

## Out of Sight, Out of Mind

### Chapter 13

#### “Where in the world is it?”

##### Unknown location

The sound of silence and a cool breeze was felt upon the skin.

The air grew warmer, as the rush of wind threatened to deafen.

The heat grew as steam began to rise from the ground.

Nabiki opened her eyes to find herself in a vast white world.

“Wha...?” She asked dumbly. “Where am I?”

She struggled to remember, rocking her head from side to side, until things came back to her. “Th-that’s right...” She looked at her arms. “Ryoga got me...”

She took another look at the bare landscape, and couldn’t tell how far it was as the land was covered in the layer of fog and mist.

*You’re telling me this is heaven?! She smiled wryly. Of course not, this must be hell, how could I end up in heaven? She bit her lip and grew more nervous. Still, to be all alone in this huge place... I can’t do that... I’ll go mad...*

Her eyes grew wider. “Loneliness... Is this what Ranma feels like now?”

A sound unlike the wind echoed in the area, which came so suddenly like a crack of lightning, vanished just as quickly, only to be replaced by another, this time softer as the shock of hearing it wasn’t so much.

Whirling around fast, Nabiki pinpointed where the sounds were coming from, which wasn’t hard seeing as there was someone there, walking away from her direction slowly.

As she moved closer, the blurriness began to vanish, and soon the air cleared up immediately.

“R-Ranma...”

The red silk top and black Chinese pants, not to mention the black pigtail, stopped her breathing for a few seconds. The image of him walking away made her realise that he was leaving.

“Ranma!” She started to run after him, but dismayed to find that the harder she pushed herself, the further the distance grew.

“RANMA! WAIT!”

Still he did not stop, nor turn to look at her, continuing his pace towards his destination.

Nabiki tired out, her knees exhausted, and she fell hopelessly on them, watching him go. Before she screamed out his name one last time, a musical piece, which her brain registered as playing throughout, grew stronger.

### **At that moment**

“RANMA!”

Nabiki opened her eyes fast, and was puzzled over why she wasn't in that white world. Instead she saw a familiar tower and could feel the heat rising from the hot spring lake.

“So, you're awake now...”

She turned her head sideways to see the female God.

“M-Monlon?!” Nabiki looked up to the palace and could see where her flight began. “H-how -”

“My special attack enables me the ability to grab things, the bonus of which is to leap far distances.”

The Tendo furrowed her brow, and felt her forehead. “Let me get this straight, you jumped out, caught me, and performed acrobatics with your wires to get us down? Like a bungee jump?”

Monlon nodded. “That's right.”

“Well... Let's get -”

She tried to stand up, but found her arms were far too weak to hold her, but aside from that, no pain. “Wait a minute, I'm sure I broke some bones just now...” She could still taste the blood in her mouth.

“Not broken, just slight fractures.” Monlon rolled her eyes at having to explain. “While you were unconscious I played a melody that heals critical wounds. It can only be performed within a minute of the injuries taking place, so is only used in an emergency. As you were lucky, there wasn't much to repair.” She held down an arm and helped Nabiki up.

“I was lucky? To have been shot at with ki?!” They began jogging away on the path, but soon acknowledged that Nabiki couldn't move fast just yet, so they walked.

“Yes, but you did not see how Kirin protected you with some of his rice, though it wasn't enough to shield you completely, it vastly reduced the lethal properties to just some concussion.”

“So... I probably felt the rice itself breaking up...” She commented out loud, then shook her head. “But I was bleeding! I can still feel it!”

Monlon smirked. “You bit your tongue hard, of course blood would come out...” She ended the sentence there, as if what she said was natural.

Nabiki shut her mouth for a few seconds. "Hang on, I need my bag! It has all my important stuff in it!" She stopped to turn back, but she was prevented from going any further.

Monlon shook her head. "Your suitcase is out of the question, however I manage to salvage your backpack, which I assume has all the necessary items?"

"Yes..." Nabiki reluctantly agreed. "But... all my clothes?! I spent ages picking them!"

Monlon waved her off. "It doesn't matter..."

Taking her bag, she could see that one of the shoulder straps was hanging on by a few threads. She held it out for Monlon to see. "So, you're telling me this damage doesn't matter? I'll have you know that Samsonite isn't some cheap foreign brand, it's the highest quality." She peered in closer. "You'll be receiving a bill from me in the near future."

Monlon grew a sweatdrop and stepped back. "F-fine!" She huffed and strode on.

