

## Out of sight, out of mind

### Chapter 12

**“You’ve got to be kidding me...!”**

#### Five minutes later

Stopping at the top of the staircase, Nabiki leaned against the wall and breathed hard. *I’m out of shape, if I can somehow trek across China but then can’t go up some steps I need some exercise...*

She looked ahead, the large double doors stood, imposing. *Well, here goes nothing...* Strolling up to them, she placed one hand on each door and pushed, the loud creak echoing around her.

Once inside, she let them close on their own and faced forwards, dropping her backpack to one side. She started walking on the red carpet. On her left was a buxom woman clad in a purple shoulderless dress and a strange material hovering above her head perfectly from under both arms. Her cyan hairdo was hard to miss, as was her lute. Nabiki then passed a man on the right holding a long trident staff, wearing red and brown clothing, or was it armour, she couldn’t be sure. He narrowed his eyes suspiciously at her. Finally, she passed another diminutive man on her left, near to the end of the carpet. His height reminded her of Happosai, though he wasn’t as short. The big ears and fishing rod again made his features unmistakable.

*So... Monlon, Bishamonten and Ebiten are here, but where are the other three?* She smirked as the main figure came into view, the throne seemingly towering high. She gave a light bow, as her earlier deep bows still counted, and as she was more or less accepted in, Nabiki could afford to be less formal.

“Thank you for allowing me this time with you, Kirin.” She stood up and tilted her head in the direction of the neighbouring empty seat. “Is it okay if I sit there while I talk with you?”

Kirin seemed to consider it, then waved it off, using his chopsticks to say yes. Nabiki went up slowly, but before she sat down she asked a question. “I’m not going to be married to you, by some bizarre marriage ritual am I?”

His eyes conveyed confusion as he shook his head. “No, why? Should there be any?”

Nabiki breathed a sigh of relief. “Herb played a little trick on, shall we say...” She sat down and placed her head in the crook of her hand, surveying the room idly. “Hmm, that view’s nice from here, I could get used to this...”

Kirin rolled his eyes inwardly. “You may speak, what is it you wish to know about that... person...?” He nearly spat out the name, which intrigued the Tendo.

“Why so mad? I know Ranma kinda trashed your home, but it was your fault for stealing his fiancée...” She saw him turn away, his mood darkening. “So, what was it?”

“That Saotome... Yes, he destroyed my palace. Were it not for my error with Akane Tendo, and my wealth to restore it, I would have killed him for the sacrilege.” The chopsticks flexed and Nabiki swore she heard crackling noises and a small glow from the tips, but she couldn't be sure.

“So...?” Nabiki prodded for more. *God, I love teasing information out of people!*

Kirin set his face and spoke calmly. “No, it was afterwards... After the wedding to my beloved Lychee...”

“After the wedding...?” This time she was puzzled. “But why would -”

He was speaking on, already recounting the history, without caring that he interrupted her. “Things... deteriorated between us, and she left...”

“I'm truly sorry to hear that.” Her sincerity was honest, as being around Akane and Ranma often enough meant that both were too bull-headed to admit their real underlying feelings. When they were nice to one another, something or someone interrupted that moment. *A few times, that person was me...*

“Thank you...” Kirin smiled backed. “I –”

The doors burst open and a man wearing camouflage and armed with a machete ran in. The three Gods were at their weapons in an instant, but recognised the uniform of the patrol. Gathering himself, he walked briskly up to Kirin and bowed deeply.

“What is the meaning of this interruption?” He asked, standing up and exuding his authority.

“I-I apologise Lord Kirin!” He bowed even further down, and spoke facing the floor. “I have urgent news to bring you!”

“What is it?”

“The Musk warrior has changed course from the Northern Pass and is headed south. His pace has increased rapidly and his ki is also battle ready.”

“What?!” Both Kirin and Nabiki shouted at the same time.

“I told him to go back to Herb!” She looked a tad desperately at Kirin. “There's no reason why he would do that...”

Kirin thought about the information for a moment longer. “Why south? What is there?”

