

Chapter 15

Escape/The Meeting of the Promised Two

Train 112

Wednesday, 10th of March

Early evening

Keitaro yawned; he had been on the train for a long while. He looked out the window to see the sun beginning to set behind the skyline. He was about to nod off before...

"Train 112 will be stopping at Kyoto. Arrival at Kyoto in less than five minutes. This train terminates at Osaka."

Keitaro didn't need to hear the rest, hearing the message being repeated in English, picking up his bag he sat patiently in his seat. He opened the front pocket to reveal his new journal. He hadn't yet written in it, buying it only recently at the Tokyo station. Closing it abruptly, he looked at the cover, an old anime called Tenchi Muyo was written there, faded images of the characters were on each page. *Heh, yeah right... As if it were possible for one man to be with a load of women...* Sighing he placed the journal back into the pocket and zipped it up just as the train pulled into the station. Standing up he walked to the door easily; he was the only person in his carriage.

Waiting for the door to open automatically he stepped off the train onto the platform. As the sun set, the wind began to blow harder, making the cold seep through to his skin. Clutching his bag closer to him he began to move towards the exit of Kyoto station. Looking over his small map quickly, he made his way through the streets to his destination, a small hotel, run by a kindly old lady... He went to sleep, not even taking a dip in the hot springs beforehand.

Hinata-sou

Thursday, 11th of March

"Hmm, he hasn't called since yesterday..." Mitsune mumbled pensively to herself.

"Where could he be right now...?" Naru spoke to no one in particular.

"Don't worry about Keitaro..." Said a smiling Haruka, who oddly enough appeared from nowhere, "He'll be okay, he always is." They were sitting in the living room having a drink to themselves.

"What!" Naru stood up, "You mean he's done this kind of thing before!"

"Only rarely," She replied, "However the times he does run away he's usually under a lot of strain or pressure." Taking the cigarette out of her mouth she continued, "I'd this was one of those times."

"So he can't handle failure..." Naru muttered under her breath.

Around the corner a quiet Motoko stood, out of sight of those sitting there. She had heard every word uttered by those in that room. Her eyes were closed, arms folded and holding the katana within its sheath. Opening her eyes a pained expression was visible. *Why...? Why did you leave us? Are you ashamed of failing? Failing in front of us? In front of me?*

Meanwhile, two diminutive figures crept around the grounds of Hinata-sou, they were about to go downstairs into the main hallway, but they noticed that the people in the living room would see them. Taking a detour, they went back upstairs and left via one of the windows. The blonde athletic one jumped out effortlessly, whereas the other didn't want to jump, and instead slowly made her way down.

"Escape accomplished!" Suu-chan put up her fist in victory.

"Are you sure you can find sempai?" Shinobu-chan asked, worriedly. "Is it okay to leave Hinata-sou like this?"

"Of course!" Suu-chan beamed at her friend, "My machine is fully charged now, so all we need to do is start it up! I also left a note for everyone there."

Inside Hinata-sou

At that exact moment

The corridors were quiet, the floor looking newly polished. Reflected in the floorboards is the door of Room 302. A healthy green leaf is sellotaped to the door, on it were these words:

Gone to find Keitaro with Shinobu

Suu

A second later

Outside Hinata-sou

Looking behind her nervously Shinobu-chan spoke again. "Can we go downstairs first in case they see us here?"

"Okay." Suu-chan then started to jump erratically but in a general forward direction, Shinobu-chan following her by running as fast as her little feet could go. Once they had reached the bottom of the steps she turned to Kaorra. Reaching into her rucksack, she brought out a strange device that looked like a bowl. Pressing a button on the underside of it, the bowl began to transform into a miniature satellite dish, with three eyes. Placing it on her head, the visor covering her eyes, Suu-chan then brought out a portable keyboard and began inputting commands.

"Kaorra -san... Is that it? That embarrassing thing?" Shinobu said, blushing at the fact that lots of people were staring at them.

"Yup..." Smiled Suu-chan as she continued to type in things.

A few moments later she stopped typing. She lifted up the visor and looked at Shinobu-chan. "Okay... following his credit card transactions, I saw him make a few purchases lately. Some kind of book in a train station and a one way train ticket."