Nabiki chuckled. *I guess I forgot to mention that it has a lifetime guarantee then? Oh well...*

Monlon waited for her to catch up, before changing the topic. "We need to get as far away from here as possible."

"Why?"

Her answer came in the form of another earthquake, as a bright light beamed out of the top floor. The roof was vaporised as a huge ball of white green ki lit up the night sky, hovering for a few seconds before falling again.

"Great..." Nabiki muttered. "The Perfect Shi Shi Hokodan..."

As they paused in their half jog, they saw a huge shield forming beneath it, glowing bright yellow as the rice threatened to snap.

"He's really working hard..." Monlon stated. "The opponent is very strong..."

"True..." Nabiki agreed, then giggled. "But if you walk into the next room he'll get lost easily, and of course his curse."

"Curse?"

"Yeah... Jusenkyo. He turns into a pig." She saw the amazed and angry stare from Monlon. "What?! I forgot okay?! I was kinda thinking about surviving, I never believed he would hit me..."

Monlon sighed. "It makes no difference." The light died down as the ki blast split from inside, a few seconds later a single figure clad in dirty yellow flew out the new skylight, far into the brush. "Lord Kirin has won."

They were now standing past the first gate, leading towards where the recently created clearing lay. "This way, we'll find out from the guards what happened there earlier."

## Five minutes later The clearing

Another guard flew into the trees, nearly hitting Nabiki.

“Great, what next?” She asked, looking up at the sky.

“Looks like your 'friend' is acting up a bit.” Monlon assumed.

In the centre of the clearing, surrounded by fallen patrols, was a weary but still battle hardened Lime, his face bore scratches and he had bruises on his arms. *Must've been beaten badly...* He knocked out another guard that tried to hit him with a machete.

Monlon brought out her lute, but Nabiki held out a hand. “Let me handle him, you'll only make things worse.”

Feeling the heat from his ki, she nervously walked up to him, her posture completely passive. She could tell that his animal DNA was overriding his normal senses, his eyes were flitting about fast and centred on her, his nose trying to figure out her mental state. Smirking, as he could tell she was afraid, he got ready to pounce.

“Lime...” She commanded, though her throat gave out at seeing the look in his eyes, so she repeated it. “LIME!”

Hearing his voice stunned him for a few seconds.

“That's enough now.” Taking the last few steps to him, avoiding the piles of soldiers. She put her hands on her hips. “We're not your enemies, you moron!” She scolded.

Instantly, he reverted to his usual self. “What did you call me?! Maybe I should try this 'groping' you mentioned a while ago...” His hands twitched suggestively, only to face a stern Nabiki.

“Try that on me and you won't have any hands to grope with.” Her thumb indicated Monlon. “She'll tear them off before you even realise the pain.”

“What's the lute lady doing here?” He growled.

“She's helping me out for now.” Monlon nodded. “So, are you going to tell me what happened to you then?”

Lime turned around and crossed his arms. “Nope, not telling...”

Nabiki smirked at his childish sulking. “I get it, you lost badly, huh?” She shrugged. “Never mind, I expected better of you.”

“I... I didn't -”

“Lose?”

Lime sagged his shoulders. “No... I mean, yes, I lost...” He looked up at her face. “That Ryoga kid sure got strong fast... I learned a new technique but didn't get the chance to use

it against him..."

Nabiki patted him on the back. "Yeah, that's kinda my fault, I pissed him off back home, and depression makes him too powerful." Lime got a confused look on his face, but shook his head to get rid of it. "So what happened here, why'd you beat up these people?"

He darkened. "They tried to sedate and capture me."

Monlon sighed. "They were doing no such thing, they were ordered to check out what that light was and administer any first aid if needed."

"Then why did they poke me with their puny sticks?!" He stepped on one staff, breaking it in two, to emphasise his point.

Nabiki grinned. "Maybe you just freaked them out, who knows?" She glanced at her watch and realised it was very late. "Look, I don't have much time, I want to get out of China fast. Monlon is accompanying me, do you want to join us?" She held out a hand of friendship to Lime.

"What?!" The cyan haired woman wasn't best pleased. "You mean that uncouth beast is coming with us?! I won't allow this!"

Nabiki gave her malicious glare, stalling Monlon in her tracks, before Lime could counter with another argument. "You have no choice in the matter. Kirin said you were to help me, he didn't forbid me from enlisting another person too." She looked at the tiger man with admiration, smiling, but still directing her speech at Monlon. "Besides, you seem too prim and proper, do you know how to hunt or set up camp? Lime can do all that, and more, within the hour."

