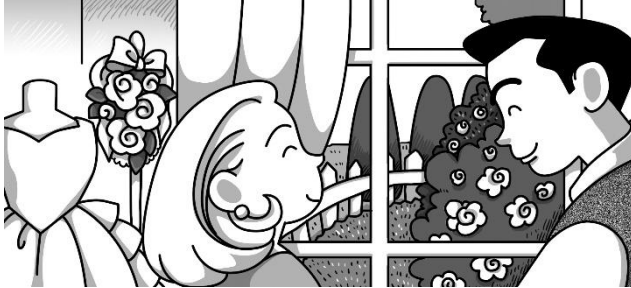


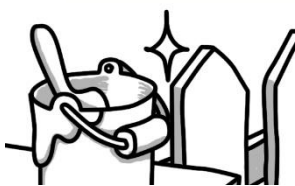
3. An Oak Tree



Chai and Maria
were planning
to have
their small Spring wedding
in the beautiful backyard
behind their house.



They had
two brightly flowered gardens
in the yard,
and a freshly painted
white picket fence
that circled
the deep green lawn.



Also a big oak tree stood
in the middle of the yard.
In front of the tree was
where they had planned
to stand
during the wedding ceremony.



On the day
before the ceremony,
Chai was checking to see
if everything was perfect
in the backyard.

The next morning
he and Maria
would marry.

There would be
no time
before the wedding
to make sure
the backyard was
just right.



He walked around
the backyard
like a careful detective
inspecting every part
of the lawn
and the gardens.



Chai didn't find anything
in the grass
or flower beds;
there were no shreds of litter
or fallen twigs

to dispose of.



But

at the end

of his search

he did look up

at the great oak tree

and noticed

a plastic bag

which was caught on

one of the high branches

and swaying

in the warm breeze.

"What shall I do?"

he asked himself.

"That bag up

there must not be there

in the morning!"

Chai was determined

to remove

the white and orange bag

from the oak tree.



First

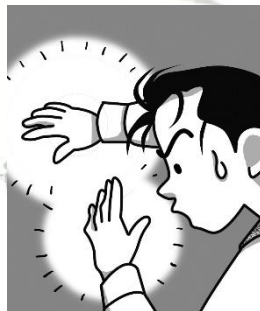
he took the garden hose
from the shed
and tied an empty
- but heavy -
gas can
to one end of it.



He held onto the hose
and began spinning the can
in the air
above his head.



Then he launched
the can and hose
into the tree,
trying to catch the branch,
not unlike a fisherman
trying to catch a fish.



But Chai lost his grip
on the hose
and in a moment
both hose and can
were stuck
in the tree
with the bag.





Chai shook his head,
but he was still determined.



Next
he used a basketball
to try and hit
the hose,
can,
or bag
out of the tree.
That too got stuck
between two big branches.



The next thing
to get stuck was
a rake,
and then
an old shoe.
Then a lawn chair,
an ice-skate,
a pail,
a hoe,
a sprinkler,
a garbage can lid,
a bicycle wheel...

Half the things
in Chai and Maria's shed
were hanging all over
that big oak tree
in their backyard.



When Maria came outside
from the house
to see

what Chai was doing,
both of them stood
next to each other
without saying a word.

They both looked up
at the oak tree
in amazement.



Then
the white and orange bag
became uncaught
and blew out
of their tree and yard.



And then,
together,
they began to laugh.



They laughed
like they had never laughed before.

And why wouldn't they laugh?

-They were in love
and would be married

the next morning
under a strange,
but beautifully and colorfully
decorated tree!



3. An Oak Tree

Manga English Series Vol. 3

