

Chapter 8

Tergiversation and Catharsis

One hour later

Shinobu-chan was pleased with herself. She had prepared a special meal for everyone in Hinata-sou, with everyone's favourite dish as the main course. It was hard work, but she felt that she had to it, besides, it was one of the few times in which most of them were at Hinata-sou on a weekday. Humming happily to herself, she had to inform everyone that lunch was ready. *I think I'll let sempai know first, he is the kanrinrin.* Walking towards Keitaro's room, she rapped lightly on his door.

"Come in!" he shouted, Shinobu-chan opened the partition to see Keitaro. Now fully recovered he was sitting up at his heating table reading some of his study books. He had a small bruise on his forehead. "Hello Shinobu-chan, how may I help you today?" he smiled at her.

Shinobu-chan, concerned as ever, saw the bruise and indicated it. "What happened to your head sempai?" She looked as if she was about to cry.

"Ahh, it's nothing Shinobu-chan, no need to get worried over it, I'll survive!" Keitaro put one hand behind his head, a small sweatdrop appearing to the left of it. *If only she realised how painful this was...* "So, what can I do for you?"

"Umm," she tried to rack her brains, trying to recall why she was there in the first place, but the bruise had put her off, "ah yes, I'm just here to inform you that lunch is ready sempai."

"Arigatou Shinobu-chan!" Keitaro smiled, he always loved her cooking. "Tell you what Shinobu-chan, I'll let everyone else know and you can set out the table. Is that okay with you?"

She looked shocked, "Are you sure sempai?"

"Of course it is!" Keitaro waved off that assumption by her, "It's no trouble at all Shinobu-chan, besides I'm sure you're a little tired from doing all that cooking, the least I could do is let everyone else know that it's ready."

She looked delighted and bowed slightly, "Arigatou! I'll set the table right away sempai!" Shinobu-chan skipped down the corridor down towards the kitchen area.

Keitaro stood up and walked to his next door neighbour, Mitsune, a slight limp evident in his stride. He rapped on her door.

"What?" Her Osaka accent sounding annoyed. Taking this as an invitation into her room, he opened her door to see her lounging on her sofa reading a book. From what Keitaro could see, it was called 'The Last Day'.

"Gomen Kitsune," Keitaro bowed slightly, "I've just popped in to tell you that dinner is ready now if you would like to go downstairs."

"Arigatou Keitaro," she said, still engrossed in the book, just as soon as I've finished this chapter."

"Okay, see you later then!"

Keitaro exited Mitsune's room and walked upstairs. The first door he reached was Narusegawa's room, so he knocked on her door.

"Come in!" Keitaro opened the door to see her working at the heating table, books laid out neatly in front of her. She was wearing her glasses, as she does every time she reads her books. "Keitaro, I can't help you study right now, I'm too busy..."

"No, no," he interrupted, "its nothing to do with that, I'm just informing you that dinner is ready."

"Oh," she seemed slightly disappointed, "okay then, I'll be down in a moment."

Keitaro shut her door and walked to Suu-chan's room, and was about to knock on her door. To his surprise it opened almost as soon as he reached there. Keitaro looked into the room, which was completely dark at this point. Peering in further he could make out a brown object in front of him, it had five small objects on the top, but he realised what it was too late. Suu-chan delivered her powerful kick barefooted against Keitaro's cheek, making him reel backwards, tears of pain leaving his eyes for an instant. Grabbing hold of the top of her door partition frame and swinging herself forwards, she executed a mid air loop and Keitaro, looking up in time, caught her as she landed in his arms. She latched her legs around his waist, arms around the back of his neck, and she was beaming happily at him.

"Heya Keitaro, watcha want?" Without any intervention her door slid shut of its own accord.

Keitaro messed up her hair a little. "Well Suu-chan, just wanted to let you know that mealtime is here."

She began to drool slightly, "Food!" She twisted herself so that she was on his back, kicking him with her legs lightly as if he were a horse, "Well lets go then Keitaro!"

"Hold on Suu-chan, I still have to get Motoko-chan."

Walking by her door, Suu-chan took the initiative and knocked on Motoko's door, calling out loud, "Motoko! Time for lunch!"

There was a little bit of shuffling as she got up from her seating position and opened her door. She was a little surprised at seeing Keitaro there as well.

