

Chapter 19

Adventures / Resurgence of the Past

Near Okinawa

7:12pm

Mutsumi awoke to see branches and large leaves high above her. She rose up, making a few leaves fall from her body; she had been covered in them as her legs remained warm from the remaining few that lay there. Holding her head as the dizzy spell from getting up so quickly passed, she began to focus on her surroundings more. Looking off, she could see nothing but forest, the palm trees extended far into the distance. To her left through a break in the trees she could hear the sounds of water, the beach where they were washed up on. Glancing to her right, she jumped slightly at the sight of a slumped Keitaro, snoozing away in a seated position. Smiling a little she placed a hand on his face and stroked his cheek gently. This resulted in him waking up with a start, and he looked at her, and his face changed instantly from one of sleep to one of delight.

"Mutsumi-san! You're alright!" He exclaimed.

"Ara... Gomen nasai..." She put a hand to her head, "I'm fainting more often these days. It must be such a bother for you..."

"No!" Keitaro stopped her, "It's no bother... I just..." Keitaro stopped and blushed, faltering his speech, "I just worry for you..."

:"Ara..." She moved closer to him, "You're so kind to me Urashima-kun!"

This only made him blush more. Mutsumi looked around a bit more, and asked him, turning chibi in the process, "Where are we by the way?"

Keitaro face-faulted into the earth, leaping immediately, his clothing and hair spiking up, "We're stuck on a deserted island! Can't you remember!" He paused and calmed down. *Oh yeah, she did tell me that she forgets things...*

"Are you sure?" She didn't seem convinced, inspecting the area surrounding them, "There might be people living here." She looked at him, "Have you searched?"

Keitaro paled and realised he hadn't, " Umm... Not exactly..."

"Well..." She stood up, showing her curvaceous body to him again, holding a hand out for him, "Shall we go and look Urashima-kun?"

Much to his own amazement, he closed his eyes and stood up with her help. "Okay Mutsumi-san, but first you should put on your clothes, it'll get cold at night."

"Ara, you're right, wait one minute."

She picked up the clothes off the floor and began to put them on her now dry bikini. Keitaro turned away quickly to avoid a nosebleed and for Mutsumi's own innocence. A few minutes had passed and soon he felt the presence of her breasts in the small of his back.

"Shall we go now Urashima-kun?" She spoke as her head appeared over his right shoulder.

A small trickle of blood left his nose as he managed to stammer, "O... Okay then!"

About to move off, he was surprised to find Mutsumi being the one to lead the way, skipping happily between the trees and holding his hand as she did so.

"M... Mutsumi-san! Wait! Don't go so fast!" He pleaded, but she didn't listen, humming a familiar but happy tune to herself.

As they went through the trees, they failed to spot several pairs of eyes glinting at them from behind bushes. Each one then flashed white briefly, a star-like shape appearing in each eye before vanishing into the darkness.

7:30pm

Kyoto

"Hmm... Where are they?"

Naru looked at a map trying to figure where they were. Mitsune and Motoko were behind her.

"According to my sources, they should be located here, Naru-sempai." Motoko indicated a place on the map.

"Okay, we'll go there first then Motoko-chan." Naru cheerfully smiled back.

Motoko continued to walk behind her, but in complete silence, not even keeping an eye out to her surroundings in case there was any danger. Naru was trying to coax Mitsune away from the restaurants, in case they ran out of money before they found everyone. Mitsune looked back to see a troubled Motoko, her eyes strangely glazed over.

"Motoko? You okay?" The girl from Osaka asked.

Motoko jumped, stunning Mitsune to a degree that it made her open her eyes momentarily. Collecting herself together, she replied coolly, "I'm fine Mitsune-san, arigatou."

Unconvinced, she raised an eyebrow, "Whatever you say..." She turned back to Naru, but wanted to raise the issue with Motoko again.

Meanwhile

In another part of Kyoto

A small crowd had gathered around a stall in a main tourist spot. At this table sat the diminutive figure of Maehara Shinobu. Next to her stood an oddly dressed Kaorra Suu, wearing clothes similar to that of a circus ringmaster. She had in her hand a traditional megaphone, that without any electronic enhancement.