The patrolman shook his head nervously. “I-I don't know, my Lord.”

Kirin widened his eyes. “Unless...” He looked at the messenger in front of him. “Stand up and face me.” He did so instantly. “Where did our border patrol state where the barrier had been breached?”

“To the south, my Lord...”

Nabiki crossed her arms. "Someone invaded?"

"No, it was just one person, and not a scout." Kirin darkened. "From the report we received, the person involved had a part in the destruction of my palace..."

Nabiki gasped. "You mean... Is it Ranma?!" Her heart leapt into her throat as it constricted her voice.

"We don't know..." Kirin gave a calculating gaze to no one in particular. "But –"

He was interrupted by a noise. Suddenly the room began to shake. "A-an earthquake?!" Nabiki cried out, familiar with the land shifting from her home country. "Get to the doorway, its sturdiest there!"

They were halfway there when it stopped, but a new event occurred. Staring outside the windows on the side of the building, the dusk of the evening was now bright. Running to them, they saw a hemispherical dome of white that came from a portion of the forest near the first gate, covering several dozen trees. After a few seconds, it dissipated and all that was left was a clearing. Nabiki narrowed her eyes to force her long distance vision quicker, and saw two blurry black dots in the centre, any distinguishing features were marred from the disappearing light source and intense distance.

"There were two people there..." Nabiki commented.

Kirin agreed. "Yes, I saw them too..." He turned to the patrolman, who was sweatdropping in disbelief. "Your orders are to head straight for that new clearing and intercept anyone still standing. Every patrol is to converge there, except the border guards." The man was still stunned from the spectacle. "GO!" Kirin bellowed.

"Y-yes, my Lord!" Taking a few steps backwards from the shout, he ran out of the throne room.

Kirin sighed and massaged his head. "All these new things happening one after another..."

He walked back to the throne, letting the formalness fade away as his stress levels grew. Nabiki could sense it from him, the way his shoulders sagged at moments when he was thinking deeply, and the long drawn out sigh.

"Kirin, what's wrong?" She wasn't best pleased with the way he stole Akane from them all those months ago, and how he didn't want to let her go, even after he lost. *But, it was my fault I put her in that situation as well, I pointed out she was holding the scroll...* She also realised that someone else was missing. "Where's Lychee?"

Kirin gave her a sardonic smile. "Have you already forgotten that things went awry. She left me, along with her pet, Jasmine."

"Ah... That explains a lot..." Nabiki had to re-evaluate him. *It looks like he's really in love with the right person this time... The pain he's going through is real.*

"I... miss her..." He looked away, as his murmurs to himself were picked up by Nabiki.

"I can see that you do..." Nabiki smiled. "Why aren't you out looking for her then?"

He shook his head, anger flaring up for a moment. “Unfortunately, running a kingdom takes precedence over a woman.” The middle Tendo noted that his statement seemed as if it quoted verbatim from a law of some description. “I’ve sent out three of my subordinates to look for her.”

*So that’s where they went...* “Do you have any idea where she is?”

“No idea...” He sighed. “Somehow she and her pet have vanished, but I wouldn’t be surprised if she turned up in Japan.”

“Japan?” Nabiki chuckled. “Why would she be there again?”

The chopsticks flexed. “Perhaps she’s still running after Ranma...”

Nabiki scoffed. “Excuse me? You mean she’s in love with Ranma?!”

Kirin stared at Nabiki, who sat there unflinching. “Everything leads up to that, it looks like there’s no other way.”

“Go on...” Nabiki could tell that he was holding something back. “Does this have something to do with why you both broke up?”

Kirin looked down. “I suppose it does.” He looked at her. “What do you know of the previous battle?”

“Almost everything, what does that have to do with anything?”

“Ranma and Lychee seemed to be constantly together, on my ship first, and then passing through the gates...” He seemed to take a breath, but she jumped in quick.

“And? What are you trying to...” Nabiki trailed off, as things began to make sense. “Let me guess, you got a little jealous of Ranma?”

