

Chapter 9

Secrets Revealed I: Kaorra Suu

Kanrinrin's Room

A few minutes later

Keitaro sat down at the heating table where his books remained prepared for study. He immediately began on mathematics, knowing that it was one of the first exams. Of course, Suu-chan was as excitable as ever, almost back to her old self. She sped around the room looking into every nook and cranny of Keitaro's home away from homes, looking for anything she could use to tease him with. This went on for around an hour, much longer than the first time he let Suu-chan into his room. Keitaro was about to complete a calculus problem when his pencil end finally snapped, along with his nerve.

"Yaaah!" Holding his head in his hands he shouted in frustration. Suu-chan remained oblivious as she blurred around him looking for anything. Stopping suddenly, she opened a magazine that Keitaro knew all too well, from his 'collection'.

"Pervert!" She giggled, thinking she would embarrass him further.

However Keitaro smirked a little, he picked it out of her hands and threw it behind him. "Imouto-chan..." He replied in a confident voice, "don't you remember that this was the same one you showed me before?"

Suu-chan being innocent put her hands behind her back and replied softly, "No."

Keitaro smiled victoriously, only to have his eyes bug out upon seeing Suu-chan hold out another magazine, open at one of his favourite pages.

"What about this one then?" She knew she had hit him where it hurt, it had taken her longer than usual to find this magazine, and three articles of furniture protected it.

"Kyaa! Not that one!" He began to panic a lot. *That is my most guarded secret, I keep it a secret to myself almost...* Keitaro began to chase Suu-chan around his room, the latter laughing out loud all through it. She jumped over the heating table, swung from doorframes and did just about everything to stop him from reaching her. Tired out, Keitaro braced himself on his knees, panting heavily. *Damn, this studying is really affecting my fitness levels, my stamina is very poor, must get in shape one day.* He managed to get his colour back into his cheeks as he saw Suu-chan looking at him with a mild curiosity. Knowing that she was going a little too far, she held out the magazine towards him. He understood and accepted it from her. He sat down at the heating table, placing the magazine underneath the covering in case anyone were to walk in unexpectedly.

"I was going to throw them out anyway imouto-chan, it was years ago since I got them. I didn't have the guts to get any more." Keitaro blushed. *Why am I telling her these things? She might take them the wrong way and go crying to Motoko-chan...* Suu-chan looked at Keitaro carefully, trying to read his expression. She walked up to him and sat next to him, putting a hand on his, which was resting on his knee.

"I won't tell anyone Keitaro," She spoke honestly and kindly, "Besides, it's like what Naru said, all boys have them, so it's nothing to get worked up over."

Keitaro began to wonder. *Naru, I wonder what she is doing now. I realise that I may have been a bit too harsh with her, Suu-chan was very upset at that time... I hope she hasn't done anything drastic...*

Meanwhile, in the same space immediately above Keitaro in the room above, we see Naru wearing her glasses reading over her World History notes again. She seems happier, or, to put it more accurately, less sad than when she last glimpsed Keitaro. Nevertheless, she continues to immerse herself into her revision.

"Suu-chan..." He called her by her real name for the first time since he decided to make her his 'sister'. This brought her full attention. "Why did you destroy your room? It seemed to be totally devastated when I entered it."

Suu-chan was quiet for a few moments before she came up with her answer. "I was angry... sad... lonely... I had never felt so alone in my life at that moment."

She stopped, the memories apparently overwhelming her slightly. *I hope I haven't gone too far, she seems to be getting depressed again...* Keitaro took her hand in both of his, and looked into her eyes, which were now downcast.

"I'm sorry imouto-chan, if this is too painful for you, you don't have to answer me." Suu-chan began to fidget a little.

"Yes, it is painful, but I need to tell you all, however," She looked at him with pleading eyes, "can I stay close to you?"

What a silly question, she has done everything possible to me and now she asks something that would be considered tame by her standards. "Of course you can imouto-chan, I can hold you if you want to."