Putting it to her mouth she began to speak to the gathered audience, the megaphone punctuating her voice by expanding and contracting at every other syllable. "Welcome ladies and gentlemen! I am here to show you a freak of nature..." Shinobu gasped at this and held her head in her hands in shame, "A girl so strong she could make trees topple over, even by looking at them." She turned to Shinobu, using her arm to show them the 'freak', "I am willing to give the first person that beats her in an game of arm-wrestling the sum of 100000 yen!"

The crowd began to murmur amongst themselves, pointing and chuckling at the now blushing girl hiding her face away from the stares.

Now that Suu was sure that she had their attention, she continued. "The charge is 500 yen per arm-wrestle. Right hand only. The first person to win against her wins the money. So..." She passed her gaze over the crowd for effect, "Who will go first?"

A chorus of people began to chime up, all men. "Okay then, you first sir!"

A large, hulking brute came out from behind the throngs of people, although standing seven foot tall made sure he could be seen. He had tattoos on his arms, the left with the character for 'kill', the right the characters for 'death'. Smiling inanely, showing his yellow teeth he sat down at the table, holding out his right hand to the little girl sitting in front of him, who accepted it reluctantly. *Hmm, her hand is cold...* The man mused. *She must know that she's going to lose to me!* Shinobu looked to Suu, who winked at her.

"Three! Two! One! Begin!" Suu chanted.

For an instant, nothing happened, everyone except for Suu and possibly Shinobu, who was still in two minds about whether or not it would actually work, thought the man would pound the opponents hand into the table. He looked at the girl in astonishment, who seemed to be calm with only the tiniest bit of strain appearing on her face. Placing more power into it his face became redder as the arteries and veins on his forehead and arm became visible. Shinobu's hand only moved a millimetre to the left. Then she began to fight back, and slowly she made a noticeable difference in the angle, now precariously close to her winning. With a sharp push she slammed his hand onto the table, much to the astonishment of everyone watching and the participant involved. Clutching his hand in pain, he stood up carefully and nursing it he left the table mumbling to himself.

Suu smiled, "Any more takers?"

Fewer people started shouting out for their go, but these seemed more skilful than the sheer strength that the first had. Suu began to pick them out and asked for them to form a queue. Shinobu sighed and remembered what Suu told her...

A few hours ago

"What is this Suu?" Shinobu asked, pointing at her new limb which was remarkably human, her old arm hidden behind her jacket.

"It's one of my works in progress." Suu stated, bringing out a blackboard and chalk, magically changing into a black cloak and mortar and some normal clothing underneath, holding a wooden pointer.

"I plan to make a true mecha one day using my skills, so this would be a good time to test some things." She indicated pictures and blueprints of arms and using her pointer before crossing her arms, "Try clenching your fist."

Shinobu did just that, she thought out the instruction and the arm did so with ease. Suu picked up a piece of wood and opened the hand and placed it in there. "Try again." She said.

Once more the hand closed in, but now crushing the wood to pieces, making it fall apart and scare Shinobu. Suu chuckled awkwardly.

"Ahh... I think I need to lower the strength, we don't want you to crush their hands." Suu brought out a screwdriver and opened up the wrist to reveal gears, metallic tendons and other objects, including a little dial. Inserting the flat-headed tip into the dial, she turned it anti-clockwise by one revolution and then closed the hatch.

"How about now?" Suu picked up another piece of wood and placed it within the hand and Shinobu tried her best to break it but it wouldn't. Releasing her grip, the wood had marks where her fingers were breaking into it. "Perfect!" Suu said happily.

Shinobu was amazed, "Suu, you're a genius! Are you sure this will work against normal people?"

"Of course it will!" She replied confident in her creation, "The artificial cartilage and tendons are stronger than any human bones, and can easily overpower them."

"Suu..." Shinobu warily asked, "How can you make these things?"

Suu just winked at her, "It's a secret!" Pulling out a watch she yelped, "Aah! We're running out of time! We need to get some money before we can move on. Let's go Shinobu!"