Her words both offended Monlon and touched Lime in ways they never expected.

"I find him trustworthy in his own way, much like you when you saved my life." She looked at his face. "What do you say, Lime? Up for a little more adventure with me?"

He was thinking. Many thoughts regarding disobeying Herb and returning to the Musk immediately once he delivered Nabiki to Kirin affected him, especially the punishment he would receive for disobedience. However he knew that she had a hold on his master, not by much, but enough to give Lime leeway to obey her for the time being.

Besides, maybe she would allow him to 'touch' her as a reward.

He took her hand and shook it. "Deal, I'll follow you until you say otherwise." He marvelled at the smoothness of her hand, but lost it once she released him.

"Good, glad to have you on the team." She turned to her female companion. "Monlon, could you wake up a few soldiers, and have them inform Kirin about what happened here?" Nabiki was staring at the large piles of injured men. "Try to stick to the truth, I don't want another war over a little spat like this."

Monlon grunted in response, but relinquished and began to play her lute, the harmonic melody reviving some nearby people slowly.

It was only now that Lime really noticed the woman. "So... So beautiful..." His eyes were the form of hearts, but changed back to a somewhat leery look.

Nabiki heard his quiet comment, and made a sarcastic comment. "Oh, and what am I? Chewed meat? Leftovers?"

Surprisingly, Lime didn't know how to reply to that.

**1:14am**  
**15 miles outside Nekonron territory**

Lime returned from the woods. "No major predators out here, but lots of good meat, and even some edible berries."

"Yum..." Nabiki chose not to look at the rabbits in his clutches. Despite knowing where he got the food from, she didn't want to see them being killed.

Monlon had a uppity look on her face. "There's no way I'm eating such uncultured food..." She sniffed.

Nabiki was mildly incredulous. "Hello? Do you see any palaces nearby that would spare us some venison or veal?" She clicked her fingers. "Ah, of course, your stomach can't handle them, right? You can only eat pickles..."

Monlon sat by the fire in silence.

"There's nothing we can do about that..." Nabiki admitted. "We should have taken some with us, but we were in a bit of a hurry." She chuckled. "Tell you what, have the berries, they can't be too harsh, and a piece of meat. That should be enough for now. The water Lime brought from the spring should fill you up too."

"That... sounds acceptable..." Monlon turned her face away from them to stare off into some middle distance.

Nabiki rolled her eyes. *Well, at least she's going to eat something... Her attitude is a bit too pampered though... Being pampered recalled her of Nerima. She's a bit like Akane, the strongest martial artist, until the rest came along. She never really trained much after the basics. She was spoilt, even I grew out of that...*

Lime walked away and began to strip the rabbits of fur and sharpened sticks for rotating over the fire. Within twenty minutes, a meal was ready and prepared in some large clean leaves as makeshift plates.

"Thanks Lime, looks well done." Nabiki picked up a piece and her compliments were well deserved.

Lime of course had the larger portion, and without hesitation began to wolf down his food. Monlon felt a bit queasy at hearing his chewing and crunching, and got up to walk about while munching on her supply of different coloured fruits.

Nabiki and Lime were talking out loud, about their previous journey, and joking about the funny moments, like when Nabiki hid his clothes as he went to bathe in a random hot spring they found. Feeling a bit left out, Monlon returned to the fire and sat on her rock. The sole piece of meat was waiting for her by her side, the juicy, wet, but dark meat inviting her. Ambivalence from eating the succulent food and from breaking her morals over eating such dubious foodstuffs made her stop.

After a few minutes, she realised that as long as she was away from the palace walls, she would have to resort to other kinds of tastes to keep her stomach satisfied. Picking up the morsel, she placed it in her mouth and kept it there, almost unsure as if what to do next.

“This is the part where you start chewing.” Nabiki cheekily said.

Sending a withering stare her way, Monlon began to bite, slowly speeding up. Eventually the piece was finished and she felt a craving for more.

“No.”

Raising an eyebrow, she looked to the person she was supposed to be taking care of. “No what?”

Nabiki lay back against her rock, staring up at the night sky. “No, you can't have more.” She detected the strange look on Monlon after she finished her meat, similar to what Lime had when he first tried to 'talk'. “Your stomach won't be able to handle it. I heard that Kirin suffered for a bit of time when he tried Akane's cooking.” *Maybe he could eat more, but Akane might've increased the toxicity levels somewhat..* “You need to eat a tiny bit each day to adjust. Even then you might not be able to eat it normally...”