“I did no such thing!” Kirin was incensed, but calmed down quickly. “After we married, we talked for hours on end... I’ve never experienced such a simple thing like that, but I got great pleasure from it.”

Nabiki smiled, recalling the times she would spend with her sisters during the rare quiet moments in Nerima, and doing nothing but talk like old times. *I wonder how they’re doing?*

“So what happened?” She asked quietly, guessing the answer already.

Kirin ground his teeth. “Lychee wouldn’t stop talking about Ranma!” He closed his eyes in frustration. “Some entire conversations would revolve around him, ‘Ranma was hurt by Monlon’, ‘Ranma beat up the Go brothers’. I just couldn’t stand it!”

Nabiki mulled it over, already knowing what was wrong. “I don’t do this for free; I can give you a discount if you have some information that Ranma contacted you recently. I already see the problem, and I know how to solve it, although that is all up to you.”

Kirin narrowed his eyes. “You say you can fix things between us?”

Nabiki held up a hand. "Yes, but I'm not going to be here. You'll need to do all the work yourself, I can only give you some pointers which should help to smooth things between you."

Kirin rubbed his chin.

"I am an expert at this, I've helped bring couples back together, and even made some break up with one another." Nabiki smirked. "It'll be the best purchase you made in a long time, I'll bet."

Kirin closed his eyes. "Ranma Saotome did contact me, sometime in early December." He looked at Nabiki. "Okay, I shall pay you for your services."

Nabiki grinned and inched closer to him from across her throne. "Well, from what I can see, it's simple. You're jealous of Ranma." She waved a hand to stop him from interrupting. "Not because of his lifestyle or numerous fiancées, but because of the short time he spent with Lychee."

She held up a finger. "One, he was with her during her time of great stress, mostly brought on by you. He didn't mean to, but felt that they were both in the same boat, as their relative fiancées had left them, voluntary or otherwise. They both shared those emotions and in a way got closer, but only for their ultimate goal, getting back their loved ones."

A second finger was raised. "Two, back then you constantly rejected her advances, instead staying with Akane, the person who merely held the scroll. You feel angry now because Lychee was obviously still in love with you, knowing that you were after the original bearer of the scroll. You also saw Ranma declare his love for Akane a few times, though he said it in his usual roundabout way by insulting her. He also fought his hardest to save her from you. The fact that you lost meant that, indirectly, your love lost out to his."

The third finger was added. "Finally, Lychee saw first hand how Ranma fights. Even I was taken aback when he fought his harder opponents near the dojo. You can't help but be impressed at how hard he pushed himself to defeat anyone and their odd techniques. Sometimes he even allows himself to get injured just to find a weakness in the attack. Lychee saw him fight many opponents, all of your Gods. He was hurt against Monlon and Ebiten."

She knew she scored a victory upon hearing them shuffle while standing nearby. "Then, he fought you, and you hurt him really bad, and even nullified his technique." She shook her head. "It was a fluke that he figured out a way to beat you. But Lychee saw how hard Ranma fought to win Akane back, and in her eyes, you were to one who stood in his way always, the one who injured him the most."

"So what are you saying?!" Kirin couldn't take the speech any more. "You're saying she does love him more than me?!"

"No." Nabiki spoke calmly. "I'm only saying that she has spent more time with Ranma back then, and if she wants you to know more about herself, then she'll obviously talk of that time often." Nabiki smiled. "She doesn't love Ranma, she's probably a little jealous that Ranma would go through so much to save Akane. She hasn't seen that same form of dedication from you." She tentatively placed a hand on his arm. "Now's your chance to

prove yourself, you have to go to her.”

Kirin was pensive. “I don’t know where she is though, the three Gods haven’t picked up any clue as to where she went.”

Nabiki shrugged. “Human nature is fickle sometimes, but easy to predict. If a person is hurt, mentally or physically, they retreat to a place where they feel at home or welcome. This is to enforce the safety net that surrounds them. Do you know where she lives?”