"Y... Yes..." Shinobu haltingly complied and was being dragged by Suu to where they would earn their money.

Near Okinawa

8pm

They had been walking for a while, Keitaro in front of Mutsumi batting away the bushes and branches that got in their way. Keitaro wiped his forehead. *This is hard work... How big is this island!* He stopped upon hearing a noise in the bushes to his right, a rustling of leaves. He began to regret taking her home if he was going to die in on a lonely island. Holding onto Mutsumi's hand he ran through more undergrowth hearing sounds from all sides upon reaching a clearing. He could only hear the strange noises, almost like giggles and their eyes occasionally glinting in the darkness beneath the bushes. Seeing a spot where there were neither eyes nor noises, he ran there, Mutsumi being tagged along.

"Mutsumi-san!" He yelled, "We have to get out of here!"

He looked back to see her chuckling to herself. Not wanting to stop and ask what she found so funny, he went on, only to receive a flexible branch in his face. Falling back he

held onto his face which now bore a red mark across his nose and cheeks. Feeling his back he was aghast at noticing that Mutsumi had fallen underneath him.

"Mutsumi-san!" Her pupils popped back into her eyes.

"Ara? Are we okay sitting on the floor here?"

Keitaro facefaulted, his head twisted at an odd angle before returning to normal. "Yes, I just fell on you, we need to keep moving."

He pulled her up and they continued to move through the trees with difficulty. "Why is it so dense here?" Keitaro rhetorically asked, frustrated at the number of trees in his path.

"Ara, why not use that path there?" Mutsumi said pointing with one finger.

To their right was indeed a constant clearing, and as they walked to it they found themselves on a thin strip of bare earth that wove through the forest, sometimes trees overhanging the path. Keitaro sweatdropped. *I can hear the ocean behind us, we must've just missed the path, and I've been going parallel to it all along...* Mutsumi began to walk on ahead this time, and as Keitaro followed her they could both hear the sounds of footsteps and soon enough, various objects were being thrown at them, coconuts, sticks, and small stones. Keitaro's eyes bugged out as they had reached the gates of a house, the door apparently locked. Keeping Mutsumi closest to the house, lights streaming out from the inside, he shielded her from danger, the several attackers were now closing in on the two, their backs in shadow as Keitaro stood there sweatdropping in fear as he picked up a stick to defend himself.

The view finally pans to the dark sky as his scream echoed around the island.

Meanwhile

Kyoto

"So they left..." Motoko mused.

They were now outside the inn where her sources had stated they would find the other tenants of Hinata-sou. Mystified they all began to walk through the streets of Kyoto for any sign of them, improbable as it may seem. They were walking by an electronics retailer, but Mitsune stopped and ran in.

"Kitsune! We don't have time to be watching TV at a time like this!" Naru berated her.

"Shh, look!" She said regardless.

On several of the different makes of televisions, there were two photos along with the words 'Missing at sea', those of Keitaro and Mutsumi, but they didn't recognise the dual-antennaed girl. Naru picked up a remote control of the 42" plasma screen and increased the volume.

"... For several hours from a cruise ship that departed from Kyoto to Okinawa. Halfway through the journey, some passengers noticed a hot air balloon floating away from their ship, heading due south with the winds. The names of the missing have been confirmed as

Urashima Keitaro, 20 years old, and Otohime Mutsumi, 21 years of age, according to the passenger logs. Unfortunately it appears that if they continued in that direction, they would have intercepted Hurricane Tokimi, which was currently over the ocean, threatening all ships with 20' waves and possible tsunami's into mainland Okinawa. The likelihood of their survival is slim, although there are smaller islands around the outskirts of the hurricane. A search and rescue operation is unable to begin due to the present state of Tokimi. All ships are warned to keep away from that area for fear of being caught up in the storm. In other news..."

Naru muted the volume, now a shade paler. "What are we going to do now?"

Motoko answered for all of them, "We look for them." She said simply.

"But how! They are lost in a hurricane!" Mitsune complained.

