

Out of sight, out of mind

Chapter 4

“You’re coming with me!”

**The next day
Nabiki’s room
8:54am**

“Uuuhhh...” Nabiki groaned.

Feeling her head with her right hand, she blurrily took in her surroundings. *My room... How did I end up here?* She tried to pull off her covers before noticing that her left hand wouldn’t move. Panicking for a second she paused and looked. *A hand...* Following the arm up to see its owner, she wasn’t surprised to see the eldest Tendo girl there, sleeping in a chair beside the bed. The alarm clock told her the time of day.

Debating whether to wake the girl or not, she thought it through and decided not to, just yet. Gently lifting her palm off and onto the chair, Nabiki slowly got up, stopping every now and then when the mattress shifted and made noise. Standing up, she coaxed the elder girl up, picking her up for a few seconds before lowering her onto the bed. Removing her slippers, she replaced the covers over Kasumi, whose expression changed to become content, as she snuggled further into the warm quilt.

Sighing inwardly, Nabiki picked up her robe which was hanging off the cupboard, and then walked downstairs. *Might as well get breakfast ready since sis is sleeping...*

Fifteen minutes later

The rice cooker had finished and was now beginning to steam up. *Good, that’s done...* Having already sliced some vegetables and boiling and frying some, she glanced out the kitchen, seeing Soun and Genma waiting in anticipation. Placing some rice in two bowls she went out and served the two.

“Thank you Kasumi.”

“Daddy... It’s me...” Nabiki smirked.

He sweatdropped and looked up. “Y-you cooked then?”

“Yes.” She wasn’t happy. “And don’t you dare insult my cooking, otherwise I’ll ask Akane to help me.”

Both men shuddered together, picking up their bowls quickly. “Yum... Looks good!” Their grins were somewhat forced and they began to eat.

I'm not as good as Kasumi... Nabiki thought, as she went back into the kitchen to clean up. *But I can make something basic with a little touch of class...* She heard someone else join the table. *And there's also no way I'd break the kitchen like Akane.* She gave a smirk at this and placed another dollop of rice into the bowl, leaving to serve her younger sister.

"Nabiki?" She asked, curious. "Why are you cooking?"

Her sister shrugged. "Kasumi watched over me last night, so I put her to bed in my room..." Her brow furrowed. "Come to think of it... What happened?"

Soun put down his paper. "You fainted after we told everyone the dojo is now open." Nabiki faltered for a bit, but stayed standing. "We postponed the celebrations until another day while we put you to bed."

That's right... Nabiki tried to lift the fog from yesterday. *I remember waking up... It was just a second or two... but I was in bed...*

"Everyone went home, but we put Ryoga up for the night..." He stopped talking upon seeing the cloud of dust from Nabiki running out of the dining room.

Ryoga! Her eyes were enraged. *I've got to find him... Enough with the useless memory changes... Ranma's gone, and I have to find out where and why... I hate mysteries I can't solve...*

Bursting into the guest room without any knocking, she found Genma's futon still messy, but the absent other made her think the only thing Ryoga could do. *He's lost...* Searching the rooms, she realised that he wasn't anywhere. *Think Nabiki, think!* Whirling towards the cupboards, she started opening them, and eventually gave up, returning to the entrance hall. *Oh well... Last place to try...* Opening up the broom closet under the stairs, a dishevelled figure fell out.

"Aaah!" Ryoga tumbled at Nabiki's feet. "I thought I'd never get out of there!"

Raising an eyebrow she laughed unkindly. "It's just a tiny room with one door!"

"No!" He stood up, his eyes wildly darting about from place to place. "I ended up in a huge snowy world... There were animals, weird creatures, a witch and a talking lion! I've been gone for so many years!"

Nabiki looked him over. *He's crazy...* She slapped him harshly. "Get a grip Ryoga... It's only Sunday, a day after we were all in the dojo..."

He came to, and looked at the middle Tendo. "I... Sorry... It seemed so real..."

"That's good..."

She glowered at him, pushing herself forwards and slamming both hands to either side of his head, the wood cracking a tad as her own aura flared visible for one second.

"Now... you're going to help me, whether you like it or not... P-chan..." Her evil grin returned with a vengeance, making him blanch and try to pull away, despite her having trapped him.

“H-h-how did –”

“You may have fooled my sister...” Her voice lowered dangerously. “But nothing gets past me. Ranma may have some random reason to protect you, but I don’t...”