“She did mention a town when she was young, before she started searching for Haposai...”

“Well, try there, and this time go alone, I’m betting that you sent your followers to Japan to find Ranma, where you assumed she would be, yes?”

Kirin hmphed and looked away, getting a giggle from Nabiki. *Men can be so easy to read... Instead of thinking about getting the girl, they try to get rid of the rival...*

“So, apart from finding her, what do you suggest?” Kirin asked.

“Listen to her stories, but try not to feel jealous at Ranma, she’s not doing it on purpose. Besides, you should talk about yourself more often.”

“Me? Why?”

“Women like to know more about a person they chose to spend their lives with. You learn something new each day, as the saying goes.”

Kirin deflated, slumping against his chair. “I suppose I have been a fool in the way I reacted. I have to ask her to forgive me...”

“Good, but first things first, what did Ranma talk to you about?”

“Before I tell you, I’m curious, what happened to him? Why is he missing?”

Nabiki was prepared for this, and began to speak of everything she had discovered so far, how he disappeared, everything. Even the three other Gods were listening intently.

“I see...” Kirin nodded gravely. “That is a most drastic action to take, a respectable decision, but one fraught with danger.”

“Danger?” Nabiki quirked her eyebrow.

“To the self. His heart must be broken after removing all memories, as no one close to him remembers who he is, how does he satisfy his basic need for human acknowledgment? Who is there to be proud of him, who is there to be his friend, and most importantly of all, who is there to love him?” Kirin stopped and let the thought hang for a bit. “At this moment in time, he must be the loneliest person alive...”

Nabiki too was saddened by the thought. *It’s still so hard to admit that Ranma thought of such a complete plan to erase himself... ‘Saotome never loses’, but can he beat loneliness?*

“Why are you chasing after him?” Kirin enquired.

“Me? I... don’t know really. I hate mysteries I can’t solve. Besides,” She grinned. “I can’t exactly live my life as I used to, because I know that he existed, I’d be bothered about it all the time. My funds need topping up too, and Ranma was a good source for pictures.”

Kirin rolled his eyes. “Your reasons seem muddled... Anyway...” He cleared his throat. “As to your question, Ranma contacted me via a bird carrier.” *Must be Herb’s gift...* “He asked me about any special foodstuffs that could alter memories or actions, as he assumed correctly that I knew a great deal about mystical herbs and spices.”

“Interesting...” Nabiki tapped her cheek. “What did you reply?”

“He was very courteous in his message, so despite Lychee leaving I decided to humour him by speaking of a few items, most of which no longer exist. One Chinese invention however I mentioned could be helpful. It was in the form of a small pill. Once consumed, the eater could then be instructed by the person who gave the pill to do something, followed by a specific signal. Afterwards, once the signal was performed, the user would unwillingly perform the instruction.”

“Oh God...” Nabiki held a hand to her mouth. “I know about those pills! Shampoo used them on Ranma and Akane...” *So, that was another ingredient of that compound Ranma used. The Science Club did well figuring out Chinese origin of those herbs...*

Kirin sat up straighter. “Unfortunately, that is all I know, I never received a reply from him.” He looked closely at Nabiki. “Am I to believe that, in the unlikely case anyone from Nerima visits us, we are not to mention Ranma Saotome?”

“You got that right.” Nabiki nodded, and then sighed, standing up. “I think I should leave now, you’ve been a great help.”

“I’m sorry I cannot help you in your search, but as you know, I have my hands full already.” Kirin smirked at her.

“Now, I’d be thankful if you could tell where I could find –”

Kirin narrowed his eyes, followed by the three Gods; they all stared down the red carpet to the entrance. The door exploded inwards, sending debris and dust around the chamber. Nabiki coughed harshly and put her arm over her face, as the breeze brought the cloud of dirt towards them. The rest did not budge, instead raising their ki levels and bringing their weapons to bear.

A figure in shadow stalked out of the door, still covered by dust. In a few moments the person breached the outer layer of the cloud, and staggered forwards.

“WHERE AM I NOW?!”