"We just do." Motoko stated firmly, "It is part of our duty to search for the kanrinrin if he were to go missing."

"Well... I'm not so certain I agree with that..." Mitsune yawned, "Besides, if Keitaro were gone then I wouldn't have to pay off my de..."

"If you end that sentence I will be forced to hurt you in an excruciating manner." Motoko interrupted, her demeanour becoming darker, her eyes wishing pain into Mitsune's now opened ones.

"Wha..." Mitsune began before being interrupted again.

"Never wish for someone's death or passing away." Motoko went on, now standing alone, recounting memories from long ago. "Even I as a warrior never bear any grudge against an opponent, wanting them to die for some other gain. One rule of the Shinmeiryu is to fight seriously only to defend someone or to test your opponents strength." Her voice became lower, "This only applies to humans of course..."

"Then why do you attack Keitaro?" Naru chimed in.

This had caught out Motoko. *Why?* "I am merely defending my honour, and besides, I rarely attack him with full strength."

"So only in the cases you mention can you kill someone?" Mitsune guessed.

"Correct. However..." Motoko paused for a second, "I have yet to kill a human yet... And nor do I have any wish to do so in the near future. Killing humans with the Shinmeiryu techniques and considered unjust, seeing as these are skills used to fight against demons..."

Naru's and Mitsune's jaws fell open at this point. "*Demons!*" they both thought at the same time.

Motoko went on, "Nevertheless, it has happened in the past, long ago. Only one human has been killed since the formation of the Shinmei-ryu, and he had been possessed by an ancient evil from millennia ago. Only through the co-operation of the entire clan, including the clan that he belonged to, we were able to defeat him..."

Images began to flood Motoko's mind. A scroll depicting the man, completely in shadow save for the glowing eyes and his snarling teeth, appearing to be sharp. His left arm was drawn across his body, and the katana he held in that hand was parallel to the ground, the right arm supporting the left in his odd posture. The katana glinted, and was surrounded by a black aura, oozing off it like heat above boiling water.

Kyoto

1867AD

Fire raged throughout the streets of Kyoto, the Edo period was about to come to an end, the Tokugawa regime soon to fall at the hands of the Imperialists. On the outskirts of the capital lay hundreds of strewn bodies. Surrounded by a circle of samurai was the figure of a young man, his entire guise being twisted into that of something inhuman, his hands contorting into claw-like shapes at random moments. His body would also convulse and jerk into impossible positions in order to kill people. The samurai facing him were mostly of two different kinds, one the familiar white gi and red hakama, all females. The other group was mixed, although there were more men than usual in it. They wore a completely black outfit, the gi and hakama of the same shade, the extremities of the outfit outlined by a white colour, a white strip being their belt. Each person owned a katana and all but one had them unsheathed.

The person snarled, his breath being seen by all around him before his body vanished, a cloud of smoke the only evidence that he had been standing there.

Three white slashes against a black background, and in an instant three more of their total number were dead. There was no time to react as their carved bodies fell to the ground, the blood seeping into the soil and the blood of the other slain. The katana began to draw its power from the dead before the counterattack came from both sides.

Thrusts, parries, lunges, wide slashes, downward arcs, everyone did their best against him, but he managed to avoid all their hits, even getting a few of them in the process, injuring them lightly. Jumping back he laughed at the state of them, all bloody and panting for breath. The one who had yet to unsheathe her blade spoke to the group, and as if a decision had been made, they began to circle him once again, attacking once they were the same distance from him. The attacks came swift and brutal, forcing the man to parry each one, not being able to get a hit in. The woman jumped into the air and pulled out her blade, the flames of Kyoto reflected in its edge.

The following happened in slow motion, the world went silent. The group around the person had moved back at the last moment as the woman brought down her katana. The man looked up and opened his mouth, his eyes stopping their glow for a split second. The woman's mouth could be seen shouting some words and the world turned white.

The possessed fell to the ground as an ancient scream left his body, the essence flowing back to the katana with the black aura. The man's circular glasses fell next to his body as his hand landed nearby; blood caked around his fingers. The glasses lay there until his blood flowed to it to make the lenses crack, one of them shattering completely. In the other lens, the figure of the woman who defeated moved closer, her hair flowing in the breeze.