"Oh, hello Keitaro." She didn't want to seem too forward to him in front of Suu-chan. She began to walk alongside of them as Suu-chan continued to rub her face on Keitaro's right cheek, enjoying the feel of his skin.

"Umm," Keitaro began to blush a little, Suu-chan feeling the heat of it against her own cheek, "Motoko-chan..." She turned to him as they continued to walk, "Arigatou. You took care of me didn't you? After I was knocked out."

"Keitaro was knocked out?" Suu-chan feigned ignorance and asked him. "Did you cure him Motoko?" She looked at her looking innocent.

"Yes Suu-chan," Motoko replied, nodding, "I took care of him, to make sure there was no lasting damage." She noticed the bruise on his forehead. She lightly put a hand to it, feeling its surface, and stopped noticing that Keitaro winced slightly. "It seems that it has not fully healed." She smiled, "Any ordinary human would've been killed at hitting a wall at that speed, but you seem to have emerged relatively unscathed from it."

She stopped, causing Keitaro to stop and look at her, her hands locked together in front, and lowered her head slightly, "If you don't mind I would like to tend to your wound later." Her hair covered her face, which was becoming redder by the second. *What am I thinking! I am being too forward! Why would he even want to accept such a preposterous offer...*

"Okay then Motoko-chan," He smiled compassionately at her, "I would like that a lot."

Motoko looked up, her face still slightly red, those last few words echoing in her mind. *"I would like that a lot... I would like that a lot..." Did I hear him correctly? Does he mean it?* She stopped thinking about it and began to walk again beside Keitaro on their way to the kitchen area.

Upon their arrival a wondrous sight met them, there were seven plates set out on the table. Each one had a different meal on them, obviously the favourite of each person. Everyone had arrived, Shinobu-chan was in the kitchen picking up some drinks for everyone. Naru and Kitsune were chatting to each other, waiting patiently for everyone to arrive. When everyone had sat down there was still one spare seat.

"Shinobu-chan," Naru asked, "why is there another seat prepared?"

"Gomen for being late, I had to finish up with a few customers." A voice instantly recognisable came from the entrance.

Keitaro craned his neck to see...

"Haruka-obasan! (Aunt)" Keitaro exclaimed, "What are you doing here?"

Haruka belted him over the head with her newspaper. "Call me Haruka-san." Once he looked up again, holding his head, she continued. "Shinobu-chan invited me here for lunch, is that a problem Keitaro?"

"No, no, not at all Haruka-san! I'm just surprised and happy to see you that's all." Keitaro somehow made Haruka smile a little, her cigarette still smouldering.

She inhaled once more and puffed out some more smoke before walking over to the sink, putting out her cigarette and throwing the wet butt into the bin. Returning to the table they began the meal. Keitaro sat between the two youngest people in Hinata-sou, Shinobu-chan and Suu-chan. The meal went by without any notable events, even Keitaro didn't manage to upset anyone at that time. Suu-chan often managed to cover Keitaro in sauces due to her eating style, one side of him plastered with tandoori and masala sauces. Shinobu-chan was very conservative whilst eating, occasionally laughing with Keitaro over his current appearance.

After the meal they had all congratulated Shinobu-chan on her wonderful meal. She blushed immensely and bowed to them. Keitaro cleaned his face and his left shoulder that was soaked in sauces, and looked at Suu-chan. She turned to him still drinking a glass of water.

"Hmm?" she questioned still drinking.

"I was wondering if you would like to help me do the washing up Suu-chan." Keitaro said, having finished cleaning his face.

She put her glass down and replied, "Sure, I like to spend time you Keitaro!" She beamed at him, making him notice that she still had some sauce left untouched on her cheek. Keitaro reached out and wiped it off her face with a clean serviette from the table. Naru glanced at him from across the table, did a double take and then slammed both hands on the table hard.

"What are you doing to Suu-chan!" She yelled. Keitaro turned, his attention on Naru, moving his hand away from Suu-chan. He was about to answer when he felt the familiar punch on his face. He flew backwards out of his chair, landing in a rather painful looking position on the floor, the chair flipping over and landing on him after he hit the ground. He accidentally slapped Suu-chan as he fell. Naru failed to notice this as everyone else watched in astonishment.

