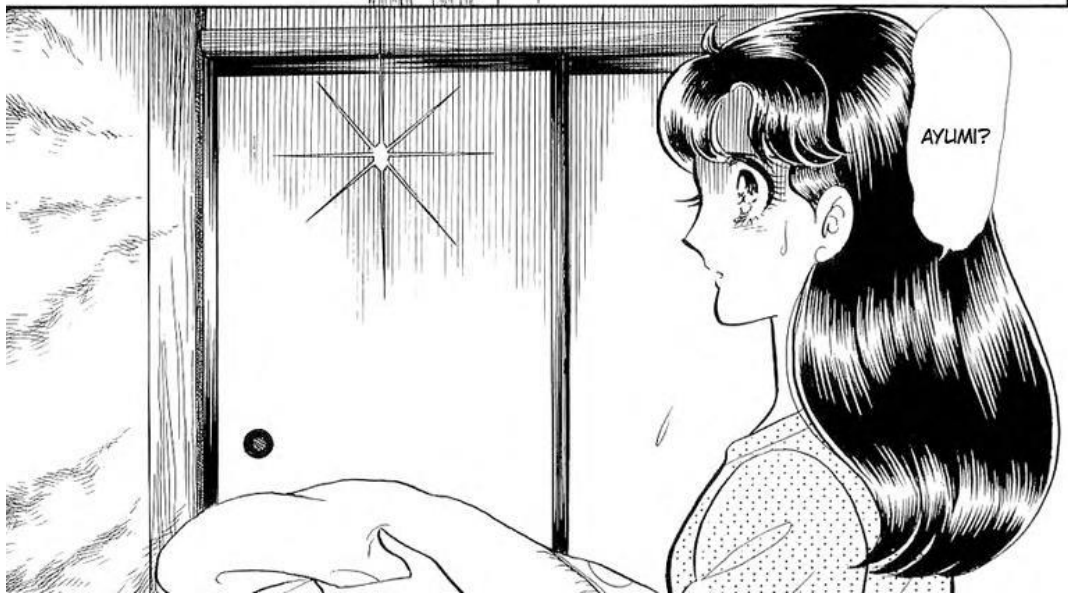
There's a huge difference between us!

"Life's pearls" would simply be "life's pearls."

It would be perfectly natural that I could hear the voices of Heaven and Earth.

Of course! Not if I were the Crimson Goddess!

I shouldn't be surprised that the spirit of the gods become a tree!





Who knows what we'll have to do now?

In the Valley of the Plum Trees?

TODAY I'D LIKE FOR US TO GO TO THE VALLEY OF THE PLUM TREES...

AND FOR YOU TO DO THE TRIAL OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS THERE.

GOOD MORNING.



HOW COME?

YOU'RE ALL HERE!

THE VALLEY OF THE PLUM TREES? YOU GUYS, TOO?

THIS MORNING, GENZO CAME TO US AND SAID THAT TSUKIKAGE-SAN WILL SHOW US THE VALLEY.

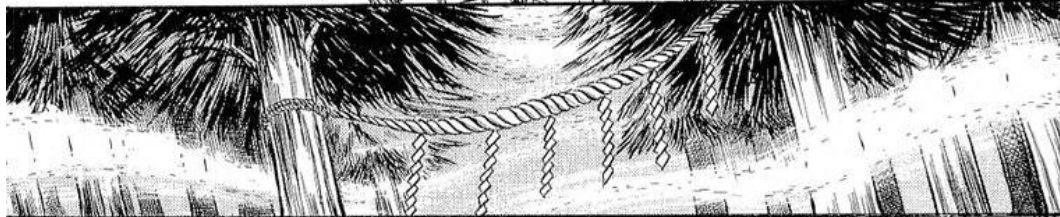
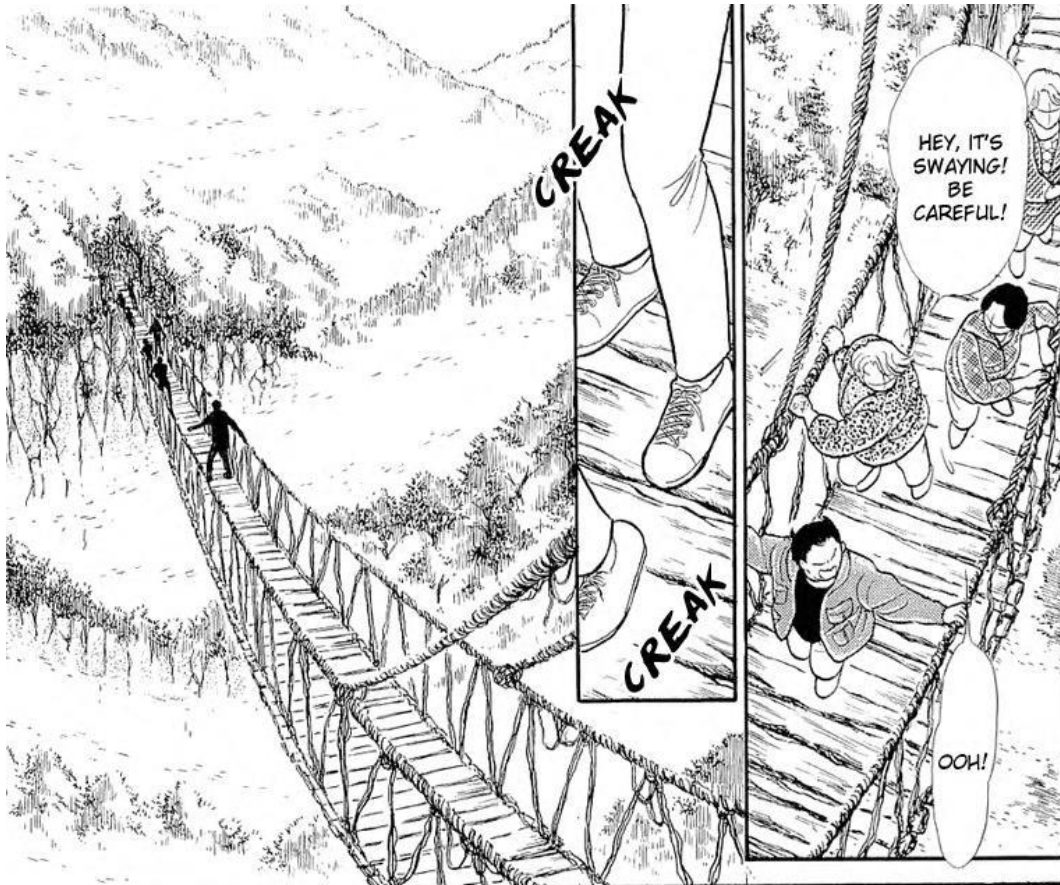
SO HERE WE ARE.



