

child of love,  
children of hate

子供の愛  
子供達の嫌悪

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April 29, 2000

Sailor Moon is the property of Takeuchi Naoko and some corporations. Ranma  $\frac{1}{2}$  is the property of Takashi Rumiko and some other corporations. I claim only ownership of the plot and what new characters there are. It is not my intention to violate their copyright, but instead to entertain. I can only hope to do so with a fraction of their skill. This story is meant to be distributed for free. Please do not change it, or stick your name on it.

People who preread portions of the text: Dracklore, elfman, hachiman, James Merritt Jr., Lord Talon, Octavian, roslyn, say-tan, Tigress and Weeb.

Comments and feedback in all forms are appreciated. Comments and feedback sent directly to me are appreciated even more, since that makes it easier for me to keep track of it. I'm particularly interested in thoughts on my characterizations.

This story takes place after the end of both of the series involved. While I can't think of anything I've written which might spoil the story, you've been warned.

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When I first began reading Ranma/Sailor Moon crossover fan fiction, I noticed that most of them followed a fairly standard formula. Something happens to either Akane or Genma, and Ranma ends up living in Juuban with his mother. Some relationship evolves with Ami, and then it turns out that Ranma is a throwback to the Silver Millennium, either a Senshi, or another male companion, ala Tuxedo Mask. In some of them, continuation stories especially, Ranma and Akane actually marry.

Many of these stories are actually quite spectacular, and I can only aspire to tell as good a story as them. But still, there is a certain predictability about them. (The few<sup>1</sup> that have been finished, anyways.) This story is only partly about the story itself. A good part of it is an experiment in other forms of Ranma/Sailor Moon crossover fan fiction. Unfortunately, due to certain beliefs about Ranma  $\frac{1}{2}$ , I can't be totally unpredictable, either.

Ohh well.




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<sup>1</sup>Fire's "Sailor Ranko" and "Destiny's Child" are the only ones that come to mind.



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**Part I**  
**The Story**



# Chapter 0

## The Prelude

Ransou and Ayane Aino stepped up to the front door of their modest Juuban home. But before they had even put the key in the door, they knew something was wrong.

“Minako! We’re home!”

They waited.

Sure, it was sunday night, but it was only 9:00pm or so, and Minako had a nasty habit of staying up late.

“Minako! Where are you?”

There wasn’t any response.

Ransou and Ayane began searching through the house, getting increasingly worried. By the time Ransou made it to the stairs, he was glowing with ki, and as he ran up the stairs at sub-sonic speeds, the carpet smoked under his feet.

“MINAKO!?!”

“WHERE IS SHE?!”

\*bzzt\* \*bzzt\*

\*bzzt\* \*bzzt\*

“Whats that?”

“Idiot, thats the doorbell.”

“Oh.”

Ayane sighed as she walked down the stairs to get the door. Carpeting wasn’t cheap. At least this wasn’t anything compared to having to fix holes in the walls.

Reaching the door, which was left open in their earlier haste, she saw a group of girls standing outside. She recognized four of them as Minako's best friends, the other two seemed familiar. Maybe she'd seen them on the street before.

\*The girl with the long blonde hair done up in two balls and two pony tails, what was her name? Ah, Usagi, yes..\* Usagi was standing in the front, flanked by a tall brown haired girl and a girl with long black hair. \*Wish I would've paid more attention to Minako's friend's names. Oh well.\* The other three were standing at the bottom of the stairs, and she couldn't see them very well. \*Ah, Ami is there in the back.. she always reminds me of my sister.\*

"Yes? What can I do for you?" Ayane inquired in a rather exasperated voice. She had just come home to find her daughter missing, and here were a bunch of Minako's friends, all safe and sound.

The Usagi girl spoke up, "Mrs Aino? Ah, well, er, you see, uh, Mina, well..."

Ayane perked up instantly at the mention of Mina. In fact, it sounded like Ransou had heard and was coming down the stairs, too.

"Minako? Do you know where Minako is?"

"Well, er, I mean.."

Ransou had most certainly heard, and was staring at Usagi with rapidly decreasing patience.

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Usagi was getting increasingly nervous as she walked towards the Aino home. She was fairly sure about how the Aino's would react, they were usually fairly calm people (except with each other). Just thinking about Ransou Aino was calming, he seemed sort of like her Mamo-chan, tall, with dark hair he kept in a pig tail, and strong looking. She could see where Mina got her good looks, both of her parents were very attractive. They must've had any number of people chasing after them when they were young..

Ami's voice snapped her out of her day dreaming.

"Usagi! We're almost there, have you figured out what you're going to tell them?"

Usagi got sort of nervous as she mumbled, "Not exactly.." her voice beginning to trail off before she even finished the first word. Academically, she understood that this was part of her job as team leader, but she didn't ever actually expect to have to do it..

\*Oh boy, I don't feel so good... I could use some ice cream right about now...\*

By this time, they were arrayed in front of the Aino's door. For some reason, it was wide open. Well, it wouldn't be polite to just walk in. Even with Rei and Makoto right behind her, and Ami, Haruka and Michiru behind them, Usagi didn't feel very confident. Sadly, that didn't stop what had to be done.

So, she rang the doorbell.

Ayane, Minako's mother, came to the door. It was odd, she didn't seem like she belonged in glasses.

"Yes? What can I do for you?" Ayane inquired in a rather peevisish voice.

Usagi nervously began, "Mrs Aino? Ah, well, er, you see, uh, Mina, well..."

"Minako? Do you know where Minako is?" Ayane's eyes had gotten very bright at the mention of Mina's name.

"Well, er, I mean.." was all Usagi managed to get out before she noticed that Ransou had come down the stairs. \*Hey, what are those foot prints doing on the stairs...? And, whoa, I could swear Ransou's eyes are glowing. Nah, I've just gone too long without ice cream.\*

Usagi gulped. Ransou was staring at her and did \*not\* look at all pleased.

In a dreadfully calm and level tone, Ransou asked "Do you know where my daughter is?"

\*Oh boy. He doesn't look at all happy.\*

"WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER?!?!?"

At this point, Usagi's mind pretty much locked up. She never was one to handle danger very well, and Ransou was looking pretty dangerous right about now. She may have fought off evil invaders from the past, present, and future, but she'd never been too successfully in dealing with angry parents.

At this point, however, Usagi was at least temporarily saved from dealing with Ransou, as Rei and Haruka had quickly stepped in front of her.

Rei's non-trivial temper wasn't going to help much of anything.

Too bad.

Usagi was dimly aware of Rei telling Ransou to back off before things got really confusing.

---

Ami watched as Usagi stepped up to the open door and rang the door bell. \*I

wonder why the door is still open.\*

Minako's mother, Ayane came to the door. Ami and Mrs Aino spoke quite a bit whenever Ami stopped by. She wasn't sure why, they really didn't have much in common, Ayane was a housewife and a small time actress.

Unfortunately, all the way in the back, and at the bottom of the stairs, Ami was having trouble hearing exactly what was being said. Ayane seemed upset.

With a sigh, Ami realized that Usagi wasn't doing a particularly good job of breaking the news to Minako's parents. Things seemed to get worse after Ransou came down the stairs, though. His deeper voice carried much better.

"Do you know where my daughter is?"

\*mumble\*

"WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER?!?!?"

\*That's odd, Mr Aino is usually so calm, I never would've imagined him shouting, even about this. Oh my, it looks like Rei and Haruka have gone on the defensive.\*

"Hey! Back off, you don't need to shout at Usagi!" Rei always was the most defensive of their princess, even if she wouldn't admit it.

The next bit took them all completely by surprise.

Ransou started to glow. Then he pushed through Rei and Haruka and grabbed Usagi by the shirt, and lifted her off the ground.

"TELL ME WHERE MY DAUGHTER IS!"

Ami's analytical mind was going into over-drive at this point. There were a number of things wrong here. First, Ransou was glowing. Normal people tend not to glow. Second, Ransou had lifted Usagi off the ground with one hand. Usagi may be a teenage girl, but she packs away enough ice cream that she certainly isn't anorexic. Next, Ransou had gotten through Rei and Haruka. Admittedly, Ransou was a gym teacher, so he would be strong, but Haruka was a strong fighter, and Rei wasn't a slouch. You don't fight youma, cardians, droids, daimons and who knows what else without learning a few things. Oh, and, finally, Ransou was glowing. In her time as Sailor Mercury, had cataloged a number of groups of people who glowed. People possessed by youma, people being drained by cardians, people being drained by droids, etc, etc, etc. Generally people being drained passed out rather quickly. This left her with just one remaining category, people possessed. People possessed by youma and other evil things usually started draining other people, though.

Hmm. It appeared as though Rei, Haruka, and Makoto were charging Ransou to save Usagi.

Why did Ransou have a 5 yen piece in his left hand?

“HAPPO GO-EN SATSU!”<sup>1</sup>”

\*Oh my.\*

Ami watched dumb-founded as tendrils of energy snaked out from the coin, hitting Rei, Makoto and Haruka, all three of whom started to glow.

\*Why, it looks like their energy is being drained!\*

Ami’s mind still being in analytical over-drive went over her last train of thought. Ransou was glowing. He wasn’t being drained. Rei, Makoto and Haruka were glowing. They certainly almost weren’t possessed, but they were being drained. Ami came to the only conclusion possible for somebody who had never seen a age-shifting ki-vampire deal with juvenile delinquents. Ransou was possessed by some sort of energy draining youma, and it was her job as a Sailor Senshi to save him.

“MERCURY CRYSTAL POWER, MAKE UP!”

Michiru picked up quickly, too. “NEPTUNE CRYSTAL POWER, MAKE UP!”

Unfortunately, Rei, Makoto and Haruka were still suffering from the effects of being drained. Usagi was mumbling incoherently under Ransou’s stare. They needed some sort of distraction... “SHABON SPRAY!” With the area obscured in fog, Mercury worked to pull Rei, Makoto and Haruka back.

“MARS CRYSTAL POWER..”

“JUPITER CRYSTAL POWER..”

“URANUS CRYSTAL POWER..”

“MAKE UP!”

When the fog cleared, they saw a rather confused looking Ransou and Ayane standing there, with Usagi set down on the ground. Ransou was still glowing, though.

“Taking over our friend’s parent’s and attacking teenage girls is unforgivable! In the name of the Moon, we will punish you!” Ami wasn’t quite sure why she didn’t punish people in the name of Mercury or something, but she decided to worry about that some other time.

All Ransou could manage was a “Huh?”

This sort of put a damper on Mercury's plans. Demons and what not usually responded with threats against her life, rambled on about how she was a little girl and they were going to drain her energy, yadda yadda. They didn't "Huh?" at her.

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Ayane watched helplessly as Ransou picked up Usagi and shouted at her. There wasn't a whole lot she could do at time like this. In fact, there probably wasn't anything anyone could do to stop him about now.

\*Hrm, those three girls think they're going to get to him?\*

"HAPPO GO-EN SATSU!<sup>1</sup>"

\*Ah, a Happo Go-en Satsu. Wasn't exactly expecting him to use that technique. Always used to make him so nervous to even hear those words.\*

\*Whats going on back there? Ami seems to be reaching for something... Wow, thats a nice light show. Shabon Spray? What kind of a techni...\*

"Hey? Where'd everyone go to?"

\*More of that same light show. I wonder if its anything like building up a battle aura.\*

Ransou's burning battle aura managed to get rid of the fog rather quickly, leaving Ransou and Ayane standing in front of Usagi, with a 5 teenage girls in rather short skirts arrayed behind her, on and at the bottom of the stairs.

The girl in the short blue skirt began shouting, "Taking over our friend's parent's and attacking teenage girls is unforgivable! In the name of the Moon, we will punish you!"

Ransou managed a fairly confused sounding "Huh?"

Deciding that something probably needed to be done before the situation got any further out of control, Ayane spoke up, "Excuse me? Nobody is taking over anyone here. Now, sure, my idiot husband over-reacted and picked up Usagi but it isn't like he could bring himself to hurt a girl."

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<sup>1</sup>A number of people pointed out something along the lines of "Ranma can't use the Happo Go-en Satsu because he hasn't had the changes made to his body that Ms Hinako did." I went back and perused the translations of the manga. While I'm certainly human, I didn't see anywhere that it said that everyone who wanted to use that technique would need those changes, just her. The fact that no other characters actually used the technique doesn't mean anything. Presumably a number of characters knew techniques which they never demonstrated. IMO, thos echanges were simply a quick route to the ability to manipulate ki. The slow, and normal, route, was the one which Ranma, Ryouga, Happosai and Cologne used. Becoming high-powered martial artists. Hence sufficient desire could easily allow Ranma to learn the technique.

The young girls all seemed sort of confused at this point. The one in the blue skirt seemed to have some sort of visor over her face now, and was looking particularly confused.

The girl in blue's confusion became painfully evident when her unsure voice spoke up, "Um, guys, I'm not reading any evil coming from them. In fact, they're normal except for a bit of magic clinging to Mr Aino and whatever power it is that he is glowing from."

That definitely seemed to put a damper on the girl's spirit. Here they were all ready to punish some demons or youma or what have you, but nooo, they had to turn out to be humans. Extraordinary humans, but humans all the same.

"Why would we be evil?" inquired Ayane, her concern over Minako temporarily pushed to the side.

Again, the girl in blue spoke up, "Well, um, first Mr Aino was glowing, and then he, er, lifted Usagi off the ground, and then he sucked the energy out of Rei and Makoto and Haruka.."

"Yeah, and..?"

"Well, thats about it."

Ayane was getting sort of exasperated at this point, "Whats evil about battle aura, being strong, and using a ki-draining technique to calm people down? If they hadn't run off in that fog, he probably would've given them their ki back after he got an answer."

Apparently, Ransou was in no mood to discuss things, and most certainly hadn't forgotten his daughter.

"WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER?!?!"

Snapped out of her trance, finally, Usagi spoke up, "Shegothurtreallybadsowe-tookhertothehospitalohboyI'mreallysorry!"

With a scream of "NOOO!!!!", Ransou took off running, his ki charged legs burning with a light like that of thermite flares, and tearing into the concrete sidewalk like a pair of jack-hammers.

"MORON! Get back here! You don't even know which hospital!"

Turning back to Usagi, Ayane asked "Which hospital did you take her to?"

Usagi managed to blurt out "Seasidehospital" as a single word.

With a burst of light almost matching Ransou's, and a brief thanks, Ayane barreled her way through the dumbfounded girls. Following the trail of ruined sidewalk, Ayane's own ki-charged legs managed to do little more property damage

to the already thrashed concrete.

---

“Wow. That was weird.”

Usagi had this tendency to understate things. She just did it again.

Sailor Mercury spoke up, wondering, “What do we do now?”

“I guess we should try to follow them or something.”

---

Apparently, even though Ayane hadn't caught up with Ransou before he made it to the hospital, he had miraculously made it to the right hospital.

“Minako Aino! What room is she in?!”

“Now sir, listen here, you can't just come barging into a...”

Ransou was in absolutely no mood to be lectured. Letting the fire of his ki show itself in his eyes, he stared at the nurse, and asked, again, “Where is Minako Aino?”

Not used to being confronted with people whose spirit burnt so powerfully that it could be seen in their eyes, the nurse clammed up for a second. Admirably, her emergency room training kicked in, and she was able to choke out “five forty-two” with a minimum of stuttering.

No sooner than the last syllable had left her lips, Ransou was gone, charging for the stairs, his ki flickering across his body. Showing uncommon restraint, he avoided ripping up the tiles or stairs with the speed of his feet.

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Panting, Ayane Aino reached the main desk of the hospital, and encountered a rather frazzled looking nurse.

“How can I help you?”

“I'm Ayane Aino, Minako Aino's mother. What room is she in?”

The nurse suddenly got nervous, \*I hope she isn't like the last one...\*

“Excuse me? What room is my daughter in?”

Lucky for her, the nurse managed to stammer out “F.. five f.. forty t.. two”

With a curt “Thanks”, Ayane took off running towards the stairs.

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Ayane found room 542 easily enough, apparently Ransou had taken lessons from her father on how to cry so she just had to listen for the water-works and avoid the puddle.

“Ranso.. oh god! Minako!”

Pausing between sobs, Ransou asked aloud, “Who did this to my poor baby?”

By this time Ayane had joined Ransou at Minako’s bedside, and was looking at her daughter through tear-clouded eyes. One leg lifted in traction, the other and an arm in casts, with bruises and burns covering a good bit of her exposed skin she certainly didn’t look like the idol singer she wanted to become someday.

\*Whats that?! ..heavy ki buildup?\* Ayane quickly began looking around, but it didn’t take long to locate the source. Ransou had begun glowing with the greenish color that signified depression ki buildup. She should know what it looked like, she’d certainly seen it coming off of Ryouga often enough. \*God, its still growing! He could accidently discharge a Shishi Houkou Dan at this rate!\*

Not wanting Ransou to hurt Minako, or damage the hospital (the sidewalk would be expensive enough), Ayane grabbed Ransou and jumped out the window with him. Safely on the ground and overlooking the water, she began coaxing him.. “Come on, just let it out.”

With that, the green light around Ransou flared even brighter. A green column of pure depression lanced out into the night sky, released by the words “SHISHI HOUKOU DAN!<sup>2</sup>”

“Come on, lets go back up to Minako now.”

---

Much to the unknowing nurse’s relief, Usagi and the Senshi didn’t have to ask which room Minako was in. And on a night filled with strangeness, the sight to which they were treated upon entering Minako’s room was actually quite normal. On the far side of the bed, Ransou and Ayane sat, teary-eyed, watching their daughter sleep.

The girls all gathered into the room, standing near the door (they were wary of the Ainos after their last encounter)

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<sup>2</sup>“Shishi Houkou Dan” means “Raging Lion Bullet”. It is performed by placing ones hands together, palms out, at arms length, and “firing” a ki blast fuelled by depression.

Working up the courage to disturb the Ainos, Usagi spoke up, “So, uh, I guess you know our secret now, huh?”

After a few painful seconds, Ayane looked up at Usagi. “Your secret?”

“Yeah, you know, that we’re the Sailor Senshi.”

“You’re the Sailor Senshi?!” Ayane’s eyes had lit up at this revelation (but not with the burning light of her ki)

All of the girls face-faulted.

“You didn’t realize that we were?”

“Nope.”

Groans rose up from the collected girls.

In a soft voice, Ayane asked, “Does this mean.. that.. Minako is one, too?”

“Yes. Mina is Sailor Venus.”

“So, all of it, everything we worked for, it was pointless.”

This time, it was Ami who spoke up, very quietly, “What do you mean? What was it that you worked for?”

“Minako... We were trying to give her the normal life we never even had a chance at, and now look at her, caught up in this.”

“She’s happy being Sailor Venus... she likes to help people.”

Ayane looked back down at her injured daughter, taking awhile to digest this bit of information.

“Who did.. this to her?”

“It was a demon, we’re not sure who is responsible for them.”

Finally, Ransou spoke up, quietly at first, “They’re going to pay.. every last one of them. I’ll rip them apart, I’ll unseal forbidden techniques just to make them suffer more!!!”

A bit confused, but still thinking that Ransou had gone over the edge, Makoto asked “And what could you do? These are demons, they did this to Mina while she was Sailor Venus, and our magic protects us from harm.” She obviously thought the idea of Ransou helping the Senshi was ludicrous.

Ransou was now standing up, staring at the recently revealed Senshi, his ki again flickering across his body like wildfire. “I am Ranma Saotome of the Anything Goes School of Martial Arts, and no demon is going to stop me!”

“You mean to tell us that you’re the famous Saotomes?” Makoto didn’t believe

them in the least and was taking no pains to hide the fact. Mr and Mrs Aino both wore glasses, they were never seen practicing martial arts, and until tonight had always been very peaceful people. They could hardly be the world famous Ranma and Akane Saotome, grand masters of Anything Goes Martial Arts, greatest living martial artists and quite possibly the greatest ever.

“Yes” came the response, in stereo.

Makoto shook her head, “No. Way. I’ve seen them at tournaments before, and Ranma Saotome has that curse that turns him into a woman. You don’t look like them, and you sure don’t turn into a woman. Besides, even if you are the Saotomes, you’re just martial artists. Those rumors about what you can do can’t possibly be true.”

“So, you’re saying you don’t believe us?”

“Right.”

“Ranma” and “Akane” exchanged a look with each other, and then they started to turn to the right and then.. they blurred. Their entire bodies turned into big blurs.

And, just as suddenly as it started, it stopped. Two people were standing there. They were wearing matching red and black chinese clothes, an embroidered dragon curled its way across Ransou(?)’s chest, down his right arm, up Ayane(?)’s left and across her chest. Neither one had glasses, and they both exuded the raw power and confidence that comes from being the very best, and knowing it.

“Kachuu Tenshin Amaguriken, Saotome revision #7, Clothing Rearrangement Whirlwind<sup>3</sup>.”

“Ranma..” spoke first.

“..and Akane..” spoke second.

and “..Saotome.” came out in stereo.

Makoto whistled. All the other girls kept the same dumb look on their faces.