“Ranma...? Who –”

Clutching his collar, she dragged him upstairs into her room, where Kasumi was still sleeping. *Not here...* Retreating to the guest room, she closed the door behind her and shoved him to the ground, cracking her knuckles to make her point clear.

“I’m not in the mood for games any more...” She glowed again, her purple aura surrounding her, surprising Ryoga. “I need something from you...”

“Wh-what?” Ryoga was growing more nervous by Nabiki, having never really spoken to her longer than necessary.

“You told us a few years ago, you went to an all-boy’s school...” She closed her eyes for a moment and reopened them. “Where?”

“I... I don’t know... I was young. Besides, I lost my way there years ago!” He drew back seeing her step closer.

“Not good enough... If I have to drag you to the ends of Japan to find out where you went, then that’s what I’ll do. So...” She pulled him up, her upper body strength coping for the duration. “You’re coming with me, Hibiki...”

“B-b-b-but...”

“Stay here...” She cautioned him, walking to the door. “You move, and I’ll tell Akane about P-chan.”

Having the desired effect, Ryoga slumped to the floor as Nabiki returned to her own room, to pack.

Fifteen minutes later

Nabiki had on her overcoat, fleece, warm trousers and some hard wearing boots in her hand to put on. Hefting the backpack, she opened the guest room to find Ryoga still sat there, the fearful expression on his face.

“Get up.” He did so and walked to her side. “You go anywhere without me and get lost, then I’ll come back and tell Akane.”

They walked down the staircase together and she held his arm at the doorway. “Wait here.”

Nabiki walked into the dining room. “Daddy, I’m going out now, I don’t know how long... I might be away for a few days.”

Soun started bawling. "My darling daughter is running away!"

She sighed. "No, I'm not, I need to check something." She turned and paused. "Before you ask, I have Ryoga with me in case anything happens."

"What?! Why do you need Ryoga?" Akane yelled, standing up to face Nabiki.

So... She's jealous eh? "Why do you care sis? It's purely business, not pleasure." The disdain she felt was clearly evident in her body language. "I'll return him to you in one piece, don't you worry."

With that she stormed out, ignoring Akane's protests and pulled Ryoga out into the cold.

The street outside

The snow was still falling and they wasted no time in walking onwards.

"So... Give me some clues, is it near Nerima?"

"N-no..." For some reason he had tears in his eyes. "I never ended up here while I was there..."

"Fine..." They both walked to the train station. After several minutes, she spoke up again. "Where do you live?"

"I have my address here..." He showed her something from his large bag. "But I can't find it..."

Snatching the crumpled piece of paper from his fingers, she stared at it. "I see..." She looked at the lines and saw that they went in both directions. "Which way would you go from here to go home?"

"South, definitely." He was confident, his grin breaking through.

Walking up to the cashier, she bought two tickets to the nearest one on the address, and sure enough, they waited on the northern bound line.

Lucky I took all my funds out... I had no idea he lived so far away...

As the bullet train pulled up, she looked to the destination. *What will I find there?*

3 hours later Sendai

The rain was constant, a difference when compared to the soft flakes in Nerima. Ryoga walked out, his heavy umbrella already open to prevent his curse activating, Nabiki following with her own.

“Okay, we’re not far from your home now...”

Ryoga seemed to brighten up, and Nabiki saw his delighted expression. *Maybe he really does miss it... Must be hard not being able to find where you live...*

Thankfully, the rain did not spray from the side, nor did any cars splash the two of them, as they passed a few blocks to his home, which was not dissimilar to Nodoka’s. *This place reminds me of Nerima... Subtle differences, but still the same...* She looked round the side and found the abandoned lot where Ranma and Ryoga were supposed to fight all those years ago. *I’m not surprised he lost his way there, it is too far for him...*

She waited as he piled into his bag to search for his house keys, which inevitably were at the bottom of the bag, due to lack of use. His excitement was barely held in as he entered the property.

“Okay... I’m just going to look for records of your school, then I can go there myself...”

She walked in to the kitchen and saw a note and read it out loud. “Son, I made you dinner, you’ll find the container in the fridge. I’ll be back late. Love, Mum.” She shuddered as she saw the date on the note. *Maybe they came up with this date idea themselves...*

Making her way to the fridge, she opened it and stared. *That... That can’t be food...* Closing her eyes, she shut it quietly, so as not to disturb whatever had evolved inside. She went up the steps and walked into Ryoga’s room. *Interesting...* He had souvenirs from many different places that he visited, flags, statues, maps and anything small he could carry. She briefly recognised a photo of Akari on his bedside table.