GOOD MORNING!

HI!







FOR A LONG TIME, IT WAS A FORBIDDEN AND MYSTERIOUS PLACE.

SO, EVERYONE, WELCOME TO THE VALLEY OF THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

AS YOU CAN SEE, THIS IS A UNIQUE PLACE.



MAYA, AYUMI... YOU WILL NOW BOTH CREATE THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

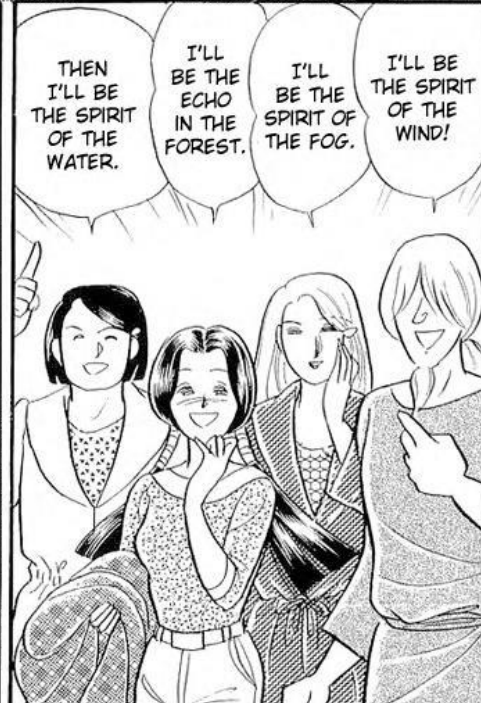
THERE'S A REASON I BROUGHT YOU ALL HERE TOGETHER.

AND I'D LIKE FOR EACH OF YOU TO CHOOSE A SPIRIT TO PORTRAY.

"HERE IN THIS HOLY GROUND, WHERE GODS THRIVE, I HAVE THE SHAPE OF A PLUM TREE."  
"THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH'S GODS GROWS AND SHOWS ITSELF ON THE SURFACE."  
"IN THE CRIMSON GODDESS, THERE ARE THE LINES 'THE TREE AND THE SPIRIT.'"

NOT JUST THE CRIMSON PLUM TREE.

ACCORDING TO LEGEND, THERE ARE MANY OTHER SPIRITS.





WOW, THAT'S A GOOD FIT FOR YOU!

SO... I HAVE TO BE THE TENGU?

NO ONE ASKED YOU!



IT FITS YOU LIKE A GLOVE!

OH, BUT THAT REALLY SUITS YOU.

ALL THAT'S LEFT FOR ME IS THE GOD OF THE MOUNTAIN ...

TSK! YOU TOOK ALL THE BEST PARTS...



ME?

MOUNTAIN GOD! TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK.

CLAP



ANSWER ME IN CHARACTER.

THEN, SPIRITS.

WE HAVE GATHERED TOGETHER.



I AM ANGERED THAT HUMANS HUNT SO MANY BIRDS AND ANIMALS.

WE... AS THE GOD OF THE MOUNTAIN...

Ha ha!  
Ha ha  
Ha ha  
Ha ha!

AND THAT THEY CUT DOWN SO MANY TREES, LEAVING ME BALD.

THIS IS YOUR HOME...

A SACRED PLACE FORBIDDEN TO HUMANS.

EACH ONE OF YOU HAS A QUARREL WITH HUMANS.

HUMANS DESTROY NATURE.



AND THEY CHANGE THE COURSE OF RIVERS, DRYING THEM UP TOO!

I AM THE SPIRIT OF THE WATER.  
HUMANS DRY UP MY LAKES...

THEY DON'T REALIZE THAT WE, TOO, ARE ALIVE!

I, THE SPIRIT OF THE PLANS AND FLOWERS, FEEL THE SAME.  
THE HUMANS RECKLESSLY PLUCK PLANTS AND FLOWERS!



THEY WERE THE ONES WHO STARTED IT BY INVADING THE ISLAND OF THE TENGU TO STEAL OUR TREASURES!  
EVEN BACK IN THE TIMES OF MOMOTARO, WHAT DID WE DO TO THEM?