Collapsing to his knees, Ryoga was sucking in deep breaths from the climb. The Gods all recognised the bandanna wearing boy, and Nabiki was completely bemused by his appearance.

“R-Ryoga...?”

He started, his eyes widening sharply. Snapping his head up, his eyes bored into Nabiki, as a malicious grin spread across his face.

*Uh oh... I think I'm in deep shit now... She gulped. I'd know that look anywhere... He always used it against Ranma...*

“Nabiki Tendo...” He stood up as his green ki began to steam around him. She didn't even need to concentrate to see it, as it flared in the visible spectrum. “Thanks to you, I've been through hell!” He took a few steps, his feet leaving deep impressions on the carpet and presumable the wooden floor beneath, thanks to the weight of his ki-filled body. “PREPARE TO DIE!” He lunged at her, his umbrella outstretched.

“Oh crap!” Nabiki backpedalled, but tripped on the steps leading up to the throne, and fell onto her back, landing badly on them, hitting her head against the chair itself.

“Halt!” Bishamonten intercepted Ryoga, batting him away with his trident, the latter managing to only get nicked by the blades.

Ebiten and Monlon stood guard as Kirin stepped down from his throne. “Ryoga Hibiki, what are you doing here?”

The manic look in the lost boy's eyes returned. “Get out of my way, I have a score to settle with her.”

“Not if we're still standing.” Kirin replied, sending a silent signal to the Gods. They all tensed themselves for the battle.

He moved back onto the carpet, as the Gods were spread evenly between him and Nabiki. He cracked his knuckles. “Then you won't be standing for much longer. I'm not going to be as easy to beat as last time, Kirin.” He moved to one of the temporary support pillars to the right. “Take this! Bakusai Tenketsu!”

The pillar shattered into thousands of pieces, flying in every direction. However, having gone through the training before, Ryoga was unaffected by the blizzard of stones, but the three lesser Gods were taken aback, and fell back further.

Screaming with rage, Ryoga piled through the rain of masonry, fist drawn back, and pulverised the armour-clad Bishamonten in the face. He flew back the length of the room and lay unconscious after hitting the wall at high speed.

Hearing a musical piece being played, he searched for the sound, only for the wire of the lute to wrap itself around his arms. A swishing sound and his right leg was wrapped up in Ebiten's fishing line.

“Heh, you think these will hold me ba-” Paling, he saw who was in front of him.

“Ougi, Hyaku Shou, Ryou Geku Shou!” Kirin shouted. A tunnel of focused chopsticks began speeding towards him.

“Shit!” Ryoga started to roar as the first wave hit him.

His ki grew and the weight advantage he now had helped him. Feeling the wire vibrating and cutting into his skin, he tried pulling them off, but only resulting in more pain from the thin metal. Crossing his arms in front of him he grinned.

Nabiki shuddered. "Oh my God! NO!"

Ryoga lost his grin and began to sag, the recent turmoil over Akane getting to him again, as he cried out. He snapped his hands forward. "Shi Shi Hokodan!"

The chopsticks were disintegrated, and the lute wire snapped off. The fishing rope was steadfast. Grabbing it, Ryoga yanked it hard and Ebiten flew towards him. Sending a roundhouse his way, he was surprised when the small man dodged him in mid air, and curled the rope around his neck, tightening the hold. Gasping for breath Ryoga hooked a hand and twisted the rope and loosened it. Grabbing his bandanna, he tore it off and sliced through the rope.

"What the...?" It cut through, but the strange material turned out to have metal filaments running through it, a supple but hardy component.

Ebiten had returned to Kirin's side, the rope now shorter, although it seemed to grow back again, the same with the missing wires from the lute.

After the blast was fired, Nabiki was in the direct path, Kirin, noting this danger, pushed her out of the way in time, as the back of the building blew open. He narrowed his eyes.

"I see, you've learned ki projection..." He stated.

"What do you think?" His depression grew as he began to tap into the same power again. "Thanks to Nabiki, I can make it more powerful than you can imagine..."