“Now, are you going to let us come along, or will we just have to follow you?”

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<sup>3</sup>I got the name of the Kachu Tenshin Amaguriken revision from Richard Lawson’s “Serendipity”, set in the “Thy Outward Part” universe. Thy Outward Part is a good story, you should read it if you haven’t.



# Chapter 1

## Confrontation and Explanation

*“One must understand that when we first met the reincarnated Senshi, they were unable to grasp any source of power besides that of their own magic.” - Ranma Saotome*

Makoto looked at the two people standing in the middle of the street. Not 20 minutes ago, they'd claimed to be the famous Saotomes. She hadn't believed them initially, and rightly so. She was slowly becoming more than merely convinced, though. After Rei had demanded hard evidence of their claim, the two of them had jumped out of a window. They were on the fifth floor.

Not even Sailor Jupiter was going to try a jump like that if she had a choice about it. Sure, she'd survive, and the bones in her legs would even heal straight after a few days (if she stayed Sailor Jupiter the whole time), but it wouldn't feel at all pleasant. And those two..

So the assembled girls had hurried down the stairs, to find Akane and Ranma waiting a ways off, smiling. They waited for only a minute before running off, quickly. It didn't take long for the girls to completely lose them. Then, right as soon as they'd stopped and just about given up, Ranma and Akane had appeared behind them.

“Well, I suppose if you want to stop here, that's okay..” said Ranma, looking around lazily. “So, you don't think we'd be able to do anything to some demons, huh?”

Now, Ami with her computer out, spoke up. “Well, Mrs Aino or, er Saotome doesn't have any magic at all, and you just seem to have a tiny little bit clinging to you..”

“Right, that's just my curse, it's not like the stupid thing could help me, anyways.”

Slightly confused, Ami continued, “..and even that isn’t even close to my level of power, let alone Usagi or Minako’s.”

Now it was Ranma’s turn to be confused. “What would we be doing with magic? All it ever does it get me in trouble, why there was the time with that evil spirit..”

A cough and a look of promised violence from Akane stopped Ranma in mid-ramble.

“Yeah, er, so, anyways, what would we need magic for just to beat up some demons?”

Ami stood wordlessly. She wasn’t quite sure how to respond, since she wasn’t aware of any means to fight something like demons *without* the use of magic.

Seeing the confusion on young Ami’s face, Akane thought to try and get to the point. “What do you girls use magic for?”

Ami was happy to again know what she was talking about. “Well, the Sailor Senshi magic makes us faster, stronger, increases endurance, and gives us magical attacks.”

“Like what kind of magical attack?”

The girls looked between each other, and Makoto spoke up. “I’ll show them.” After some nodding, Makoto called out her transformation phrase. “JUPITER CRYSTAL POWER!”

Looking back to see a unimpressed Ranma and Akane, she faced down the street before letting loose a Sparkling Wide Pressure up into the air.

Akane nodded in thought. “Not bad. Something like that might catch Ryoga’s attention. Here, this should be about like that.” Drawing back her right arm while extending the left one forward, Akane summoned her ki, and formed it into a red sphere in her right hand. Speaking only slightly louder than normal, Akane announced the attack, “Rekka Hokan!<sup>1</sup>”. Right arm shooting forwards along the line made by her left arm, the ball shot off into the night sky, swelling to about the size of a basketball right after passing her left hand.

All of the girl’s jaws had dropped, but Rei and Ami were the only two who needed to worry about people parking in their mouths. “Tha.. that was ki, wasn’t it?” Rei asked, having managed to rein in her astonishment.

“Yeah, that was one of the simpler attacks.”

---

<sup>1</sup>“Rekka Hokan” means “Raging Fire Completion”. Give or take. Attack names seem cooler in Japanese, so that and proper nouns are about the only place where I plan on using Japanese.

“Ha.. how do you manage to give it shape?!”

“You have to use emotional energy to make your attacks strong enough to be useful.”

“But, how did you do that without magic?” inquired Ami.

“It isn’t magic! It is ki! We can use it to do the other things you use magic for.”

“Like what?”

“Well, we can make ourselves faster by using ki and a technique called the Kachu Tenshin Amaguriken. You saw the most advanced forms of it the other day.”

Whipping her computer out, Ami asked if Akane could demonstrate the Amaguriken.

“Well, the basic Amaguriken just lets you grab chestnuts out of a fire. Its the revisions that let you do useful things. You saw one of them earlier. Thats the final revision. The first revision is merely a speed punching technique.” With that, Akane cocked her right fist and let fly Saotome revision #1.

“Impossible..” said Ami, eyes straining to pop out of her face. “Akane’s fist was moving at an average of 750 meters per second!<sup>2</sup> Thats way beyond anything we can do.”

Deciding to give the introductory lesson to advanced Amaguriken usage on the spot, Ranma spoke up, “Same thing can be done with your feet, or whole legs, or whatever other body part you want. Reflexes are increased by affecting the mind. Endurance can be increased by speeding up the healing process. The Amaguriken can’t be used to affect strength, though.”

While Ranma was ready to go into details, Akane was not. “Listen, as much as Ranma’s ego would love to stand around all night and talk about martial arts techniques, I’d like to get back to my daughter.”

With little hint of disappointment, Ranma joined his wife, who was already walking back. “Wait, if you want to help with the next demon, how do we get ahold of you?” called out Usagi.

That managed to stump the pair, until Akane came up with a solution, “Well, how do you normally contact Minako?”

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<sup>2</sup>See the case study on Ranma at:

<http://web3002.servers.instant-web.co.uk/RanmaFAQ/arts/ranma.html>  
He can manage 1000m/s at 16, but Akane never was as fast as Ranma.

Disappointed that she hadn't thought of it sooner, Ami responded, "Ah, we have communicators. We left Mina's in her room after we took her to the hospital. You could carry it around. Bottom drawer on the left."

Nodding, Ranma and Akane left 6 very surprised girls to return to their daughter.

---

Dropping her guise of Sailor Jupiter, Makoto walked the short distance back over to her group of friends her eyes conveying a message of astonishment.

Makoto opened her mouth to speak, but everyone else took that as a cue to speak, too. After it calmed down a bit, Haruka demanded, "Well, Ami, what do you think? If they show up at the fight, are we going to be hindered trying to keep them out of trouble?"

"I'm not sure," Ami said, "my computer could not measure the power of Mrs Saotome's attack. Various other physiological measurements are quite surprising, though. Their bodies are in perfect condition, and in fact, do not show signs of aging past about 25. I don't know how old they are supposed to be, but Mina is just 16, so they *must* be at least 30."

Ami's speech decayed into near-rambling as she talked about heart rates low enough that most people would be dead, and how their bones had been broken so much that they were now quite a bit thicker than normal.

"Ami!"

"Oh, yes?"

"Will they be able to keep up?"

"Well, that's hard to say.. if any non-Senshi can, it would be them."

"I suppose that will have to do."

---

Kneeling before the dinner table, Ranma across from her, Akane asked "What you said earlier.. about unsealing the forbidden techniques.. did you mean it?"

"Well, not really. I mean, I'll do whatever it takes to get the people who did this to my poor Minako, but we probably shouldn't start using advanced techniques right off the bat.. we don't know who we're dealing with, after all, and we don't want to hand the techniques over to them.. Besides! It's not like we can't take 'em down with standard techniques!"

Akane nodded sagely and sipped her tea.

---

A man on a dimly lit stage spoke, “Now, mother, what’s the matter?”

“Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended” answered a familiar voice.

“Hamlet” didn’t get a chance to respond, however. The unfamiliar buzz of her daughter’s communicator distracted Akane. Having jumped suddenly, she threw off her fellow actors. “Ah, excuse me..” mumbled Akane as she hurried out of the room to try and figure out how to activate the communicator.

After fumbling with the few buttons for a second, she managed to get a picture of Ami’s face on the dial. “-ossing some cars around outside of Kashu Coffee.”

Nearly shouting Akane informed them, “I’ll go get Ranma and we’ll be right there!”

From the blasted look on Ami’s face, Akane decided that maybe she didn’t need to speak quite that loud.

---

Standing on the high school sports field brought back plenty of memories to Ranma. Most people would be thinking about football games, or maybe the cheerleader under the stands. Ranma thought about duels with Ryouga, Ms Hinako, Happosai, etc, etc.

Ranma watched as Taketo hit the softball. \*Hmm, looks like its coming this way, better dodge in a second, don’t want to look too-

“RANSOU!” the shout came from Akane, standing on the other side of the field, by the fence.

\*SMACK\*

-fast. Ouch.\*

“Idiot, why didn’t you dodge that?” asked Akane, now standing no more than 10 feet away and closing at a brisk pace.

“I was, uh, distracted by someone.”

“Hrmph, how impolite of them. Oh, hey, there is a demon attacking! We’ve got to go!”

Having instantly caught Ranma’s full attention, Akane grabbed him and began dragging him away from the field.

Sailor Mercury would describe herself as quite distraught right about now.

Really, most people would be wetting themselves were they in her situation. She was, at this moment, lying in a shallow hole in the sidewalk. This hole was conveniently shaped exactly like her.

That probably had something to do with the fact that the demon had used her to make it. She hadn't felt this helpless since Vesves had taken Nishio's dream mirror and trapped her inside of a computer. That had driven her to her Super form. Discussions with Pluto, led her to believe that nothing waited beyond the Super form for any Senshi but the Moon Senshi. No getting out of this one on her own.

Sailors Moon, Mars and Neptune were also out of action. Tuxedo Mask was standing over Moon whose wings were frayed and tattered, trying to wake her up and generally fretting. That was about all he could do with a broken throwing/sword arm. Poor Tuxedo Mask, always showing up to help Sailor Moon and then getting pounded on. Pluto and Saturn weren't present. Probably a good thing. Mercury wasn't sure if Saturn would try to use the Death Reborn Revolution on this thing, and she didn't really want to find out, either.

This left Jupiter and Uranus still standing. They'd both launched their most powerful attacks any number of times. In fact, all of the present Senshi had. At least the demon had enough decency to be oozing something from a couple of wounds.

Propping herself up, Mercury was able to get a good view of Jupiter making a nice Sailor Jupiter-shaped hole in the wall. At least Mercury could lay down in hers.

Uranus had apparently taken stock of the situation, and decided to back away for a second, hoping that one of the other Senshi would get up to give her some help.

---

Sailor Uranus was not a happy camper. She and Jupiter were the last ones standin- scratch that. She was the last one standing. Not that she thought the Ainos- er- Saotomes, would be of any help, but they'd called them a good 5, 10 minutes ago and they still weren't here. If they'd promised to help they should at least show up and take a pounding, too.

Deciding to act graceful from a bit farther away, Uranus began to back pedal in the direction of Neptune.

---

Mercury, while previously quite upset over the current state of things, was about to become even more upset. Seeing the last mobile target moving away, the demon had started to look for the immobile target most likely to become mobile soon. Poor Mercury had been just about to start lifting herself off the ground when she became the demon's new target.

Moving at a level of speed Mercury had only recently realized possible, the demon charged her. Bracing herself for an attack, she- er. She found herself a good 8 or 9 meters from where she'd been. Looking around, quite confused, she saw the demon, also looking confused, and two people in matching red and black with black hair. Protective reflexes tried to kick in, but found her muscles uncooperative. That gave her brain time to analyze the past few days and come to the conclusion that the two people were the Ainos. "No, the Saotomes" her brain told itself.

---

Akane was both upset that it'd take them so long to arrive, and relieved that they'd made it there when they did. On the one hand, she knew they could move a lot faster if they really wanted to, but Ranma had refused to use the requisite techniques. However, arriving when they did gave her a chance to help out Ami, which gave her a warm fuzzy feeling inside.

Ami had always reminded her of her two older sisters wrapped into one. A Kasumi with Nabiki's intelligence.. or was that a Nabiki with Kasumi's kindness?

Watching the demon jog over to Ami out of the corner of her eye, Akane leaked a bit of ki into her legs and arms. \*Don't want to lose any speed when I pick Ami up.. or wrench my arms out of their sockets.\* After setting Ami down, Akane expended a bit more ki to disperse her inertia and immediately rejoin Ranma.

Luckily, they'd changed outfits on the way over. No sense in being naked in front of a demon for the few milliseconds it took change. Ranma was enough of a pervert without flashing for evil given physical form.

So. There they were. Ranma and Akane Saotome. They were standing a few meters away from each other, and the demon, roughly forming a triangle.

Speaking up, Ranma announced in an uncustomarily level tone, "I'm gonna tear you apart."

This surprised the demon. Of late its adversaries had been spouting all kinds of semi-poetic nonsense about how they were going to punish it and yadda, yadda, yadda. It was almost enough to make it ill. A number of things struck it as different about this one. It wasn't wearing a skirt, it was taller, and wasn't a teenage girl. Oh well, it was still a human..

Not wasting any more time in contemplation, the demon charged Ranma with the same kind of speed. Surprisingly (to the demon), Ranma wasn't there when it arrived. Instead, it heard a voice behind it. "Pathetic. An opponent as helpless as you could drive my ki attack to Perfection."

---

Taunting the demon a bit in hopes of getting it to let off some hot ki had proved futile. Oh, the demon had become upset alright. He'd dodged the attack, but not even half as soon as he'd have liked. This thing was fast. And while it had become quite upset, it wasn't giving off even the tiniest bit of hot ki. \*At least I know not to fall back on the Hiryu Shouten Ha. Can't hurt to keep up harassing it, though. Angry opponents get sloppy.. or let off Rekka Hokans.\* Ranma mentally cringed.

"Pathetic. An opponent as helpless as you could drive my ki attack to Perfection."

Not strictly true, but it had the necessary ring to really get an opponent upset. Standing there, oblivious to the demon's pending action, Ranma was making a target out of himself that would be unforgivable if he'd been informed of one teeny-tiny fact.

Demons don't use ki attacks, they use magical attacks.

Hence the large Ranma-shaped hole which managed to appear right next to the slightly smaller Sailor Jupiter-shaped hole in the wall. Without the ability to sense his opponent building up for a ranged attack, Ranma couldn't hope to dodge.

Unperturbed by being knocked through a brick wall, Ranma lept back to his feet and quickly took to dodging and weaving at random. He wasn't about to be caught by the same thing twice. Akane took the hint and began to run and leap about the scene of the fight, as well.

Confronted by two targets cavorting about at speeds even it considered mildly impressive, the demon prioritized. First thing to do was to get them to stop moving around like that.

Firing a multitude of magic blasts that resembled inky black nothingness at Ranma and Akane, the demon quickly found that shooting at them was futile. So, it tried shooting at random, hoping to get lucky. That didn't work either. Finally it realized that these two targets had shown interest in the other targets, so maybe it could use them as bait.

---

\*Impossible..\* was the thought that kept going through Sailor Uranus' head as she watched Ranma and Akane. Her magically endowed speed had allowed her to save the other Senshi from various forms of devastating attacks in the past, but Akane had just run in with speed that slightly surpassed Uranus', grabbed Mercury, and moved her 20 meters. That wasn't that big a deal, with enough work Uranus could probably have built herself up to that kind of speed and strength. The big deal was what Akane had done when she'd set Mercury down. One instant, she was moving in one direction at around 30 meters a second, and the next instant, she was moving just a little bit slower, in the completely opposite direction! Physics was more Pluto's specialty, but Uranus was pretty sure what Akane had done defied at least a few laws of physics.

Uranus' disbelief only increased when Ranma and Akane began to put on an acrobatics display which made her think of a pair of Olympic gymnasts who'd forgotten about the law of gravity.

---

\*Oooo, this thing is getting on my nerves,\* thought Akane, as she barely dodged yet another one of those blasts. \*Hmm, I think I've got a way to ruin this thing's day.\* A small smile crossed Akane's face as she started coordinating her leaps to carry her a bit farther away. Reaching what she believed to be a safe distance, she noticed the demon seemed to have ceased firing. Akane stopped and began pulling her ki in and concentrating it into the distinctive patterns needed. Finally ready, Akane began to announce her technique.

“SPL-”

“No!” screamed a now distracted Ranma.

His interruption's goal had been achieved, however. Akane lost her tenuous grip on the ki patterns needed and felt them disperse harmlessly. Focusing on Ranma, and preparing to bash him a good one for distracting her, she stopped. The demon was rushing towards Ami again. There wasn't any way she could

make it in time, but Ranma could. And did. Placing himself in its path, Ranma let fly an unannounced Mouko Takabisha<sup>3</sup> at what passed for the demon's face.

It didn't seem to care. Instead, it whipped some tentacle things around and grabbed Ranma. A game of "make Ranma into a pile of mush" then began.

This didn't sit too well with Akane. She was the only one who was allowed to beat her husband senseless.

Akane summoned all of her ki, she was going to put an end to this thing now, no more fun and games. Her visible battle aura went from being a few wisps of occasional red to a small bonfire, lifting loose pieces of gravel off the ground and generating a stiff breeze.

And then, it was all gone, worked into a massive ball of ki, held in her left hand. Casually aiming her left arm, she let fly the ball. Oddly, it didn't fly with the speed of most ki attacks, but instead chugged along almost lazily through the air.

It missed, passing a meter or so to the demons left.

Barely having had to dodge, the demon was clearly amused by this turn of events, that ball of whatever it was had looked awfully painful. It was odd, though, Akane didn't look at all surprised.

\*FSSST KLABWALM!@#!\*

The ball had exploded into a small fire storm after passing the demon by little more than its diameter.

Clearly pleased, Akane belatedly announced the attack, "Hah! Fuhatsudan Kibou<sup>4</sup>. They always fall for that." Seeing the demon down, and probably not planning on moving soon, Akane skipped over to where Ranma lay. "Hey moron, you alright?" she inquired in a nearly school girl tone. "Ugh. No thanks to you. Do you really have to go tossing ki bombs around near other people?" "Would you rather the demon still have you?" Rubbing his head, Ranma eeked out a "Well..."

Quickly trying to change the subject, Ranma looked around for something interesting. "Hey, look! That demon is still moving!" And it was. In fact, it was just managing to pull itself up onto its hoof-feet-things. "Aw man, how much does it take to put one of these things down. And it isn't giving off any hot ki, either.." Revelation striking, Ranma inquired, "Hey, how about that technique you were talking about the other day? That revision to the Hiryu Shouten Ha?"

---

<sup>3</sup>"Mouko Takabisha" translates to "Fierce Tiger Domineering". It is performed by placing ones hands together, palms out, at arms length, and then simply "firing" off a blast of ki fueled by sheer confidence.

<sup>4</sup>"Fuhatsudan Kibou" means "Unexploded Bomb Ruse".

Akane was mildly surprised he'd been listening to her. She may be one of the few people in Ranma's bracket, but that didn't mean she was anywhere close to Ranma's level of skill. This meant he had a tendency to get a bit distracted when she proposed new revisions. If he really wanted them, he'd usually just make them up on the spot. "Yeah, that one." Still stunned, Akane wondered aloud "Think we can pull it off without any practice?" Ranma waved his hand dismissively and put on his stupid grin, "Sure, why not? Lets go for it." Jumping to his feet, Ranma took up a position off to one side of the demon, and began to gather his ki.

Once Akane had taken up her position, and the demon was looking nervously between the two of them, she announced "I'll lead off."

Receiving a confirmation imperceptible to anyone but her, Akane began.

"TSUIN.." She was running clockwise around the demon, fast.

"..HIRYUU.." Ranma was running now, too.

"..SHOUTEN.." Vast streams of hot ki were trailing from Akane now.

"..HA!" shouted Ranma, who had streams of down right cold ki trailing him. On that word, both Akane and Ranma launched upper cuts that never connected, but instead triggered the ki tornado they'd setup.

---

Actually on her feet by now, Sailor Mercury was looking around. Neptune, Mars and Moon were moving again. Jupiter was wobbling about uneasily, holding her head. Making a mental note to check Jupiter for a concussion, Mercury finally found Uranus standing off at a distance watching Akane hurry over to a fallen Ranma. Making her way over to Uranus, she noticed that Akane and Ranma were setting themselves up on opposite sides of the demon.

"Mercury, I don't believe what I'm seeing."

"What do you mean?"

"Those two.. they're moving faster than me, and they don't seem to be trying too hard to do it, either. And that energy blast Akane threw a minute ago.. it was at least as powerful at my World Shaking attack, and Akane thought nothing of tossing it. It seemed like Akane had gotten fed up at one point and was going to end it with a different technique, but Ranma stopped her before she finished announcing it. It makes me sort of nervous to think about what kind of technique is so powerful that he wouldn't want her to use it."

"TSUIN.."

Uranus and Mercury turned as though choreographed to face where the demon and two.. blurs were. Mercury instantly had her visor down. "I don't believe it. They're running in a circle at nearly 40m/s, and they're getting faster!"

"..HIRYUU.."

Mercury was continuing to mumble about impossibilities when it hit Uranus like a freight train full of bricks. "A tornado! Amazing! They're actually going to try to make a torna- Oh god. They'll be able to run fast enough to do it, too!" Shouting, Uranus told everyone "GRAB SOMETHING NOW!"