"Train ticket!" Yelped Shinobu-chan. Grabbing Suu-chan by her arms she started shaking her, "Train ticket to where!"

"If you stop shaking me I'll tell you." Said Suu-chan, her head bobbing with the relentless shaking.

"Aah... gomen Kaorra-san..." She let her go immediately and bowed, a light blush covering her face. *I can't believe I lost myself like that... What will Kaorra-san think?*

"Don't worry Shinobu! We'll find him!" Suu-chan said cheerily. Taking another peek into the device she spoke on. "It seems that his final destination is Kyoto."

"Kyoto?" said a panicked Shinobu-chan. *That's really far! How are we going to get there... unless...*

"Kaorra-san..."

"Shinobu, call me Suu! We've been friends for this long, you can at least call me that." Beamed her friend.

"Okay then Suu," she placed her hands together, her index fingers patting each other, "D... Do you have any money?"

"Of course!" Reaching into her back pocket she withdrew an incredibly thick wallet. Shinobu-chan's eye bulged out slightly at this, until it burst open with strange notes. "This is money from my country!"

Snatching a note from the air she peered curiously at it. "Erm... Suu... you can't use this money in Japan..." Her heartbeat began to slow down. *How are we going to get there without any money... Unless...*

"We can't use this?" Pouted Suu-chan, now looking quite sad.

"It... it's okay Suu, let's just go to the station." *Looks like it's all down to me then...*

Meanwhile

Kyoto East Mountain

Keitaro was enjoying himself; he woke up early and had some of the breakfast that the innkeeper made for him. Starting his trip around Kyoto, he decided to go see the fabled Pure Springs Temple.

"Wow..." He marvelled at the architecture of the building. *The legend says that you can jump off here... I wonder...* He peered over the edge and got a sudden attack of vertigo. Feeling slightly woozy he pulled back. "There's no way you can jump off without dying."

He looked to his right to see a familiar person. *Don't I remember seeing her somewhere before?* Without any warning her eyes closed and she leaned forwards, a little too far to be normal.

"Waaah!" Keitaro yelled as he ran towards her.

He grabbed her legs just in time before she fell over the barrier. Stunned onlookers only watched as he carefully pulled her up over the barrier and onto the ground. A small crowd had gathered around the two of them. Looking at her features carefully he noticed that she wasn't breathing. He moved closer to her face to give her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. However her eyelids snapped open, scaring Keitaro backwards. She then sat up.

"Ara? What happened?" A cloud of smoke appeared as everyone facefaulted around them. Keitaro tried to explain.

"You... you nearly fell off the edge back there." He indicated the spot behind him and noticed her cheery expression.

"I think the height got to me a little." She stood up picking up her bag also as Keitaro did the same. "Ara... so were you the one to save me?" She peered closely at his face.

"Umm..." He started to blush furiously. *She's very pretty...* "Is... Is there anything wrong?"

She pulled back and placed her palms together, "You look cute. Are you in middle school?"

Facefaulting to the ground again, his arm left in the air twitching involuntarily Keitaro leapt up. "I'm 20 years old!" Tear flew out of his eyes and his hair stood up on end as he said this.

"Ara... Really?" She looked at her watch, "Ara? Is that the time? I'd better be off now to sightsee some more." She turned and began to walk away; the crowd had vanished a long time ago.

"W... Wait!" She stopped and looked at him with interest. *She might hurt herself all alone... I have nothing to look forward to back at Hinata-sou, so why not spend it with this girl?* "Are... are you travelling alone?"

"Yes... why so interested?" She had a clueless expression on her face.

Keitaro blushed again, putting a hand behind his head, "Do... do you mind if I accompany you?"

She paused to think about it, "Okay then!" She happily walked to him and smiled again, "So where shall we go now... I don't even know your name yet...?"

"Urashima Keitaro, and what's your name?" He replied.

Keitaro... Sounds familiar. "My name is Otohime Mutsumi."

"Okay... shall we go eat now? I'm quite hungry." His stomach rumbled to emphasise this point.

"Okay Urashima-kun!" She said in a bubbly fashion. He blushed when she added that serif to his name but said nothing of it.

They were walking through Kyoto looking for nice place to eat when they passed a photo sticker camera. Keitaro gawped at it for a second. *A third generation camera! I must get a photo from there! But... not when I have such a nice girl with me, she might think I'm some kind of sad loner...* "Mutsumi-san... why don't you go look over there and I'll have a look down this street?"