AND FOR THIS, MOMOTARO IS CALLED A HERO! HOW COME?

THAT'S RIGHT! WELL SAID!



AS A TENGU, I HAVE SOMETHING TO ADD!  
THE HUMANS DISRESPECT ANYTHING THAT IS EVEN A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT FROM THEM.



THEY MAKE ME REPEAT THEIR SENSELESS SCREAMS OF "YAHOO!" AND "HEY!"  
THE HUMANS WHO COME TO THE FOREST TO HAVE FUN...  
I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO REPEAT THEIR MEANINGLESS WORDS.  
I GET IT.



MY TENGU ANCESTORS WERE CHASED AWAY JUST BECAUSE HUMANS THOUGHT THEIR FACES WERE UGLY.  
WE ARE ACCUSED OF VARIOUS EVILS AND FORCED TO ENDURE THEIR INSULTS.





THEY KILL INSECTS AND ANIMALS LIKE THEY ARE NOTHING!

THEY THINK ANYTHING THAT IS NOT LIKE THEM CAN BE KILLED AT WILL.

I HAVE RIDDEN ON WINDS AROUND THE WORLD... AND I'VE NEVER MET A BEING MORE SELFISH AND CRUEL THAN A HUMAN!



FIRST, I WOULD MAKE A NICE THICK FOG SO ANY HUMAN WHO WANDERS HERE WILL BE LOST.



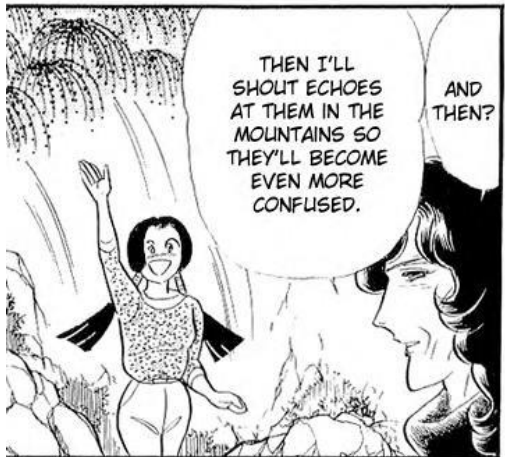
SHE IS THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

THIS IS THE SACRED PLACE WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH'S GODS SHOWS HERSELF AS A PLUM TREE...



TELL ME...

NOW THAT YOU HAVE EXPRESSED YOUR ANGER AT THE HUMANS,



THEN I'LL SHOUT ECHOES AT THEM IN THE MOUNTAINS SO THEY'LL BECOME EVEN MORE CONFUSED.

AND THEN?



HOW WOULD YOU DO IT?

YOU HAVE TO PROTECT HER.



WHAT WOULD YOU DO TO THEM IF THEY WERE TO SET FOOT IN THIS VALLEY?



AND IF THAT ISN'T ENOUGH, I'LL SUMMON RAINCLOUDS TO POUR DOWN ON THEM.



AND IF THEY SOMEHOW STILL COME THROUGH, I'LL BLOW THEM AWAY WITH A GUST OF WIND.



I'LL WRAP MY TENDRILS AROUND THEIR BODIES SO THEY CAN'T MOVE.

WHEN THEY'VE LOST THEIR WAY, I'LL BLOCK THEIR PATH WITH VINES.



WHEN THE HUMANS FALL INTO THE RIVER, I'LL DRAG THEM AWAY.

THAT'S WHERE I COME IN!



IF THEY MANAGE TO GRAB HOLD OF SOMETHING, I'LL PULL THEIR LEGS SO THEY FALL TO THE BOTTOM OF THE VALLEY.

AND AFTER THAT, IF BY SOME MIRACLE, THEY STILL TRY, I'LL MAKE USE OF MY INVISIBILITY AND TRIP THEM SO THEY'LL FALL OFF A CLIFF.



I SEE. SO NO HUMAN CAN DESTROY THIS PLACE...

THAT'S HOW WE WOULD DEFEND THE VALLEY OF THE PLUM TREES!

THAT WOULD BE THE FINAL BLOW!

Ha haha!

Ha ha ha!

THAT IS ALL. YOU CAN CONTINUE TO PLAY AS YOU LIKE IN THIS VALLEY.

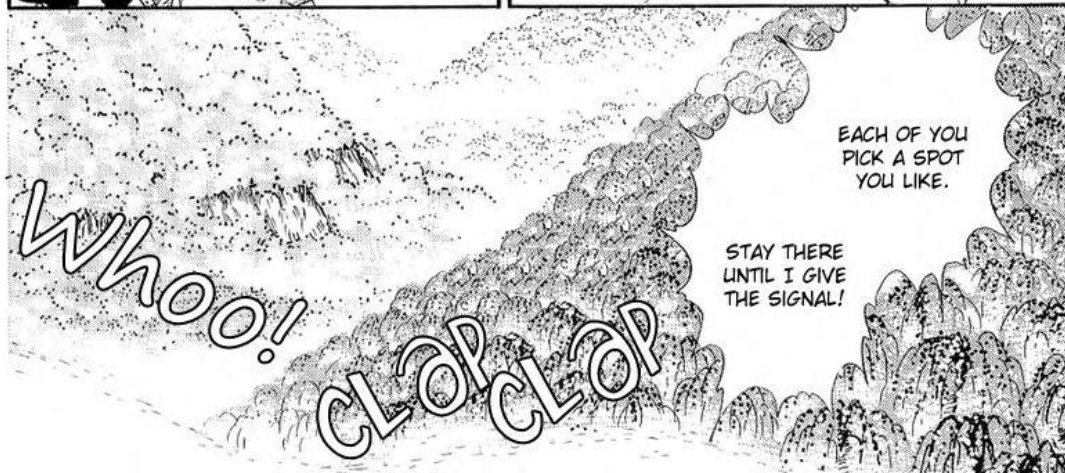


GREAT! JUST GREAT!

