

## **Out of sight, out of mind**

### **Chapter 10**

**“Nice festival...”**

**10<sup>th</sup> December  
Tendo Dojo**

“YAAH!”

Another breeze block was returned to the large construction site in the sky via a rage fuelled fist.

“STUPID RANMA!”

A second promptly joined the first.

“Akane...”

The youngest Tendo stopped and wiped her sweaty brow with her sleeve, concrete particles showering the wooden floor as she did so.

“What is it Kasumi?” Her smile had returned, for now.

“Remember, tonight’s the festival, we need to get dressed up for it.” Kasumi took a quick look at the area and surmised what was going on. “I’ll get the furo ready for you, could you carry out the heavy pieces into the yard so I can clean up in here?”

“Oh yeah...” Akane blushed, forgetting that she usually smashed the blocks outside.

Picking up the pieces she walked out of the open door and dumped them in the rubble bin bags that seemed to multiply since the arrival of the Saotome family. Turning back and closing the dojo for the night, she saw the reason for going inside. The object of her dislike at this point was lying on the roof, staring up at the sky, hands behind his head. Growling once she ignored him and stormed off into the house to dress.

The pig-tailed youth this instant could sense her ki grow, then simmer away as she left. Sighing once, he watched the clouds in the distance travel along their normal paths, the sun was on its way beyond the horizon, but the skies remained clear.

**Several minutes later**

“Boy!” He rolled his eyes and casually looked down to see the dirty white gi. “You come down right now and apologise to Akane!”

“Sure thing pops!” Ranma flipped down, and planted two feet into his face, sending him into the koi pond. “Sorry, what was the last thing ya said?” He asked cheekily.

*“Apologise to Akane!”* The sign read, as the panda lurched towards him ominously.

“No way! I ain’t done nothing to upset her!” He turned around, only to face his father again.

*“You’re going to the festival tonight!”* He flipped the sign. *“You can say sorry then.”*

“I told ya...” He booted the panda in the mouth. “I’m not gonna say sorry.”

Leaving his father embedded in the earth outside, Ranma walked in to see Kasumi smiling and humming to herself.

“Oh my, Ranma are you coming tonight to the festival?”

“Maybe...” He saw that the eldest Tendo was getting ready for it herself. “Why?”

“Because it’ll be fun.” She almost had a spring in her step. “There’ll be food stalls and games there...”

Ranma thought about it for a minute. “I guess I could go...”

He wondered off beside the staircase, still thinking to himself, before a splash of water hit him unexpectedly.

“Gyahaha.” Happosai cackled. “Don’t be annoyed about Akane, let me cure your woes!”

Predictably, he lunged, arms spread wide, for Ranma’s chest. “Cure this you old freak!” Sending a steel-like uppercut to his chin, Happosai barrelled up and through the roof, still cackling and now holding a red silk top.

Cursing to herself, Ranma covered up her loose assets and stomped upstairs, wishing pain upon the master. The noise was heard by Akane, who was leaving the furo at this time, thankfully dressed, but towelling her hair.

“You pervert!” She jumped to her same old conclusions. “You were going to peep on me like that, weren’t you?!”

“No, I wasn’t...!”

Her fist ensured Ranma would be spitting plaster for a day, her body now planted in the wall.

“Gees Saotome, you never get any breaks, do you?”

“Uhhh...” She rubbed her head, the pounding headache returning. A dry towel was dropped on her. “Thanks, Nabiki.” She used it to cover up her breasts.

“Don’t mention it, this one was on the house.” She moved in and gave a sinister grin. “But you’ll have to do something for me...”

“Wh-what?” Ranma paled at thinking of all the possible favours she might have let herself into.

“You’re coming to the festival, as a girl.”

“What?!” Nabiki expected this reaction and had some answers prepared. “But I...” Ranma looked at the shrewd woman and then flicked her eyes away and down, calming down remarkably. “Okay, whatever you say, Nabiki.”

She raised an eyebrow at this, but didn’t remark upon it. “Good, now follow me and let me dress you...”

Wordlessly, as Ranma lost her voice for a short time, Nabiki dragged her into the room.

### **A few minutes later**

“Good, now you’re dry...” She looked at the hair and shook her head. “This won’t do.” She pulled off the band keeping the pigtail in place and watched as her hair fell naturally against the shoulders.

“H-Hey, I’m not leaving my hair like this!” She argued.

“I know that!” Nabiki chided. “Just let me comb it a bit, you’ve got loads of knots.”

“A guy doesn’t get knots.” Ranma snorted, but stood there with her arms folded as Nabiki drew the comb through the hair, wincing each time she passed through a knot.

“Well, for a guy, you’ve got very nice hair now.” She bounced it just for effect, seeing it shimmer and settle nicely against her smooth neck. “Let me tie it up...” Expertly weaving the hair, she wound it up and put the string back on.