Suu-chan nodded seriously, not beaming like she would usually do. She slowly crawled into his lap like a young child and tried to make herself comfortable. In the end they both sat so that Keitaro sat against the wall, with Suu-chan's back facing him, her legs stretched out. He hugged her around her stomach, not too tightly, so as to make her feel claustrophobic, but not too loose either to make her think that she was a hindrance, just about right to let her know he was there for her. Keitaro knew this would give him the chance to listen to her properly, she would be mostly talking and he listening, she could always lean into him if she were getting tired or sad. It was perfect, and then she began.

"This morning, I was confronted with many emotions from everything that happened at the table. Naru's outburst and attack towards you, you hitting me..." Keitaro was about to reply when Suu-chan continued, "I know that you did not mean it Keitaro, it was an accident, and I don't hold any malice towards you for it. It did however bring up some memories of an incident similar in my past, memories which brought the underlying emotions behind them, those of anger, sadness and loneliness."

Keitaro, becoming all the more wiser put things together quickly. "This was to do with your oniisan? Am I right?"

"Yes," she replied, "he is the one who did this, but not directly." She tensed a little, "Don't get me wrong, I love my oniisan, this was just one bad event out of many, many happy memories."

For a moment Keitaro had the image of her oniisan beating her, but he was glad when Suu-chan shot down that thought.

"It all happened back at the time I was around seven years old, when I was back in my homeland... back with my oniisan and oneesan..."

Suu-chan begins to look far beyond the horizon, back to a time when everything changed for her.

Six years ago

Unknown location

The ground is a lush green; the occasional trumpet of elephants can be heard in the background. The sandalled feet of someone comes running into view. As the runner gets closer, we see that the person is wearing a traditional sari, dark green to complement her eyes. It is Suu-chan (albeit much younger than she is now), with a big grin on her face. Stretching out her hands she tries to grab the viewer, only for it to float in front of her, constantly out of her reach. She is trying to catch a yellow butterfly that is flying gracefully over grass she is on. It stops on a flower in a flowerbed by a large wall, its wings moving very slowly. Suu-chan tries a different tact, and sneaks up on the butterfly, but instead of lunging it she gently places her finger on the petal, and sure enough the butterfly placed its tiny legs on her finger. Moving it slowly upwards, Suu-chan looked delighted, giggling, as it continued to move its wings slowly whilst remaining on her finger. The image zooms out to show that she is in a fairly large garden, at one end being a palatial house, the other a few large trees. A tall wall, around 8-foot high surrounds the entire gardens, and is about 2-foot thick. Where Suu-chan plays now is on the eastern wall, flowerbeds are immediately in front of the walls. Although not intricately designed, the gardens do have some nice patterns using different paths with concrete slabs, each about enough to hold one person's footstep. The main features appear to be three small ponds. Two of them are around ten metres from the palace, whilst the third is further up the garden, the centre of it equal to the centre of the palace. Using gravel and small slabs, the pattern is unmistakable, the representation of three eyes, the pools being the iris'.

Suu-chan knew not to touch the symbolic eyes in the garden, for they were sacred to the palace, and held much importance in terms of religion. Looking at the butterfly, she stroked both wings gently, not noticing that residue was left on her finger. Only a few minutes later it had died, the fluttering stopping and it falling from Suu-chan's finger, dead. Bemused she knelt down to the butterfly, and began to cry as she noticed that it was no longer moving. Cupping it gently in her hands she walked slowly inside to where she knew she would find her oniisan. Sure enough, he was there, sitting by his room window upstairs with a view of the garden. Light filtering in through gaps in his coloured curtains, which were moving with the air currents inside his room, bathed in the colour of the curtains. Suu-chan walked up to her oniisan. She thought that to outsiders he looked intimidating his (relatively) tall height and hard stare could crack even the most apathetic person. However, only the inner family and some of the servants knew that he was indeed, a kind-hearted person with his family, his first priority in his heart. He looked daunting at that time, the shadows hiding his face above his mouth, which was seemingly in deep concentration as he worked on some