Ooh!

IF THEY STILL REMAIN AND SET FOOT IN THIS PLACE, I'LL SHAKE THE GROUND TO SCARE THEM AWAY!

SBAM



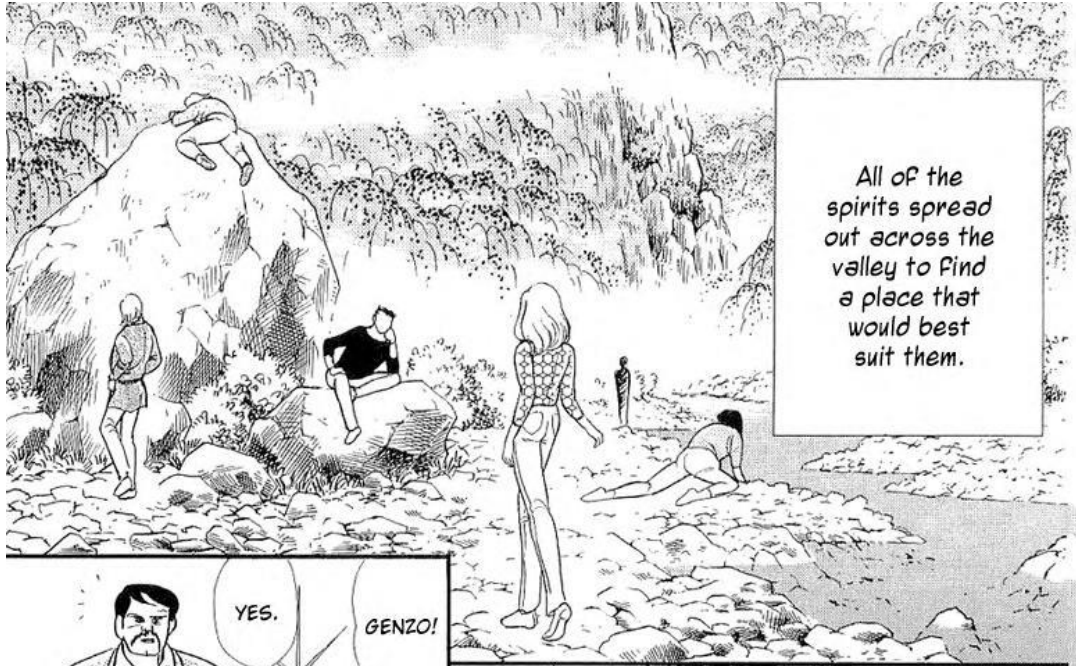
Whoo!

CLAP CLAP

EACH OF YOU PICK A SPOT YOU LIKE.

STAY THERE UNTIL I GIVE THE SIGNAL!





All of the spirits spread out across the valley to find a place that would best suit them.



YES.

GENZO!



HOW NICE. IT LOOKS LIKE A SHAWL.

CLOTH?

TAKE THESE AND FIND YOUR OWN SPOT.

IT SERVES AS THE COSTUME FOR THE CRIMSON GODDESS.



GO, THEN.

YES, TSUKIKAGE-SAN!

YES.



YOU HAVE TO STAY STILL UNTIL THE SECOND SIGNAL.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

FOR THE OTHERS, THIS IS A GAME. BUT FOR YOU, THIS IS A TEST FOR THE CRIMSON GODDESS.

SHE'LL WAKE FROM A LONG AND DEEP SLUMBER AND SHOW HERSELF TO THE OTHERS.





Even trees have warm bodies?

The spirit of the plum tree...



Eh? This tree feels somewhat warm...



GOOD MORNING! GLAD TO MEET YOU!

WHAT A GREAT TREE.

I GET A GOOD FEELING FROM IT!

**PATPAT**

YOU ARE ME!