"Sempai!" Shinobu-chan cried out as she got out of her chair to crouch down to help him, lifting the chair off him. His eyes were swirling so she got a glass of water and carefully fed it to him. Drinking slowly he slowly regained consciousness. Opening his eyes, he was met with a concerned Shinobu.

"I... I'm okay Shinobu-chan," Keitaro smiled at her, "You know me, I survive anything."

Keitaro got up off the floor, Shinobu-chan still staying close by his side in case he for some reason falls over or faints. Motoko stood up and glared at Naru.

"Narusegawa!" she exclaimed angrily, "Why did you do that! Can't you see that he was being nice to Suu-chan?"

Naru closed her eyes and folded her arms, "He was being a pervert again. He was touching her..."

"So what!" Motoko interrupted, "He was cleaning her face. You usually have to touch the other person's face to do so."

Shinobu-chan spoke up, "Naru-sempai, you are not being very kind to Keitaro-sempai, he was just helping Suu."

Naru looked shocked, she turned to her old friend and Haruka for support. All she received in return was a disappointed shake of the head from Haruka, who was beginning to light up another cigarette. Mitsune was not being able to hold Naru's gaze.

"K... Kitsune, you too...?" Naru was in disbelief.

"Naru-chan..." Mitsune hesitated, "You do go too far at times... You take things he does way out of proportion."

Naru's vision suddenly went black, a gunshot sound resonating in her ears, she was in a world of darkness. She felt completely alone, all of her friends had abandoned her for Keitaro, and it was as if her heart had just broken. Her vision returned as the darkness smashed as if it were broken glass.

There was a loud sniffing coming from the table.

All eyes turned to Suu-chan, who throughout this exchange was quiet. All became clear as they noticed she was the one sniffing. Her eyes were sad, tears welling up in them. This was shocking for all those around, for not once had they seen her this sad. Mitsune even opened her eyes, in case she was hallucinating. She was holding her cheek, which now sported a red mark from where Keitaro hit her unintentionally. She turned to Keitaro

"Oniisan... (Brother)" she mumbled tearfully, unable to say anymore as she began to sob uncontrollably.

"Suu-chan..." Keitaro reached out to her. However she turned and closed her eyes, her tears floating in the air momentarily, and she kicked him in the face to get him out of her way. Keitaro, who recovered quickly and rubbing his cheek saw the distressed Indian girl bawling loudly down the corridor and up the staircase. Shinobu-chan who was still beside him saw her running off.

Everyone was numb, except for one person. "See? Now look what you've done, You've gone and made Suu-chan cry!" Naru pointed accusingly at Keitaro, looking around at the others for support. Motoko narrowed her eyes at Narusegawa. The other girls were still too numb to react accordingly. Keitaro looked right into Narusegawa's eyes, which made her nervous. *What is that look he's giving me? He's not asking for forgiveness yet... it looks like... no, it cannot be... it looks like... anger? Hate?*

"Narusegawa..." He spoke with a calm, neutral voice, which made Naru worry. *He hasn't been so formal to me for a while, perhaps he's going to beg for forgiveness...?* He continued, "When you hurt me, you hurt Suu-chan, and when you hurt Suu-chan, you hurt everyone. I don't care in the slightest what you think of me, since I no longer care about you." Naru gasped to herself at the last comment, "You can hurt me as many times as you wish, I couldn't be bothered really, but if you hurt Suu-chan again, I will never forgive you..."

Keitaro continued to stare at Naru, but this time spoke more quietly, "I'm afraid that I can't help you with the washing up today Shinobu-chan. I'm sure you can understand why..." He spoke with regret in his voice.

"I understand sempai," Shinobu-chan nodded profusely, her hands balled up together as if in prayer, "I hope you can cheer her up."

Keitaro narrowed his eyes slightly at Naru, and then turned and left the room. For a few moments everyone froze, unsure of what to do. *I have to go help him, Suu-chan will need comfort from more than one person.* Motoko then decided that enough was enough and left the room soon after, not looking at Naru. Haruka mumbled something about reopening her shop, and left quietly. Shinobu-chan began to collect some of the plates to place them

in the sink. Mitsune got up using both hands, feeling drained from everything that had just transpired.

"Kitsune," Naru tried to appeal to her friend once more, "you agree with me don't you!" Naru was almost desperate for Mitsune to concur.