"..SHOUTEN.."

Holding onto the base of a lamp post with one hand, and trying to keep her visor from being pulled off her face with the other, Mercury continued to watch them. "I just don't believe it.. they're running at nearly 65m/s no-"

"..HA!"

Anything else Mercury might have said was lost, as the air which would have conveyed her words was sucked up to launch the demon into the ki-charged air.

---

The Tsuin Hiryyu Shouten Ha was the most powerful thing they were allowing themselves to access at the moment. While they had access to enough ki to perform it for the rest of the day, if it didn't work the first time, repeating it wasn't likely to accomplish much more.

They were plum out of things to do, without digging into the collection of secret or forbidden techniques they couldn't access without deciding to beforehand.

Hence, it wasn't a good thing, when the demon landed - nowhere near as far away as it should've, and much sooner - and it wasn't moving. That didn't last very long, however. Propping itself up on some tentacles, it finally worked its way up to its hoof-feet, and sort of wobbled around.

Speaking for the first time, it seemed to inquire, "YOU WHO ARE ?".

Looking back and forth at each other, Akane and Ranma tried to puzzle out what it was asking. (After they picked themselves up from the face-fault that ensued the demon actually standing up) "Is it asking who we are?" "I think so.."

Seeing the demon apparently nod in agreement, Ranma smiled. He was always happy to announce himself.

"I am Ranma Saotome of the Anything Goes School of Martial Arts!" Ranma quickly added, "and this is my wife, Akane Saotome!", after he felt her glaring

daggers at him.

While Ranma had received a number of different responses to his introduction, glee was rarely one of them. Gleeful demons look *really* weird, believe you me. They look simply unnerving, actually. This demon was most definitely gleeful upon receiving this news.

“YOU SAOTOME IS ?”

“Er, yeah, thats what I just said.”

Simply ecstatic at this point, the demon brought itself up to its full height.

And it ran away.

Ranma and Akane were simply too stunned to move, and the Senshi weren't about to chase after an enemy as powerful as that, even if they were in a condition to do so.

Returning to her living room, Akane brought with her a tray stacked high with tea cups and various implements of proper tea serving. Before setting down the tray, she paused to survey the young girls and their male companion.

The two older ones, Haruka and Michiru, were sitting together, looking very concerned. The man with his right arm in a used looking sling, was fussing over a bruised Usagi who was in turn fussing over his arm. The other three girls were sitting together, Makoto's head wrapped in bandages, Rei knees braced (she was sitting with her legs straight instead of bent underneath her, too). Only Ami had escaped any visible damage, but she was wishing for a chiropractor. Male companion?

“Excuse me, Usagi, who is your friend?”

Utterly distracted by fussing over the man's broken arm, Usagi didn't hear a word Akane said. The man did, however.

“Ah, I'm sorry, I am Mamoru Chiba, I was the one in the tuxedo during the fight. Pleased to meet you.”

Since the object of her worries disappeared when Mamoru stood up, Usagi realized that she'd been asked a question. “Oh, Mrs Aino! Mamoru is my boyfriend! We're going to get married someday!”

\*He has to be at least 4 years older than her, and she is only 16. Well, I guess Ranma and I were only 16..\* Akane turned and went back to serving tea after mumbling an appropriately polite response

Once tea had been served, Ami pulled her computer out from the no-space in which it spent most of its time and set it on the table. While the demeanor of the meeting was very subdued compared to many which began with Usagi and Minako arguing over the merits of various boys or ice cream, Ami still had to cough to get everyone's attention. Assured of her audience's undivided attention, Ami began. "First, to reiterate some things we already know: What we fought was a demon. A 100% demon. Many of the things we've fought in the past were simply animate evil confined or bound to some sort of physical object. This thing normally resides in Hell until summoned. That is the key. Somebody is summoning these things to our world. It also means that its power is not being diluted by being channeled through a mundane object."

After waiting a moment for this to sink in, Ami continued, not noticing that Ranma already looked bored. "Next, we barely managed to do anything to it. Nothing but our strongest magical attacks were able to even get its attention. Those only succeeded in damaging it when more than one struck it at the same time." Pausing to tap on her computer, she looked up when Ranma coughed. "Yes?" "I was wondering.. we were able to hurt it, right?"

Without a word of response, Ami went back to typing, leaving Ranma hanging. Then, "Well. That was what I wanted to mention next." Pleased with himself, Ranma began to smile. "You weren't able to do much more than we were able to do." Ranma's smile disappeared. "However, you were able to do it in a tenth the time, and with 5 fewer people." Ranma's smile returned, but with a touch of uncertainty.

"You should probably know.. we weren't using our full range of techniques. Some things are just way too dangerous to use without planning to ahead of time. We won't be making that mistake next time, though."

Haruka began to gape, but held it in, instead deciding to ask a question.

Instead, another voice behind Ranma spoke up.

"Usagi, I hope you know what you're talking about!"

Turning to see who had walked in now, Ranma found himself being eyed by a black cat with a crescent moon on its forehead.

"Ack! Cat!" exclaimed Ranma, as he was on the other side of the room before the words registered in anyones' ears.

Akane rubbed her temples as though a headache was developing. "Idiot, what are you doing? Its just a talking cat."

"Oh. Right. Sorry. I was just testing you. Ha. Ha. Its not like I was surprised.."

Giving Mr Saotome an inquisitive eye, Rei asked “Are you afraid of cats, Mr Saotome?”

“Me? Afraid of cats! Ha!” Ranma gave off a fake laugh that lasted just a bit too long before sitting down. “Why would you think I was afraid of cats?”

“Well, you did jump across the room when you saw one!”

“Oh, that.. well, okay, maybe I used to be a *little* scared of cats. I got better though.”

“Just how afraid of cats were you before?”

“Oh, not very.”

Having had enough, Akane thwapped Ranma on the head and decided to explain before he made any more of a fool out of himself. “Ranma was really scared of cats when he was younger. Something to do with being tossed in pits of cats as a child. When we were in England I was finally able to drag him off to a psychologist.” Thinking for a second, Akane added “You know, its a an amazing coincidence that Minako showed up with Artemis on the same day that Ranma’s shrink- er- psychologist told us that the last part of the treatment was to adopt a cat. A day earlier and we wouldn’t have let her keep him.”

“Oh, hey, Mr Saotome. Thanks for not letting Mrs Saotome have me ’fixed’.”

Ranma turned around again and was faced with a white cat.

Deciding that it would be a good time to take a nap, Ranma did.

Real men don’t faint after all.

---

Akane sighed and shook her head. \*He may not lapse into the Neko-ken anymore, or run in screaming terror, but I’m not sure if this is much better.\*

“Well, I need to drag him off to bed. He’ll be out for a little bit.” Halfway bent over to pick him up, she stopped. “The doctors were telling us that they expect Minako to wake up very soon. Ranma and I will be going to spend the afternoon with Minako tomorrow. I think she’d like it if some of you were there when she woke up.”

All the girls nodded, but Ami and Usagi were particularly vigorous.

“Wonderful, I’ll give you a call before we go. Well, if you’ll excuse me, I need to take care of sleepy head here.”

---

Rei was annoyed. Sure, the Saotomes had told her that they were using ki to power their attacks, but something wasn't adding up. People just don't have that much kind of ki. And it didn't feel right, either. That was what was really eating her.

As Mrs Saotome was curtly ushering her towards the door, Rei whipped around. "I'd like you to tell me where you're getting all of the ki you're using!"

Akane looked like she was caught in the headlights of an oncoming truck named Rei. "Ah, well, nothing special. We've just, ah, built up bigger auras over the years from our martial arts training.. Come along now, can't have your parents worrying about you.."

---

Ever the site of Senshi meetings, the Hikawa Shine was again in use for that purpose.

All the girls were talking at once, posing questions, and providing speculation, but Haruka in particular was trying to get her question answered.

"How were they able to create that tornado?"

Having almost shouted her question, the other Senshi meekly quieted down and deferred to Ami, the only Senshi who could hope to provide any useful information.

Ami, who'd actually been quiet until now, looked up from her computer. "That is a very good question. Normally a tornado is caused by hot and cold air meet, however Mr and Mrs Saotome were not heating up or cooling off the air, but instead letting off streams of some sort of energy that I cannot identify..."

"That's ki" chimed Rei.

"...and when the two energies met, they reacted like hot and cold air. That, and the high speeds at which they were running acted to cause the tornado."

Makoto tried to contribute something next, "I've seen all of the Saotomes tournament fights, and the other night was the first time I'd ever seen them use a ki attack. They even stopped giving off battle aura a few years ago."

"Hmm. There was an interview with a Mr Hibiki on the news a few years ago, I didn't pay much attention to it at the time because I had little interest in martial arts, but I seem to recall him telling the interviewer that Ranma used ki attacks when they were both teens living in Nerima." Count on Michiru to actually listen to and learn from the news.

“But nobody actually believes that they were able to use ki that young!” cried Rei. “I use ki for my fire readings, but just tiny amounts of it. At the rate I’m going, I won’t have as much ki as they used in a single blast until Crystal Tokyo is founded.”

“Maybe they learned some secret that you don’t know?” added Usagi, unknowingly infuriating Rei.

“Are you saying that a couple of martial artists from the outskirts of Tokyo learned some secret that no Shinto priest has ever figured out?”

“You didn’t know about using, uh, what was it? emotions for their blasting stuff, though.”

“I guess they *could* know something I don’t...” quick to distract attention from that fact, Rei looked around for something else to mention. “Hey. Where has Setsuna been?”

Michiru and Haruka looked at each other before Michiru answered, “Actually, we haven’t seen her recently. She always seems to disappear at the worst times. We should have realized something bad was going to happen when she disappeared.”

“I hope she returns soon, it would be very helpful if we could ask her what is happening.” added Ami, a touch of concern apparent in her voice.

---

The demon which we last saw running away from Ranma and Akane at its top speed was now doing its best impression of kneeling in what appeared to be an alleyway. Some.. body? thing? was standing in the corner looking down on it.

“*Finally* found *them*, did you?”

“I FOUND THEM DID”

“Yea! *Well* now *that* Cassia is *done* with you,” began the shadowy figure, “you can go back to hell!” it finished quickly.

Very pleased at being released from its servitude, the demon got up to leave.

“*..the quick way*” announced the figure, quite happily.

At that, the figure in the shadows held up a hand, and.. blasted?! the demon right out of existence.

---

“Ranma!”

Instinctively flinching, Ranma turned away from Tokyo's night skyline. His response of "Yeah?" was rather weary as he finished pulling off his shirt.

"Your back! You've got a huge bruise on it!"

"Hrm.. must've been when that demon was trying to grind me into the ground. Guess it was a bit stronger than I thought.."

With anger at Ranma's ability to lie to himself rising in her voice, Akane snapped "Idiot, you know exactly how strong it was. You know you couldn't have taken much more of that!"

Sitting down on the edge of their bed, Ranma began scratching the back of his head. "I dunno, I guess I'm just not used to being pummeled like that. Its been too long since I fought with anybody who could lay a hand on me, let alone deal out that kinda damage.. Now Ryouga, I bet by now you could drop a mountain on 'im and he wouldn't notice.. Hey, thats it! Wasn't Ryouga telling us at the last tournament that he was looking for somebody he could fight who was strong enough to make him feel their attacks?"

"Hmm, I think so.."

"Maybe we should just use some more powerful techniques on the next one. No need to start sharing all the fun if we can help it."

"Moron, I'll show you fun.."

## Chapter 2

### The True Enemy

*“I knew they were hiding something from the beginning.” - Rei Hino*

In a small, dark hole on the outskirts of Tokyo, someone had just received some very good news. Being the most mentally unstable of her generation, Cassia had sort of twisted around the idea of not killing the bearer of bad news. She'd ended up with “kill the bearer of good news”.

Whatever, it was just that much more fun.

“Dum de dum.. foop oop a doop.. What shall Cassia do..” mumbled Cassia as she twisted her unkempt black hair around in one hand. “Teehee,” she giggled, “Cassia *thinks* that *Cassia* shall go and, uh.. hmm.”

Pausing briefly to remember what she was supposed to be going to do, Cassia noticed a rat crawling into her hole. All semblance of coherent thought went out the window at the sight of a new toy.

All that could be heard for the next few hours was the high pitched screeching of a rat. Without its tail. Then without its legs. Then without various organs.

Then she found the lungs, and it got quiet again.

---

Minako was the center of attention. And for once, she wished she wasn't. Minako felt embarrassment encroaching as she looked back and forth between her parents on one side, and her friends Ami and Usagi sitting at the foot of her bed with the two moon cats. Oddly, Ami had closed the door as she walked in.

Her father had started into another crying fit when she'd shifted her leg and

said “ouch”. After she’d spent a good 5 minutes calming him down, the room had been left in a rather pregnant silence.

Getting nervous, Minako said the first thing that came to her.

“Gee, I wish I could heal faster.”

Feeling the need to point out the obvious to her, Artemis informed Minako, “Well you can’t transform into Sailor Venus until you’re out of those casts.” Minako turned deathly pale. Had a nurse been watching her about then, she probably wouldn’t have bothered to do anything but start filling out the death certificate.

Thinking quick, she tried to play it off like she didn’t know that Artemis could talk. “Uhh, wow, did Artemis just talk? What a smart kitty!” That didn’t help much. “Of course he can talk,” sighed Luna “did you hurt your head, too?”

Now Minako was sweating with worry. Her parents were here, and the moon cats were talking! \*Oh man, oh man, what am I going to do? I hope Usagi will stuff the cats into her backpack!\* While Minako continued to fret, Ami realized what the problem was, and informed Minako of it. “Mina, ah, your parents know Luna and Artemis can talk.”

\*Hah, she expects me to believe that? They must just be trying to play some sort of big joke on me!\* “Hah, and next you’ll be telling me that I’m a Sailor Senshi and my parents know about it, too!”

“Er, well, yes, they do know. We sort of thought your dad was possessed by a youma, so we transformed in front of him.”

---

Akane had just finished smacking her forehead with her hand. After her daughter had fainted, Ranma had turned on the water-works again. Nothing they could do could convince him that Minako wasn’t deathly ill, so with Ami’s help, she’d tried to rouse Minako.

Short term memory intact, Minako looked around, and in a fairly small voice addressed her parents “So.. does this mean that you, ah, know that I’m Sailor Venus?”

“Yes, Minako. We also know that you got hurt like this while you were fighting a demon.”

“Are you mad, mom?”

Akane was quiet.

Ranma cut off the water-works once the conversation turned meaningful “No

daughter. We're not mad at you. Your friends told us, about the Senshi, and the Silver Millennium. You couldn't be anything but Sailor Venus. We.. we wish you would've told us so that we could help you, though."

"But, dad, what could you have done to help?" inquired a genuinely confused Minako.

"We meant to tell you," began Ranma, his voice trailing off, "who we were when you were old enough, but it kept getting put off..."

A further confused Minako asked "Tell me who you were? Huh? What do you mean?" No answer was forthcoming though, even when she looked back and forth between her parents. Finally she focused on Ami.

---

"Tell me who you were? Huh? What do you mean?"

Ami watched Minako look at each of her parents once, and then repeat the process a few times, the look on her face nearing pleading. Finally, Ami felt Minako gaze fall on her.

Ami cleared her throat. "Ah, well, you've heard of the Saotomes, right?"

"Yeah.. Ranma is really cute!"

Ami heard Mr Saotome sputter a little bit.

"Yes, well, you see, your parents are the Saotomes."

Minako sat in a state of confusion for a moment, before breaking into laughter which threatened to hurt her in her weakened state. "Haha! My dad and mom, Ranma and Akane Saotome? Haha, besides, my last name is Aino. Eye-Noh. Not Saotome."

Seeing a pair of matching red/black blurs in the corners of her eyes, Ami smiled. "I think they might be ready to explain now."

Carefully, Minako turned her head to her right, making sure not to move any more muscles than she needed. The sight greeting her eyes was not the one she expected. Instead of seeing her father, glasses and his cheap t-shirt, she saw a man who seemed to be in his mid 20s, without glasses, and wearing red and black Chinese clothes. The shirt even had an embroidered dragon coiling up one arm and across the chest. Not only that, but this man exuded an air of confidence so strong and thick you could cut it with a knife.

"..Mr Saotome?"

"Dad, will do, daughter."

Turning her head around the other way, Minako saw a woman in her mid 20s, wearing an outfit that matched.. her father's. "Mom?"

"Yes, Minako?"

As realization dawned, Minako began to smile. "Does this mean I get free tickets to the next Tenka-ichi-budokai<sup>1</sup>?"

And everyone face faulted.

---

"..and thats pretty much the story of our lives." Ranma signed and slumped down into his seat, exhausted.

Usagi was busy dreaming of Mamoru saving her like Ranma had saved Akane all those times.

Ami was trying to fit the stories of magic, martial arts, monsters, curses and other Weirdness into her scientific view of the world. Luckily it wasn't as hard to do as it would've been if her view didn't already incorporate the magic of the Senshi and the Silver Millennium, but still, she was going to need something for her headache later.

The two moon cats were both wishing that these two had been present to defend the Silver Millennium in its final days. If half of what they had claimed was true, either one of them would've been able to turn the tide against Beryl's forces, decisively.

Akane was wondering why Ranma had only told them about the fairly normal stuff.

---

"Mom.. dad.. do I have family I've never met?"

Akane smiled, "Actually, you did meet them when you were little, but you probably wouldn't remember."

"Grandparents? Cousins? Aunts?"

Ranma gave her the official count of, "Two grandfathers, a grandmother, two aunts, and three cousins. Akane's dad, both of my parents, Akane's two older sisters, and their children."

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<sup>1</sup>"The World's Best Martial Artist Tournament" borrowed from Dragonball

“What about Auntie Ranko?”

“Well.. about Auntie Ranko..” Ranma coughed, “you see, there isn’t an Auntie Ranko.”

“Huh? What do you mean?”

“Well, you must know about the stories about us, I’ve seen you watch those cheesy biographies on TV. Whats my curse?”

Scratching her head thoughtfully, Minako tried to remember. “Umm. Lets see. You turn into something when you get splashed with water, right? What was it? A pig? Nono, that was Mr Hibiki.. uh. a cat? nooo, that was that Chinese woman.. I give up.”

“A woman,” Ranma mumbled, “I turn into a woman, with red hair.”

“Red hair? Huh, just like Auntie Ranko..”

“Thats because I *am* ‘Auntie Ranko’.”

“But Auntie Ranko is a woman!”

“And I turn into a woman when I get splashed with cold water.”

“Oh yeah,” Minako said thoughtfully. “So, er, why did you do it?”

“So you wouldn’t figure out who I was.”

“Oh. Okay. So, do I have 1 or 2 real aunts?”

“Two.”

“Can we visit them?”

Trying to look thoughtful, Ranma scratched his chin. “I don’t see why not.. but you’ll have to wait until you’ve recovered. Grandpa Tendo would flood the koi pond if he saw you hurt.”

They all sat in silence for a moment, until a look of utter dread passed over Akane’s face. “Uh. Ranma. Do you remember how we were able to talk our parents into moving away with Minako?”

“Sure, we told them..” Ranma blanched as he remembered just what he’d told them.

Finally snapped out of her day dream by the heavy silence, Usagi looked up. “What? Huh? What did you tell them?”

“Er, well, we sort of told them that we were going to take Minako on a training trip.”

“A training trip?” Minako was a tad confused “What kind of training trip?”

“Martial arts.”

Minako managed an “Ah..” before realization sunk in.

She didn’t know any martial arts.

Akane was thinking fast, looking for a solution. She may not have made a seppuku pact, but that might be favorable to going home without an heir to Anything Goes Martial Arts. “Sailor Venus would probably be strong and fast enough to pass for a martial artist, but you can’t be Sailor Venus in front of them...”

Ami smiled, “The Outer Senshi might be able to help with that. They’re always able to use some of their power, apparently they do something slightly different when they return to their mundane forms. That is actually how Haruka has the reflexes to drive at the speeds she does these days. It is also a small part of why Hotaru is much healthier now. When you’re out of the hospital, we’ll go talk to them.”

In the Silver Millennium, speaking of Sailor Saturn, and to a lesser degree the rest of the Outer Senshi, was considered bad luck and likely to summon them (and trouble).

Sadly, none of the Senshi had complete recollection of the Silver Millennium. So, when all the communicators in the room started to buzz, they hadn’t the foggiest idea who it could be.

“Usagi? Ami? You’ve got to come quickly! Some weird lady started attacking cars in traffic! Papa and mama are fighting it now, but they said to get the Saotomes quickly! Are the Saotomes really helping us? Papa was telling me about what they could do, but I thought she was trying to pull my leg until Mama agreed.. oh! I’ve got to go help! Come quickly!”

The signal cut out as quickly as it had begun.

“Who was that girl?” asked Akane as she closed the communicator and returned it to her pocket, already standing up.

Usagi was trying to stand up, put her communicator away, and answer at the same time. It didn’t work very well. After picking herself up off the floor, she answered. “That was Hotaru, she’s Sailor Saturn!”