"Okay Urashima-kun!" She skipped away down the street he pointed to her, and he made to go in the other direction, but once she was out of sight he ran to the photo sticker booth.

"Hmm... which one should I pick?" He scrolled through all the possible photo frames until finding one he liked. "This looks good, an Omikoshi being held by several men." He pressed the number of stickers he wanted, then pressed the 'Take photo' button. He then felt a slight pressure on his right shoulder and a soft feeling on his back. Waiting until he heard the distinctive sound of the camera, he looked to his right to see a hand placed there. Looking left he realised he was nose to nose with Otohime Mutsumi, her eyes looking deeply into his.

"Waaah!" Jumping back he held both hands to his nose. *Her breast... It was touching my back...* He began to think of some excuse. "Umm... Well... you see, I was looking around and saw this... and then..."

He stopped talking when he heard her laughter. "Wh... What's the matter Mutsumi-san?"

"Oh nothing, you just look so funny!" She began to stifle her giggles. "I just to tell you that I found a restaurant over there." She pointed roughly in the direction she came from.

"Oh... Arigatou Mutsumi-san." He recovered quickly and looked to the machine and picked up his stickers.

They walked together to the restaurant, and sat down, ordering a couple of soft drinks along with their respective meals. Sipping his lemonade Keitaro looked over to Mutsumi.

"It'll be my treat Mutsumi-san, for going behind your back and going to that photo booth." He felt ashamed, and he knew that she was going to get angry with him.

"It's okay Urashima-kun." She felt into her bag and brought out a thickly bound book. "I have a fascination for photo stickers too. That third generation camera back there is quite rare."

Keitaro nearly choked on his drink, "You knew it was a third generation camera!" He searched in his bag and brought out his book of stickers opening it for her, "I've been collecting them for years, but never had the courage to ask anyone to join me in a photo."

She looked over the book, "It's the same with me, I'm all alone in my photos for the same reason... Aah..." She paused and pointed at one sticker in the top left hand corner of one page, "Who's this pretty girl then?"

Looking at the sticker in question, he noticed that it was the photo he took with Naru back in the opening week of his arrival at Hinata-sou. "Oh, that's just a friend of mine."

"Ara... Really?" She puzzled over this, "It's just that this is the only photo is which someone else was with you."

Keitaro looked at her in amazement. *She managed to skim through and look at every photo!* The waiter then arrived with their meals, and then Keitaro had a bit of his rice before continuing, "Yes... well, I'm a dormitory manager in Kanagawa prefecture, and she is one of the tenants there. It's called..."

"Hinata-sou." They both said together. Keitaro's jaw dropped. "How did you know that!"

"Ara?" She looked confused and scratched her head, "I don't know... It just came to me suddenly."

"Okay..." He scratched his head also. *This is getting a little creepy... I'm getting a feeling of deja vu here.* "So... what are you doing here if your health is so poor? You fainted in the train as well, even though I did bump into you."

"Well... I'm on my way home now, I found out that I just failed in my attempt to get into a university, and just decided to go on a sad trip."

"Hehe, that's the same as me, but I've failed for the third time this year... I'm also taking a sad trip."

"Ara... Third time?" She clapped her hands together, "Then you must be quite stupid!"

"Stupid... Stupid.... Stupid..." Her voice echoed throughout his head as he unfocussed his eyes, his entire body fading away, becoming nothing more than pastels and rough lines. Sighing, he returned to normal, angling his face down. *She's right though, failing for the third time is pathetic.*

"Well... That means that I'm stupid also..." Her cheery demeanour clouded over for a second or two by a deep sadness. "I've failed for the third year in a row."

Loosening his chopsticks in shock, dropping the prawn he was about to eat he spoke, "You mean you're 20 years old!"

"21 actually, my birthday was a few weeks ago." She smiled, "At least I think so..."

"How can you forget your own birthday!" He shouted out incomprehensibly.

"Ara... I tend to forget things sometimes." She put a hand to her head, closing her eyes.

"21... You must really want to go to this university..." He stopped to have a large dumpling, "So, which one did you apply to then?"