Mitsune simply turned to face Naru and opened her eyes, a rare frown present upon her facial features. Mentally distraught herself, Mitsune couldn't bring up enough courage to tell Naru otherwise, so she left without saying a word. Naru was speechless. Shinobu-chan returned from the kitchen to pick up some more plates to wash.

"Do you want me to help you Shinobu-chan?" Naru smiled at the girl, and went to pick up a plate. She however touched Shinobu-chan's fingers, making her flinch. Naru drew back, shocked.

"Gomen Naru-sempai," Shinobu-chan replied softly, picking up the rest of the plates and glasses quickly, "I'm fine thank you."

With that she left Naru alone at the now empty table. Naru sat down, overwhelmed by everything. Alone and depressed, she folded her arms on the table, and wept quietly into them for a long time.

Outside Room 301

Keitaro stared at Suu-chan's door, he knew that she was angry, although angry with whom he couldn't be sure. All he knew was that he was a part of it and that only he could help her. He knocked lightly on her door but received no reply. He tried again, harder, but still no reply. He then decided to risk opening her door, wary of what she might hold within. The room was dark except for the light streaming in from the doorway. Keitaro took a cautious step into her room.

"Suu-chan? Are you in here?" His voice seemed to echo in the darkness.

Immediately, three spotlights from indiscernible sources were pointed at him. The area around him was bathed in a blood red colour, the ensuing klaxon scaring the wits out of him.

"WARNING! INTRUDER ALERT! PRESSURE PADS 03, 05 AND LIGHT SENSORS 13, 101 AND 435 TRIPPED."

"Wh... What is this!" Keitaro couldn't see where the electronic genderless voice was emanating from, the spotlights blinding him. All of a sudden the spotlights vanished, to be replaced with three red eyes from different parts of the room.

"COUNTERMEASURES ARMED. MISSILES PREPPED FOR LAUNCH. TARGET ACQUIRED. LAUNCH IN: T MINUS FIVE... FOUR... THREE..."

"I... I'm going to die!" Keitaro was frozen in his place, unable to move.

"TWO..."

Keitaro could see the missiles beginning to fire up their rocket motors. His muscles began to twitch.

"ONE...."

Three lasers appeared, centred on Keitaro's chest, seemingly from the missiles themselves. Keitaro stepped back slightly.

"FIRE!"

Keitaro burst into a sprint as the missiles launched. "WAAAH!" He screamed as he ran down the corridor away from the rapidly closing missiles, the lasers tracking his every movement. Eyes clenched tight for fear he might die any second, tears flying out of his eyes, he didn't see as he bumped into Motoko.

"Aah!" Keitaro said as he saw her calm face looking at him, "Gomen Motoko-chan, but there's three missiles after me!" Keitaro was panicky, constantly looking over his shoulder in case they were to hit him as he was talking.

Motoko glanced down the corridor to see three red eyes with plumes of smoke behind them. Carefully moving Keitaro out of the way, she drew her katana and waited. Not until they were around ten metres away did she do anything. With three careful airborne swipes with the katana, and a bit of her ki, she was able to destroy all three missiles in the air. They all blew up in puffs of smoke, a little bit of shrapnel falling at the feet of Motoko and Keitaro. Breathing a sigh of relief, Keitaro put one hand on Motoko's shoulder.

"Arigatou Motoko-chan," He turned to her, "once again you have helped me, I won't forget this." He smiled and was rewarded with Motoko eliciting a barely visible but distinguishable smile from her.

"I will go talk to her for the time being, you can wait outside Keitaro." Keitaro was about to say something but then Motoko held up a hand to silence him, "It's all right, she won't use the missiles on me, she's just upset now and needed to let off some steam."

Walking together, they went up to her room door. Motoko knocked on her door. When there was still no reply, Motoko spoke, "It's me Suu-chan."

The room in front of Keitaro seemed to brighten a lot, and the door opened a crack, although he couldn't see in because Motoko stood in the way. Motoko looked down to see a tearful Suu-chan looking up pitifully at her. Suu-chan moved away from the door, opening it slightly. Motoko took this as a sign that she could enter, opening it further. As she was halfway in, she looked at Keitaro.

"Stay here until I let you come in." Keitaro nodded, saying nothing in return as Motoko moved into the room and shut the door.