*N-No way! More than the Perfect version of it...?*

This time, the power collected was much higher than before. He thrust his hands out in front of him.

"SHI SHI HOKODAN!"

Kirin stepped back into a new stance, his bowl hand forwards and perpendicular to the floor. As the rice and pickle began to fall, his chopsticks generated their own yellow ki, widening to the whole length of it.

"Ougi! Gohan Oyobi Tsukemono No Kadate."

Spearing the pickle mid air, the ki from the chopsticks turned it golden, as the rice merged, lacing out to catch the rest, and forming a cohesive mass, the pulsing veins inside it looking like a golden cobweb.

"What the...!" Nabiki and Ryoga said at once.

As the Shi Shi Hokodan reached it, the efforts by Ebiten and Monlon to parry it failing, the large circular shaped shield turned concave, withholding the blast from going any further.

Kirin smirked.

“You’re not the only one who has been training.” The pickle in the middle of the unconventional rice cake began to rotate.

*It’s taking the ki in! Nabiki gaped and swallowed, a bead of sweat rolling down her cheek. It’s been a while since I’ve seen some fights, but this is a top level battle. Ryoga must be seriously pissed at me...*

“Kousen No Tsukemono!” Kirin yelled.

The green ki was penetrated through the centre, as the pickle sent out its own ki straight to the opponent. Ryoga yelled in frustration as it struck him in the chest, barrelling him back into the wall.

“No! I won’t stop now!” He got up quickly, jumping to his feet and grabbed his bandanna, throwing it at Nabiki.

As she ducked fruitlessly, Kirin deflected it with his chopsticks. He looked at her carefully, judging her to be in danger, and took a more offensive pose, his yellow ki filling the room.

“Monlon, get Nabiki out of here...” He formed another shield. “Take her safely away from here, to wherever she needs to go.”

Ryoga tried again, and it hit the shield. However, pulling his hand away to the right, another Shi Shi Hokodan was fired, but this time it curved around the rice, heading for Nabiki.

“Oh God! NO!” She cried, putting up her arms futilely. She was blown backwards.

The pain that followed surpassed her imagination.

*Did I hear... No, feel something crack? Her bones jarred and she bit her tongue from the involuntary shaking. Ouch... Is this what Ranma tried to beat that time? As her flight path took her neatly out of the impromptu opening from earlier, her mind clouded and her eyes glazed over.*

Nabiki discovered her own mortality at that point. She made a self-mocking smirk as internal injuries from when her arms slammed into her chest presented themselves, in the form of a trickle of blood leaking from her mouth.

*Guess I got in too deep, Ryoga’s temper is lethal... What was I thinking? Her eyesight flickered once. Well Kasumi, Akane, daddy... Goodbye.*

She blinked once, seeing the deep purple sky, stars emerging from their hiding places during the day.

*Sayonara Ranma, wherever you are...*

The world blacked out.

---

## Author's Notes

Ougi - Secret Technique

Hyaku Shou, Ryou Geku Shou – 100 Chopstick Sting/Pinch (not too sure on the Japanese spelling, I tried to approximate it to what I heard in the movie)

Gohan Oyobi Tsukemono No Kadate – Rice and Pickle Shield

Kousen No Tsukemono – Pickle Beam

Corny names for attacks, but hey, aren't most people like that?

So, is this the end of our intrepid explorer and detective? We shall see...

This is the first of four chapters that I feel turn the story around completely. When writing I make things try to look and feel legendary, so you'll be guaranteed to remember them long after you've read the story. Well, hopefully at least!

Without Ranma in Ryoga's life, I made him naturally search for a person to be angry with, and now he's found her. Of course, it was by pure chance that he ended up in Nekonron. As with everything in the Ranmaverse, anything can happen, often for the worst.

As for what's happening Nerima, THE major event will take place there (yes, we are returning there in the future). No clues will be given, but suffice it to say, it will be big.

Thanks for all your reviews and critiques, it helps me along! Until next time readers!

- J