Monlon seemed a bit downcast, but let it slide quickly. Lime polished off his piece and moved on to the nearby tree.

“We should get ready to set up camp, I think it's going to rain...”

Nabiki got up and dusted her trousers. “Well, let's get to it.” She looked to Monlon. “Are you going to help?”

“O-Of course!” She hmped and got up.

Faster then ever, they managed to produce a respectable shelter, near a group of trees since three people meant it should be larger. Lime stood outside the tent, ready for his usual night watch.

Giving his injuries the once over, Monlon stood up and tapped him on the shoulder. “You... Go inside and sleep, you're still injured.”

“I heal faster than you weak humans, lute female.” He retorted, his fake cat ears flicking at some non-existent fly.

“Be that as it may, Musk, you still need to rest, so go inside. I'll keep watch tonight.”

His eyes glazed over and he zombied over to the tent.

“Oh, and if you dare to touch that girl, you’ll have me to answer to, as well as her.”

Paling slightly, he walked normally and stepped in, excusing himself. After some brief conversation and surprise, the sounds died down and they lay to rest.

Monlon could tell they were having trouble drifting off, especially Nabiki, as the lack of sleeping bag meant they were resting on a makeshift mattress of leaves and logs. Pulling out her lute, she started playing another melody. The soothing tunes floated over to the resting twosome, and the desired effect came into play, as their deep breaths and subtle snores a sign it worked.

Changing her composition, to a rousing song, she knew that within a few minutes the Musk warrior would have his superficial scratches and bruises fade away, allowing him to move about freely in his sleep.

Sighing, as the magic drain on her body took effect, she stared into the crackling fire and stood watch for the entire night.

### **The next day 10:47am**

The bright sun began to dry up the overnight shower, as two people lay asleep in a warm tent. The lookout was still wide awake, but looking much worse for wear.

Monlon decided that enough was enough, and began to play her morning anthem, in order to wake up the sleepyheads behind her. A few seconds passed, followed by a high shriek and several hitting sounds.

Jumping up from her seat, Monlon ran to the tent.

“What’s wrong?” Her ki had unfurled itself, ready to fight, but all she saw was a mad Nabiki beating Lime over the head with a log.

“Hey! Would you stop that already?! I said it was an accident...”

“Accident, my foot, you had your hand on my chest!” Nabiki smashed the log so hard on his skull that the wood broke in two. “How did you crawl from your end to mine overnight? Did some ants lift you over to me?”

Lime was bright red, and not from blushing, his face bore hand imprints from high speed slaps.

“God... Are you two like this everyday?” Monlon held her head in her hand. “This is ridiculous... Neither of you could move last night. I made sure of that.”

“You what?!” Lime cried out.

Nabiki held up a blanket that Lime had from his cart, protecting her innocence. “Wh-what did you do to me?” She shivered. “I-I knew you were the only woman there... Was there another reason why Lychee left?”

The insinuation was blatant, and Monlon exploded. "HOW DARE YOU!" Her ki tickled the occupants of the tent from its power.

Nabiki shirked further behind her blanket, but then burst out laughing. "Ah come on! It was a joke, just messing with you..." Her mischievous look made everything seem normal to her. "I figured that I slept too quickly outdoors, you probably helped us, right?"

Monlon flushed with anger and embarrassment. "Ye-yes... I also healed the Musk's wounds so he wouldn't injure himself at night."

"Hey, I have a name, you know! It's Lime!" He was annoyed again.

"Sorry about that, Lemon. I'm Monlon." She smirked as the tiger man growled. "Please feel free to use my own when referring to me."

Nabiki clapped her hands to end the discussion. "Good, now that we're all acquainted, shall we have some breakfast before we go? We have lots of ground to cover." Monlon nodded and left the two of them to get up from their bedspread.

"Hey Lime, sorry about before..." Nabiki did a head bow. "You did freak me out, what with all your threats before, and I'm sure I felt you squeeze."

Lime idly picked at his hair and looked away from her. "Yeah, it's okay, you didn't hurt me either. I... I... respect you... too much to take advantage of you like that..."

Nabiki smiled. "Bet I scare you too, that's one of the main reasons."

Lime nodded and laughed heartily. "Damn straight!"

Nabiki walloped him in the back. "Lets get out of this hole, the sun's out and it looks gorgeous today."

As they were putting things back in their places, Nabiki could see a slight blush on the Musk, and she wondered what it could mean. *Perhaps...*

"So, did you like what you felt?"