“Come on, we’ve gotta get there!” exclaimed Ranma, who was fidgeting.

Ami was again looking at her computer, with a worried look on her face. “They’re quite far away, it will take some time to get there.”

Ranma shook his head, “If they’re in Tokyo, we can get there in no time. Akane ’n I ’ll have to carry the two of you. Won’t be any room for the cats,

though.”

Shrugging their consent, Usagi and Ami waited for the ride to begin.

Ranma quickly went to pick up Ami, who he was closest to at the time, but Akane stepped in his way with something of a smiling cringe on her face. “I’ll take Ami, you take Usagi. She is already taken.” “Aww, don’t you trust me?” Akane shook her head, “I trust you, and I trust your bad luck, too.”

Before Ranma picked up Usagi, he paused to inspect the two girls. “Hmm.. You two should probably transform first or something, we’re gonna be running fast enough that these cloths might get sorta messed up.” and in a nearly sub-vocalized voice “..last thing I need is Akane catchin me with a coupla teenage girls in torn cloths..”

Simultaneous cries of “MERCURY CRYSTAL POWER, MAKE UP!” and “MOON ETERNAL POWER, MAKE UP!” erupted from the young girls, bathing everyone in bright, flashing lights.

Finished with their transformations, they waited briefly for Ranma and Akane to pick them up. Turning to his daughter, with the moon cats at her side, Ranma smiled and chirped “Wish us luck!”

With a “Good luck, dad” Minako laid back down to rest. Dual cries of “I swear, I can fly!” and “This is not the door!” snapped her eyes back open.

The door was still closed, and the curtains fluttered in the breeze.

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*\*Whoosh\**

They passed another car.

Sailor Moon never had been a big fan of roller-coasters. A ride like this was enough to make even the most die-hard roller-coaster fan forswear them for life.

When Mr Saotome had picked her up, she hadn’t really known what to expect. Thoughts of something like the Sailor Teleport had flickered through her mind, maybe flying.

Not weaving through, over and around rush hour traffic at speeds that were putting the cars to shame.

The worst part was when they had to take a turn, and momentum had conspired with city planners to deprive them of the space needed to turn on the ground. When that happened, Mr and Mrs Saotome jumped and sort of turned in mid air, and started running along the walls of buildings, parallel to the ground. Then,

after a few seconds, they'd sort of drop back to the ground. It was really nerve-racking.

---

*"Hey! Get back here!"*

Neptune was getting really tired of this.. person's sing song voice. Not only was she taunting her and Uranus, but she had to do it with that infuriating voice! At least she didn't consider Saturn good sport, and simply avoided her. Hopefully Mr and Mrs Saotome would arrive soon.

She'd seen the tail end of their last fight. The level of power they'd demonstrated was beyond her experience, and it scared her. Uranus, too. They were the Outer Senshi, defenders of the Solar System, and here some of the people they were supposed to be defending wielded power that put theirs to shame. Not only was it scary, but it was sort of embarrassing.

---

Akane flinched as an explosion vibrated the ground underneath her. Instinctively she shifted her path slightly to place a denser looking building between her and the source. "Ranma, that didn't sound good, lets hurry!" Without even looking at Ranma, she increased the rate at which she burned ki, and with it, the light she gave off.

Zippping off, Akane felt Ranma increase the rate at which he burned ki to match her's.

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**"SILENCE WALL!"**

Sailor Saturn hoped that the impromptu fortification would hold off the demon woman a bit longer. She could feel something coming, something powerful. Not many things seemed powerful to Sailor Saturn. But this did.

Running as quickly as she could to check on Sailors Uranus and Neptune, Saturn stopped short of her destination. \*What could that.. noise.. be? Its not a noise! Thats the ground!" Like all Japanese school children, Saturn had been taught what to do during an earthquake. She was trying really hard to remember, but all she could manage to do was freeze.

Oddly, the earthquake stopped almost as soon as she noticed it. Looking around she saw two people setting down Sailors Moon and Mercury at the edge of the disaster zone. \*Could these be the Saotomes? They look dressed right..\* Staring at the male figure which was approaching at a slow pace, Saturn lost her concentration and the flow of magical energy to the Silence Wall ceased.

“Hahaha! *Cassia has you now!*”

The blood drained from her face, Saturn’s attention came back like a whip crack. This demon woman was coming straight for her. She had no chance to bring the Silence Glaive to bear, let alone erect a Silence Wall or loose one of her attacks.

\*I’m dead.\*

She waited.

\*Am I dead yet? Everything is black and quiet..\*

Prying her eyelids open, Saturn surveyed the scene. The demon woman’s fist was being held firmly in the man’s right hand. He seemed to be straining to hold it there.

“Are you all right, Miss Saturn?”

Saturn searched briefly for her voice before finding it. “Yes.. I am. Mr Saotome?” The demon girl flinched. “Nah, just call me Ranma.” He smiled, and Saturn just about fainted.

At that, the demon woman hissed, and launched her other hand at Ranma in a poorly executed left hook. Ranma caught it, too. “Eager to get started, huh? Lets go, then.”

Ranma shoved the demon woman back, and brought himself up to his full height before beginning.

“I am Ranma Saotome of the Anything Goes School of Martial Arts.” The older woman was now mysteriously at his side. “And I am Akane Saotome of the Anything Goes School of Martial Arts!”

By now the demon woman was nearly frothing at the mouth in apparent anger. “*Cassia does not care about announcements! You are the Saotomes and Cassia will kill you!*”

Not waiting one more second than she had to, Cassia blurred into action. Only Akane and Ranma were able to see her hand as it came flew through the air, trailing an inky blackness reminiscent of the energy attacks used by the demon.

But even Ranma couldn’t dodge the attack. Instead he was forced to bring his

arms in front of him to block the attack. The sheer force of the attack pushed him back until a conveniently located telephone pole stopped him and snapped like a toothpick in the process.

Dusting himself, Ranma calmly proclaimed “Not bad.” Before answering with his real response. As the burning column of ki erupted from his hands, he shouted “MOUKO TAKABISHA!” Instead of being smashed through the wall on the opposite side of the road like any good human should’ve been, Cassia simply grunted as she took the blast full in the chest. Ranma was muttering about impossibilities when the Senshi began their attack with Akane.

“REKKA HOKAN!”

“MERCURY AQUA RHAPSODY!”

“WORLD SHAKING!”

“DEEP SUBMERGE!”

Ranma watched Cassia intently as anger-fuelled ki struck first, having little more effect than his own Mouko Takabisha had. Next the two water attacks struck. These succeeded in knocking Cassia off her feet and annoying her. When the final magical blast struck, it lifted Cassia off the ground and threw her end over end like a rag doll.

Knowing he wasn’t lucky enough for that to be the end of his opponent, Ranma didn’t drop his guard while Cassia lay prone on the ground. Hence, he was able to dodge when Cassia quickly leaped to her feet and laid down a suppressing fire of that inky black magic. Akane’s speed and distance allowed her to dodge, too, but the Senshi weren’t as lucky, each one being struck at least once. Each blast was much more than sufficient to toss a Senshi 15 or 20 meters.

“Hmmmmmm...” mumbled Cassia to herself, “*We can’t have any interference now can we?*”

As Cassia lifted her hands over her head, they began to reek of Pure Evil and dark magic. The sound of her laughter became eerily unsynchronized with her mouth’s movements. Just as soon as her hands had reached their apex, she brought them down out at her sides as though she was trying to make a broken snow angel.

Her hands seemed to catch on something, and they began to drag through the air, leaving a bleeding black nothingness in their path.

Then Reality screamed as it was sliced open.

Thoughts flooded into the minds of everyone nearby as Reality itself begged to be helped.

“HELPSTOPFIXREPAIRDEFENDHEAL”

While the gathered Senshi and martial artists tried to figure out who was speaking in their heads, two forms coagulated on the other side of the holes.

Arriving on the scene after the cry for help, Sailors Jupiter and Mars weren't distracted and so were able to form a pretty good guess as to what was on the other side of those holes.

Demons. Two of them. But they didn't look truly whole yet. All the more reason to try attacking now.

“MARS FLAME SNIPER!”

“JUPITER OAK EVOLUTION!”

Each attack crossed the intervening distance with minimal fuss, but once they reached the hole in existence, they simply fizzled out. Hell was not interested in allowing good magic into its confines.

“*Teehee! More fun!*”

By now further attempts to stop the demons before entering this world were quite obviously futile. They were already here.

One looked something like a sickly blue-green minotaur without a neck, the other an iguana on two legs, and more muscles than you should be able to fit on a body that size. Even if they were both 3 meters<sup>2</sup> tall. They looked around until their eyes settled on Cassia.

“WHY YOU SUMMON US HAVE?”

“*I want you to kill everyone but the man. He is mine.*”

“WHAT REWARD OUR IS?”

Angered by the demon's impudence, Cassia began screaming “*I won't kill your worthless \*\*\*\*ing hides where you stand!*” Apparently this was more than enough to motivate the demons.

Akane was looking the demons, with a mildly worried look on her face. “Ranma, were not limiting ourselves, right?”

“Right,” nodded Ranma, grimly, “do whatever you have to do win.”

“Okay. Listen.. with two of those demons, they're going to tear the Senshi apart. You go over to ‘Cassia’, I'll help the Senshi stay alive. Good luck.”

“You too.”

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<sup>2</sup>Nearly 10 feet for the metric deprived.

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“..in the name of the moon, we will punish you!”

Sailor Moon wasn't sure how she was going to punish *two* of those demons, but surely everything would work out all right. Then one of the demons was in her face, smelling really bad. With a small magical flutter her wings tried to lift her off the ground. She was too late, though. The creepy green lizard monster had grabbed her waist and was squeezing and she was screaming..

---

Akane watched with grim determination as the iguana demon grabbed Sailor Moon. Not a good way for her to start out a defensive campaign. She'd need something to distract both demons while she communicated a battle plan to the Senshi.

Mentally flipping through her vast mental catalog of powerful martial arts techniques, she settled on one that should do nicely, and, for the second time in as many days, she began weaving her ki into the needed patterns.

“SPLITTING CAT HAIRS!”

With the announcement of her technique, her image blurred and pulled apart into no less than 8 copies. Originally, the Splitting Cat Hairs technique only allowed you to mask your presence. However, by increasing ones speed in an Amaguriken-like fashion, Akane could switch her physical presence to anyone of the images without disturbing them. She was rather proud of that particular modification, it'd been one of her first to the School's style.

And so most of the Akane-images ran into the midst of the Senshi and began running interference, while the real Akane ran at the iguana demon and one fake ran at the other demon.

As she arrived at the demon, she split again. Now the demon was faced with apparently 3 Akanes, all circling it at tremendous speeds. Two Akanes synchronously launched ki blasts at its face and groin. They weren't the real ones. As the demon heard the words “Dokuja Tanketsu Sho<sup>3</sup>” an incredible pain dug into its back where Akane's glowing fingers had implanted themselves and then ripped a huge gash.

Howling in rage, the demon dropped a bruised and whimpering Sailor Moon to the ground and whipped around, swinging a fist through a ki-illusion of Akane.

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<sup>3</sup>“Poison Snake Deep Hole Blow” ki-charged attack with ones fingers. A part of the Yama-sen-ken.

Turning back around, it saw its previous target being sprinted in the direction of a tall man in black by the woman.

Having safely deposited Sailor Moon, Akane placed one ki-illusion in front of the grouped Senshi, and put the rest of them to the task of running circles around the two demons.

“I can’t talk for long or else I’ll lose my grip on the ki patterns I need to maintain this technique, so listen up.” Akane’s image was visibly distracted, her eyes not focusing on the Senshi. “I saw Saturn there use some sort of shield magic when we first got here. She’ll use that to defend Mercury, Mars, and Uranus while they try to attack the iguana demon. I’ll do my best to defend Moon, Jupiter and Neptune while they attack the minotaur-looking one. Got it? Good. I’m going to try and work them apart a bit, then go for it.”

With the end of her instructions, that ki-illusion flickered out of existence, and the others picked up in speed and complexity. True to her word, Akane began to weave a figure-eight around the two demons, which she rapidly elongated, pushing them apart.

Once the two were separated, and she saw Saturn in place by the iguana demon, she cut the power to half of her ki-illusions, and gave her demon a good blast to the face to make sure she had its full attention before beginning.

---

\*This is it. This is the summoner.. the.. girl responsible for Minako’s suffering.\*

Ranma muttered “For you, Minako” before he took the figurative safety off of his ki. With that mental action, excess ki began to burn off across his skin, zigging and zagging across his skin and cloths like lightning. For effect, he channeled a little bit into his eyes to burn off harmlessly, given them the look of being on fire.

“Come on then, girl.”

Even Cassia was a tad intimidated. She’d heard stories of Ranma Saotome. Oh yes, being raised to kill him, they’d been forced to study him. They’d seen recordings of him at tournaments with Nerima-class competitors, but it didn’t do him justice. To see him standing not 15 meters away, angry and burning off *excess* ki was completely different from seeing him fighting Hibiki in an arena.

Insanity however, prevented Cassia’s mind from holding onto an idea, such as fear for long. Instead, it slipped right on to the next thought. He’d called her a girl. Snarling, she responded, “Never, *call* me a girl!”

Evil so strong you could hear it whispering in your ear, tempting you, built as Cassia whipped her hands back, then, with a crack like a bull-whip, her hands came around and loosed dual bolts of crackling evilness at Ranma.

Removing himself from the path of one bolt with ease, Ranma watched in a near-morbid fascination as the second one clipped his left shoulder spinning him, hard.

Grinding a small trench in the side walk, Ranma regained control, and returned his gaze to Cassia. Smiling, Ranma began concentrating ki into his hands. Calmly he lifted both his hands and placed his palms outwards. “MOUKO TAKABISHA-DOUBLE!” Rapidly expelling the ki from his hands, two balls like hyper-inflated beach-balls formed and then rocketed off towards Cassia, Ranma trailing behind them at ki-enhanced speeds.

Just as Ranma had planned, Cassia was distracted when he arrived in her face. Arms and legs lashing out at every sensitive part of Cassia’s body he could reach, Ranma cranked up the ki burn as he felt his entire body blur and pass into Amaguriken-level speeds, his only remaining distinguishable features were his red shirt and blue aura. For nearly a full minute he kept it up, hammering Cassia’s body with strikes numbering in the multiple thousands.

When he finally finished, Cassia dropped to the ground like a used up toy, portions of her clothing evaporated and wafting off her body. “Kachu Tenshin Amaguriken, Saotome Revision #5, Human Hurricane. Give up now, demon girl.”

Sparing a glance over to Akane, he saw that both demons were looking quite thrashed, and none of the Senshi were too bad off. Supposedly Sailor Moon should be able to finish a demon off if they can weaken it enough first. \*Doesn’t look like those things can get much weaker without fallin’ apart, guess they’ll be done soon.\*

*“Never call me a girl!”*

Cassia was not about to stay down. In fact, she took flight, bringing herself a good 6 or 7 meters up in the air. A dark, evil ki that caused Ranma to shudder and close his mind off from it began to crackle over Cassia’s body. It quickly snaked across her skin and clothes until it was crawling all over her hands.

*“DIE ALREADY!”* Her hands snapped down with afterimage-inducing speed and loosed their evil potential at Ranma already engaging in evasive dodging.

\*I can’t shake this stuff, its trailing me! Only thing left is to block it.\* “Garyuu Bouei!<sup>4</sup>” Ki shot from Ranma’s finger tips, taking on a solidity which only the

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<sup>4</sup>“Reclining Dragon Defense” a lazy, resting dragon would be prone to simply do something to stop you, rather than obliterate you.

recipients of a ki blast normally experience, and left a thick, gleaming viscous-like shield over his head..

Which the black, evil energy slipped right through before smashing into Ranma, and smashing Ranma through the street.

And through the various piping underneath the street.

And into the subway system, where he lay.

---

Akane was fairly happy with the situation. By employing the Splitting Cat Hairs technique, she was able to draw off almost all of the demon's attacks. It didn't leave her with much chance to attack, but that was okay. The Senshi were actually managing to hurt their demons now that 3 of them could blast it at once, and they weren't having to run for their lives while they attacked.

Having her ki-illusions ripped apart was becoming mentally tiring. She wasn't concerned about running out of ki, she had plenty of that, but she was getting a nasty headache that was making holding onto the needed patterns harder.

When she heard a teeth rattling explosion near the location of Ranma's fight, her head snapped around, and with it, part of the pattern. Two fewer ki illusions. Unconcerned, she began searching the scene of Ranma's fight.

He wasn't there. She couldn't find his ki.

Worry began to grip her. Another ki-illusion flickered out of existence. Only 4 and the real her remained. \*Stupid, you've got to pay attention or else they're going to hit you, and then thrash these girls.\* For the life of her, though, she couldn't regain the concentration she needed to weave another ki-illusion.

---

Ranma hurt. Bad. Who knew how many feet of concrete he'd been smashed through? It was the piping that'd really hurt, though. \*Wonder if I hit a water main..\* coherency flittered away with a final thought, \*I think I'll just take a nap here...\*

---

"Ranma's been hurt!"

Ranma. Hurt. His normally massive ki undetectable.

The anger rose up in Akane, depression joining it, and intermingling. She tried to fight it off, launching a few attacks at the demon, but it didn't help. Time spent with Ranma flashed before her eyes. The ki patterns holding together her ki-illusions completely failed.

It didn't matter.

She screamed as a tear worked its way down her face.

“SHISHI HOUKODAN TO REKKA HOKAN!”<sup>5</sup> Dual globes of ki rocketed from Akane's hands, one red, and one green, they resembled Christmas ornaments gone awry.

The demon couldn't have asked for a quicker death. The balls of ki were reacting strangely. Arcs of static electricity crisscrossed the air between them, like they were trying to tear each other apart. As they reached the demon and washed over its arched and agonized looking form, they left nothing but a fine mist of demon in their wake.

Akane collapsed to her knees, drained of emotional energy.

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Cringing, Sailor Jupiter thought back to her own experiences with being slammed through various walls. She could only figure that being knocked through the street was worse.

\*Poor Mrs Saotome seems crushed. Oh no! She stopped making those duplicates of herself!\* Quickly looking around for her Princess, Jupiter found her at a relatively safe distance from the demon. Neptune was a tad on the close side, but she could take care of herself. Everyone accounted for, Jupiter upped the distance between herself and the demon. \*Not gonna stick around to tangle with one of those things without something distracting it!\*

Quickly reaching a safer distance, Jupiter spun around to see Mrs Saotome's entire body wreathed in green and red like a neon Christmas display. Arcs of energy that resembled electricity bounced between the green and red, each one adding to the ozone smell that Jupiter was quite familiar with.

After it built for a second, the green and red disappeared for a second, before reappearing, separate, and in front of Mrs Saotome's hands. Quickly they streaked towards the demon who had already decided that waiting for them to arrive would be a bad idea.

---

<sup>5</sup>“to” = “and”. Hence, “Raging Lion Bullet and Raging Fire Completion”

Fascinated by the energy that appeared to be electricity bouncing around on the glob, Jupiter's eyes were open and staring when the glob impacted on the demon.

Not quite able to avert her eyes, Jupiter began to feel ill as she watched the energy tear the demon apart front to back, leaving a fine mist in the air. \*Oh man. Gross! I think I'm gonna be sick...\* Not having had a big breakfast, all Jupiter was able to do was retch, while the fine mist settled down, leaving a bloody puddle.

---

\*Ugh. I feel like I got slammed through a street.\*

Gently moving his head, Ranma found that he couldn't have been any closer to the truth.

\*Oh boy.. that felt like Akane and her Shishi no Haini. She must think I've been really hurt. Better drag myself out of his hole..\*

Lifting an arm to prop himself up, he found that that would be harder than he originally suspected.

---

Deprived of its partner, and now surrounded by 7 of the technicolor girls, one weirdo in a tuxedo, and the human woman who'd ripped a chunk off its back, the iguana demon was sort of worried. At least that woman who'd split herself up had stopped that and was sitting on the ground now. It really hoped that she didn't get up again, that red and green energy she had used was much too powerful for it.

---

"Come on Senshi, lets get this evil creepo!" cheered Usagi.

Inspired by such a simplistic statement, the Inner Senshi began to attack anew. Various forms of energy whipped out and around, striking the demon which convulsed under the onslaught.

Still alive, though, it began dragging itself towards Cassia, who was floating over the hole she'd created in the street, gloating like the madwoman she most obviously was.

"Oh no you don't!"

The concept of using less than their full power rarely occurs to the Senshi, and so Sailor Moon began the Silver Moon Crystal Power Kiss attack. Complete overkill at this point, the attack wiped the demon out of existence with ease.

---

Sense and coherent thought slowly returned to Akane, but in a vague and abstract third person. She watched with detached interest as the girls harassed the remaining demon with their attacks, slowly weakening it. Next she observed as Usagi launched her final attack and wiped the demon out. The analytical part of her brain which was working noted that it seemed to be a bit more powerful than was needed, but she couldn't be sure since she was unable to feel magic like ki.