Motoko turned around from the door and was shocked to say the least, she looked around to see that Suu-chan's room was in a state. Although used to the sight of the jungle by now, she could not understand what brought Suu-chan to do what she had done. Everything was destroyed, or almost broken. Motoko walked over torn leaves, crushed circuit boards and puddles of water to Suu-chan. She was lying on her front on the branch of the only remaining tree left standing in her bedroom.

"Suu-chan..." Motoko was concerned... she had never seen Suu-chan like this.

"Motoko, why did oniisan hit me?" She turned her head towards Motoko, "Does oniisan hate me?" Her eyes began to well up again.

Motoko delicately picked up Suu-chan, cuddling her as if she was a baby. Suu-chan gave in and began to bawl into Motoko's gi. Motoko kneeled down, comforting Suu-chan, whispering soothing noises into her ear and stroking her hair. They sat like that for around ten minutes, rocking gently. When Motoko felt that Suu-chan was crying dry tears, she decided to talk.

"Suu-chan?"

"Hmm?" The fold of Motoko's gi muffled Suu-chan's reply.

"Do you mind if I let Keitaro in?" Motoko felt Suu-chan tense up, but continued nonetheless, "He wants to apologise for what he did."

Suu-chan lifted up her head, so that her voice could be heard, "patesc ianua."

To Motoko's astonishment, the door slid open by itself to reveal a sitting Keitaro just outside looking up. At that moment Narusegawa was returning to her room, but decided to pop her head around the corner. She saw the Suu-chan's door open and noticed Keitaro sitting there, then looking into the door. He seemed to nod and then pushing his hands on his knees, he got up and walked into Suu-chan's room, shutting the door as he got in. Naru hung her head low and walked back into her room, alone with her books as she had been for two years of her life.

Keitaro felt that he was being watched, and felt a presence to his right. As he got up to go inside Suu-chan's room he quickly glanced to his right and saw Naru spying on him. Dismissing her, he walked into Suu-chan's room. He reacted in a similar fashion to Motoko when she saw the room, shocked. He looked at the places where he stood, but could find no sort of security measures there, but figured Suu-chan had them cleverly hidden, however he could see the missile launchers, which were, to put it politely, falling apart. They were placed on a tree, but now that tree was but a shell of what it used to be, the bare skeleton of it remaining. He was still amazed at the mere presence of any trees in her room, but nevertheless kept his head and walked towards the tree where Motoko was holding Suu-chan. Motoko gave Keitaro a look that implied gratitude and feeling that without him, this problem would not go away soon.

Keitaro sat down opposite Motoko, who whispered something to Suu-chan, causing her to stir in Motoko's lap, but not yet turn to Keitaro. *I need to speak to her face-to-face, or else it won't be the same.* Shuffling closer to where Motoko sat, Keitaro put a hand on Suu-chan's head.

"Suu-chan..." The little girl seemed to turn her head away from his voice, "Please Suu-chan, let me see your face, I cannot apologise to you like this."

Slowly she turned to face Keitaro, her eyes red from tears, her face wet from the countless tears she shed, her nose running a little.

"Suu-chan..." Keitaro was now close to tears, in front of him a vulnerable little girl was crying because of him. "Gomen... gomen for hitting you... it was an accident you must understand. I did not mean to hit you then, and nor will I ever hit you in anger in the future, You mean too much to me Suu-chan."

He hung his head low, unable to say anything more than the truth. Suu-chan looked at him and her eyes somehow began to well up with tears again. She jumped out of Motoko's embrace and hugged Keitaro close, shocking him slightly.

"Gomen oniisan, I didn't mean to be a bad girl and make you sad..." She began to sob into his neck.

Smiling softly and bringing her closer, Keitaro replied. "You didn't make me sad Suu-chan, in fact you make me happy every time you smile." Lifting her face he wiped her cheeks with his thumbs to clear away her tears. "Although I'm not your oniisan, I would be delighted if you could be my imouto-chan (little sister) for as long as I live in Hinata-sou." Keitaro knew that she sorely missed her brother, the nights when she would cry out for him, her bad dreams about never seeing him again. He thought that he might resemble her brother in one way, which is why she called him oniisan. Even so, he knew that she needed companionship at this time, so he didn't want to leave her alone, or at least think she's alone, at any time of the day.

Suu-chan began to brighten up, her smile once again returning for the first time in a while. "Really! Is that okay Keitaro!"