The battle had finally ended.

Kyoto

Present day

My sister told me this story... I don't doubt her wisdom... Motoko had replayed the entire battle through her mind once again as Naru waved her hand in front of Motoko, bringing her back to the present.

"Motoko-chan?" Naru asked, concerned, "What's wrong?"

Motoko couldn't hide her sadness over what she was about to say. "The person who killed the possessed man was my great-great-great-grandmother..."

The image of the woman back in the fiery Kyoto came into focus in the lens. She had exactly the same facial structure as Motoko. However some of her hair contained silver strands and a few crows feet were seen by her eyes, the only sign of her true age.

Naru and Mitsune were quiet, rare as it was to see such emotion from Motoko as she lowered head in shame, "Over the past century my family had to live with that label over our heads. The murderer of a man who was supposed to be freed, not killed, in the removal of the evil spirit. For years we have tried to atone for the crime, but blood on one's hands cannot be removed without shedding one's own..."

"Motoko-chan..." Naru said with great sadness in her voice. *I don't know how to console her; this is too much for a girl her age.* "Time heals everything... The only thing you can do is to do your best." She smiled wanly at the heir to the Shinmeiryu.

Motoko looked back up to the new Toudai student, "Naru-sempai..." Genuinely touched by her advice; she graced her with a rare smile.

Meanwhile

Nearby

"After them!" Shouted one man, wearing a black suit and sunglasses.

A group of eight men all dressed the same way started to chase the two young girls through the streets of Kyoto. Suu was laughing leaping about from house to house as Shinobu panted behind her, trying to keep up her pace to stay away from the advancing group. Tripping up she yelped as she fell to the ground, her clothes becoming stained from the dirt in the street. The men had now circled her, one man who was apparently the leader walked forwards.

You do know what it means to be plying your games in our territory. No one should try to outwit us this way." He glared menacingly through his glasses, which now reflected white from the lamps above them.

"Shinobu!" Suu shouted from one of the rooftops. She turned to the man, "You won't hurt her! Take this!" She withdrew a large control panel containing buttons and a direction stick, "Mecha limb, attack!"

The right arm then pushed itself and Shinobu up off the floor and punched the lead man in the gut, making him double over in pain. Shinobu paled as the arm began to take out most of the gang.

"Shinobu! Escape now!"

Suu pressed the large red button, releasing the arm from Shinobu's shoulder and crawling along the ground, still occupying the men. Taking this chance she ran off down the empty street, shortly being joined by Suu who jumped down beside her. Running on they heard a bang and looked back to see smoke.

"Aah well, looks like the batteries have finally run out." Suu said, disappointed it didn't last longer.

They weren't looking where they were going and bumped into more of the gang, who had come from a different area of Kyoto.

"Well look what we have here..." Said the man the bumped into, "Some little girls are trying to take away our money..."

A flash and two men were down as a figure in white and red appeared. "Gomen, I was late in arriving here. Let me take care of these men first."

Motoko glared at the gang members and took out two more with a swipe from the flat edge of her katana, returning it to its protective covering straight after. Naru surprised one of the men and punched him under the chin, sending him into a wall. Mitsune grinned at the last remaining member and unbuttoned her top and the view pans to behind her as she opened it out fully for only him to see. His face turned from one of fury to incredible luck, then a massive blush as his nosebleed began to flow out in torrents, sending him back a few metres and lying unconscious on the floor. Knowing that it was not over, Motoko turned in the direction the girls came from and saw the incoming gang that had fought the mecha limb. Ready to fight, she pulled out her katana a centimetre or two, enough for the blade to be seen.

What she wasn't prepared for was the sound of gunfire, from behind the gang. Two of them fell to the ground as the other five stopped and faced their opponents. The sound of a quick reload and two more went down. From what the girls could see, a solitary man stood there, his black jeans and shirt were visible as his left arm with a pistol were seen pointing at the gang, the barrel still smoking. A leather jacket was on the floor behind him, presumably his. He was with his side to them, his eyes glaring at the enemy. Replacing his gun into the holster he had underneath his shirt he faced them all. His face was fairly round, yet his eyes looked like those of a hunter, piercing the bodies of the gang members with hatred. His mouth was turned down in disdain, only provoking the gangsters.