"Yeah..." He muttered huskily, before covering his mouth and backing away against the trees. "I... I...!"

"Hey, it's okay, you got a free feel, and in a way you did get your chance to 'grope' me." She grinned. "I'll be informing Herb of this, and he'll have to foot the bill for you." She went in close and nudged him. "So, it was good, huh?"

He nodded, afraid his voice would give out.

"Good, I may not do martial arts, but I do work out a bit." She placed her hands on her hips and thrust out her chest. "I'm proud of my figure."

Lime got a hold of his senses and grabbed the bag which contained all the sleeping stuff. As he passed her, he paused and whispered.

"You're not leftovers, nor chewed meat. You'd make a classy meal for even Prince Herb himself."

He walked on out and dumped the bag, scouting for some more berries he left over for the morning meal. Nabiki watched after him and grinned, happy for once. *Well, I never thought he'd get over his pervertedness, maybe he is good boyfriend material after all... He did flatter me a lot though...*

She strolled out into the light, covering her eyes for a few seconds before the whiteness returned to normal. She joined Monlon on the large tree stump as she played out a melodic tune.

"That's nice, is it supposed to make us feel happy?" Nabiki asked curiously, enjoying the timbre of it.

"No, it's just a normal childhood song my mother used to play to me. I've never played it since she died."

"Oh..." Nabiki was reminded of her own. "Sorry... My mum died too, but I was young."

Monlon looked at the Tendo, her opinion and features softening somewhat. She stopped playing. "Yes, it was the same with me, Lord Kirin took me in when she was killed, and trained me himself in using her lute."

Monlon looked at the birds and animals scurrying around the edge of their clearing. "I haven't been this close to her since that day, she always liked taking me outside and playing in the forest. I never went out much after that."

Nabiki mulled it over, thinking back to her own experiences. "I suppose there wasn't much reason to, without her things wouldn't be the same, and then you would just feel sad and nostalgic for being in the places you both used to visit." She looked at her. "What changed now?"

Monlon smiled sincerely. "Nothing, I think..." She heard a loud clumping through the trees and saw Lime stride back into their site, hands filled with ripe berries. "Perhaps the company I share with now has something to do with it?"

Nabiki held back a smile of her own. "Perhaps..." *Looks like her pain is changing into something else, maybe friendship? Rivalry? Who knows...*

"Hey you girls, let's eat, I'm famished!" Lime burped after eating a dozen fruits.

"Don't call us girls!" They both cried at once.

### **Fifteen minutes later**

"Okay, all done..." Lime put on his heavy backpack and looked around. "Nothing left but us now."

Nabiki cleared her throat. "Good, now we need to go to Togenkyo." She felt their stunned silence. "I didn't say it was going to be easy... That's my next clue, from there, we'll see." She pulled out her bird statue and stroked the spine, talking while the transformation undid

itself. "I'm going to send a letter to my sister, let her know I'm okay." *And to please offer Ryoga some food Akane made if she sees him...*

"Once Ranko is done there..." She chirped to acknowledge her. "I'll have her head for the place. Herb said she should be able to find places I've been to." She petted her postal service and spoke directly to her. "You're a clever girl, aren't you?" The now-eagle nodded barely. "I know Togenkyo floats about the place, but I'm sure you'll find it, right?" This time the nod was strong. "Good girl..."

Nabiki looked back up at her colleagues. "I'll ask Prince Toma for a guide, or something to let us on his island, maybe a boat or beacon, so we can follow it on the sea."

Monlon looked to the left. "There's the main river to the East, we can go there and take one of the boats. The palace owns a few for shipping pickles direct to there."

"Good idea." Nabiki nodded, and turned to Lime. "Any objections?"

He pondered everything for a second then shook his head. "None that I can think of."

"Excellent." She pointed dramatically to the woods. "Let's go!"

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### **Author's Notes**

Oh wow! She's alive! But for how long???

Well, quite a while at least. I always liked the theory of music being a healer, and in this case, a magic lute with lethal wires should also have another application, why not as an on-field medic or priest (if you're into MMORPGs).

Did you realise that the big explosion in the previous chapter was Lime being beaten down by Ryoga? And what is the secret technique he learned?

So, the search heads for the floating island, and another piece of the puzzle will fall into place, probably the biggest one, and the next destination will be inevitable from there (no, it's not Nerima for those of you itching to find out about it).

Thanks for all the reviews! I'm enjoying the critiques from some (issues of logic etc) which help me improve and tighten my writing further.

Till the next one!

- J