Right, to work... Rummaging through his desk and shelves, she was searching for anything that showed which school he went to. Dust was on every surface, a sign that the occupant rarely visited his own room. Coughing from all the disturbed dirt, she started looking in drawers and under his bed. *Nothing... Where would he keep his work and grades?* She clicked her fingers.

“The parents...”

More searching took place in the master bedroom, again checking every cupboard and storage unit. In the back of the closet, she found records of Ryoga as a child, his first milk tooth, photo albums, and the information she needed.

Okay, got the name and address of the school... Figures... It had to be in the same city... She got up and walked back to the front door.

“Ryoga?” She called out. Frowning, she realised she hadn’t seen him since walking in. *Damn, I’ve lost him...* Shrugging it off, she picked up her rucksack and left, closing the door behind her. Hearing the sounds of locking, she smirked. *Guess they know their own problems... Seems like the house locks up automatically when anyone leaves...*

She checked the map of Sendai she bought from the train station, and walked to her next target, thanking the gods that the rain had stopped.

Half an hour later

Here it is... Striding past the open gate she walked up to a caretaker sweeping away some leaves.

“Excuse me, but is anyone working here today?”

“Yes.” He stopped his work for the moment. “You’re in luck, the secretary is sorting out applications for next academic year. She’s on the third floor, the signs will point you out.”

“Thank you.” She bowed to him and went inside.

Outside the secretary’s office

“Come in!” Shouted a voice

Nabiki opened the door and was faced with a stern, middle-aged lady, half-moon spectacles on the edge of her nose peering down at some papers. Without looking up she carried on talking.

“Can I help you?”

“I hope so...” The manner in which she spoke attracted the attention of the secretary.

“If you’re wanting to enrol your brother or sister here, then you’re too late –”

“No, it’s not that.” Nabiki shook her head. “Do you have any records of a student by the name of Ranma Saotome?”

“Saotome, eh?” She sighed to herself. “What’s he done this time?” She looked over Nabiki. “That last student by that name left seven years ago, he was only at school for a few months before leaving.”

“Is it possible if I could look at his file, if you still have it?”

The secretary shook her head. “I’m afraid not, unless you have some pertinent reason for this.”

Nabiki had thought of an idea, though she wasn’t exactly pleased about it.

“He’s my fiancée.” She stated. “He’s also been missing for three days, and I’m worried about him.” The crocodile tears came rather easily for her, faster than she normally would have managed. “I need any clue I can get to find him again...”

Still dubious, the woman raised an eyebrow. “You still haven’t told me your name young lady.”

“Sorry...” She theatrically wiped her tears. “Nabiki Tendo.”

“Tendo... I believe his father mentioned that name a few times...” She stood up. “Okay, I’ll show you what I have, but there was very little information available back then, and even less for Saotome as he only stayed in school a short time.”

Loading the appropriate program, she conducted a search for him, and soon printed out the one page with Ranma’s profile and grades, and gave it to Nabiki.

“As I said, very little information. He appeared to be doing well in maths, geography and physical education, while the other grades were just average.” She smiled sincerely. “I hope that this will help you in your search Miss Tendo.”

“Thank you...” She bowed to the secretary and left.

Ten minutes later The nearby park

Gees... There’s almost nothing here... The page had a photo of the ten year old Ranma Saotome grinning inanely at the camera. *He was cute even back then...* She blinked. *Cute? Did I just think that?*

Shaking her head she stared at the information. There was a property listed, which she then went to, but turned out that the building was knocked down and a supermarket sprung up there.

What else is there? There’s just his date of birth, parent, and some grades... She put the paper down and sighed, leaning back into the bench. *There must be something, any kind of clue left...* She stared at the paper for the umpteenth time before getting up. *I’ll go on the only bit of information here that I didn’t know... His date of birth...*

“The Public Records Office...” She walked to the road and held her arm up. “Taxi!”

Author’s Notes

I had an extra two scenes that were to follow, but realised that they would make the chapter overly long, so you’ll be seeing them in the next, fleshed out greatly.

It was about time that Nabiki used some of her ruthless side to get things done, and I think that Ryoga would cave easily to her demands, since his experience with girls was near zero.

Also, I recalled somewhere where Ryoga was said to have got lost in a cupboard (be it in the manga, anime or even another fic), and thought, ‘what if he ended up in Narnia?’ Might be a oneshot at a later date, for fun.

Before you ask, I know I haven’t revealed too much in this chapter (a ‘filler’ if you will), but it was important to get these bits out of the way before the above mentioned scenes, as they are vital to the plot. Regardless, I hope you liked it

- Jason