"What, you want to die now? You've run out of bullets, and there's five of us here." The leader said somewhat nervously.

Moving into a battle posture the stranger just grinned, "You must be an amateur if you believe that someone you have never met before relies only upon his gun."

"Shut up you fool!" The leader spat, "Kill him!" He yelled.

The four men in black growled and ran at the stranger, who dodged them by skipping to the side, landing a roundhouse kick to the one on the right, knocking him onto the ground, out cold. Launching into a variant of kenpo he punched and kicked the others in the stomach as they turned, ducking to the ground he swept their legs, two of them fell to the floor as the other jumped and kicked him in the face. Smirking as the man fell forward due to his forward centre of gravity, the stranger palmed him in the chest, slamming him against the wall. Letting go the gang member slumped to the ground, breathing with difficulty.

A laughing led to the stranger facing the boss. "I see you have a few skills, but you'll more than them to defeat me!" Throwing off his jacket, the leader had changed into a black sleeveless vest and he now held nunchakas in his hands.

"So you plan to attack an unarmed man using that toy?" He smirked, "I guess I'll have to up my ante also."

He held his hands out in front of him, similar to a boxing pose but with his hands open. The boss began to sweat more as the stranger's hands began to glow, then an aura began to form around it, yellow, orange and red flames emanating from it. His stance changed to a more offensive one.

"Shall we begin?" He asked.

The gang leader roared at this display and ran forwards, manipulating the nunchakas between his hands and arms. His formidable opposition began his movements and launched towards the leader. Before Motoko could rush in to intervene, the two met and the sounds of wood hitting flesh and fists making contact were heard. Blow by blow the gang leader was being defeated, and less than a minute later a right palm to the cheek sent him flying in the air, spinning around until he hit the floor in pain, unable to move his battered muscles.

"Pathetic... We should have been called earlier to remove your influence a while ago." The stranger walked off and picked up his leather jacket.

Motoko deeply offended shouted out, "You used your superior skills against humans?"

The stranger turned his face to see her, "Against scum like this we need to punish them severely." Putting on the jacket he removed a walkie-talkie and spoke into it before jumping away around the corner.

"Motoko-chan! Who was that man?" Naru ran up to her, but noticed the fearful look in her eyes.

He has skills equal to that of my sister... But who is he? Motoko walked up to the men he defeated and felt for a pulse, they were all alive. The ones who were shot were still, but had white feathers sticking out of one point on each of them, pulling on out, Motoko noted that it was a dart, used for tranquillisation since their pulses were weak but not life threatening. *So he didn't kill them...* She thought about it for a moment longer and realised one thing. His clothing was black, and she recalled seeing a faint white edging on most of the seams, easily noticeable on the leather jacket, the ends of it were white. *Is he a member of that clan? It cannot be... They disbanded that time...* Beginning to doubt her

history lessons she only now noticed someone hugging her. Looking down she saw a teary Shinobu.

"Arigatou Motoko-san! You saved us from them! I... thought they were going to kill us!" She continued to sob whilst holding onto her gi.

Motoko, stunned momentarily by the younger girl's behaviour, did what she thought was best, and patted her on the head, resulting in her looking up in wonder. Shinobu blushed rapidly, even her eyes seemed to hide behind it, and she put her hands to her face. *What did I do? I hugged Motoko-san... What must she think of me?* Her thoughts were cut off as Motoko spoke.

"It's okay, I'm glad I arrived when I did. I heard the commotion from two streets away and ran here. You have nothing to fear now that I am with you." Motoko smiled to reassure the girl.

"Moootoko!" Suu shouted before jumping on her back, "We had fun in Kyoto!"

"Yes, I can see that, but your idea of fun is different to most people Suu-chan." Motoko reprimanded her, "You ran off worrying all of us at Hinata-sou. We had no idea where you were!" Suu looked down, pouting for a second, "However now that you are with us we can all go and look for Keitaro together."