She began to beam at him again, "Toudai of course!"

This time Keitaro did begin to choke; the dumpling had somehow lodged itself in his throat. Beating his chest with his fist, and with great difficulty, the obstruction freed itself, landing harmlessly on his plate. Breathing deeply to bring the colour back to his lips he began to speak.

"That's the same one as me!" He said excitedly, "What did you get for your average during the Christmas period?"

"Ara, I think I got 50 overall." She replied, her hand behind her head.

"That's not too bad Mutsumi-san, I only got 49." Said Keitaro, chuckling to himself, unknowingly mimicking her movements.

Looking at the table with a dazed expression on her face, she looked to her friend across the table, "Ara, the food is getting cold now, I think we should finish our meal first Urashima-kun, before we talk any more."

"I agree Mutsumi-san."

With that they both launched into the dishes in front of them polishing them off before long to the last king prawn. It looked particularly juicy, and Keitaro had wanted to savour the taste of it until the very end. However he was feeling rather full and knew he wouldn't enjoy it as he would were he empty. Poking at it with his chopsticks, he rolled it nearer to the young woman in front of him.

"Here you go Mutsumi-san, I don't feel like eating any more, I'm stuffed." He patted his stomach to emphasise this.

Her eyes lit up like never before, glistening with apparent happiness and disbelief. "Ara... Are you sure Urashima-kun? It does look very fat with all the sauces in it..."

Keitaro managed to stop himself from drooling before answering her, "Really, it's okay, go ahead." *She has just failed entry into Toudai; it won't hurt to let her eat the last piece of food.*

He watched as she playfully picked up the prawn within her chopsticks, and placed it inside her mouth, before she began to chew on it. Upon finishing it she put the chopsticks down on her bowl and placed her hands together.

"Arigatou Urashima-kun!" She smiled at him again.

He blushed again, focusing on her eyes. *She is very pretty... Such a nice character...* At that moment she rose out of her seat to go to the toilet, only to walk straight into a pillar. He sweatdropped. *Well, she is a bit accident-prone...* Once she had returned, she picked up her bag.

"Let's go look around more Urashima-kun." She said, Keitaro following her out of the restaurant.

In mere minutes it seemed the rest of the day went by. For Keitaro, that was certainly true at least. He had spent a wonderful few hours walking in and around Kyoto with a girl, who as most men who noticed the pair of them walking together, was beautiful. Yet, Keitaro could not shake off the feeling that somehow doing something wrong. His glasses gave no indications of what he was thinking, so much so that Mutsumi, who was still by his side, began to get worried. Calling his name once she got no reply. Waving her hand in front of his face elicited nothing either. She realised just how out of it he was when he tripped over a loose manhole cover, then toppling headfirst into a lamppost. A small gasp from Mutsumi

led to her running to the now injured Keitaro. He was fumbling around for his glasses. Mutsumi picked them up and knelt down to give them to him.

"Here you go Urashima-kun." She held out the glasses for him.

Accepting them, he thanked her. "Arigatou Mutsu..." Keitaro's eyes were staring right into her top, showing the cleavage of the 21 year old.

Holding his nose quickly, and looking at her puzzled expression, he knew he was too late to stop it. Blood rushed from his nostrils like there was no tomorrow, bursting through his hands. Mutsumi gasped at this, and gave him a tissue, which he took quickly. Five minutes later they were on their way as if nothing had happened, except for the pieces of tissue stuffed up his nose.

"Well, things like this happen sometimes." He laughed nervously.

"That's true..." Mused the 21 year old, "But it came from nowhere... It must've been triggered somehow..."

Keitaro just laughed again as another sweatdrop adorned the back of his head. They both travelled around the area taking in the sights, sounds and even the smells of the restaurants they passed on the way. After passing a small restaurant, a figure from inside the restaurant became startled and ran outside to look at the departing twosome. Running back inside, the female owner began to dial a number she hadn't used in years, and didn't expect to dial ever again.

Meanwhile

In a rainforest somewhere

The sweltering heat continued throughout the day, the humidity making the living of any animals in the rainforest either very uncomfortable, for those who did not belong there, or a perfect place to live, for the countless predators and insects. In a certain secluded part, there were intruders, permeating places that few have dared to enter.