\*Move Akane.\*

\*Move.\*

She leaned forwards to stand up.

Her feet pulled forwards, readying themselves to support her weight.

Akane felt slow, as though she were thinking and moving through molasses. All her preternatural speed of just a few minutes ago gone, but the adrenaline still there, her mind unconsciously expected to be faster, thinking itself still in the fight.

One foot supporting her weight, the other hanging in midair, seeming motionless in its slowness, Akane heard a voice cry out which mere minutes ago she hadn't expected to hear ever again.

"AUGH! KI-"

---

\*Ouch. Ouch. Ouch. This really hurts.\*

Ranma tugged on his ki a bit harder to feed it into the healing process. He had to get out of wherever he was. \*Where am I, anyways? Lets see, dark, sounds big, some metal on the ground and a really loud noise coming at me.\*

Blinking, Ranma focused in the direction of the sound, noting that it seemed to be particularly bright that way, sort of like a headlight.

\*Hmm. Metal rails on the ground, something loud, with a headlight, underground. Ah! The subway.\*

"The subway."

“Oh damn.”

The train’s horn echoed through the tunnel, sounding like the arrival of Armageddon and Ragnarok both rolled into one big bar brawl.

Abandoning his attempts to heal himself for the time being, he quickly looked for an escape. \*Guess I’m leaving the way I came.. No way I can jump that high, though. Havn’t been roof hopping enough recently.\*

\*Climbing is too slow. Argh! Think!\*

Remembering a video game he watched his daughter play once, inspiration hit him. Hands directed down, he hopped into the air and fired a Mouko Takabisha at the ground. \*Hey, I’m flying!\*

Gravity took hold when his hands were mere centimeters out of reach of the opening.

\*Okay, I’m falling.\*

“Double Mouko Takabisha!”

This time he flew past the opening, a bit of midair tumbling and he was on his feet, only to feel a shudder of pain pass up his legs and through his body on impact. \*Akane’ll have a field day with this.\*

Quickly surveying the battlefield/highway, Ranma realized that immediate action was required. The girls were congratulating themselves, Akane was halfway to standing up, and that demon girl Cassia was sneaking up behind her!

Her dark energy was already gathering, wiggling around her outstretched right hand, trying to leap off. Ranma had been the target of a blast smaller than this one was going to be, and he had been prepared and blocking. Nobody but Ryouga would survive what Cassia was about to launch without preparation.

She was too tough, she’d shrug off a Mouko Takabisha at this distance. In fact, she’d shrug off anything he could build up in the short time he had. Ranma shuddered at the thought of what he was going to have to do.

Ki fed into his legs, Ranma pushed off the ground, leaving foot prints as his ran. Ranma screamed inarticulately, hoping to pull Cassia’s attention to him before he got there. It didn’t work.

With a queasy feeling, Ranma launched his attack.

“KIJIN RAISHU DAN!”

The ki-charged vacuum blade whipped out from his arm, heading straight for Cassia’s outstretched arm, and passed through it, halfway between the elbow and wrist.

For a moment, nothing happened.

Then her forearm separated from the rest of her arm with an explosion of dark power. Slowly, the energy which lingered in the air like a mist died down, leaving a shocked Cassia holding a stump of an arm with her left hand, and staring at her dissolving right forearm that lay on the street.

Akane watched with a dead look in her eyes, the girls with a look of revulsion in theirs, as a thick reddish black ooze trickled from between Cassia's fingers.

Reality seemed to take just as long to penetrate Cassia's mind as a ki blast did, for it was a good 10 seconds before Cassia opened her mouth.

And screamed. And screamed. And screamed.

And as the remains of her hand finally turned into a paste on the road, she turned and ran, still screaming.

---

In a dark room in his large Juuban apartment, Ranma lay draped over a chair, muscles lax, sight unfocused, his arms hanging over the sides of the chair. The lights of the Tokyo skyline shone in, faintly illuminating his distraught features.

When she entered, Akane casually flipped the light switch, further illuminating Ranma. "Ranma, you can't mope around like this, you'd be too caught between confidence and depression to fight properly. And besides, it isn't healthy."

"Akane.. My old man was right.. the Yamasen-ken is just too violent to use.."

"What are you talking about? You only used the Yamasen-ken once, and.. oh."

"The Gods know, I've killed in self defense before.. but, this.. Akane.. I mutilated her.. even if she is a threat to our family and society.. I mutilated her. She isn't whole anymore.."

Akane's head hung low, matching her voice. "Ranma, she would've killed me. And there wasn't anything else you could've done.."

"We shouldn't have gone in so unprepared.. That girl is powerful.. even more powerful if she saw the Kijin Raishu Dan. Maybe the Umisen-ken should've been used from the start." Ranma sighed, "Wait.. I know. If we get a bit of help, we shouldn't need to use such violent techniques..."

---

One must wonder what Mrs Mizuno would think if she knew just what her daughter discussed with her friends when all of them came over. With the Mer-

cury Computer and its ability to detect humans at a distance, we'll never find out, though.

Hence, the Mercury Computer was again engaged in watching for any intruders as all the Senshi save Pluto and Venus (and Mamoru) gathered in the living room of the Mizuno home again.

For once, all of the Senshi were paying attention, except for young Hotaru, whose eyes were glazed over watching a mental movie only she could see. In it, Ranma was saving her from various forms of evil.

In the real world, however, we find Usagi smiling cheerfully as she endeavored to see exactly how much food she could stuff into her mouth while still keeping her lips sealed. The answer, as she found out, was "quite a bit".

Rei was mumbling something like "I still wanna know where they're getting all that ki from! It just isn't natural!"

In the process of figuring out if her stomach was interested in keeping food down yet, was Makoto. The only one to get a clear view of Akane's destruction of the demon, she was still ill whenever she thought about it.

Actually doing something useful, Ami was speaking with Haruka and Michiru about today's fight. Already having gone through the innanities of congratulating and complimenting each other on their success, they were actually to interesting conversation.

After a pause, Haruka began, "So. Ami, do you know how Akane was making those copies of herself?"

"That was quite interesting, actually. It seems she wasn't really copying herself. The copies were actually afterimages."

"Uh.. Ami, afterimages fade."

"Yes, well, I would venture to guess that Akane knows a way to keep them from fading."

"Afterimages don't walk and talk, either."

Sort of flustered, Ami's response was a tad quick, "If I knew how they did it, then I would've been using it to keep from being beat up, don't you think?"

"What about their other attacks?" Michiru quickly asked to distract Ami.

It worked. "Most of them were more of that same energy that I can't measure, so I don't really know anything about them."

A look of disgust crossed Michiru's face before she asked, "And.. that final attack he used.. to, ah.. well, that he used on Cassia?"

Ami shuddered at the thought of what Mr Saotome had done. She couldn't think of what else could've been done, but, cutting off someone's hand? "By dragging his arm through the air in a certain fashion, he was able to create a vacuum. He wasn't moving as fast as he has in the past, though, and he never created a vacuum before, so I would speculate that again, he was using some of that energy I can't measure."

Part way through the last description, most of the girls had begun paying attention. But Makoto was still staring palely at the food, and Hotaru's eyes were still unfocused.

"Ami, I keep telling you that they're using ki!" insisted Rei.

A tired look crossed Ami's face. "But then you tell me that you don't think it is possible for it to be ki."

Rei was taken back. "Yes, you see, its ki alright, I'm sure of that. But they can't possibly have as much as they use up. Like, today, when Mrs Saotome was making those illusions of herself, she was using ki. But! I could feel how much ki she was using up, and it just wasn't possible! She was feeding more ki into a single image every minute than I've ever used up in all my fire readings put together! I just can't figure it out."

Usagi piped up, trying to be useful, "Weellll... What if they're not using their own, uh, key stuff. Maybe they're getting it from somewhere else?"

Annoyed by Usagi's interruption, Rei lashed out, "Ooo! What would you know, meatball head! That isn't possible, anyways."

Again, quick to prevent things from decaying, Michiru shook Hotaru out of her daze. "Hotaru dear, could you please tell everyone else what you were telling me about what the Saotomes have been doing the past 15 years?"

Happy to prove herself as the biggest Ranma fan on the planet, Hotaru piped up, "Sure mama.. Hmm. Okay, 15 years ago, after Mina was born, Ranma and Akane disappeared. Lotsa people thought they'd been killed or something, but their family wasn't worried." Hotaru scrunched up her face as she thought. "Then, 10 years ago, Kuonji-Tendo Light Industries sponsored the first Tenka-ichi-budokai. Ranma and Akane both showed up, in that matching outfit you saw. Nobody expected Akane to be very good, because before she disappeared, she wasn't much better than Makoto is now. She fought really well, though, and got up to the finals. Ryouga Hibiki refused to fight her, and so she ended up taking second to Ranma."

Scratching her head, Hotaru paused before beginning again. "Hmm. They weren't really popular after that, but 3 years later, at the next one, there was a

big crowd waiting for them. Pretty much the same thing happened, except that some Chinese woman with a weird name refused to fight Ranma. Ryouga Hibiki disappeared towards the end, so he got 4th place to that woman.”

“All of the people who make it close to the finals use really strange attacks, some of them with energy like Ranma. Except for Ranma, Akane, Ryouga Hibiki and that funny Chinese woman..”

Hotaru’s voice trailed off in thought.

“Hey. What if they’re not using them on purpose?”

Ami nodded, “They said something about having to decide to use their special attacks. Maybe they think they’re so good that it would give them a completely unfair advantage over everyone else?”

“We’ve seen what Ranma and Akane can do, but it sounds like that Hibiki person and the Chinese woman are holding back, too. Could there be *more* people as powerful as the Saotomes?” questioned Haruka.

“I think, Haruka,” Michiru swirled her tea “that we’re going to find out.”

---

The phone rang.

A middle-aged woman with pink hair got up from her chair to answer it.

“Hello?”

\*mumble\*

“Yes.. This is the Hibiki residence..”

---

Mr Dantomo looked at the postcard he’d just removed from the mailbox. The Ainos always seemed like such normal people, but they kept sending mail to the strangest places. First Nerima, and now the outskirts of China. The card was apparently addressed to a personal hygiene product living in some out-of-the-way village.

He felt something akin to sympathy pains for whatever fellow postman would have to deliver this card all the way out there.



## Chapter 3

### Welcome Home

*“If only I would have been more right.” - Meiou Setsuna, aka Sailor Pluto*

Sailor Pluto stood, passively, at the Gates of Time.

This wasn't at all unusual. She'd been doing it since the previous Sailor Pluto had died, Forever ago. She'd be doing it until she died, Forever from now.

However, she was worried.

*That was unusual.*

Since the fall of the Moon Kingdom, and the development of non-magical ways for humans to defend themselves, Sailor Pluto had been feeling slight ripples in time. Time is perceived as a smooth surface of water by those who Guard its proper flow, and, disturbances in it cause ripples. These ripples weren't of much concern, they were always very small and never lasted for more than a few minutes. Certainly nothing that could derail Pluto's plans for Crystal Tokyo.

In the past hundred years, and especially the past twenty, the ripples had gotten bigger. They were approaching dangerous sizes. But.. they weren't near her Princess.

Until now.

She'd sensed the ripples, large ones, so close to the Imperium Crystal that they could've been on top of each other for all she knew.

Something was going to have to be done.

She would wait for another disturbance, and then deal with those who would dare disturb time.

“Akane? Which bag was this supposed to go in?”

“ARGH! This one!”

Plucking the high-speed luggage out of the air, Ranma mumbled his thanks and proceeded to stick some more of Minako’s stuff into the bag. \*I may turn into a woman, but I’ll never figure out where women get all this stuff from.. Must have somethin to do with that damn mallet..\*

Akane stopped packing for what must’ve been the 20th time in as many minutes, and asked, “Minako, are you *sure* you’re ready to go home?”

“Yeessss mom. I’m tired of laying in bed. And it may be a good diet, but I’m tired of eating hospital food. Even yours would better.”

“Now now Minako, your mother hasn’t got anyone sick with her cooking in years. And Akane, Minako has Saotome genes, after all, she can heal - URK.”

Ranma fell over, unconscious, a chair embedded in his head.

Dusting off her hands, Akane turned back to Minako and said, “Now, lets finish packing up your stuff and get out of here.”

“What do we do about dad?”

“Leave ’im. He knows the way home.”

Sighing, Akane added, “And he’ll probably beat us home, too.”

---

Ranma sat up a short while later to find a cleaning lady staring at him.

“Oh man, have I ever got a headache..”

---

Holding a preposterous amount of luggage under her arms, Akane was doing a balancing act reminiscent of Ranma’s waitressing days as she attempted to open the door. Finally getting her fingers around the knob, she was just about to begin the delicate process of turning the knob when it leapt out of her grasp.

“Welcome home!” grinned Ranma.

A large, tumbling pile of luggage announced its return home by landing on top of Ranma, knocking him to the ground even after he succeeded in dodging the first few pieces.

“Would you stop laying around and pick this up?” sighed Akane.

An uncomplaining Ranma dragged himself to his feet. Giving a brief bow and nod like a hotheaded young bellhop, he began to extract luggage from the pile for transportation.

“And where would you like this put?”

“Minako’s room, dear. Minako, have a seat, I’ll get us tea.”

Her parents both having left the room, Minako suddenly felt a tiredness set in that reminded her of her only partial recovery. Nervously yanking her transformation rod from its dimensional cubby hole, Minako moved to the middle of the room. Standing there briefly, she felt sort of odd about what she was going to do. She’d never transformed in her own house before, where her parents might see. Thus, a fairly small voice called out “Venus Crystal Power, Make-up.”

A few, brief, moments later, Sailor Venus stood in the middle of the Aino home, relishing in finally healing.

Her mother walked in, and found Venus standing there running her hands up and down her arms as the last of the bruising subsided.

“Can’t you girls do something about the length of your skirts? It just isn’t decent,” lamented Akane.

“No, mom. Anything longer could get in the way of fighting.”

Akane nodded, “I’ll have you know I can fight just fine in a long skirt. Another inch or two and..”

“Mooooommm!”

“Here dear,” Akane gave up on convincing her daughter of the merits of modest, “have a seat, have some tea, take a load off.”

Venus plopped down with uncustomarily little grace and took the tea offered to her. Akane quickly joined her daughter on the floor.

“Now that you’re home and feeling better, care to tell me just how long you’ve been running around doing this?”

A sheepish look crept over Venus’ features. “Well.. You remember those news reports about ‘Sailor V’ back when we lived in England?”

“Sure, they started right.. after.. we.. got.. Artemis.. YOU WERE RUNNING AROUND FIGHTING CRIME WHEN YOU WERE 13?!”

“I had to, mom. I was pretending to be the Princess to keep the Dark Kingdom from finding the real Princess before we did.”

“Did it work?” asked a now solemn Akane. “She is still alive, isn’t she?”

“Of course she is, you saw her.”

“Saw who?”

“The Princess.”

“Minako. Who is the Princess?”

“\*cough\*skinoh”

“Speak up, dear.”

“usagi tsukino.”

“*She* is a princess?!”

“You don’t exactly have to take a test to be a Princess, mom. You’re sort of born that way.”

“At least there isn’t any real royalty left, so it’s not like she’ll be running things anywhere someday.”

Venus looked distinctly uncomfortable.

“That was 3 years ago, Minako. What have you been doing since then?”

“Different new, different new-”

“That’s ‘same old, same old’, Minako.”

Venus coughed, “As I was saying.. Defeat the Dark Kingdom, stop invaders from the future, prevent the Death Busters from stealing pure heart crystals, protect people’s dream mirrors and star seeds. That kind of thing.”

“The Dark Kingdom was trying to steal people’s ki, right?”

“Ki? Huh? They were going after people’s life energy.”

“That is ki. Pretty much. Toss in some other things like your will, soul, and emotions, and you’ve got ki.”

“Wow. And that’s what you and dad use to fight?”

“Yup.”

“Could you show me, please?”

“What do you want to see? There are lots of things that can be done with ki.”

“That thing where you split yourself up would be really cool.”

Smiling, Akane stood up and then bowed to her daughter at the waist. As she bent, though, she left duplicates at various angles. Once she reached a full ninety-degree bow, four of the 5 images stepped apart, one going in each cardinal

direction, the fifth staying in the center. The net result was rather unsettling.

“Amazing! What is that called?”

“Splitting Cat Hairs.” said one Akane. The description was continued on by a different Akane, “It was invented by the Chinese Amazons a few thousand years ago.” The speaking Akane switched again, to the image that had snuck up behind Venus. “Inspired terror in some emperor or other.”

Ranma chose that moment to return to the room. “Showing off again, eh, Akane? You know, the ki burn from that technique can probably be felt for a few kilometers. Good thing there isn’t anybody around who’d care.”

Akanes flickered out of existence until only one, standing next to Ranma was left. “Finished putting up Minako’s stuff?”

Ranma’s shoulders slumped, “Yes.. I don’t see how she got all that stuff into that hospital room. Are you sure you haven’t been teaching her hidden weapons techniques?”

“Women know them instinctively.”

Shaking his head, Ranma began wondering if he’d ever understand women. Sitting down, Ranma poured himself a bit of tea before he gave himself a headache.

“Hey dad, how about you tell me some more about your friends?”

Pausing to think for a second, Ranma’s eyes grew slightly vacant. With a grin, he was back to reality. “Sure. I don’t really have a whole lot of friends, though. Spent my childhood training, remember. Been covering up who I am for the past 12 or so years, too.” Through his introductory extemporization, Ranma’s face had grown slowly sullen. Perking back up, he continued, “I’ve got the greatest buddy in the world, though.”

“My old friend, Ryouga Hibiki.”

Completely unbeknownst to Ranma, Akane cringed at the name.

“He gets lost all the time, turns into a pig, and doesn’t catch on too quick, but he is a great guy.”

Giving her father a rather odd look, Venus inquired, “He turns into a pig?”

“Sure. Remember I fell into that magical spring? He fell into another one that turns him into a pig. Used to be this tiny little black piglet, man, he hated that. Now he turns into a fairly big pig, and can actually use sumo pig wrestling techniques.”

By now Venus had one eyebrow arched to a nearly painful level. “Sumo pig wrestling?”

“Ah, yeah...” Ranma rubbed the back of his head, “I guess that *is* just too weird to believe. Never mind that.”

Realization hit her like a MAC truck to the back of the head. “Oh! This is the same Mr Hibiki who fights in the Tenka-ichi-budokai!”

“Yup.”

“What does he do besides fight?”

“Hmm,” started Ranma, “last I heard he was running some sort of civil engineering company specializing in demolition. Told me he makes pretty good money since he doesn’t need wrecking equipment or explosives.”

“How does he demolish a building without explosives?”

“He probably walks down into the basement and uses the Bakusai Tenketsu on the foundation.”

“Bakusai Tenketsu?”

“The breaking point technique. All inanimate objects have points which, when touched, cause the object to shatter. I think your mom knows how to find the point on stone, but Ryouga can find the point on *any* inanimate object.”

“Oh. He walks into the basement of the building, and shatters the foundation? Makes sense.” Venus thought for a second or two, “Wait a minute.. How long does it take for the stuff to blow up?”

Completely nonchalant, Ranma replied “Not long, second or two, tops.”

“Um. Wouldn’t the building collapse on him?”

“Probably.”

Her voice now raised with concern, Venus continued the game of 20 questions. “And shouldn’t that sort of kill him?”

“Nah. Ryouga learned the Bakusai Tenketsu by smashing himself into a huge boulder until he figured it out. Later on he decided there must be other techniques you could learn if you did other stuff like that, except even more nuts.”

“Such as?”

“Like-” was all Ranma managed to get out, when the doorbell began to ring.

Before it could even finish ringing, Ranma was in motion. Venus was gaping. Nothing could really prepare her for the way in which her father moved now that he was no longer hiding his ability. Grace was no longer applicable, it was merely a word, after all. This was real.

Venus dove behind a convenient wall, having remembered her state of Sailor Venus-ness, just as her father pulled open the door.

“Hello, Ami. Who is your friend?”

“Hello, Mr Saotome. This is Hotaru Tomoe,” Ami added, in a smaller voice and after glancing about, “you already met her, she is Sailor Saturn.”

“Oh, its nice to see you again. You’re looking much better today than you were before.”

Hotaru stammered briefly before responding, “Ah. Hello, Mr Saotome. It’s very nice to meet you under better circumstances.”

Ranma nodded slightly. “Please, come in. Minako was just resting up. I’m sure she’d love to see you.”

Turning and walking to the wall Venus had surreptitiously hidden herself behind, Ranma stuck his head around the edge of the wall. “Mii-naa-kooh.. Your friends Ami and Hotaru are here.”

Up and running before Ranma could retract his face, Venus spun her father as she took the corner at hair-raising speeds. Once on straight course to her now worried target, Ami, Venus’ speed only increased as her arms flung out. “Ami!” Apparently, Ami tried greet Venus, but being squeezed as she was, it came out as little more than “Menfgh.”

Once released from her impromptu restraint, Ami smiled, “I brought Hotaru to help you, just like we’d talked about.”

