

A Ranma 1/2 Fanfic Series: "Ranma Gets A Clue"
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Chapter 1, "Loves first kiss."

Pre-dawn in the Tendou dojo. A traditional Japanese room, floored with tatami and outfitted with shoji doors. Ranma is lying on his back with one arm draped over his eyes and the other sprawled at a 90 degree angle from his body. Genma preferring to sleep as a panda, since it is so much warmer, is curled up about a meter from Ranma facing away from him, snoring loudly. Ranma miraculously enough, has managed to stay male throughout the night, but has however, managed to kick the covers off of himself, and is shivering slightly on his futon. The window is open to the crisp spring-like air, and the beginnings of the daily chirping of the neighborhood birds can be heard faintly.

Genma raises a massive paw to scratch an itch idly in his sleep, letting it fall with a *thump*. While not a loud noise, with Ranma's life-time of training, it was enough to wake him instantly. Sitting bolt upright, his eyes snapped open, his hands up in a defensive position, and his heart beat wildly as his still groggy mind and eyes scanned the room for the unknown threat. Glancing over at Genma, realization hit him, 'Stupid old man!' he thought, glaring at his father, "he just lives to torment me," he mumbled.

Ranma debated with himself whether or not to attack his father for awaking him, or to try to go back to sleep, sleep won. Rolling over he pulled the covers back up and closed his eyes trying to go back to sleep. His mind however was now wide awake and ready for action. Rolling back to lie flat on his back with a resigned *sigh*, Ranma allowed his thoughts to drift where he usually forbade them. He started to think about the one thing in his life that he had no control over, and had absolutely no idea how to deal with . . . he thought of Akane.

Images and memories of her flooded his mind in rapid fire, her beautiful smile, her cute haircut, every detail of her face, mind and body, his minds eye traced every detail that he knew of her, and he blushed when he remembered just how much he knew, remembering their first encounter as opposite sexes. How shocked he had been to see her out of her gi, and her turning out to be so . . . well cute!

With another *sigh* Ranma let his fantasy of her speak to him, not really anything intelligible, all he really wanted was to hear her soft lilting voice speaking to him, as he had heard her speak to her other friends and loved ones. He just wanted to have a conversation with her, to hear her speak with neither anger nor sarcasm. Just to have a normal conversation with the girl he was supposed to marry.

Drifting back to the night before in his thoughts, he winced as he recalled it's outcome,

smacking himself mentally, and cursing himself for his ineptness concerning interaction with other people. Ranma replayed the night before in his mind, trying to see what he had done wrong, and how he should have done things differently . . .

::Early evening at the Tendou dojo::

Soun and panda Genma are on the porch playing Go as usual, and cheating as usual. Nabiki in her trademark "lazy" clothes, I.E. short shorts and an off the shoulder halter top, is in a corner of the family room, doing her leg exercises, neither Akane nor Kasumi are anywhere to be seen. Ranma is outside in the yard next to the koi pond, wearing a blue version of his silk traditional Chinese sleeveless shirt, and his trademark black pants, he is standing with his feet shoulder width apart, facing a wooden pole exactly his height wrapped with rope on the top. He is rotating his body and alternating smashing his left and right steel-like fists into the rope wrapped part. The wind is blowing faintly carrying the scent of flowers and the promise of a beautiful spring, a fish in the koi pond leapt, and the wind chimes ring.

Shattering this perfect moment of tranquility came the feminine cry of "Dinner's ready!" Ranma without missing a beat recoiling his left fist from a punch, changed the right strike to a chop, his palm facing upwards and his hand like a knife edge, the pole looked unaffected for a moment, then a hairline angled cut appeared, and the top of the pole slid off slowly, hitting the ground with a *plop*. With a self satisfied grin on his face, Ranma turned and leapt the few meters from his spot to his customary seat at the table, next to Akane.

The rest of the family were converging at the table as well, Nabiki plopping herself unceremoniously at her spot, Soun taking his place at the head of the table with dignity, leaving Genma the opportunity while his back was turned to move a few of the game pieces. Genma taking his seat next to Soun grabbed a kettle of hot water seemingly out of nowhere and poured it on himself, changing back to his human form, gaining the hands with which he could feed himself the fastest. Ranma moving his head back and forth quickly scanning the room for something, voiced his growing dread hesitantly,

"W- where's ...A-akane?"