“Is that it?” Ranma asked, impatient to get out of the room.

“Not quite...” Nabiki held up some eyelash curlers.

Ranma back-pedalled into the wall, unsettling some of Nabiki’s finance books on her shelf. “B-b-but...!”

“Relax...” Nabiki smirked. “I’m not going to tart you up like some yankee...” She moved in closer. “Just a tiny bit, I promise.”

“O-okay...” Ranma stepped forwards and looked nervously at the metal contraption. “Wh-what do I do?”

Nabiki rolled her eyes. *Man, she really doesn’t know anything about this...* “Just keep tilt your head up, eyelid half open, and keep your eyeball on the floor and try not to blink. If you feel any pinching, let me know.”

Steeling herself, Ranma did as she was told as Nabiki brought the left eyelashes into the curler, and squeezed it tight.

“Don’t move now...”

A few seconds passed, followed by a small pump, and it was loosened. She repeated the same with the right eye, readjusting it once when Ranma complained about the side lashes hurting.

Nabiki held up a mirror for the boy-turned-girl. "There! You look a whole lot better now!"

"W-wow..." Ranma stared back at her reflection in astonishment, the lashes now curled upwards making her blue eyes seem even bigger.

Nabiki looked at her collection of mascara. "Now for some Lagune..."

### **Ten minutes later**

"I... Is this me...?" Ranma's jaw was hanging freely, staring at the transformed face.

"Yep!" Nabiki seemed proud of her creation. "That mascara gives you a dramatic look for one evening, the blush gives you a healthy glow, and that lip gloss makes your lips just a tiny bit fuller."

She sensed Ranma increasingly become uncomfortable, and immediately felt a line had been crossed, and began to feel guilty. "I'm sorry Ranma... Maybe this was a bit too much..." Nabiki sighed sadly and looked down. "I know how you feel about being too feminine..." She pulled out a wet wipe and moved to the red-head's face to remove all traces of her handiwork. "Well, it was fun while it lasted..."

A hand reached out and stopped her own from getting any nearer. "I... I like it Nabiki, really." Ranma was sincere in her voice. "Ya made me... pretty... I'm a little worried about mum and pops though..."

"Never mind them!" Nabiki winked. "I bet you have something up your sleeve to keep them back..." She looked over the girl quickly. "And talking of sleeves, we'd better put your kimono on."

### **Five minutes later**

"But it's too tight!"

"Oh stop complaining, you look good." Nabiki made Ranma stand in front of a mirror and do a little spin. It was cerulean blue with gold and red trimmings in the form of flames, as well as a dragon circling the front and back. "See?"

Chuckling at her grumbling, Nabiki moved close behind and securely tied up the obi to ensure the kimono wouldn't slip, pulling it in more.

"Oww!"

"Some martial artist you are... If this hurts you I'm surprised you last as long as you do in

your fights.” She stepped back and admired Ranma’s figure. “There, perfect! Now you’re good to go.”

Ranma gave a withering stare. “Thanks Nabiki...” Her tone indicated she wasn’t over the moon with the outfit, but she made no attempt to get out of it.

“You know, you’re being too easy today...” She peered closely at him. “Usually you’d run off. What’re you hiding?”

Ranma sweatdropped and backed away ever so slightly. “N-nothing...” She laughed nervously. “I’d better get downstairs before your sister beats me up for being in here too long.”

As she ran out Nabiki rubbed her chin. *This is odd, Ranma’s being really edgy for some reason... Well, I’ll find out what she’s hiding from me later... I need to hurry up myself...* Reopening her closet, Nabiki pulled out another kimono for herself.

### **Meanwhile Downstairs**

Ranma sighed as she reached the entrance stairway and moved into the sitting room waiting for the others, hearing the general sounds of padding and soft curses from the girls trying to put on their own clothing. However she wasn’t alone, as three people were already sat there.

Soun raised an eyebrow at the overly female Ranma, but chose to said nothing, as the boy’s father was about to burst open with anger and disbelief.

“BOY!” He bellowed, standing up in horror. “What do you think you’re wearing, and what’s wrong with your face?!”

Ranma was about to reply before the third person interrupted. “Don’t worry husband, I’m sure there’s a reasonable explanation for this, isn’t there Ranma?” His mother was still carrying the katana in its cloth covering, however she now wore a purple and violet kimono.

Gulping once, and not in the mood to have her head forcibly removed from its currently safe location on top of her neck, she answered carefully.

“Nabiki did me a favour, but since I didn’t have any money on me, I promised to do this to pay back for her, in the meantime.” She smiled in relief after seeing her mother relax.

“See, Genma? It was a matter of honour, you don’t want him to break his promise now, do you?”

Nodoka got up and patted out a crease in the kimono that Ranma accidentally created when she unconsciously went into a battle stance. She passed a hand through the red hair and looked closer at the face.