important documents on his desk. As per the rest of the house, there was a clay jug there with three eyes on it, a small glass nearby. *Filled with water I guess*. Suu-chan knew that water was essential in the place where they lived, the heat destroying most of the life-giving reservoirs that used to contain enough to feed the entire country. Thanks to their efforts, they had managed to dig deep wells in most populated areas, and allowed anyone to pump them to the surface when needed via small pumps scattered around each town, so that everyone had their fair share. It took much of their resources, so Suu-chan's family had to cut back on some luxuries for a short while. However, it was all worth it in the end, the people love them for what they did and made sure they would never forget their generosity. Suu-chan inwardly smiled, her oniisan did enjoy a glass or two of wine, but only on special occasions, such as her birthday. Finally walking up to her oniisan she decided to speak.

"Oniisan," She waited until he turned to her, his eyes still hidden from view, his smile apparent on his face.

"What is it imouto-chan?" He put down his pen carefully as he listened intently to her.

"The butterfly died," Her eyes began to water, "I think I killed it." She looked down to the butterfly, its wing still not moving.

Her oniisan got up and gently placed the butterfly in his hands.

"It wasn't your fault Suu-chan, you weren't to know why it died." He rubbed his finger lightly on one of the wings showing her the yellow particles that remained on his fingertips. "See? You probably stroked it with love as your intention. However, removing too much of this dust can kill them."

Removing a tissue from a dispenser emblazoned with the three eyes on his desk, he wiped his fingers and her hands to remove all traces of the dust. Placing the butterfly in the centre of the tissue, he folded it such so that the corners met in the centre. Folding it again, he looked at Suu-chan.

"We shall bury him in the garden by the trees, so that his body may mingle with the roots, giving them essential minerals and nutrients, thus making him live on again in the life of the tree." He smiled at her, making her lighten up a little, though her eyes still contained some tears in them. He hefted up Suu-chan, holding her with one arm, whilst he picked up another tissue from the dispenser.

"Here, dry your eyes little one." He handed her the clean tissue, and continued as he walked downstairs. "You do realise that you're getting heavier, it will be harder for me to pick you up like this." She giggled a little at his comment as they walked outside in the baking heat.

He opened up the small door embedded in the wall outside to open the tool shed, picking up a small trowel, one that was specially used to remove the top layer of turf. Walking to the trees, he slowly knelt, releasing Suu-chan from his grip, and picked a spot that he felt was good enough. Taking the trowel he delicately cut an area larger than that of the tissue into the turf. Wedging one side of it he peeled back the layer of turf exposing bare soil beneath it. Looking at Suu-chan, he noticed her getting excited, and he smiled.

"Do you want to dig out a small hole for me imouto-chan?" Looking at him with wide eyes, he anticipated that she would react like this, she liked to get her hands dirty whenever she could. "But," he pointed out, holding a finger upwards, "not too deep, and place the soil in a small pile here." He indicated the piece of turf he removed, which was now upturned, the earthy side up.

She understood and got to slowly digging up the soil. It would only have taken a few seconds, around three handfuls, even for Suu-chan, however it took around ten minutes. She savoured the feeling of the soil between her fingertips, being forced to remain clean in the household, forced to keep up appearances so that they are not associated with the lower members of their society. Her oniisan knew this all too well; there was a vast difference between the rich and poor in their country, his family obviously in the upper percentile. He despised the way his parents didn't want them to associate with members of a lower class. He defied them, and there was nothing they could do to stop him. He was the next in line to take his father's position, and he threatened to quit the inheritance if he were not allowed to keep his friends from days of old, before they fell from grace. Nowadays he was getting education from a tutor, he wanted to have an education in case the worst came to pass, and he would need to get a job. He was too old to go into a normal school, not that his parents would allow it, and university would not do for a prince, so he asked his parents for a tutor (under their funding obviously). He was not stupid, he inherited his okaasan's (mother's) intelligence and insight, which helped a lot in everyday life. With these he learned quickly from the tutor and from those around him, advancing level by level in a matter of months. Suu-chan was still too young to learn anything unfortunately. He wanted her to get the best possible education in order to have a fairly normal life.