"Why, she's right here." Kasumi said coming rounding the kitchen entrance, gesturing behind her. As Kasumi started setting everyone's places Ranma glanced over her shoulder, Akane was standing sort of uneasily, and was clutching a steaming plate, containing he could only guess, was some sort of food substance... hoping against hope, Ranma looked back at Kasumi to see if she had set his place yet, seeing the table all set out and Genma already doing his impersonation of a vacuum cleaner, Ranma noticed a conspicuous absence of a plate in front of himself.

A large sweat drop formed on the back of Ranma's head. Akane, not having said a word during this small pause, stood rather stiffly. A faint sheen of sweat kissed her forehead, and she looked somewhat worried. Ranma however missed all these details as his eyes and

nose informed him that Akane had been cooking again.

A sickly grimace appeared on his face, as his brain sorted rapid fire through a list of possible excuses he could use to leave the table.

"Akane has been working really hard all evening, Ranma" she pronounced the last 'A' in his name harder, snapping him out of his "deer-caught-in-the-headlights," impersonation.

"She made it just for you, isn't that sweet?!" Again that hard tone to Kasumi's voice indicated to Ranma that he had better behave. Stuttering he managed to choke out, "T-thank Y-you, A-akane."

Akane knelt beside her future husband, and hesitantly placed the plate of weird looking food before him, along with a pair of chopsticks. Sound from behind a fountain of tears sputtered out,

"Oh my girl, my girl, is growing up, wah ha ha, I'm so proud!" Tears streamed down his face as he looked upon his youngest daughter's obvious display of affection for Ranma. Nabiki just stared expectantly, and Genma's munching slightly registered in the back of Ranma's mind.

"Well go on, Ranma," Kasumi prompted, her voice again gentle. With an audible *gulp* and a visible reluctance, Ranma separated his chopsticks and lowered them down slowly to the steaming mound of . . . whatever-it-was.

Akane unnoticed by the rest of the family still kneeling beside Ranma clenched her tiny hands into fists and felt her whole body go ridged. Her face animated with hope she silently chanted.

"I hope, I hope, I hope, please, please, please, please." As he raised the parcel of food to his mouth, a collective gasp was heard, as everyone (except Genma, who at the moment was moving his hands so fast feeding his face, that they were becoming a blur.) Held their breath.

Placing the food in his mouth he let it rest on his tongue, trying to use will power to swallow it. But the sensations overcame him, and he fainted, falling backwards.

Sitting up he politely pushed the plate away from himself mumbling, "thank you Akane it's . . . errr, good, but I'm not feeling too well all of a sudden, I think I'll skip dinner. Ranma lied, then placing his hand behind his head said, "I'll go see if Ryouga is around anywhere."

"At least I know he can eat this stuff," Ranma thought to himself. Ranma, as he moved to get up, completely missed the single tear sliding down Akane's cheek. Stunned, Akane was thinking to herself,

"NOW what did I do wrong?!" Her emotions in upheaval she replaced these unfamiliar feelings with those that she was more comfortable with, she started to grow angry.

"He didn't even give it a chance and I worked really hard, TOO!" She thought to herself. Turning to face him as he made his get-away, she whipped out her trusty mallet and launched him into next week yelling,

"Ranma you jerk!!!!" As he sailed away, Ranma managed to yell back, "Uuuuuuuunnnnnnnnnncuteeeeeeeeeee!"

::the memory faded to black as Ranma's memory failed::

Snapping back to himself, Ranma again mentally smacked himself for his knee-jerk-foot-in-the-mouth reaction that Akane's cooking seemed to bring out in him. He knew damn well in his secret heart, that she was trying so hard to cook for HIM, and if not out of, L-love, then out of a genuine desire to show Ranma affection somehow.

Muttering to himself, Ranma rolled back till his lower body, and legs were off the floor, then placing his hands astride his head, he reversed his momentum, and pushed with his hands at the same time, effectively launching himself onto his feet, perfectly balanced and poised as usual. Ranma headed off in the direction of the bath, intent on soaking away his worries as well as any dirt. Passing Genma on the way out he swiftly kicked the Panda in the butt. Smirking to himself, Ranma walked out. Genma still sound asleep, simply scratched the injured area absently and rolled over again.