Suu's face changed immediately, "Okay Motoko!" Her face became a tad confused, "But we don't know where he is..."

Motoko began to recount everything they had heard in the news broadcast, and Suu put a hand to her chin thinking. "So they're lost at sea but there's several islands there..." Changing her attitude completely she beamed at them, "I know what I'll do! Follow me everyone!"

They followed the foreign girl through the streets of Kyoto, Suu had picked out a mobile phone with three eyes on the back of the fascia talking in a language they never heard before. Just as they had reached a main road a limousine pulled up to them, the door opening.

"Everyone get in!" She shouted.

Complying quickly they went in and sat down in the comfortable chairs happy for a chance to put their feet up for once. Non-alcoholic refreshments were provided, as were some snacks. Suu was nibbling on a banana whilst still talking on the phone. A minute passed and she flipped it closed.

"All done!" She spoke, happy that something was completed without any hitches.

"Suu?" Shinobu asked meekly, "What exactly is 'done'?"

She just winked at her friend, "You'll see Shinobu." Putting one hand around her friend she cheered for their success, and Shinobu joined in a few seconds later. Soon even Naru and Mitsune joined in the fun as music began to pound through the vast vehicle. Motoko relaxed also, having a few drinks and sighing after finishing them.

The view changing to one of the driver, a dark skinned man wearing a chauffeurs uniform and cap, moving out of the window to the top of the limousine which also bore the three eyes as it sped through the streets of Kyoto, eventually moving out of the city boundaries.

Osaka Port

1 hour later

The vehicle stopped. "We're here!" Shouted the hopping Suu, who leapt out of the car door that was being held open by the driver.

Everyone followed her bemused, and were shocked at seeing they were in a dock, and were stood in front of a magnificent ship, fit for a princess. Once everyone was out, the driver shut the door, bowed to Suu, who merely beamed and saluted him, and he left, driving back into Osaka.

"Well, all on board now! We need to leave to get ahead of the storm!"

Suu bounded up the steps as the staff she passed bowed deeply to her. Going by her lead, they walked up the steps as the staff again bowed, but to a lesser degree to them. Within minutes they had set sail for the open ocean, in search for Keitaro.

Suu stood on the stern, and pointed out to sea, the others stood behind her watching, "Keitaro! We'll find you if it's the last thing we do!" She shouted, as the three eyes painted on the front of the ship became drenched by the waves.

Ominously, the distant flash of lightning closely tailed by the loud boom of thunder made them all sweatdrop, jumping a little by the sound. A klaxon started to echo around the ship.

"All hands report to red alert status! Storm level five precautions underway! Will all guests please return indoors to the safety of the lounge! Lock down of all windows in two minutes, and protective barriers to be erected in five minutes! ETA to breach of storm perimeter in fifteen minutes!"

Suu laughed half-heartedly to herself, "Oops, didn't make it... Let's enjoy the food though!" She ran into the cabins as the others walked slightly faster than necessary, a shade greener than before.

"I have a bad feeling about this..." Mitsune said out loud as another thunder strike made itself heard.

The eyes at the front glowed green and began to hum as the ship began to transform into the equivalent of an armoured battlecruiser, extra metal deploying to the sides of the ship. Another burst of speed and the view pans away to show the ship heading straight into the storm ahead, the lightning flashing across the sky.

Author's Notes

Ooh, 14 pages! I'm surprised at myself :)

Hope you like the mythology I brought in on this chapter, the pain was researching and finding that Kyoto HAD no port, so they needed to drive to Osaka to get to one. I also needed to check out the Meiji Restoration date and calculate the relation to Motoko. Having recently watched most of Kenshin, I'm quite surprised to find that Saitou Hajime did actually exist, and that the scenes that were included in the series were good history-wise (such as Okita being ill). Still, I thought the past was very interesting and I really enjoyed writing that part out.

Hoping that I haven't made any enemies with the past being shown etc. Review/crits welcome as usual.

- Jason