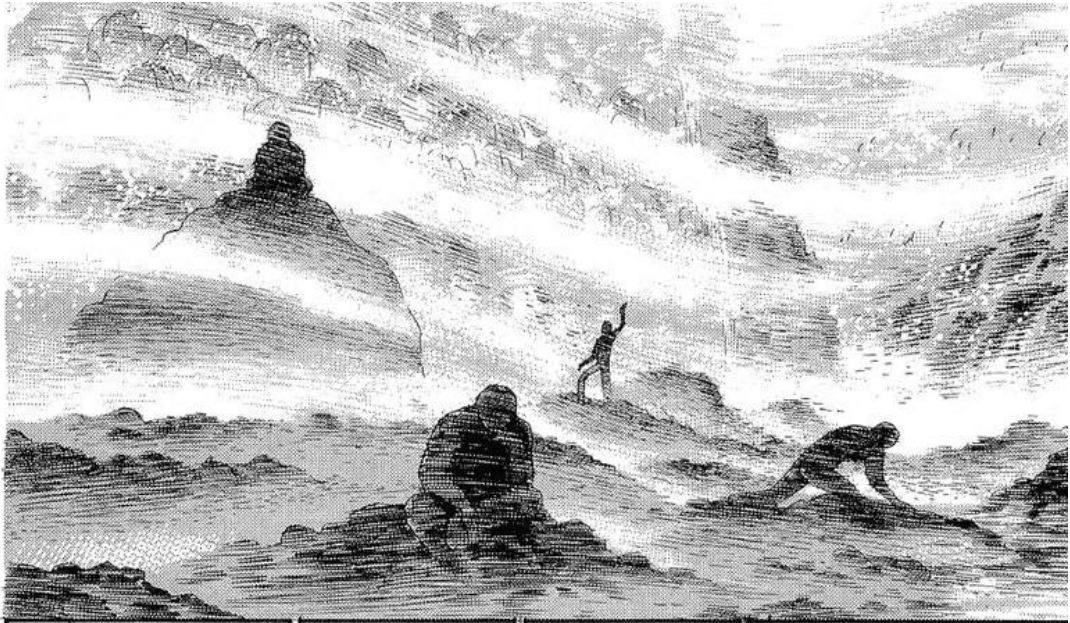


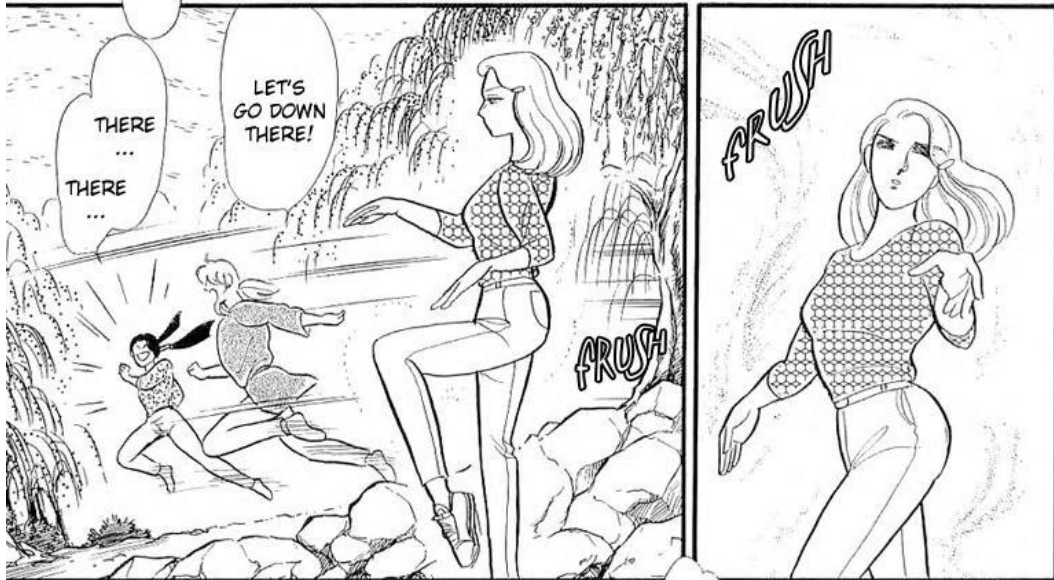
*grab*



The Crimson Goddess!

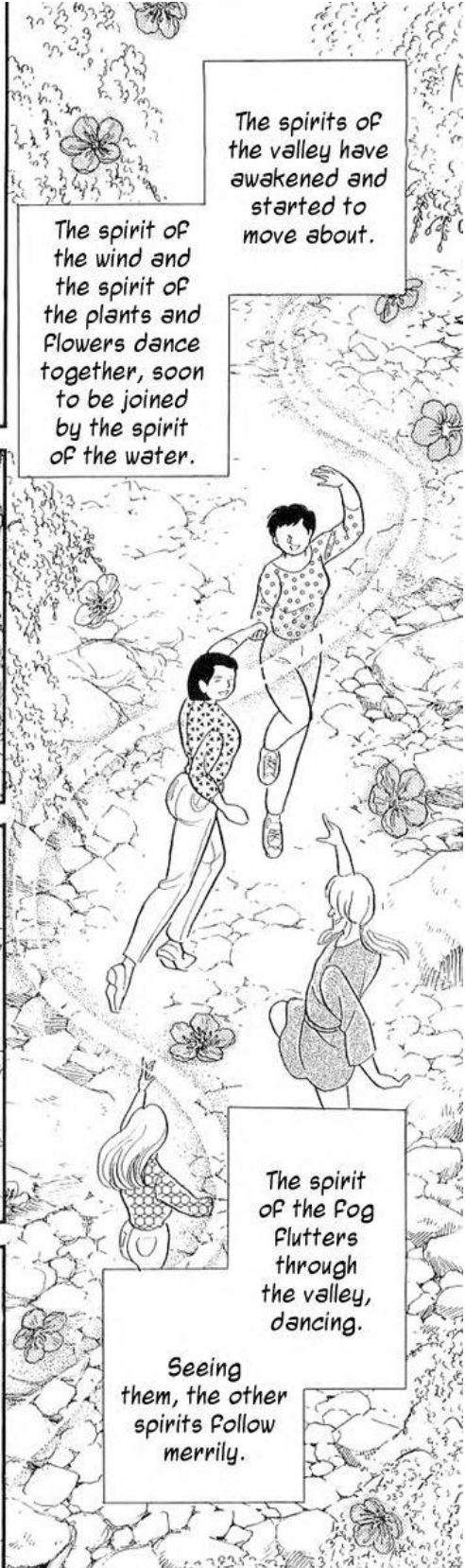
**CIAP**







The spirit of the echo jumps about... repeating every word uttered across the valley.