Silent as a ninja, Ranma practiced his stealth as he slinked down the hallway. Not one to ever tell the old man, but Ranma did listen to the things that Genma said, and while he knew that most of it was just his stupid rambling, some things Genma said rang true. One of them being his saying,

"A true martial artist can turn any experience, no matter how difficult or unpleasant into training . . ." Ranma early in life had decided to take that to heart, running along fence tops to practice his balance, using ordinary situations to train, such as standing in the hall holding water buckets for being late, and in situations such as this early morning, when everyone was still asleep, he liked to practice stealth, or ninjitsu.

However he froze in his exercise as he caught out of the corner of his eye, the blue woodcut duck scrawled with Akane's name in English characters, as was the trend, hanging

on her door. Impulse overcame reason, and Ranma ever so quietly padded up to her door, and quietly let himself in.

"Just to check on her, and make sure Mr. P isn't in there," he told himself. Lowering his eyes to the floor as he did so, in case Akane while sleeping, had managed to uncover any . . . sensitive areas. He closed the door behind himself, and just stood there, at the doorway listening to her breathe. Smirking inwardly to himself he thought,

"She would kill me if she found me in her room just staring at her." Ever so slowly, he raised his eyes, starting at the foot of her bed. Where her feet were, he raised his gaze, noting how unlike him she was, in that she usually managed to keep her covers on herself while sleeping,

"I guess she isn't violent all the time," he thought. With relief his gaze reached her torso, and he noted that she was fully clothed in her yellow pajamas with the pigs on them, letting out the breath he hadn't even known he was holding with a *whew*, he froze, terrified that the sound had awakened her. Glancing at her face he relaxed as he saw her eyes still closed. He also smirked outwardly as he noted the absence of "P-chan", and saw that instead she was cuddling one of her spare pillows to her tightly, he also noticed that she was mumbling as she slept. Curious he crept closer to her bed to hear what she said.

Taking a seat gingerly on the edge of her bed. He took the time to stare unashamedly at her beautiful features. Noting how her soft hair framed her face so perfectly on the pillow as she slept, and how even when closed her eyes were still beautiful, and her lips were turned upward slightly at the corners in a sort of half smile as she slept, then he noticed something else, she was . . . Blushing? Snapping out of his reverie, he listened to what she was saying, most of it was too garbled to discern, but a few bits and pieces managed to come through.

"R-ranma . . . why . . . what . . . how can I . . . oh Ranma . . . I . . . don't you know . . . I L . . ." Rolling over in her sleep, the last thing she was trying to say was lost into the pillow. "She's . . . she's dreaming about . . . Me!?" Listening again he caught his name again, this time followed by a sound he had never heard from Akane before, after speaking his name, a very contented and drawn out sigh.

A slow grin spread across his face as he heard that sigh, it was the most beautiful sound he had ever heard in his entire life! Reaching down hesitantly he moved his hand to her head, and softly stroked her hair out of her face.

"She's so cute sometimes . . . it's hard to believe that this Akane and the one that is always hitting me in the head are one and the same person," he thought to himself. Worry of discovery was starting to nag at his mind though, and with a disappointed *sigh* he got up

from her bed, not making a sound as he did so, he opened her door, all the while keeping his gaze on her, and let himself out, just as quietly as when he had entered, all Akane did was roll over again, and continue whatever dream she was having.

Now even more out of balance than before Ranma desperately needed to unwind. Intent on relaxing in the bath for awhile he entered the changing room, and shucked off his boxers and tee shirt he had slept in, tossing them casually over his shoulder as he went into the main bathroom. Starting the flow of hot water that would fill the tub for the day, Ranma sat down on one of the wash stools and began to thoughtfully scrub himself clean.

"Why, oh why am I so shook up now? Why should I care if she dreams about me? Can it be that I really do care for that uncute tomboy? Naw, it must be something else, maybe an aftereffect of her cooking?"

He muttered to himself while scrubbing, after awhile the tub was full and he dumped a pail of cold water over himself to rinse away the soap, hardly even noticing the change now, as when by himself and with no mirror present, and no one to remind him that he was now a girl, the effects of the curse were subtle enough as to be noticeable now to him. Plodding over to the tub, Ranma slowly lowered himself into the almost scalding water, wincing as it snaked it's way up his nervous system, leaving a tingling sensation in it's wake, finally he was up to his neck, and he collapsed against the tub wall and tried to rebalance his now chaotic mind.