Confusion quickly became evident on Venus’s face. “What did we talk about?”

“Um,” started Ami, who was already rubbing her forehead, “retaining some of your Senshi powers while not Sailor Venus.”

“Ohhh... That. Right. That. Oh yeah! Hey, great. How do we start?”

---

As Hotaru stepped forward, Ami stepped back to join Minako’s parents, who had taken their seats back during the exchange.

As Hotaru began her explanation into the mechanics of Senshi-fication, Ami turned to Akane and gave a fairly deep bow. “Mrs Saotome, I wanted to apologize.”

Unable to contain her surprise and touch of uncertainty, Akane rapidly asked, “Whatever for, Ami?”

“For being unable to stop Cassia when she was going to attack you at the end of our previous fight.”

“Ami..” Akane’s face became rather serious, and she brushed her long hair out of her face, “there wasn’t anything you could do. Besides, I knew the risks. Plus everything worked out.. well enough.”

“That’s just it. I feel bad that there wasn’t anything I could do. The Outer Senshi could’ve done something. Even Mina probably could’ve stopped her. But not me.”

An uncertain Akane put her arm around Ami. The same Ami that reminded her so much of her own sisters. \*Sisters need to take care of each other.\* reasoned Akane. “Its okay, Ami, really.”

---

“Do you understand, Venus?”

Venus paused a moment to reflect over the instructions that Hotaru had given her. “Yes.. I think so. Could you try showing me?”

“Sure!”

Yanking her transformation rod out of its pocket dimension, Hotaru raised it in a single fluid motion, while calling for her transformation. “Saturn Crystal Power, Make-up!”

After the brief display of magical fireworks, Sailor Saturn stood in the living room of the Saotomes, the Silence Glaive held in her right hand.

Before Saturn can begin to instruct Venus, a Ranma eager to escape the mushiness being displayed by Akane and Ami hopped to his feet and over to Saturn.

“Say, that is a pretty impressive lookin weapon. I mean, as far as weapons go, you know. I was wondering if you’d mind if I gave it a whirl?”

As Saturn glanced back and forth between Ranma and the Silence Glaive, Ranma felt as though he might’ve asked some sort of terribly embarrassing question. “I mean, if you don’t want to, thats okay, I don’t want to be bothersome or anything..”

“No, no. I don’t mind, its just that I’ll need to be transforming and untransforming. I’m not sure if the Glaive will disappear.”

“Oh,” shrugged Ranma, “if it disappears, it disappears.”

Saturn moved to hand the Glaive to Ranma, using only one hand. When he in turn reached out with a single hand, she looked at him questioningly. “Its really

heavy, you know. I couldn't hope to lift it without being Sailor Saturn." Ranma's grinning face was all the response she received, and all she needed.

"I'll be in the backyard." said Ranma, as he turned to leave with the Glaive in hand, "Don't worry, I'll take good care of it."

Once Ranma had left the room, Saturn turned back to Venus. As Venus watched Saturn moved, she realized that even without the assistance of the Glaive's wicked blades, Saturn was a tremendously impressive young woman.

"Hmm. Your dad should have stayed in case the Glaive will disappeared." A brief pause ensued before Saturn continued, "Might as well detransform before he gets any further away. Here I go..."

With that, Saturn closed her eyes, and dismissed her power, but as it fled, she tugged at it, bring it towards and into her. To those few watching, it seemed as though she'd pulled her uniform into her, exposing her previous clothes.

Now Hotaru, she smiled, "Now you try."

And Venus did. Releasing her grip on her power, she tried pulling it into her as it dissipated, just as Hotaru had told her to, but it didn't end up feeling any different. Hotaru sighed as she watched the uniform of Venus turn into colored energy and then dissipate, without being pulled into Minako.

"Here, I'll show you again."

---

Feet set firmly apart, Ranma Saotome held the Silence Glaive in his hands. The cool metal which defied identification glinted here and there. Thinking for a moment, Ranma struggled to remember an appropriate kata for this weapon.

As a child, his father had trained him in the use of more weapons than most people realized existed. Weapons practice had never been very important, though, and had ceased completely by the time Ranma's training trip was over. Ranma had developed a weapon more formidable than anything that could be forged, though: his own force of will (with a heaping helping of raw ego).

Shaking his head to ward off a trip down memory lane, Ranma gave up on a kata for the glaive, and instead settled for one on a simple staff. Right before he began, he felt the Glaive tug for a moment in the direction of where he'd left the Glaive's owner. Guessing that was all that was going to happen, Ranma allowed himself to settle into the rhythm of the kata.

Working himself through the motions of the kata, Ranma was distracted by the strangest thoughts and feelings. Images of himself wielding the Glaive in combat

as he slew mercilessly, follow by images and thoughts of destroying the world and bringing Silence. Then a wordless voice began whispering at him. For awhile, he wasn't sure what it wanted, but then it became clear.

It was the Silence.

It wanted him.

It was asking him to wield it and bring Silence to the world. It offered Its power to him, all he had to do was unshackle it from its current wielder.

Visions of that came.

Ranma dropped the Silence Glaive and backed away, sweat covering him. The simple thought, *\*That thing is alive!\** reverberated through Ranma's mind as he hurriedly went back into the house, having left the Glaive lying on the grass, the sun shining on it.

---

“Hoh-tah-ruuuuu! I can't get it right.”

“Minako dear, stop whining like your friend Usagi.”

Putting on a downcast face, Minako turned back to Saturn. Saturn gave Minako a smile, “Try again.”

With a sigh, Minako hoisted her transformation rod for what felt like the 100th time that day, and wondered if it was possible to wear out the transformation rod. “Venus Crysta-”

“Hotaru! Is your Glaive supposed to talk?” asked a still nervous Ranma.

“Talk?” Saturn was rapidly becoming nervous, too, Ranma was not the type to be nervous, and so when he was, it was infectious.

“Yeah, talk. Or something. The Silence was trying to talk me into destroying the world. It wanted me to, uh, get rid of you, then it said it would let me have your power.”

Saturn hung her head low. “Sailor Saturn is the Senshi of Creation and Destruction. When my power was created, the Silence was harnessed in exchange for a promise that Saturn would someday be allowed to bring the Silence..”

Ranma and Akane's jaws dropped.

“You can see, though, the world is still here. The Silence is angry that I refuse it. It hasn't ever tried talking to anyone else, before. But you are the first non-Senshi to hold the Silence Glaive.”

Saturn continued, forlornly, “Sometimes the Glaive will try to move on its own. Pluto said that was the Silence, and that if I could get ‘physical mastery’ over the Glaive itself, it would help in controlling the silence. I don’t know what she means by that, or how i’d get ‘physical mastery’ over anything, I may be healthier than I was, but I’m still weak.”

A look of deep thought crossed Ranma’s face before he announced, “I’ve got an idea. Do you know how to use it, to fight?”

“I use it for my magical attacks.”

Ranma shook his head. “Just it, by itself. Assuming you could hold it, could you fight with it without magical powers?”

“Not really.”

“Well,” Ranma grinned, “how about I teach you?”

Saturn’s face brightened considerably as she looked at Ranma with undisguised hope and happiness. “Would you?”

“Sure! Hmm... Heres what I can do, I’ll work on making a form of Anything Goes Martial Arts for Glaive, and I’ll only teach you. I’m not sure how being a Senshi works, but you could pass it on to your successor or something.”

A dreamy look invaded Saturn’s eyes at the thought of Ranma Saotome doing something like that for her. Not even two weeks ago, she had never expected to ever meet Ranma, and here he was, going to invent a secret martial arts style just for her.

Ranma went on, talking about how it wouldn’t be easy for her, and it would take years, yadda yadda. Saturn wasn’t listening to a word of it.

“We’ll be visiting our family dojo with Minako, soon, Hotaru. Would you like to come with us? The dojo would be a good place to start your training.” A subvocalized voice added, “And havin a student’ll help convince my old man that I havn’t been slackin off.”

“Mama and papa might not be too happy about that,” said Hotaru.

“Ah,” nodded Ranma, “I can understand that. I’ll give them a call later and ask them. You are interested, though, right?”

“Oh yes! Very!”

“Wonderful. Now.” Ranma plopped himself down beside his wife, who was looking a bit less mushy, “How is it coming, Minako?”

An inarticulate mumbling with an obviously negative meaning slipped out of Minako’s mouth.

“That bad, eh?”

“Worse.”

Cringing, Ranma asked, “May I watch? I haven’t had a chance to closely watch you girls transform before.”

Blushing, Minako whispered, “Dad.. We’re sort of naked for part of it.”

“And?”

“And what?! We’re *naked!*”

“Akane, where are the baby pictures? I’m sure Minako’s friends would just love to see those...”

Ami giggled, and Saturn blushed as Minako became flustered.

“Fine! Venuscrystalpowermakeup!”

Knowing its wielder’s desire, the power of Venus did indeed do its best to speed things up, but it was hindered by Minako’s attempts to keep herself modest for the entire process.

A completely impassive Ranma turned to Saturn after his daughter was done. “Can you show me what the detransformation should look like?”

Saturn nodded once, concentrated, and released her power, while at the same time pulling it in.

Ranma looked on, thoughtfully. Finally, when it was done, he turned back to Venus, “Okay, Minako, I think I see. Try thinking of a vacuum sucking on the power as you detransform.”

“How do you know that?” asked a perturbed Venus. Ranma merely shot back a Parental Look of Death that cowed the mighty Sailor Venus.

“Okay, okay..”

Closing her eyes and envisioning the big clunky vacuum her mother used while they lived in England, Venus released her power...

And successfully pulled it back in.

“I did it!” Minako cried, and began to dance around.

Ranma stood and asked, “Could you all follow me into the backyard, please?”

Minako stopped in middance step, “Why?”

“Well, I’d like you to show me something, and Hotaru would probably like her Glaive back..” Ranma began mumbling, “..and I don’t wanna touch the thing again..”

---

Minako stood in her backyard facing off against her father. She was glad her mom, Saturn (who had transformed, again, to reclaim her Glaive), and Mercury (who had transformed and retrieved the Mercury computer, at her father's request) were watching, because her father was acting odd.

“Well, dad, whats up?”

No verbal response came from her father. Instead, he bowed, and dropped into a fighting stance, with not even the slightest expression on his face.

Then he came at her.

No tricks, no superhuman speed, just a straight charge.

Launching a simple punch to his daughter's shoulder when he reached her, Ranma was pleasantly surprised to find that she was able to dodge it. “Very good. Now, can you hit me?”

Combat reflexes that the past and future leader of the Senshi had forgotten slowly came to the fore. Sailor Venus had had little use for hand to hand combat since her reincarnation. Slowly grace returned to her and dodged and waved out of punches and kicks that were ever so slowly increasing in speed.

“But I don't wanna hit you, dad!”

Ranma sighed, and launched a flurry of punches. “Hit me, or I'll dig up those baby pictures,” mentioned a grinning Ranma.

“OOOO! Don't you dare!” Minako went for an uppercut to the gut, thinking that her father would dodge it.

He didn't.

Instead, he let himself get lifted a good 2 meters off the ground, before plopping back to the grass, unceremoniously.

“Ugh. Akane, dear?”

“Yes?”

“Remind me that I don't need to follow Minako on her prom night.”

Akane smiled, “Yes, dear.”

Slowly pulling himself up to his knees, Ranma coughed, and rubbed his stomach. Mercury and Saturn both came to help him to his feet, Saturn hurrying to lay on her healing hands. Minako just stood there, staring at her fist.

“Are you alright, Mr Saotome?”

“Yes, Ami, I’m fine. I’m just not conditioned to take damage like I used to be. Havn’t had any serious injuries in years, so I’m not healing like I used to. Getting slammed through the street last week *still* hurts. Besides,” Ranma began mumbling, “you girls are pretty strong.”

On his feet, Ranma approached Minako and waved his hand around in her face until he got her attention. “That was pretty good. I’m surprised you were able to dodge all of that.”

Distantly, Minako replied, “I started remembering more of the original Senshi training when you attacked. Helped with the speed and coordination..”

Ranma nodded and joined his wife. Quietly, he told her, “It’ll have to do. She is a bit stronger than you and only slightly slower than me at her age. We could try teaching her basic Anything Goes stances, but I don’t think she’d pick them up fast enough.”

“Our parents are getting old, Ranma, they won’t be able to spar with her. If they ask for a demonstration, they’ll ask for some katas.”

“I suppose you’re right,” sighed Ranma. “Good thing they can’t make us commit seppuku.”

Akane paled. “Ranma..”

Ranma began getting pale, too.

“Didn’t we swear to produce an heir to the school when we got married?”

“Ummm,” Ranma gulped, “I think so..”

“I’m not big on slicing myself open, Ranma.”

“Neither am I, but I hid from honor once, and I’m not going to do it again. Even if you do live longer..” Ranma sagged, “it tends not to be a life worth living.”

“Come on, lets get some hard numbers out of Ami..”

---

“Hello?”

“Yes. This is Haruka Tennou- Ah. Hello Mr Saotome. What can I do for you?”

“Training? I suppose. Let me ask Michiru..”

Haruka waved, trying to draw Michiru’s attention away from the violin that she was practicing on.

“What is it, Haruka?”

Haruka covered the receiver with one hand before replying, “Mr Saotome would like to take Hotaru on a short trip to his family dojo, with Minako. Hotaru told him about Pluto saying that she needed ‘physical mastery’ over the Glaive, and he suggested learning a martial art based on the Glaive. So he was going to invent one,” Haruka’s voice began to betray a hint of uncertainty, “specifically for the Silence Glaive, and teach it to Hotaru.”

Setting down the violin, Michiru looked at Haruka as her mind thought furiously. “I imagine that it can’t hurt. The Saotomes believe that they scared this Cassia girl off, at least for the time being. They could probably get Hotaru to a battle sooner than we could, even if they were on the other side of Tokyo. Hotaru does wish to go, correct?”

Haruka nodded, and removed her hand from the receiver.

“She may go. When will you be leaving?”

“I see. Will Hotaru need a ride home today?”

“Okay. Goodbye.”

Haruka hung up the phone, and moved to join Michiru, who was yet to reclaim her violin.

“When will they be leaving?” asked Michiru.

“In a day or two, they want to make sure Minako has completely recovered, first. Something about her grandfather being easily upset.”

“Haruka. What do *you* think of this threat?”

“I.. I don’t know. Pluto said that Galaxia would be the last threat we faced before the world sleeps for a thousand years and Crystal Tokyo is founded. And this threat, its powerful. I’m afraid that even without the mistakes we made facing those demons the first few times, that as soon as this Cassia bitch showed up, she would’ve torn us apart.”

Michiru listened without moving.

“As much as I hate to say it, I think we owe our lives, and the life of our daughter and Princess, to the Saotomes.”

“That said, I’m worried that even Ranma did little more than fight Cassia to stalemate.”

Rising from her sitting position, Michiru announced, “Let us attempt to do something about that debt” before she retrieved the Deep Aqua Mirror from its pocket dimension.

Ranma propped his feet up on the desk that he used for grading the “tests” of his PE students. Never one to care much for education, his school mandated tests had been farces. Sure, the Ministry of Education gave him all those nice premade ones, but they were so *hard*.

Staring at the small postcard in his hand, Ranma considered the afternoons events. He’d taken a true student, not one of the kids that the school system stuck him with. Minako, his one daughter, had demonstrated that she had the speed and strength to pass for a martial artist of his caliber 19 years ago. She had none of his skill, though.

Sighing, Ranma gave up further procrastination and quickly scribbled a message onto the card.

It read, quite simply, “Bringing Minako from Juuban. - Ranma and Akane”

---

Genma Saotome sat in a tent in his own front yard, eating cold rice and some things which his wife claimed were fish cakes.

He didn’t believe her for an instant.

For some reason, Nodoka became very upset whenever he came up with another training method for his granddaughter. Sure some of them sounded rather Neko-ken-like, but tossing her in a pool of pirhanas couldn’t possibly be as damaging to her psyche as wrapping her in fish sausage and tossing her in a pit of cats. Genma sighed again as he tried to figure out women.

As Genma heard the mail man drive up, he hoped for a letter from his son telling him that he could finally see his granddaughter. The last he or his wife had heard was a letter a few years ago saying that they were back in Japan. Of course they’d watched him and their daughter-in-law on Nabiki’s TV as they made the Anything-Goes School proud, but it just wasn’t the same.

His reminiscing completed, Genma hopped to his feet. adjusted his dew rag before rushing to the gate to fetch the mail. Deftly avoiding a loose stone’s attempt to dunk him in the koi pond, Genma safely made his way to the door just in time to catch the few pieces of mail as they slipped through the mail slot.

Using Martial Arts Mail Reading techniques, Genma was quickly able to find that 3 of the 4 pieces of mail were bills. They were slipped into his gi before his wife could find them.

The fourth piece of mail would require actual reading, though.

Having read the postcard twice, Genma's brain began to churn and grind loudly as it began to understand the contents.

"Oh happy day!" cried Genma before running off to tell his wife and best friend that their heirs were returning.

---

Sailor Pluto felt it again. The awful, unmistakable feeling that rose up out of her soul and spilled itself into her stomach whenever time was distorted.

She was ready this time. She'd found where the distortions were coming from. A plan for 'correcting' those who would disturb time was already forming in her mind. Soon all that would remain would be to implement her plan.



## Chapter 4

# Impending History Lesson

*“While the exact origins of the technique have been lost, it is entirely ki-based, and thus completely safe for usage by anyone able to master it.” - Chinese Amazon instruction text discussing the Kachuu Tenshin Amaguriken*

As the train screeched into the Nerima stop, four very special passengers prepared to disembark.

Two were husband and wife, practitioners of one of the most advanced forms of martial arts ever devised.

Two were young girls, reincarnations of magical warriors from a kingdom dead a millennium, and a millennium away from returning.

All were nervous, though for various reasons.

The first two shared a reason. Long ago, they’d sworn to produce an heir to the Anything Goes School of Martial Arts. Instead, they had chosen to take their daughter away from the kind of chaos that would rain down upon her.

Their daughter was one of the two young girls. She was basically unaware of her parents’ oath, but she did know that her grandparents expected her to demonstrate some degree of martial arts talent which she did not possess. That fear, compounded with the fear of meeting her grandparents for the first time in her memory, was making for one nervous young girl.

The last member of the entourage was also the least nervous. She experienced naught but a miniscule case of the jitters, and those only because she was going to be training with her idol. Even if she knew what would be expected of her idol’s first student, she wouldn’t have worried. Much.

Mamoru Chiba looked about his fair sized apartment. His beloved, Usagi Tsukino, had been over the previous evening and left food and other detritus scattered all around. Sighing, he debated even bothering cleaning up before her return in another hour or two to the spend the afternoon with him.

The phone decided for him and announced its decision by ringing. Twice.

“Hello? This is Chiba.”

“Hey, Chiba. This is Haruka. Michiru.. and I were wondering if you could stop by the shrine in a little bit. We thought it might be a good idea to try and work with Rei to ‘investigate’ these demons and figured you might could help us think of something.”

Nodding to nobody in particular, Mamoru thought for a second.

“Sure, I can come by. Usagi is going to spend the afternoon with me, though, so I’ll have to bring her with me.”

Ignoring the hurried and poorly hushed discussion that took place on the other side of the phone, Mamoru surveyed his poor apartment again and resigned himself to cleaning it up tomorrow. The safety of Tokyo took precedence over his tidiness.

Haruka’s tired voice returned to the phone, “Sure, what the hell, bring Usagi too.”

Smiling weakly, Mamoru drudged through the standard farewell pleasantries and got ready to leave.

---

“Rei, the mail just came, would you please get it?”

Pulling herself up from the floor, Rei dusted off her robes and adjusted her hair. Satisfied that she was presentable, she began trudging down the steps of the shrine towards the gate where the mail was delivered.

\*I wish the mail man could deliver to the top of the steps instead of the bottom. Oh well, that’s too much to ask of Mr Dantomu, he *is* getting on in the years.\*

Nearing the last few steps, Rei could hear the distinctive sound of Haruka’s motorcycle purring its way along the pavement towards the gate of the shrine. The sound of another motorcycle and its passenger became audible as Rei’s left foot touched down on ground level.

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaa! I want you all to myself today, Mamo! Rei’s *mean!*”

Her hair wiggling back and forth as she shook her head, Rei just ignored Usagi's high-pitched wailings and continued towards the mailbox. Pulling the cover open, she slipped her hand in and grabbed the mail that was present.

One engine shut off as she pulled the mail out. Flipping through the mail, she found that most of it was for her grandfather. A shrine owners' convention, a lingerie catalog, junk.. more junk.. and a letter to "Father Hino and Rei Hino." Humming to herself, she wondered who it could be, since there was no return address, and the postmark placed the letter's origin in the Kumamoto Prefecture<sup>1</sup>.

She didn't know anyone from Kumamoto.

Curiosity gripped Rei. Luckily, it was easy to find out who sent the letter. So she did. A quick swipe of her hand tore the envelope open and pulled the letter out.