The spirits of the valley have awakened and started to move about.

The spirit of the wind and the spirit of the plants and flowers dance together, soon to be joined by the spirit of the water.



Ryuujin and the tengu engage in a contest of strength.

When they can't decide a winner, the god of the mountain jumps on a rock...



Causing a quake, and ending the competition.

The spirit of the fog flutters through the valley, dancing.

Seeing them, the other spirits follow merrily.



And with the others.

Everyone is having a good time with their part...



Ayumi starts to get anxious.

Both Maya and Ayumi have remained in the plum tree's pose for quite some time.

The second signal from Chigusa Tsukikage has yet to come.



When will she give the signal?

What is Tsukikage-san thinking?



Eh?







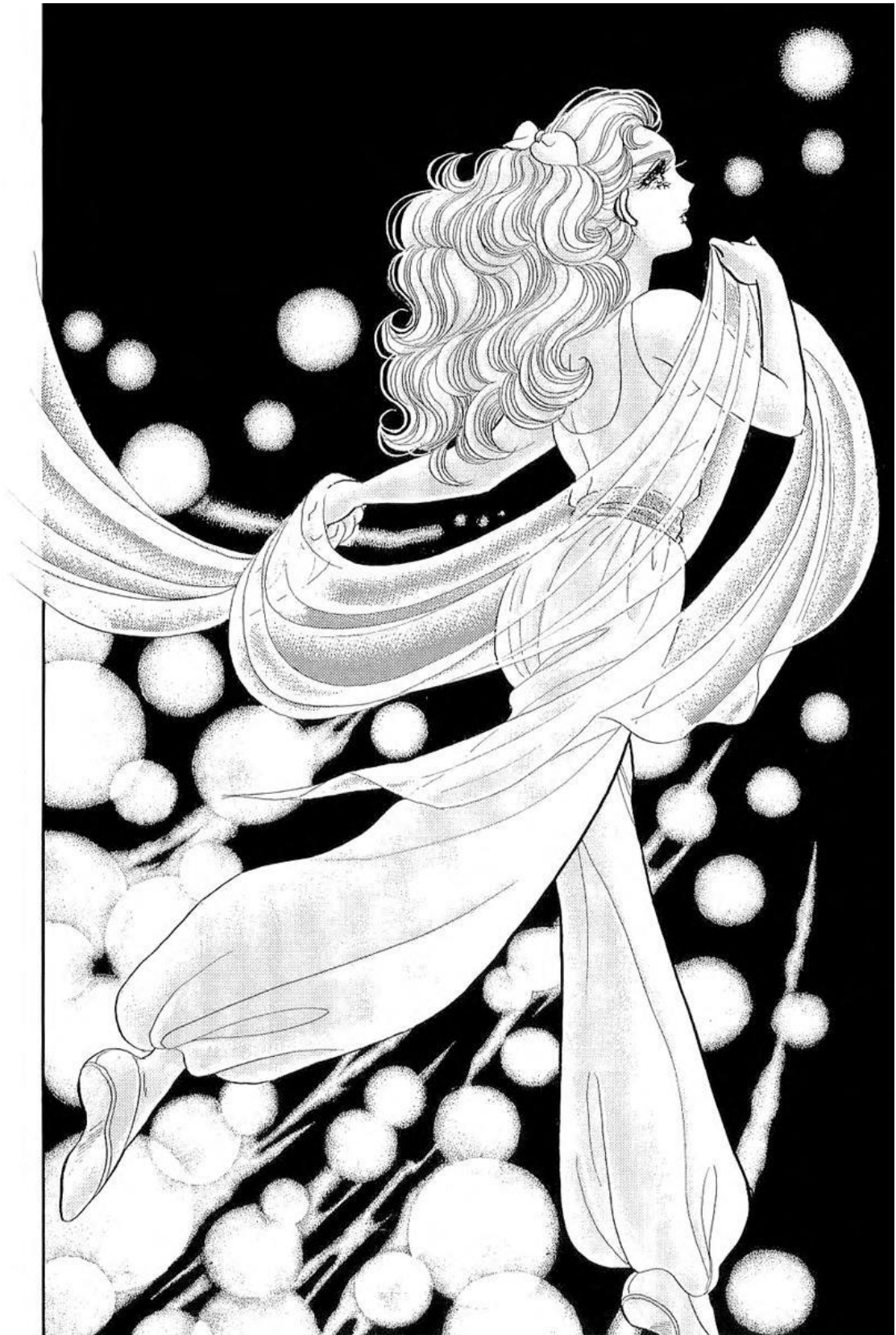
The signal of the Crimson Goddess!

GULP!

In the Valley of the Plum Trees, the second signal sounds.

CLAP







Ayumi gradually changes from the shape of a plum tree to a charming spirit.

She is elegant and effortlessly beautiful.

WOW!

HOW PRETTY!



What?!



HUH?