An unknown amount of time had passed, Ranma shutting out all outside influence, and shutting out even his own thoughts. Letting the warmth of the bathtub soak into himself, ever since Jusenkya, Ranma had hated being cold, mostly because cold now to him meant changing, the warmer the better as far as Ranma was concerned. Ever so slightly almost hesitantly Ranma raised his head up, then his torso out of the inviting water.

Looking much calmer he climbed up the steps leading out of the bathtub. Steam emanating off his now almost pink skin, in the chilled air of the much cooler bathroom. Wrapping a towel around his waist, he padded out of the bathroom. Still walking so as to make the minimal amount of noise, Ranma headed for his room.

Sliding open the shoji he entered the Tendou guest room made into an almost-permanent residence with the Saotome presence in it. Moving over to the dresser where he kept his clothes, no longer quieting his movements since he didn't care if he woke the old man up or not, and besides he could sleep through anything. Quickly dressing himself, choosing his traditional outfit, but with a ivory white version of his Chinese silk sleeveless shirt, with gold ties in front and an ebony black interior.

Now suitably dressed for the day. Ranma's stomach rumbled, reminding him that not only did he skip dinner last night, (due to the fact that he was in low earth orbit, playing human

satellite) but he needed breakfast as well. He steeled himself against the hunger however since he knew that Kasumi although usually first up in the household, wouldn't have breakfast ready for at least another hour and a half, half an hour after she woke up as usual. So he headed downstairs to think.

Walking down the stairs a mischievous grin appeared on Ranma's face and he hopped up onto the banister and with his indoor house slippers on, sliding down the rest of the way. Reaching bottom much faster.

"Heh, still got it!" He remarked to himself. Ranma usually refrained from any acrobatics in the house. Ever since that one time when he had almost plowed into Kasumi almost knocking her over, when he was leaping down the stairs. His code of honor would never allow him to injure anyone whom could not defend themselves, even accidentally, especially a woman, and especially someone as sweet and innocent as Kasumi. So this was a rare opportunity for Ranma to do this and be sure no one would be hurt. Ranma started to wander in and out of the various rooms of the Tendou residence, memories overtaking him as he recalled all the things that had happened there.

Stopping in front of the frame to the shoji leading to the backyard, he ran his hand over the noticeably newer wood of the left side, where Shampoo's bonbori had smashed through, when she was trying to kill Akane that day she had showed up from China. In fact there were little patches of new all over the Tendou residence, especially in the dojo, where either due to circumstances beyond their control or overeager training, Ranma or others had managed to destroy parts of it.

Ranma's wandering lead him back to the shoji again, and he opened them this time. Stopping just to look. He had intended to go to the dojo and run through a few form -- or *katas* as they were traditionally known -- but he just started to stare at the beauty that confronted him.

With dawn just barely starting to alight the sky, the world was truly a beautiful place. The wind had died down to a whisper, and everything was silent. The pink buds on the cherry tree were silhouetted in what little light the dawn was giving, and seemed to be glowing with a life of their own, contrasting sharply with the greener but dull new leaves that were also growing. The koi pond was an odd shade of blue-green. It seemed to be made of ice, and with such crisp air the entire world seemed to be sharply in focus.

"Wow," Ranma murmured. Almost as if in a trance, he walked solemnly to the edge of the koi pond and stared into its depths, hardly even breathing. Ranma tried to become part of the silence as he sat down on a nearby rock and began to meditate, the world seemed to freeze as Ranma slipped into himself.

Time passed and the wind picked up, and the sun's hues became more radiant, the birds began their daily serenade. Ranma came back to himself with a start, when he felt the sun's first rays peeking over the boundary wall. Stretching and yawning, he looked around as he did so. The bird's song's lifting his spirits noticing that the silent world had fled and a more vibrant and alive world had taken its place.

His heart froze though as he shifted his gaze to his left and beheld what was there. Akane was sitting on a rock right next to his! In the same kind of meditating trance that he had assumed moments earlier.

"She must have come down when I was meditating," he thought to himself. Taking another opportunity to stare, Ranma allowed his eyes to play over her delicate features. Her eyes were shut, and fluttering slightly, her hair had obviously just been brushed, as it was shining vibrantly in the early morning light, the light bouncing off of her hair making it seem alive. Her skin (all that was visible to Ranma outside of her standard red belt clad gi, anyway,) was covered with goose pimples, reacting to the cool morning air, he supposed.