The trees were getting thicker by the day, even the guides were telling the two women to give up their search for whatever they were after. The older woman just chuckled saying that she was just out for a little bit of fun, much to the guides' disbelief and shock.

One of the millions of mosquitoes that lives in the rainforest came to rest on a pale white arm, a few red spots covering scattered around it already. Immediately a pair of brown eyes narrowed evilly and a hand came down on the bloodsucker brutally. Wiping the dead creature off her arm, she wasn't at all pleased to see another red mark on it. She sighed to herself, adjusting her hat given to her by the guides. *So many mosquitoes! I can't understand why we have to stay here.* Sweating under her brow once again she took the hat off and fanned herself with it, one lock of hair springing up on her head as if returning to a position it was used to. *The rainforest is unbearable; the crocodile's back there almost ate us! I'm getting tired of all this...*

A sharp high-pitched tone abruptly pierced the forest. The guides looked around, unaware of this birdcall, and fearing it might be dangerous they brought their guns up, aimed

towards the trees. Not seeing any of this the girl felt around her backpack and picked out her mobile phone. Unfamiliar with the number, she decided to accept the call.

"Hello?" She asked, curious as to who this was.

The guides having heard the 'birdcall' dissipate turned their guns on the girl upon hearing her voice. Seeing all these men aiming at her she became a little nervous.

"It... It was my mobile." She explained to them, indicating the phone. They lowered their guns and walked on a little. Realising that she had phased out for a bit she turned her attention back to the phone, "Yes? Who is this?" A short reply later and "Obaasan, it's for you."

The shorter woman came into view, the shadow from her hat keeping her face hidden.

"Arigatou Kanako-chan." Said the older woman as she took the phone from the young girl. Placing her phone to her ear she spoke on, "Hello?" The voice on the other cannot be heard, "Yes this is Hina-obaasan." This time a longer pause as the voice spoke on, "So they've been spotted together then? In Kyoto." The shortest pause so far, then, "I see. Arigatou for the information." She cancelled the call and turned back to the young girl.

"Kanako-chan, it's time to call the town elders. The two have finally met up, as I predicted, in Kyoto." She smiled nervously, "We need to be kept informed of what happens now."

Urashima Kanako remained silent, a sombre feeling in her eyes, but she turned to the elder lady and remained expressionless, "Hai Hina-obaasan, I'll get onto it soon."

At that moment

Kyoto

Keitaro and Mutsumi were still walking on, when suddenly they both sneezed once. Looking at each other they laughed at the timing.

"Ara, Urashima-kun, you know what they say about what a sneeze is?" She asked him.

He thought about it for a bit but shrugged his shoulders, "No idea Mutsumi-san."

She giggled, "It might sound silly, but my okaasan told me that it meant that someone was thinking of you!"

Keitaro racked his brains, but could only think of someone who might've been the one. *Motoko-chan...*

Author's Notes

I'm now replacing the chapter, and getting rid of the massive bloopers in there regarding Osaka and Kyoto. After thinking through a certain point in the manga, I realised that Keitaro actually travelled all the way to Osaka, then had to travel back to Kyoto to do his

sightseeing stuff. Sorry to all those who were confused by this. I somehow thought that Kyoto was *in* Osaka (don't ask me how).

Anyways, this is mostly the usual plot line here, and the meeting of the two that most of you have been waiting for a while. My time in Spain wasn't entirely profitable fanfic-wise, I kept getting injured or ill, and the past week I've had tonsillitis, which is traumatic considering that eating food equates to incredible pain. Thankfully it's gone now.

It also added the little bit at the end because I thought it was about time to bring in the town elders (I miss them, I really do!). Everyone else using them in their own fanfics made me realise that they were quite cool geezers who can be highly philosophical. Hope you liked the portrayal of the two other Urashima family members, not much to go on but they'll be more of them, trust me.

The next chapter will be another Secrets Revealed one, not telling as of yet who it will be about, but you will soon see. My university is beginning way in September 30th, so I don't have to worry about things like work, but research is still required, so I might still not get some time to do it all.

Reviews/flames etc, especially complaints about how similar this is to the whole anime version of events in Kyoto with Naru are welcome, I don't want to seem too repetitive by carbon-copying episodes and not having enough original thoughts on the matter.

Until later,

- Jason