"Sure, I want to, so why not... imouto-chan?" He smiled at her.

Suu-chan was overjoyed and kissed him on the cheek, resulting in a slight blush from Keitaro. Motoko watched all this with amusement. *I never knew that Keitaro could be this kind to anyone, even if it is Suu-chan.* Upon seeing his blush though, she raised her eyebrow and began to have second thoughts. *Looks like he is having more impure thoughts... maybe I was mistaken in thinking he was different.* Keitaro looked to Motoko and winked, he had got to the stage at which he could begin to read her, and he recognised that look of doubt in her eyes. Motoko inwardly gasped, she didn't have any inkling that she betrayed her emotions at all. *I'm sure I kept them hidden, or maybe... could he... read me? Have I become that transparent to him?* She decided to let it go for the time being.

Keitaro looked around the room, and decided that they shouldn't stay there for much longer, it was a tip. He began to rise and indicated to Motoko that they should leave. Still carrying Suu-chan protectively, he opened the door to her room, Motoko following close behind, shutting the door behind her as they left.

"What do you want to do now imouto-chan?" Keitaro needed her to indulge herself for as long as need be, so that she remained happy.

"I want to stay with Keitaro," She held both arms out, still smiling, "I promise to be quiet."

Keitaro chuckled, he knew what she meant by 'quiet', but he liked her presence, so he agreed. Turning to Motoko he asked "Will you be okay for a while Motoko-chan?" She nodded and saw him mouth 'I might need you later' to her as Suu-chan crawled around him onto his back. She nodded once more and entered her room.

Keitaro began to walk back to his room, knowing that he would have to pass by Naru's room. He was still angry with her, and felt that he shouldn't apologise to her as of yet, for fear of upsetting Suu-chan again. He walked back downstairs, and failed to notice Naru following his movements through her door, which was open by a crack. He also failed to notice a single tear flow down her cheek as she returned to her studies.

Author's notes: These last two chapters were produced almost simultaneously, and simply flowed from my fingers.

The title of Chapter 7 was a sort of tribute to an Evangelion fanfic of the same name, which I find very interesting (it still isn't finished yet).

I apologise in advance to Archimage for any similarities to his monster in his Motoko-based story. I think we both understand that there was a creature in her past that was indeed a turtle (hence her inherent fear of them). However I probably put more attributes that he gave of the monster into my creation, sorry about that (and I will change it somehow if you do want me to).

I know that I might get flames for created what is essentially an ACC in Chapter 7. I am trying to base him on what I think Keitaro is like in the end of Love Hina (Volume 14 I mean, seeing as I saw the scans of it), so it isn't entirely created. Regarding his sudden skills in fighting, well, that is all to come... in chapter 40... of Book 2... (i.e., a while off).

Chapter 8, and some help for those still trying to figure out the title.

Tergiversation: change of mind, change of intention, change of purpose; afterthought.

Catharsis: The release of ideas, thoughts, and repressed material from the unconscious, accompanied by an emotional response and relief.

Hope that clears up any confusion... This is the first of a short saga regarding the change in Naru's constant punishment of Keitaro, indeed, of everyone and the way they react to him. I was really troubled over the way in how I should end the scene at the table. There were two ways in which I wanted it to end, there was this way, where everyone abandoned her, or she could've gone ballistic. I had read probably the longest Evangelion fanfic ever (possibly of all fanfics), standing at well over 200,000 words long, and it's still going. I cannot remember the name, but I know that the author is known as 'Kimberly'. It is about a relationship between Shinji and Rei. This is a very loooong and gradual romance. However, in the background, Asuka went totally bizarre, crazy shall we say, and I wanted to do that to Naru since I liked it a lot '. However I felt that the Naru fans here would lynch me, so I decided to keep her fairly human.

Anyways, back to my fanfic, as you can see the relationship between Keitaro, Motoko and Suu-chan as you can tell is increasing, and I hope you think it is a nice addition to the story. I hope to develop some other characters more, such as Shinobu-chan and Kitsune seeing as very little is known about them. I have added a bit more mysticism over Suu-chan's origins, adding a new language to her vocabulary. Before you ask, there are supposed to be no capital letters at the beginning of a new sentence, and it is not too hard to guess which language she can speak...

E-mail me at for any comments on a personal basis.