Suu-chan was kneeling there looking at him patiently, having finished digging. She had noticed the pained look in his eyes, which were betrayed by a few rays of light filtering through his hair. "What's the matter oniisan? Is there something bothering you?"

He was jolted out of his reverie by her and replied quickly, smiling again at her. "Oh no it's nothing imouto-chan, nothing to worry yourself over." He put a hand to the back of his head to lighten the mood.

"Okay..." she answered, somewhat unsure, "If you say so oniisan." She was suspicious, it was rare that he lied to her, to hide something, but she decided to let it go, she would find out eventually.

A small sweatdrop appeared on her oniisan's head, just beside the hand behind his head. *My, she seems to be as perceptive as otousan (father), I must be careful when I am around her.*

"Very well Suu-chan, we shall begin the burial of your butterfly friend." Placing the makeshift coffin in Suu-chan's hands, he asked her to lower it into the hole gently. She did so with the utmost care. He then began to say a few words.

"Requiem: We give up this creature's soul to you God, may it be at peace with itself and the world."

Suu-chan looked as if she were in prayer, hands clasped together. Taking the piece of turf, her oniisan began to fill the hole up until all the loose soil was gone. Patting the soil gently he placed the piece of turf on top of it so that it blended in perfectly with the rest of grass,

as if it were not disturbed at all. Taking her hand he picked her up again, angling her so that he could talk to her.

"The tissue paper should decompose quickly, meaning that your little friend will be able to lead a new life within the tree." He smiled and Suu-chan smiled back, feeling happier. "I'm going to continue with my work now, so you go and play now child. If you need me you can always come and see me, I would do anything to get away from work."

"Okay then oniisan!" Now back in the house he let her go and placed her on the ground.

"Go wash your hands though before your parents see you." He spoke fairly sternly, but it was only because his parents would go crazy over seeing her hands dirty. Suu-chan pouted towards her oniisan, but he would have none of it. She sulked off to wash her hands, not really sad but she knew that her fun was ending. Her oniisan smiled at her and returned to his studies upstairs.

Meanwhile there were a pair of violet eyes watching Suu-chan from a doorway that was open by a crack. Opening the door quietly, the figure sneaked up to Suu-chan, who was washing her hands, and placed a heavy hand on her shoulder. She screamed, only to turn around and see a familiar face.

"Oneesan!" Amara Suu stood there looking down at her little sister, who was now miffed at her sister, putting her hands on her hips. "Why did you scare me?" Suu continued.

The ten-year-old Amara answered, "It was fun that's why."

She then walked out into their living room, Suu-chan promptly following, her sandals clacking loudly against the tiled floor. Amara looked outside the window towards the garden.

"Kaorra-chan, why do you insist on bothering oniisan?" She sounded stern, and turned to face the younger child, an angry look in her eyes.

"Wh... What do you mean oneesan?" Suu-chan began to get more tearful. She didn't like the tone that Amara was taking towards her, even the fact that she spoke to her using her first name.

"Do you not understand that he doesn't want you bugging him constantly!" Amara became more animated, her voice rising, "If he fails in his studies it will be all your fault!"

Suu was now crying, "I... I didn't realise... that I was a nuisance to him..." She began to sob as Amara smirked at her victoriously.

Now for the final nail in the coffin. "If you talk to oniisan again, he will hate you forever."

Suu-chan looked up, gasping in shock. She began to bawl out loud now, kneeling down. *I don't want oniisan to hate me, but I don't want to not talk to him again.* Suu-chan's inability to figure out what to do at that point made her even more distressed. Laughing, Amara failed to hear someone walking down the stairs into the living room. Upon seeing Suu-chan on the floor crying, her oniisan ran over to her, lowering himself and comforting her. Turning, he looked at Amara angrily.

"Why did you make her cry Amara!" Raising his voice for one of the few times in his life, he was angered by the way Amara treated her sister. He stood up and faced her, Suu-chan still sobbing on the ground.