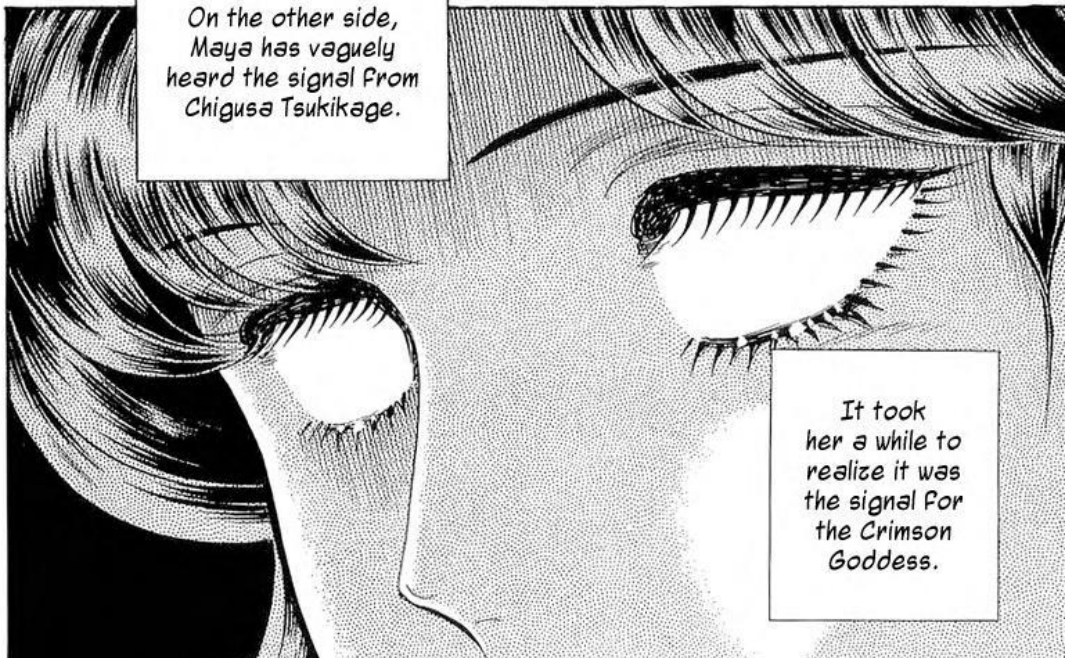
HEY!



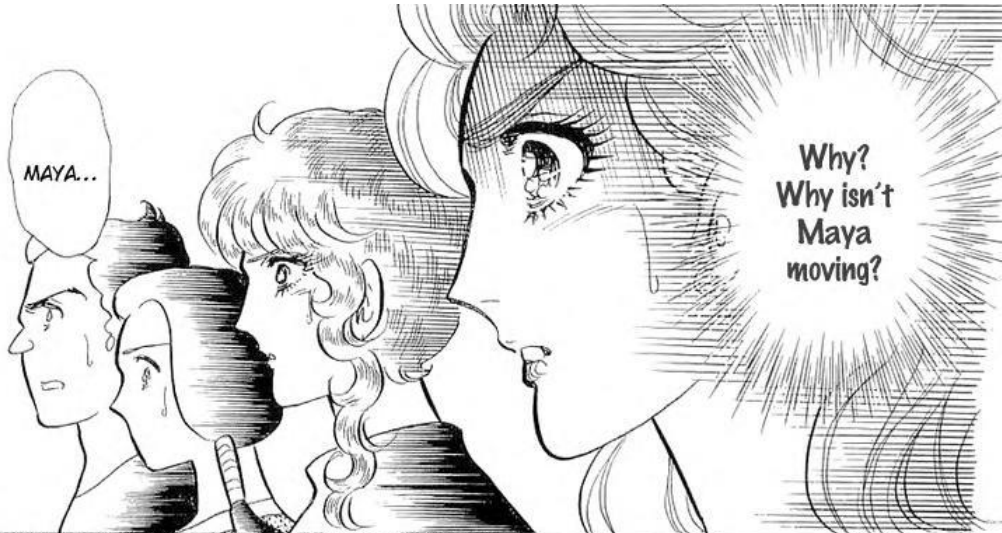
Hmf hmf.



*On the other side,  
Maya has vaguely  
heard the signal from  
Chigusa Tsukikage.*

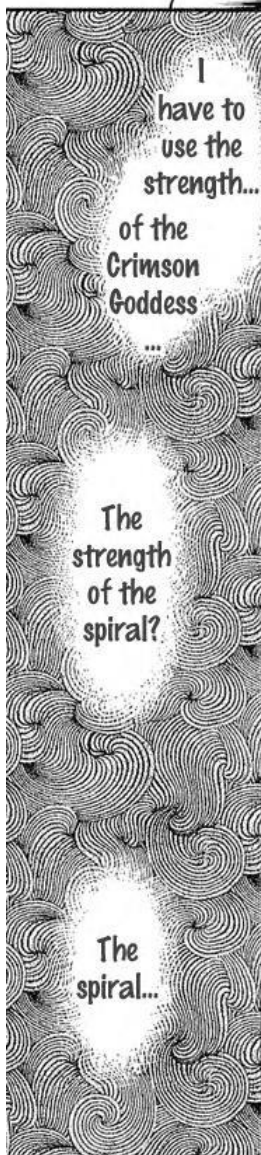


*It took  
her a while to  
realize it was  
the signal for  
the Crimson  
Goddess.*



MAYA...

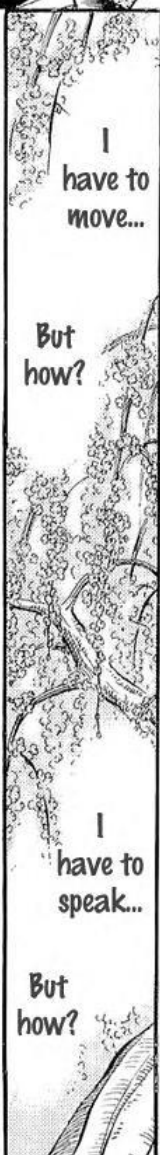
Why?  
Why isn't  
Maya  
moving?