“I see that Nabiki did your hair, and did a good job with the make-up...” She paused. “Well,

I must admit that you are the manliest of men, however..." The back of Ranma's head began to sweatdrop rapidly. "... you can be the prettiest, and girliest, of girls I've seen in my life." The maroon haired woman began to sniffle, managing to completely evaporate the sweatdrops from the girl in front of her. "I've missed you Ranma... My handsome son, and my beautiful daughter, all rolled up into one."

Pulling the shocked girl into a warm, loving but agonising hug, Nodoka began to cry quietly. Ranma, still stunned with her arms twitching sporadically in the air, recovered and returned the hug with equal vigour.

"Mum..." She too started crying. "I'll... I've missed you too..."

The sound of sobbing could be heard throughout the home.

### **An hour later At the festival**

"God, you're so uncute!" Ranma hiked up the kimono and leaped over several food stands and landed far from the crowd behind some trees.

Lowering the thick material back slowly over her legs, she sighed and looked around. "Looks like she didn't follow me..." Ranma let out another deep sigh and walked into another row of stands.

"...and that'll be another 3000 yen you owe me..." Ranma looked up, seeing Nabiki ask for money from Kuno. Edging away between two stands, she hid away, not wanting to be chased by him today.

"Thank you Kuno-baby, now get moving." The kendo captain charged off in the opposite direction of where Ranma was. Nabiki smirked and pocketed the cash, moving to some nearby stalls, before she whispered. "You owe me 1000 yen, Ranma. Kuno's going to be searching by the shrine for 'his goddess', so you're safe for a few hours."

Letting out a breath she didn't know she was holding, Ranma smiled. "Thanks Nabiki, I'll get ya the money when I can." She moved beside her. "Like some company?" She hooked out an arm in anticipation.

Nabiki watched this odd display, but shrugged it off. "Why not?" Linking arms with her, they both strolled by some of the stands, when Ranma's stomach made its presence heard. "Not had anything to eat, eh Saotome?"

Ranma blushed. "I missed Kasumi's meal when Akane kicked me away."

She looked at the candy floss maker, a thin line of drool growing at the corner of her mouth. Suddenly she felt her hand being held still and forced opened, several cool objects landed there.

"Go ahead, get some before you create a lake!"

Nabiki giggled as Ranma skipped off and bought some with the money she now had,

fluttering her enhanced eyelids at the young attendant, who decided to move the stick around a few more times to give her a larger than normal portion.

“You know, you’re a natural at manipulating people like this. No one can resist those big eyes and pouty lips.” Nabiki tried to make an impression of her. “See, doesn’t work on me...”

“Yeah...” Ranma licked her lips of the excess pink sugar. “But you’re still better, you can make anyone crack.” She jerked a thumb over her shoulder. “Even Kuno, and he’s so cracked up ain’t on the Richter scale.”

“My, a big word from you...” Nabiki teased. “Who’d’ve thought it?”

Ranma lost the smile a bit and looked away, flushing from embarrassment. “Well it was on yesterday’s documentary about that earthquake in Kagoshima...”

Nabiki frowned and ruffled her hand through the girl’s red hair. “Hey, don’t take it so seriously, I didn’t mean to upset you Ranma...”

The smile returned, and transformed into a beam. “Forget about it; want to play one of these games?”

“Sure thing, there’s something I’ve had my eyes on for a while now...”

Ranma grabbed Nabiki’s arm enthusiastically. “Take me there!”

Nabiki laughed to herself at the girlish antics as she walked down the path to the coconut stall. “This place has a cash prize that’s been going up all night from the number of people taking part.” She pointed at the coconuts. “Knock down all five of them and you win the lot.”

Ranma cracked her knuckles and grinned evilly. “Let’s do it.”

Nabiki chuckled menacingly and handed the proprietor the money, and soon five balls were in her hands. Passing one to Ranma she nodded. “Don’t hold back. Lot of people have tried this, and none of them could knock the left one off, it must be nailed to the post.”

Ranma nodded and juggled the ball in both hands, bouncing it off her head, shoulder, elbow, until she snatched it from mid-air suddenly, and drew her arm back, her blue ki filling the ball.

### **Two short minutes later**

“Well, this has been a profitable evening.” Nabiki sensed the weight in her sleeves, where the money now lay. “Here’s your share Ranma.”

“But I...”

“Don’t be stupid, without you I wouldn’t have won. 100,000 yen is a big achievement, so here’s 10,000 for you.” She held out the money. “It’s my standard commission I charge

people.”

“Umm... Thanks...” Nabiki noted that Ranma was a bit sheepish, until she passed her a few notes. “Here’s your thousand, for Kuno.”

Nabiki opened her mouth to object, but closed it quietly. “Thanks, Ranma.” She plucked the notes from him and put them in her sleeve. They stopped at a shooting gallery, handing some money to the woman behind the counter. “See anything you like Ranma?”