A quick perusal told her everything there was to know, but not how to feel about it. With a sigh she looked up, Usagi was standing no more than a few feet away, talking at her. She didn't hear any of it. Haruka and Michiru were just sliding off their motorcycle. She'd wait until they were here to say anything.

Glancing back at the small piece of paper, Rei found herself trying to decide how she felt. Happy. Sad. Angry. Indecision wracked her, until she decided to go with her default emotional state. Returning her eyesight to the horizontal, she found that Haruka and Michiru were also now present and staring at her, so she said it:

"My parents are coming to visit. I'm so mad! Why couldn't they have visited sooner?"

---

Another pesky grain of dust had fallen on the walkway.

Intending to remove the offending dirt, Nodoka Saotome began to rise from her seated position. Reflexively her left hand moved to pick up the katana that she always carried.

It wasn't there.

Shock and worry set in for a moment until Nodoka remembered that she hadn't carried that blade for nearly 20 years. Her daughter-in-law now bore the Saotome honor blade in her stead.

With a sigh, Nodoka continued towards the offending speck. Everything

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<sup>1</sup>Middle prefecture of Kyushu. Has some western coastline to it.

would be perfect for her son's return and meeting her granddaughter. It would be so wonderful to see the new heir to the family school.

The broom almost in hand, Nodoka came to a stop. Someone was at the door.

*Knock*

*Knock*

Sheer glee filled Nodoka's heart as she scrambled towards the door. She wished she had another chance to make sure that Soun and Genma weren't drinking again, but then, some things were just unstoppable.

"Coming!" she announced, loudly.

She could hear voices on the other side of the door, one was a man's.. it just *had* to be Ranma! Behind her she could hear other mens' voices. Genma and Soun must've heard it, too.

Almost there.. hand on the latch.. pull it open.. and..

"Ranma! My son!"

Latching herself around Ranma's torso, Nodoka hardly noticed the breathless choking noises he was making. Then someone tapped her on the shoulder.

"Excuse me? My father can't breathe."

Nodoka whirled around to face Minako, who was taking on the appearance of a small furry animal trapped in the headlights of an oncoming truck.

"Minako?"

Minako gulped visibly and then nodded. It didn't take her too long to regret it.

"MINAKO! GRANDDAUGHTER!"

"Murfflurghleflub!"

Concerned at her daughter's inability to clearly enunciate, Nodoka pulled back and gave Minako an appraising eye. "Is something wrong, dear?"

"Grandma?"

Nodoka's head bobbed exuberantly, and Minako began to beam happily. She gave a quick bow and said, "It's very nice to meet you."

"And you as well," Nodoka returned the bow with a bemused expression, "I look forward to seeing the heir to the family school."

Everyone except Hotaru gulped.

Not one to forget anyone, Nodoka turned to Hotaru next. "Whom do we have

here?”

“I’m Hotaru Tomoe,” she bowed politely, with a giggle and a smile.

“It’s very nice to meet you. I am Nodoka Saotome.” Nodoka turned to her son, arching an eyebrow in the process. The question on her mind was quite obvious.

“Hotaru is my first student.”

“I see,” Nodoka quickly gave Hotaru another appraising look. “Well then, come in, come in. I believe Genma and Soun are already progressing nicely through the sake we bought to celebrate.”

---

Usagi was already quite bored. First she’d had to listen to Rei rant for a good 15 minutes *or* more about her parents coming to visit and how they should’ve visited sooner. Then Rei had started going on about how her parents should’ve come to visit sooner. Almost all Usagi could think about (until snacks arrived) was how glad she was that Rei’s parents weren’t visiting for a few weeks. Rei would’ve had a fit about having to clean up if they’d been coming any sooner.

Finally she’d been forced to endure Michiru and Rei talking about vision interpretation for the past 5 minutes! It was getting to be more than she could take. In a clever attempt to try and get someone more fun involved, Usagi had suggested inviting Ami over to “discuss” the subject at hand, too. Haruka’s words still rang in Usagi’s ears, “I already tried to get ahold of Ami. She was busy, and her mother didn’t know what it was.”

Sighing, Usagi shoved a few more cookies into her mouth and swallowed. Her throat barely cleared of food, she piped up, “Hey. When are we going to do something fun?”

Calm as always, Michiru replied, “Usagi, we are trying to discuss the visions we’ve been having about the current enemy. This is very important, and it seems to be the only thing we can do to assist the Saotomes in what is likely going to become a fight which only they can handle.” Her shoulders sank, “You will recall that during our previous fight... we were, ah... Less than effective until the very end when one of the demons was finally weakened enough to destroy it.”

Solemnly, Usagi did nod her agreement. She definitely remembered destroying that demon. In fact, remembering inspired a question. “Hey.. why is it that these demons are so much more powerful? We fought daimons before and beat ’em up good, even before we got powered up.”

“Ami explained this to you,” stated Haruka, “don’t you remember?” Not even

waiting for Usagi to say “no,” she continued, an oddly tired expression on her face. “The daimons weren’t pure evil. They were like demons’ ‘souls’ bound to normal objects, which weakened them, but made them controllable by the Death Busters. What we’re fighting now are real demons, in their natural form.”

“They’re not weak, like daimons. They’re pure evil.”

Slowly nodding, a question came to Usagi, “If the Death Busters had to, um, weaken the daimons so that they could control them.. then how was that girl ‘Cassia’ controlling those two demons, and the ones before it?”

Noone responded immediately, giving Usagi time to think “Oooo. I bet I know. When Ami and I showed up with the Saotomes to that last fight, ‘Cassia’ pulled two of those demons out. It was hard to hear, but I think when they asked why they should do what she told them to do, she threatened to kill them.”

Michiru nodded and Mamoru whistled. Michiru followed her action up, unlike Mamoru, “If she could actually hope to follow through with such a threat, then it would make sense that the demons would obey her. But how would she get that kind of power? She can’t be much older than Haruka and I. And while she seems to practice some form of martial arts, I was under the impression that not even Ranma had her power at that age.”

“Did anyone ask Ranma and Akane to try and identify the style that she used?” inquired Mamoru. After waiting a moment and receiving little but blank stares, he continued. “Well.. Has anyone asked the Saotomes where they get the power for their attacks?”

Quick to pipe up this time, was Rei. “They’re using ki I tell you!”

“And then you say its impossible...” mumbled Usagi.

Rei shook her head, swinging her black hair around. “No, it isn’t *really* impossible to do it. Gramps could probably make a ball of ki if he really wanted to. And there are stories of people being able to do the some of the same kinds of things, but in the stories, they always get very tired, and can’t use those attacks much. There has to be some secret to it that only the Saotomes have figured out.”

“Could you tell us some of those stories?” requested Michiru.

Rei hung her head. “No. I read them a very long time ago, and didn’t pay much attention to them. I didn’t really believe them until I saw the Saotomes in person.”

“What about the visions you’ve been getting, from the fire,” Haruka pointed at Rei, “and the mirror,” she nodded at Michiru.

“When I try to ask the fire about our enemy, I just get strange pictures of

standing water. And when I ask about the future, I see ice. Just.. ice. Its really weird because the Great Fire has never shown images of water before,” finished Rei, a strange look on her face.

“Standing water?” Haruka raised an eyebrow.

“Yeah. I’m not shown to an edge, so it could be a puddle or a pond or an ocean for all I know.” Rei paused and considered for a moment. “The more I think about it, though, the most I get the feeling that there is some sort of strong emotion attached to the water... something negative.” She shrugged and said no more.

Haruka continued pressing for more, “What about the ice?”

“I didn’t get anything else about the ice.. at all. Just *ice* and nothing more. Gives me the creeps to even think about it.” Again, Rei went silent and retreated into her thoughts.

Michiru took that as her cue, “The mirror consistently shows me images of duality when I ask about the current threat. The yin-yang, the dragon and the tiger, heaven and earth.. As far the future, I can’t even begin to interpret the images. It depicts the Senshi, but, they’re not the Senshi. Things change and shift, too, as though the future is somehow indefinite, which is impossible.”

“How is that impossible?” peeped Usagi.

“You’ve seen the future,” shrugged Michiru, “havn’t you?”

“Oh... Right.”

---

Minako, for all her dreams of becoming an idol singer, was not in the least bit prepared for all of the attention she was receiving. For a second, Minako was almost glad that she didn’t have a fourth grandparent, but she quickly perished that thought.

“Why look at our beautiful little granddaughter, Saotome! She is the spitting image of my dear departed Tomoya,” Soun began to build up to wail when he was interrupted.

“Um, Grandpa Tendo, could you tell me about Grandma?”

Surprisingly, Soun stopped, and paused for a minute, while he looked at Minako.

“I’d love to, granddaughter.”

Nodoka rapidly grew tired of listening to Soun recount all of his failed attempts to court Tomoya, in chronological order. She was glad to see her granddaughter again, but a person could only listen to someone happily recount being malleted so many times.

In retrospect, it was quite clear where Akane's temper had come from. Her mother was an absolute saint with her children, but that was it. With a sigh, she pulled herself to her feet and went to find her son. It couldn't be too difficult, the only three things he did was eat, sleep and practice.

First stop, the kitchen. Poking her head in, Nodoka found it empty and undisturbed since she left it after preparing breakfast. Worryless, Nodoka began to climb up the stairs to check Akane's old room which she had shared with Ranma until they moved out.

The duck on the door had long ago been replaced with a simple sign that had simply read 'Akane'. Shortly after the unceremonious departure of the duck, Akane and Ranma had wed. Thus, some enterprising fellow (it was obviously Genma, as everyone recognized his handwriting) had scribbled in 'Ranma' beneath Akane's name.

For a second, Nodoka considered not walking straight into the room. After all, she knew about her sons' manliness, his daughter was downstairs. She figured though, that it wouldn't hurt...

So she pushed the door open and stepped in.

There wasn't anyone there.

Only a tad disappointed, Nodoka headed back towards the stairs. As she passed by the living room she noted that Soun was still relating stories of his courtship to an entranced Minako. Shaking her head, Nodoka continued out the door and towards the dojo. Surely Ranma couldn't be anywhere else.

Walking smoothly along the well worn path to the dojo, Nodoka noticed that no sounds of practice echoed from the dojo. Now she was getting concerned. Certainly something must be wrong. She increased her pace. Careful not to look overly concerned, Nodoka pressed on towards the dojo doors.

Arriving at the aforementioned doors, she slid them open and stepped inside... to find Ranma and Akane sitting peacefully in the middle of the room bent over looking at something.

As the worry rushed out of Nodoka's system, curiosity rushed in to fill its place. Demurely, she coughed to get her son's attention.

“Yes, mother. We felt you coming up to the dojo,” mumbled Ranma, without turning around.

“What are you doing, Ranma?”

Akane stood up and carefully padded over to Nodoka. “He’s studying,” whispered Akane, “He wanted to read over some of my father’s martial arts scrolls.”

“Oh?” Nodoka had joined in the whispering by now, too. “Which ones?”

“Weapons handling. Um, the yari, naginata, bo, and some other foreign pole weapons.”

“And why is my son interested in using weapons?”

“He isn’t, for himself, anyways. His student, Hotaru, will be learning learning how to use a glaive.”

“I see. And why will she be learning how to use a weapon instead of Anything Goes?”

Akane instantly became very glad that they’d agreed on the story ahead of time. Telling people that Hotaru wanted to learn how to use a glaive because she was Sailor Saturn probably wouldn’t be a good idea. It would be an even worse idea to tell them that the glaive she was planning on using was a sentient weapon keen on destroying the solar system and any other celestial bodies it could find.

“Her family’s traditional weapon is the glaive, but her parents passed on before they could teach her. Ranma offered to create a new style which would be worthy of her family’s history.”

“Interesting. I suppose Ranma will be studying those scrolls for the duration of his stay?”

Akane’s mouth had barely dropped open when Ranma stood up and announced, “Nah. I just finished. Mr Tendo has a bunch of stuff about weapons, but none of it goes really in depth.”

“Ranma, how does that small girl expect to wield a glaive? Many of them are easily twice as long as she is tall.”

“Ah, heh,” Ranma chuckled and rubbed the back of his head, “she is much stronger than she looks. Runs in the family I guess.”

Nodoka smiled and nodded. “Well, how about you come back to the house and save your daughter from more of Soun’s stories? I don’t think she knew what she was getting into when she asked him about his wife...”

---

Usagi looked at the others in the room again. They'd all decided to go to different parts of the room and think about what the visions could mean separately. Though, Haruka and Michiru hadn't done much splitting up. Usagi had even begun scooting back towards Mamoru.

"Uuuusaaaagiiii..." slurred Rei. "What do you think you're doing?"

Terror gripped Usagi at the sound of Rei's voice coming from so close behind her. Quickly she looked for an escape from Rei's questioning.

There, on the table. Her way out.

Her hands snuck out with a shot, grabbed the food, and quickly shoved it into her mouth. Thus occupied, she turned to face Rei and said:

"Dufh hoom unt sumfh?"

"No I don't want any. We're supposed to be brain storming, *separately*, and you're just thinking about Mamoru!"

"Bufh eh *uz* danfoming!"

"No you weren't. Now get back to your corner." Rei pointed ominously at the corner of the room which Usagi had previously occupied.

Obediently, Usagi sulked her way back to the corner.

\*Welll... Hmm, if Rei is gonna be a meanie about it, I might as well sit here. Lets see. The bad guys are like two opposites. That doesn't make much sense. They're really mean, and Cassia wasn't even trying to steal anything, she just made a big mess until Mr and Mrs Saotome showed up.\*

\*The ice and water is weird, too. Maybe something is gonna happen to Ami or Michiru? Ami is still gonna be alive in 1000 years, though, so nothing too bad can happen to her... Michiru, though...\*

---

Akane found herself rather unsurprised by the scene which greeted her upon her return to the living room.

Minako and Soun were bawling on each others shoulders, occasionally holding up a tissue to the other's face so they could blow their noses.

"Excuse me.. Minako? Whats wrong?"

For a moment, Akane didn't think that Minako was going to answer her. After a moment, though, she managed to contain her sobbing and face her mother.

“Grandpa was telling me all about your mother..” Minako fought back a stray sob, “its soo sad!” Unable to keep back the tears any longer, she returned to crying on her grandfather’s shoulder.

At this point, Nodoka came up behind Akane and asked, “Does my granddaughter always cry uncontrollably like this?”

Akane’s reply came slowly. “Not normally. She is a sucker for romance stories, though. Gets really emotional about love.”

“Any particular reason?”

“Its a long story,” coughed Akane. “Some other time.”

Nodoka merely nodded. “Why don’t you two have a seat with your fathers? I’ll prepare lunch.”

Ranma’s stomach rumbled that it had no problem with that plan. The matter thus settled, Ranma moved to sit down, and Akane followed.

A few minutes later, Minako and Soun finally brought their water works under control. Minako looked at her other Grandfather, passed out from the quantities of sake he’d drank. Soun looked at his daughter and son in law.

“Akane dear, will you be visiting your sisters while you’re here?”

“We were hoping to, dad. Are they both still in the same place?”

Soun shook his head. “No. Kasumi and Tofu recently acquired a much larger medical practice, and moved into an apartment above it.”

A brief pause to down some of the little remaining sake and he continued. “Nabiki and Ukyou both live in a large flat atop their corporate offices.”

Ranma made a funny little thinking noise and asked, “Will we have to make an appointment to see them?”

“I suppose it wouldn’t hurt, son. But they have lots of visiting martial artists, so they tend to leave a door on their balcony open. You can just jump up and walk on in. They probably won’t mind.”

Ranma just grinned. “Who’d a ever thought that Ucchan would’a made it so big?”

Genma rolled over and grunted.

“No thanks ta you, old man. You should just be glad she ain’t thought ta sue ’ya for emotional abuse or somethun.” Ranma formed a small ball of ki with his left had and let it loose at his delinquent father.

One yelp later, Genma was up and looking around alertly. “What was that for,

boy?"

"Bein you."

"Why I'll teach you manners yet, boy." Genma cried as he lunged at Ranma.

A flurry of feet and fists came flying at Ranma, who continued to sit impassively. At the last second one arm whipped out and disappeared from sight in a blur from the shoulder down.

"You think yer gonna lay a finger on me, old man?"

Genma showed no sign of giving up. Instead, he was keeping himself aloft by pusing off of Ranma's arm, allowing him the use of both hands and feet in the fight.

Even though neither combatant was planning on giving up, the fight ended quite suddenly.

"Idiot," sighed Akane, as she withdrew her mallet from the back of her husband's head. "Don't pick on your father. You know it isn't fair. And stop talking like you're uneducated."

"Son," asked Soun, "was that the Kachu Tenshin Amaguriken?"

The reply came from a rather groggy and only barely conscious Ranma, "Yes."

"But you didn't even have to prepare! No ki buildup or anything."

Ranma just shrugged. "The Amaguriken has become second nature to me in the past few years. I can keep it going over my entire body for a few minutes."

Two jaws dropped. They belonged to Genma and Soun. Notably, Minako's jaw was still drooping from watching her father fight her grandfather with one hand. She'd seen some of her father's speed and grace already, but this was even more amazing. Hotaru sat rather impassively, unimpressed by this minor display.

Genma recovered first, "Come on, son, share your secret with your old man. I won't tell anyone."

"I'm not stupid, pops. Besides, there isn't any secret. Its like the technique was just made for me. It was easy back when I was a kid, but this is as easy as breathing."

Nodoka chose that moment to announce that lunch was served.

Ranma's form had disappeared before Nodoka finished saying the word 'food'.

Genma followed shortly after that. Akane, Soun, Minako and Hotaru all slowly rearranged themselves around the table while listening to Nodoka keep her husband and son from eating all the food before she'd even served it.

As two thuds were heard, Nodoka stepped out of the kitchen carrying a tray full of food, which she sat on the table.

“Here you go. The other two will be joining us in a moment, so take all you might want now.”

The four seated at the table readily took Nodoka’s advice, while she sat down, and then took her own advice.

Munching down the food at a brisk pace, Minako paused to state, “This is very nice, Grandma.” Hotaru made her agreement known with some vigorous nodding.

“I’m glad you like it, dears. I’ll be sure to send the recipe home with Akane.”

Minako just beamed and went back to eating.

After a few minutes of silent eating, Ranma and Genma both stumbled back into the room and took their places at the table. They hardly even fought over each other’s food, too.

Mere peaceful minutes later, everyone was done eating.

“I’m going to take Hotaru out to begin her training in a few minutes,” announced Ranma.

“So soon after she ate?” inquired Nodoka.

“Need to talk to her for a little bit, first. Get the mental stuff down pat so she’ll be on the right track for ki manipulation.”

Hotaru’s eyes just became sort of large at the thought of manipulating ki all by herself.

---

“And what do we have here?”

Usagi froze at the voice of her keeper, Luna.

“Well? Don’t tell me you’re having a meeting and you forgot to invite me?”

Another small voice spoke up to correct Luna, “Umm.. Us.” Usagi recognized the voice as belonging to Artemis. Slowly, she decided to turn around and face Luna.

“Not exactly.. I was gonna go to the park with Mamoru this afternoon, but he drug me over here instead and Rei has been mean to me all afternoon.” Usagi quickly put on her best pouty face to try and look as distraught as possible.

Luna wasn’t convinced, but there wasn’t much she was inclined to do to her

Princess at this point. She had another thousand years to correct her behavior, so she wasn't in any rush.

"Very well then. What exactly have you five been discussing?" asked Luna.

Rei interjected at this point, "I've been consulting the Great Fire about the situation, and Michiru has been looking into the Deep Aqua Mirror. We wanted some people to talk to about what we've seen, so we asked Mamoru over. He brought Usagi along." She paused for a moment, and then asked, "Hey Artemis, why aren't you with Minako?"

Artemis coughed. "The, uh, Saotomes didn't want to take me along. They didn't want to have to explain why Mr Saotome wasn't cowering in fear of me."

Usagi just snickered a bit.

"Back to business then," announced Luna. "What have you two come up with?"

Rei and Michiru both sighed and readied themselves to relate their visions.

Again.

---

Hotaru Tomoe stood facing her new teacher, Ranma Saotome, in his dojo. Her gi screamed out to the world her novice status by means of its sheer newness. Not even Kasumi was able to clean a used gi to such a state of perfection.

In Hotaru's hands was a long pole, roughly the length of her Silence Glaive. This pole carried no blades, though. Instead one end had been dipped in purple paint, while the rest of it remained in its natural wooden state.

Since entering the dojo and noticing Ranma, a rather curious question had been floating through Hotaru's head, "Where is his pole?" This question had been rattling about in her head all thru his lectures.

Now that actual, physical practice was about to begin, she gave voice to her question, "Um, Teacher, where is your weapon? I thought you'd said we were going to practice with weapons."

A grin grew up on Ranma's face which Hotaru would learn to dread during their practice session. "One of the problems with using a weapon is that it can be taken away from you. The first thing you need to do before you can hope to effectively use a weapon is to make sure it cannot be taken away from you." After waiting for Hotaru to acknowledge him with a nod of understanding, Ranma continued, "That is what we will be practicing today." He began to grin even bigger, "My weapon is already in this room, 'ya know."