I  
have to  
use the  
strength...  
of the  
Crimson  
Goddess  
...

The  
strength  
of the  
spiral?

The  
spiral...

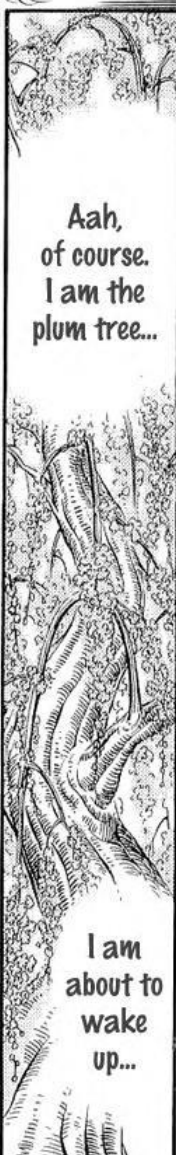


I  
have to  
move...

But  
how?

I  
have to  
speak...

But  
how?



Aah,  
of course.  
I am the  
plum tree...

I am  
about to  
wake  
up...



This is  
weird...  
My voice  
won't  
make a  
sound...

What's  
happening?  
I've never  
felt like this  
before...

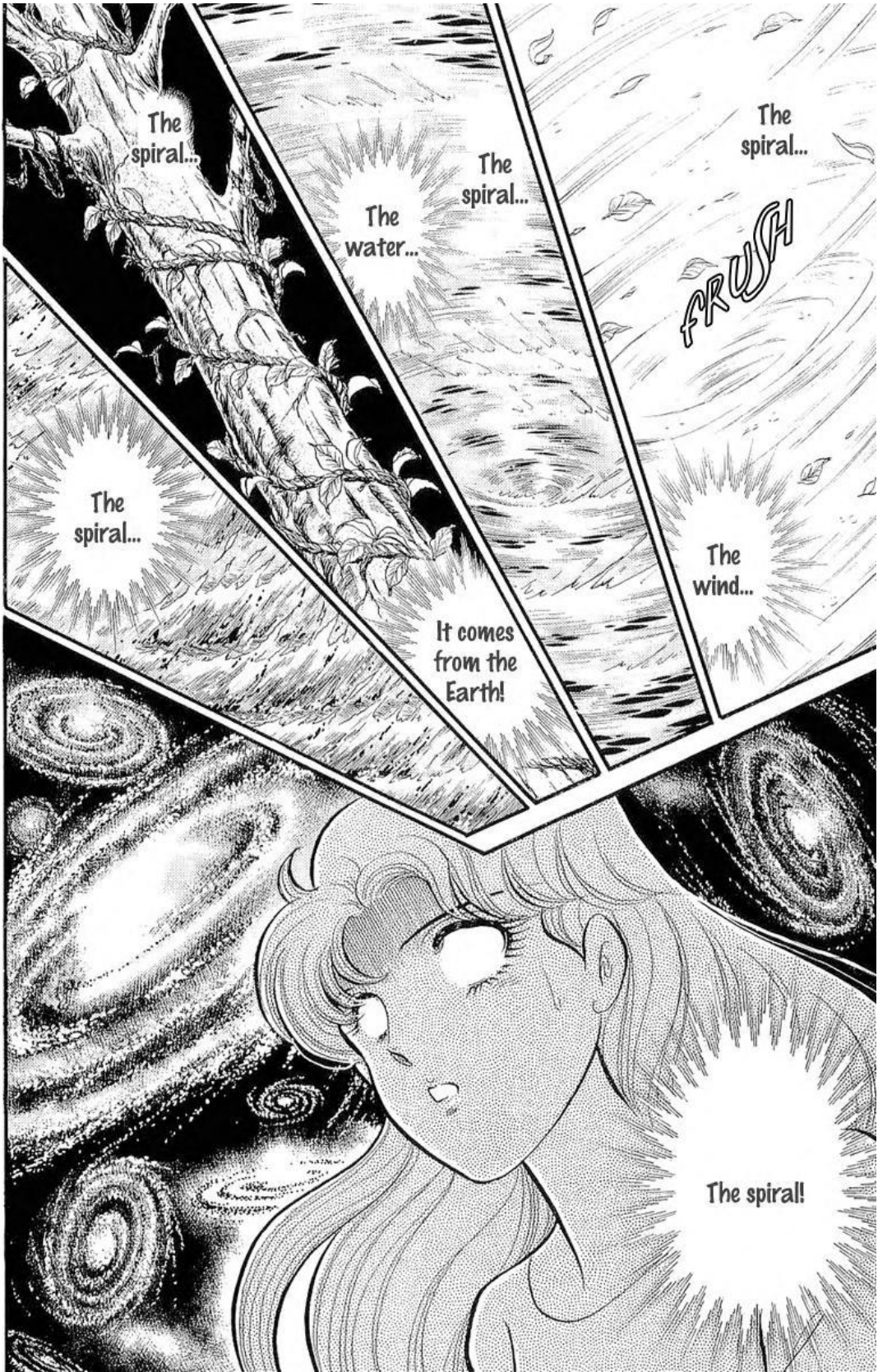


What...

What is  
happening  
to me?  
I...

Can't  
move...

Why?



The spiral...

The water...

The spiral...

The spiral...

FRUSH

The spiral...

The wind...

It comes from the Earth!

The spiral!



The  
strength of  
the Crimson  
Goddess!