Amara was dumbfounded, and turning this into anger she shouted at her oniisan, "WHY DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO TAKE HER SIDE!"

Clenching her eyes shut, silent tears falling, she drew back her fist and punched her oniisan square across the chin. He fell back a few metres into the opposite wall. Looking up, Suu-chan saw her oniisan unconscious, a small crack apparent in the wall. Already sad she couldn't cope with seeing her oniisan in such a state. Wailing, she ran out of the room and ran upstairs. No sooner than she did so, her oniisan returned to consciousness, and looking at Amara, he left the room without a word, following his younger sister out. Amara just stayed there, in shock. *I... I didn't mean to hurt him. Why did I hurt him?* Tears beginning to well up, she walked to the bathroom and closed the door behind her, locking it. She let the tears fall to the tiles below as she began to run a hot bath for herself. Only the sound of running water could be heard from that room, with a few sobs after the bath had presumably filled.

Back to the 7th of January

Many minutes later

"I see..." Keitaro sat there in shock, still taking in everything Suu-chan had told him. "So your brother didn't hit you, but your sister hurt him, which made you upset..." Suddenly a thought occurred to him, "Suu-chan? Do I look like your oniisan?"

Leaning back, Suu-chan looked up at Keitaro from her position, and nodded. She began to rest against his shoulder. Keitaro patted her head, finally understanding everything. Several minutes passed when he thought that he should make a move.

"Well," He began, "I think that we should go now and fix the broken things in your room, don't you think?"

She seemed hesitant, wanting to stay with Keitaro, but finally realised that her room was a state and had to be cleaned. Sighing with happiness that the air was cleared now, she got up, and waited by Keitaro as he stood up. Leaving his room, he walked Suu-chan to her room, both walking in silence side by side but not touching each other, both engaged in their thoughts. Opening her door, he whistled after noticing just how bad the devastation was. However, Suu-chan leapfrogged over him, grabbed onto her doorframe and performed a perfect mid air twist, arms extended in the traditional Y-shape as in gymnastics. She beamed at him.

"Don't worry Keitaro, I can clean this room by myself now." She spoke very confidently.

"Are you sure imouto-chan!" He couldn't believe it, "There's a lot to be done here, you positive you don't need any help?"

"Of course I'm sure!" She tiptoed over to him, "Now you have to make up with Naru."

Keitaro knew that he had to apologise to her for overreacting. "Okay then imouto-chan... if you say so, I will see you at dinner then."

"Sure thing Keitaro!" She jumped up and kicked him in the face. "See you later!"

Keitaro was stunned slightly, she had only hit him with a fraction of her strength, and the force of it had managed to push him out of her room. He watched as her room door shut, then began to worry as the room began to pulsate in various colours. He edged away from there and once he was sure that no missiles were after him he began the short walk towards Naru's room. Motoko who was meditating lightly in her room opened one eye and noticed a familiar shadow pass by her room. *So he has returned. I hear Suu-chan is in her room now doing some more bizarre things. I will not disturb her yet, nor Keitaro, if he is about to do what I think he is.* Closing her eye again she returned to her meditation.

Reaching Naru's door, Keitaro mentally prepared himself for anything as he rapped lightly on her door partition.

Author's notes

Sorry for the delay, I have begun another fic and also planning others at this time. My Christmas holidays are now coming to an end, I'm returning to my university on January 4th. This will result in loooong delays between chapters again sadly, but I hope to finish them off pretty soon in what I am now going to call the 'Longest Day; saga (think about it, since chapter 7, it is still set in the same day). As you might've guessed from the title, this will be the first of many different parts in which we delve into the pasts of a certain character, seeing as we know so little about certain people. I will try and keep them as close to the original character as possible, so bear with me...

Now, there might be some problems with this chapter again, since I realise that some people might not like the way in which Keitaro and Suu-chan are having some 'special' time together, but hey, it's the way I think things should plan out.

Thank you for all your comments, they are well appreciated and keep me going when writing more fiction.

I'm sure you will all be looking forward to the next one. Onto the depressing mind of Naru!

- Jason