Snapping her head around as quickly as possible, Hotaru surveyed the dojo, looking for another pole, but her eyes confirmed that the dojo remained just as empty as before.

Then understanding struck her.

“Teacher.. there is only one weapon in this room.”

“Yup.”

---

“Your dad gave me a really good workout, though. I don’t think I’ve been this tired since.. I was sick.”

“Come on Hotaru, mom and dad say Aunt Nabiki is cool, and so is Miss Kuonji. Besides, won’t it be neat to meet the richest women in Japan? Gee, if I would’ve known that I was related to them, I wouldn’t have had to work so hard to get that chance to be an idol singer. I guess it was still worth it, though.”

“I don’t know, Minako. You’re related to Miss Tendo, and Miss Kuonji is a good friend of your father’s. I’m just a stranger to them.”

“Don’t be silly. You’re my friend, and you’re my father’s student, I’m sure it will be just fine. Come on, get changed and we’ll go.” Minako grabbed one of Hotaru’s hands and began to drag her back towards the house.

“Are you sure about this? I don’t really have anything nice to wear, you know.”

“I was digging around in some of my mom’s stuff while you were out training. She has some nice old dresses from when she was your age that will probably fit you. Just add a nice belt or something...”

“If you say so, Minako.”

Hotaru wouldn’t have agreed if she’d known that Minako had always wanted a clothes doll.

---

Ranma sat, impatiently, next to the koi pond.

Years ago, he would never have dared to come this close to a body of water. By doing so, he would’ve been taunting fate to get him wet.

Fate was not one to pass up a chance to thumb its nose at Ranma Saotome.

However, Ranma was still sitting next to the koi pond, quite peacefully and quite non-wet. Instead of hastily running from the pond as quickly as he could,

he was trying to remember the last time he had come in contact with cold water accidentally.

It was back in England, where he and Akane had gone for years to make sure they escaped everyone who could possibly disrupt their child's life. Shortly before moving back, he'd been caught without an umbrella in some rather chilly afternoon rain. No little old ladies had splashed him, no leaky faucets, no Happosai looking for his darling Ranma-chan. Just a bit of weather.

And that was it. No unintentional activations of his curse since then.

He'd wondered about it before. He checked regularly to see if the curse had disappeared. It hadn't.

He came to the same conclusion that he had come to in the past.

*\*Maybe fate is done with me?\**

Ranma continued to sit and ponder, until a few minutes later when he felt his daughter trying to sneak up on him. No matter how many times she had tried to sneak up on him as a child, she'd still not learned she couldn't pull it off.

Just grinning, Ranma sat still and didn't give away his knowledge until she got within a meter. Chuckling to himself, he decided to jump and spin around to face her.

---

*\*Hehehe, I'll get him this time, I know it!\**

Minako had been trying ever since she was a child to catch her dad unaware. This was the closest she'd ever gotten to him without him knowing.

*\*Now I'll just pounce on him, and I'll have him!\**

Springing her legs for the jump. Minako noticed her father twitch, but thought nothing of it.

*\*Here I go!\**

With that, Minako sprang into the air, aiming towards her father. Once in the air, she noticed that her father had jumped and was now spinning in the air.

At the same time, they realized what was going to happen. Had Minako had time to reflect on the situation, she would've realized that her father's horrible expression roughly mimicked her own.

Another second later, Minako slammed into her father and pushed him over the koi pond.

Very shortly after that, gravity succeeded in its never ending task, and pulled both Ranma and Minako into the cold water.

As Minako pulled her head above the water's surface, she noticed that her left hand was on something rather soft. Squeezing it, she confirmed that she wasn't imagining it.

A voice she hadn't heard in a long time spoke up.

"Excuse me, could you stop that, please?"

"Dah-dad?"

Ranma Saotome, Jusenkyo victim, coughed. "Not much of a dad like this."

"Wow, you look pretty good."

"Thanks. I know. Ready to go visit your Aunt?"

Minako bobbed her head in the positive, causing her loose hair to wiggle and shimmy all over. "Good. Go get your mom and Hotaru. I'll meet you at the gate."

---

"Mr Saotome, what about that one?" asked Hotaru, pointing to another spot of concrete that wasn't quite the same color as the rest of the concrete around it.

"Hmm. I think that crater must've been Ryouga's umbrella again. He really liked those original ones."

Minako perked up, "Original ones?"

"Yeah. After the first Tenka-ichi-budo-kai, he lost the last of his original umbrellas. So he got Nabiki to have new ones made for him. I tried 'ta pick one up.. they must weigh a couple tons each, its just crazy."

While the girls gaped at the thought of a multi-ton umbrella, Ranma and Akane just smiled. After walking along for a few minutes peacefully, they came up on a rather quiet intersection where Ranma stopped.

"See where the concrete changes here?"

Minako and Hotaru both eyed the ground carefully and each nodded after a second. Hotaru was done, though. "Where is the other edge of the new concrete?"

"The other side of the intersection," stated Ranma in a very calm voice.

Slowly, Minako asked "What made this one?"

Akane spoke up for the first time since they began picking out Nerima "landmarks." "This one was Ryouga, again."

“The Bakusai Tenketsu?” inquired Hotaru.

Akane shook her head, “No.. The Perfect Shishi Houkou Dan. The normal Shishi Houkou Dan is like my own Rekka Hokan or Ranma’s Mouko Takabisha. But instead of anger or confidence, it feeds off of depression.”

“Everyone of the ki attacks that feeds off of emotion has a matching ‘Perfect’ version. But you can only use it when you are so full of that emotion that nothing else exists within you. Then you release everything you have into an explosion around yourself. You survive only because you are emptied of all emotion.”

“Ryouga is the only person still alive to have performed the Perfect Shishi Houkou Dan.”

“What happened to the others?” asked Minako, almost afraid to know the answer.

“They committed suicide.”

There wasn’t much left to be said at that point.

---

“Here we are,” announced Akane, who twirled around to face the rest of her group while raising her arm up to point, “Kuonji-Tendo Light Industries, corporate headquarters.”

Minako and Hotaru oled and awed as was expected while Ranma began looking for the balcony his father-in-law had mentioned.

Akane was itching to get inside, though. “Come on, Ranma, stop gawking and lets go on inside.”

“I don’t feel like dealing with any secretaries or anything.. Lets just go straight up.”

With a sigh, Akane announced she had no interest in arguing. Thus, Ranma led the small group around the corner of the building where he’d found the balcony.

“Here it is, just four stories up.”

“Um, dad.. What do you mean *just* four stories? How were you going to get up there?”

“I was going to jump. Your mom can carry Hotaru.”

“And you’re going to carry me, right?”

“Um. I was hoping to see if you could make it up jump up there yourself.”

“I don’t think so, dad.. Not even if I, er,” Minako mumbled the next word, “transform right here in the middle of the street. Four stories from a standstill is crazy!”

Ranma sighed. “Here, I’ll show you how you can get up there, then.”

At that, Ranma faced the building across the street and crouched down. Waiting for a second, he sprung, directly at the other building. A moment later and he impacted against the wall, roughly two stories up. From there, he pushed off again, aiming for the balcony across the street.

Just a few seconds after he’d started his ‘trip’, Ranma was waving down to Minako from four stories up.

“Come along dear,” encouraged Akane, “you can do it.”

Mumbling to herself about being related to “a bunch of crazies,” Minako began to repeat her father’s movements. Still shaking her head, she took the leap towards the wall. She easily made it to where her father had hit, and pushed off again.

She didn’t put quite enough power into it, though.

“Waaah! I’m not going to make it!”

And indeed, she wasn’t going to.

Seeing her daughter about to fall an unpleasant distance to the ground, Akane ran to scoop Hotaru up under one arm. Her first passenger secured, she flared her ki and put the slightest bend in her legs.

Arcing up into the air, Akane managed to catch Minako under one arm and continue her flight to the balcony. Once safely on the balcony, Akane set down her two passengers. “There, that wasn’t so bad, was it?”

Minako was busy patting herself down and asking “Am I alive?”

Hotaru’s eyes were like those of someone who’d just gotten off of an out of control roller coaster and was still trying to decide if it had been fun.

Ranma was just grinning from ear to ear, “Lets go on it.”

As he stepped towards the sliding glass door, it opened of its own accord. Not acting very surprised, he stepped on through.

“Hello, Mr Saotome. Your family and guest may wait in here. Miss Ukyou and Miss Nabiki will be with you shortly.”

Eyes already adjusted to the dim interior, Ranma picked out the speaker, a very attractive young ‘woman’.

“Hiya Konatsu. You still working in security for them?”

Konatsu shook his head, “No, no, Mr Saotome. I am security, these days. The head of it, anyways.”

“Good going. So, they in a meeting or what?”

“Indeed. I believe they are currently in the process of acquiring the remains of the Kuno Estate.”

Ranma just nodded at that tidbit of news.

“Well Mr Saotome, I must be going. I wish you luck on your various ‘endeavors,’” said Konatsu. With that, he walked into a shadow and disappeared.

Akane came up behind her husband and asked in a quiet voice, “What did he mean by that?”

“I don’t know, but I’m betting that Nabiki does. Don’t you, Nabiki?”

Two women walked out of a door which hadn’t been there a moment ago.

“I sure do, Saotome.”

“Heya, Ranchan. How are ’ya?”

As Akane hurried over to hug her sister, Ranma walked over to Ukyou.

“I’ve been better, Ucchan,” he paused for a minute as Ukyou hugged him hard enough to force the air from his lungs, “how about yourself?”

Ukyou flashed him a smile, “I’m wonderful. Did you hear that I’m listed as the richest woman in Japan this year? I managed to beat Nabiki out for once.”

Across the room, Nabiki called out, “Hah! I’ll be back on top next year.”

“Suuure,” Ukyou teased. “Come on you guys, have a seat, we didn’t buy these couches to hold the floor down.”

Everyone moved to take a seat, Ukyou ending up next to Hotaru, and Minako next to Nabiki. “So,” began Nabiki, “how is my favorite niece doing these days? I haven’t gotten to see you since you were a baby. Maybe I should’ve sent your parents plane tickets to come visit..”

“I’m great Auntie Nabiki.”

“Doing good in school?”

Minako choked. “Uhh. Well...”

“Yeah, I figured you took after your dad. Oh well. Congratulations on winning that idol search last year, by the way. If you ever get around to taking advantage of that and it doesn’t work out, just let me know. You’ve got real talent, so Kuonji-Tendo would be happy to set you up.”

Beaming, Minako responded, “Thanks! I hope to have time to get around to it, but I’ve been, ah, really busy, recently.”

Nabiki began to grin like a cat who’d just caught its prey. “Yes, you sure have, havn’t you, Sailor Venus?”

Minako turned three different shades of pale before going green. Hotaru was already pale, so she just skipped straight to green. Ranma and Akane both sputtered.

“Oh come on you guys? Did you really expect me not to know? I’ve been watching you for years. I know almost all about your little ‘adventures’. You managed to disappear a few times and my surveillance forces couldn’t find you for a few days, but that was it.”

No response, so Nabiki continued.

“I also know that you’re currently engaged in some sort of off and on street fight with any number of rather unpleasant demons.”

Ranma perked up at this, “Do you know anything about the girl summoning them or where she is from?”

“Named ‘Cassia’, she appeared in this country through unknown and likely illegal means. She disappears to an unknown location after summoning the demons. She is 130 centimeters tall and weighs roughly 80 kilograms. Black hair, black eyes, pale complexion, no distinguishing features until you removed her right hand. She suffers from almost every mental illness we can diagnose from a distance, the only one one note that we havn’t identified is multiple personality disorder. Her style of martial arts is unidentifiable and she radiates an evil magical aura that puts Happosai to shame. In summary, she is serious screwed up in the head, and Kuonji-Tendo Security Services has her labeled as a class 5 magical hazard.”

“What does class 5 mean?”

“Run. Quickly.”

“Know anything about her that we don’t?”

“Nope.”

Ranma sighed deeply.

“Ranma?”

Rather slowly, Ranma turned to face Ukyou. “Yeah?”

“I just wanted to tell you, that, I wish I could come help you guys fight, but.. I don’t think I’d be very useful.”

“You stopped practicing martial arts?!”

Pulling her large spatula out of nowhere, Ukyou slammed it into Ranma’s side, knocking him over. “Don’t be stupid. I’d never do that... but, after all these years, I’ve just never managed to do much more than flare my ki. I just don’t think I’ve got it in me to do it.”

Ranma nodded sadly. “Not everyone does. I just figured all of the old group woulda managed to do it sooner or later.”

Ukyou perked back up, “Luckily, we can do some other things to help you!”

“Like?”

“For starters, we’ll get medical teams standing by after your fights. They can take anybody whose hurt to some private medical facilities with ‘discreet’ doctors.” Ukyou stage coughed and leaned over towards Ranma a bit, “We had to clean up a slight ‘incident’ when your daughter’s friends took her to the hospital. Apparently they forgot to switch back to their real names in the hospital. It was also sort of suspicious that they said they’d carried her a mile or so on their backs. Luckily Konatsu can be ‘discreet’ too.” Finished, Ukyou sat smiling.

Without any response, Ranma sat nodding dumbly until Nabiki spoke up.

“About Konatsu.. he is really rather underutilized these days. While his skills aren’t suited to direct combat, he can probably help out with reconnasinse. Lend a hand if things start looking bad, that kind of stuff.”

Nabiki paused for a moment and brought a hand to her face to think, “You know, we’ve even got some competitors in that area he can spy on. He can help you *and* be profitable.”

Minako could’ve sworn her aunt was drooling.

Putting on a sly smile that told everyone she wasn’t interested in talking about business anymore, Nabiki faced her niece again.

“Now, I’m sure you’ve had some boyfriends in your time.. spill it.”

---

“It was really nice to visit Auntie Nabiki, Mom.”

“Yup,” Ranma added, “Seeing Ukyou again was good, too. We need visit ’em again sometime.”

Akane smiled and nodded. “Sure. I suppose next time we can just make an appointment. Lets see, Tofu’s new office should be riiight here.”

Rounding the corner with her little gang, Akane was faced with a sign that read “Gone on vacation, back on the 10<sup>th</sup>.”

“The 10<sup>th</sup>?” Minako read aloud, “That’s next week! Argh.”

Akane’s mood got visibly darker and she sighed. “I guess that’s what we get not calling ahead of time.”

Already turned away, Ranma started walking back to the Tendo Dojo. “Come on,” he called over his shoulder, “lets go, girls.”

---

Artemis and Luna had both been nodding and listening intently throughout the description of the visions. Now they were ready to interrogate the two seers.

“Rei, now, about this water, you say there is some sort of ‘negative’ emotion,” Luna continued, “Can you describe it anymore than that? Is it like pain?”

“I’m not sure... There is, agony.. anguish. But it isn’t anything physical.”

Artemis’ turn. “Do you know the source of this ‘agony’?”

“I don’t think it is the water. I just don’t know, though. The visions aren’t that specific.”

“And the ice, do you know its source?” persisted Artemis.

Rei just shook her head.

“Is it magical?”

“No.. It feels very natural.”

Luna nodded, “Well, that narrows it down. The only places where you’ll find as much ice as you describe are the polar caps. Quite strange, though. Don’t see what the future has to do with the polar caps. Maybe you’ll have to take a trip back to Beryl’s base near the north pole.”

Usagi shuddered, remembering her last trip to the north pole.

Rei shuddered more, remembering her death.

It was obvious to Luna how little either girl wanted to keep thinking about that, so she quickly moved on.

“Michiru, how about this duality? Is there one particular image you get more often than the others?”

“The dragon and the tiger occur much more frequently than any of the other symbols. The others still appear often enough that they should not be disregarded

in the interpretation, mind you.”

“Do the symbols,” Artemis stopped for a minute to look for an appropriate word, “‘appear’ differently than you would expect them to?”

Raising a finger to her mouth, Michiru thought for a few moments. “I cannot recall. One minute.” From her seated position, Michiru took her right arm, raised it to match the horizontal level of the floor and then pointed it directly to her right. In a quick motion, she swung it around to her left side. When she was done, the Deep Aqua Mirror was in her hand.

Oddly, no one could remember where in her hand’s path the Mirror had appeared.

With calm poise, Michiru began to peer into the mirror, and concentrate on thoughts of Cassia and whoever might be associated with her. Soon she had conjured up the first image she wanted, that of the dragon and the tiger.

Michiru held up the mirror so the others could see and said, “Here you go.”

Everyone bent over to peer into the mirror. Usagi nearly lost her balance, but a steady hand from Mamoru kept her from tipping over and crashing through the table.

“The dragon and the tiger seem to be very, ah, distinct and separated from each other,” commented Mamoru.

Michiru replied “Yes, they do.”

“Can you show us the other images?” asked Artemis.

Pulling the Mirror in close again, Michiru refocused on the image of heaven and earth. A moment later, she had it ready. Again, she held the mirror up so everyone could see it.

As she expected everyone blinked repeatedly when they saw it, like they were trying to clear their eyes.

“It is very blurry, is it not? Before I simply thought the image was hazy, but now I believe that it is purposefully being blurred.”

“Like heaven and earth are being merged,” noted Haruka.

“Exactly.”

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“Akane, would you be a dear and come here, please?”

“Yes, Mrs Saotome?”

“Your father and my husband are both quite eager to see Minako in action. I, too, must admit that I’m anxious to see what Ranma’s training has been able to produce.”

Paling slowly, Akane tried to keep any hint of worry from her voice. “Right. Anxious. Ummm... I’ll go get Ranma. Right. Ranma...”

Didn’t work.

Thus Akane walked off mumbling to herself about looking for Ranma when he was standing no more than two meters to her left.

“I’ll get Minako and head out to the dojo with her,” Ranma eyed his wife’s retreating form, “grab Akane and drag her along. Shove her into a gi while you’re at it, too.”

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“Listen Minako,” began Ranma as he sat with her in the yard, “you can’t beat your mother. Sailor Venus can’t beat your mother. But you’ve got a better chance against her than you do against me, so to show you off to our parents, you’ll fight her. Now, even to this day, she still uses a style which focuses on dealing with a large number of opponents simultaneously. This is her weakness. You must make a small target of yourself, while remaining mobile enough that she can’t tag you. This demonstration won’t go far enough that Akane will attempt the Amaguriken, so her speed isn’t that much greater than yours. That’s the closest thing you’ve got to an advantage, so make the most of it.”

Minako nodded sickly.

“If you got a card up yer sleeve or something like a Hiryou Shouten Ha, don’t hold it back, though.” Ranma smiled and winked.

“I don’t think so...”

“Neither did I,” sighed Ranma, “Lets go.”

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“I overheard a butcher talking about throwing some stock away on the way over here,” states Artemis, “so I want to get this finished up.”

Luna gave Artemis a glare strong enough that it nearly knocked him over, but, she said nothing.

“What about the final image you got from the mirror, Michiru? The one of the Senshi that weren’t.”

“Would you like me to bring up that image, as well?”

“Sure.”

Again Michiru brought the Mirror to her face, and again, she paused a moment as she concentrated. Then, as before, she held up the mirror so everyone else could see.

With the blurred image of heaven and earth, everyone had simply blinked a bit, trying to clear their eyes. This time, though, blinking did nothing to clear things up.

Usagi cringed painfully, “Looking at that is giving me a headache!”

Peering into the Mirror deeply, Luna’s face was visibly grimaced. “You can tell it is a picture of the Inner Senshi, but you can’t hold your eyes on them to see any detail.”

Eyes averted, Rei commented, “And the picture seems to waver and shift. I could swear we kept changing places without moving.”

“That is certainly interesting,” said Mamoru, “Can anyone see anything about the image which Michiru didn’t already describe?”

After a few moments of silence, Mamoru had his answer.

“Ohhhkay.”

“Hey,” injected Artemis, who hadn’t forgotten about the butcher, “if thats it, lets cut out. I’m getting hungry.”

“Aww,” Rei began to sing-song her voice, “poh wittel Artemis wif no Menahkoh to feed him.”

“I don’t see you volunteering to feed me!”

Haruka stood up, and Michiru joined her a half second later. “I believe Artemis is right. There isn’t anything more to discuss. We’ll be on our way now.”

“How about we go get some ice cream together?” asked Usagi, obviously exuberant about the idea.

Both Haruka and Michiru shook their heads. “We have things to do. We’ll be around, though.” With a flash of a smile, Haruka said, “Don’t forget to call us if any demons or that Cassia girl show up.”

Usagi laughed nervously. “Don’t worry, we’ll let you know if we run into her.”

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The fight over, and his parents already out of the dojo, Ranma grabbed one of

Minako's arms and drug her to a corner opposite from the door.

"Ami said you couldn't use magic without being transformed.. how did you do that? And how did you learn those martial arts you used?"

"I.. I... remembered," stammered Minako.

"But we never taught you any martial arts to remember, and we always made sure you didn't see us practice, even when you were small.."

"No. I remembered my past life."

"Didn't you already tell us you remembered it?"

"Just little pieces before..."

"And now?"

"All of it."