“Err... well...” The prizes were mostly pink and fluffy.

“Never mind...” Nabiki picked up the air rifle and steadied her arm. Aiming for a row of cards she held her breath and popped the first round off, knocking back the Jack of Spades. Reloading twice, she did the same for the Queen and Ace of Spades. *Now for the Gambling King look-alike...*

“We have a winner!” The owner cried, as the King of Spades fell.

“Thanks, I’ll have that prize please.” Nabiki pointed and was rewarded with the item in question. “Sorry Ranma.” She said as they walked away. “It was the least girly one out there.” She handed a small brown teddy bear about the size of her hand, a simple design with two black buttons for eyes and a stitched black X for a nose. “It’s not pink, or the size of a pillow, so you should be able to keep it hidden from your dad.”

“Th-thank you...” Ranma took it and blushed, squeezing the soft toy between her hands.

She stopped without warning, making Nabiki turn around with concern. “What’s wrong Ranma?” *Is she crying?* Her shoulders were shaking slightly, but when she looked up, no tears had fallen, though her eyes did seem a little too watery for comfort.

“It’s nothing. I’m fine, just glad to see you’re okay and having fun here.” Ranma beamed, putting all worries away behind that smile, which made Nabiki reply with one of her own.

“Well...” Nabiki turned away, hints of a blush threatening to rise on her cheeks. “Thanks for caring Ranma, you’ve been lots of fun tonight.” She stared off to one direction. “And I think you’ve been spotted by someone...”

Ranma shuddered and turned slowly.

“Hey Ranma honey!” Ukyo was waving from behind a long line of people at her okonomiyaki stand. “I have some food here for you...”

“Umm... No thanks, I’m not hungry any more.”

“Airen no want ramen?” Shampoo was at the stand next door, with an equal number of clients waiting to be served.

“Oh boy...” Ranma sensed another presence behind him.

“Oh hohohoho!” Kodachi was there, in a black and silver kimono, her battle ribbon twirling in the air. “Where are you hiding my Ranma, you little witch?”

“Great, as if things couldn’t get any worse...” As soon as she said that, Ranma knew never to tempt fate like that, as she moved into the middle of the path to see the final knife get twisted in her back. “Damn, talk about that Sod’s Law I read about...”

People began parting in front as a fire bore through them. Ranma sighed. “This just isn’t my day...”

As the crowd split, the fire was emanating from Akane Tendo, her ki giving that impression. “So, here you are, Ranma...”

The red-head spoke to her side. “Nabiki, you’d better get out of here, there’s gonna be a fight now...” Hearing no reply, she looked back to see no one by her side. “Ah...” Looking back at Akane, she knew nothing she would say would make a difference. “Hey Akane.”

“Don’t you ‘hey Akane’ me!” She cracked her knuckles and moved in, pointing accusingly. “You were with her again, weren’t you?”

Shampoo took this moment to glomp onto her arm, as Ukyo threw a freshly made meal into Ranma’s mouth, jumping in with her battle spatula. Kodachi began snapping her ribbon, cutting some of the ground around her, as she withdrew more clubs from her outfit.

“Umm...” Was all Ranma could say before Akane screamed.

“You PERVERT!”

### **Meanwhile A few stands away**

Nabiki was quietly counting the money again, just to be sure she wasn’t short changed by the owner, before glancing over her shoulder at the beaten girl.

“Sorry Saotome, but sometimes a girl has to cut her losses and get out quick before things get hectic...”

She walked off as the battle cries started and property damage grew, shrapnel flying everywhere. She heard Ranma’s own pained yells in the mix and winced. She didn’t look back once.

“I’m sorry, Ranma...”

### **---** **Author’s Notes**

Probably my most favourite chapter yet, I missed writing Ranma’s character, and I hope I got it spot on here. It’s difficult to figure out where the canon ends and the fanon begins when it comes to his speech. I know I make people sound too intelligent, so I had to dumb down for him, knowing that he didn’t really have good social skills.

This is mostly Nabiki’s memories, and also some extra scenes (Nodoka and Ranma namely) which give more character building, and I wanted to put in, regardless. This is how

I see their lives continuing, not a silly quest to remain a man lest Ranma commit seppuku. Nodoka would have accepted him as he was and I tried to reflect that.

The term I used above, Yankee, doesn't refer to America, but in Japan means a bleached blonde girl who is a delinquent. And yes, I did get make-up tips from my girlfriend, and the order in which it was done ;-)

P.S. Small note, we're around half way through this tale, I can see ten more chapters, though that may grow given the circumstances. There's now a forum for this story which you can access via my profile.

Reviews etc appreciated. Till the next one!

- J

[edit] Changed the part with Kodachi in it, see forum for details.