Akane had come out of her own trance the second Ranma had yawned and stretched, some instinct though had urged her to remain as she was. So she stayed motionless, her back straight and her legs crossed underneath her, with her head lolling down onto her sternum. A small shiver of electricity ran down her spine as she thought to herself,

"Why is he looking at me like that? Can it be oh, can it be that he really doesn't think that I am all that uncute?" Her breath came in shallow heaves and her skin was going all goose pimpley, not because of the cold, but because of the attention that Ranma was paying her.

Finally she couldn't stand it any longer, and playacting she imitated his movements from earlier. Opening her eyes she met Ranma's gaze, and the two just looked at each other shyly. Raising his arm behind his head, Ranma cleared his throat. "Uh . . . heh, wahcha doin' up this early, A-Akane? . . . W-What are you looking at?"

He asked self consciously. Akane blushed and turned her gaze down, suddenly finding the grass very interesting. "Well since she's already up, and out here . . ." Ranma thought to himself. "Um A-Akane?" He voiced hesitantly.

"Y-Yes . . ." she answered. Smacking himself mentally, Ranma forced the words out in a rush, "Wouldyouliketogopracticewithme?" Once done he exhaled rather loudly, *whew* He thought, "Well, at least she can't say I never offered," he fully expected a sarcastic remark or her refusal. He stood up on suddenly shaky legs.

Ranma stood above her looking down at her with those blue-gray eyes of his. "He is waiting for an answer!" Her mind shouted at her. She was however, too confused to respond intelligently. "Why is he being so nice to me?" She pondered. Chalking it up to the absurd, Akane simply nodded her head.

Shock turned Ranma's blood to ice-water. He had expected her to refuse! While training with his father for 10 years had made Ranma an excellent and powerful martial artist, those years hadn't prepared him to interact with other people. Slowly and hesitantly Ranma extended his hand to Akane. Akane for her part was beside herself, "Ranma is being so nice to me! Is this his way of trying to say he's sorry for dinner last night?"

Also as hesitantly, and overriding her pride, Akane extended her hand, allowed Ranma to help her to her feet. His touch was electric on her skin, Ranma tightening the muscles in his arm, effortlessly lifted her to her feet. Embarrassed he dropped her hand and turned his back to her and began to walk in the direction of the dojo. Partly because he really did need to train, but mostly to hide the rampaging blush spreading over his features. Akane as well was still standing where he had lifted her, also blushing furiously.

"I think that that is the first time Ranma has ever touched me, without it being absolutely necessary." She was reeling. Unsteadily she walked on her wobbly legs to the dojo. Peering inside she saw Ranma was already running through a kata, warming up.

So she decided to just watch for the moment. Akane realized that she had never really watched Ranma when he practiced. She was usually too busy being jealous of his skill, or busy trying to beat him up for his latest insult.

"Wow!" She thought, "He moves like a dancer . . ." Watching Ranma move through a simple for him, but extremely acrobatic and difficult kata, for her, she couldn't help but admire his skill. After Ranma finished his warm-up kata, he faced the dojo shrine and bowed. Akane couldn't help herself, as giddy as she was feeling, she clapped! Ranma looked up, and seeing her there, broke out in a grin, and also blushed slightly.

"C-Can you teach me how to do that?" she asked. Ranma now in familiar territory replied more confidently,

"Sure Akane, but first we should stretch out your sleepy muscles, eh?"

"O-Okay" she stuttered. Stepping through the door frame, Akane bowed facing the dojo interior, and stepped onto the main floor. Cinching her belt up tighter and tucking the loose parts back into place, she sat down and kicked out her legs, and started to reach for her toes on her left and right sides. Ranma just sat cooling his heels, well squatted actually, and watched her stretch.

"Want me to help you, Akane?" He asked. Although Ranma had never actually helped any of the other all too few students he had trained, to stretch, whether they were male or female, Akane did not know that, and grinning slyly he also admitted to himself, seeing that this was one of the rare times when they were alone together, that he also wanted to be able to touch her without that damn mallet of hers smacking him into next week!

"I have got to ask her where the hell she keeps that thing someday," he thought wryly.

"S-Sure...." Akane whispered still facing the floor. "Oh my god he is going to touch me

again," she thought as her heart leapt into her throat and her adrenaline level rose several levels. Shifting so that her back was facing him, she leaned forward again, and Ranma, needing no further encouragement placed his hands on her back, and applied pressure.

The only person that he had ever partner stretched with was Genma, so he was a little surprised when Akane *yelped* from under his pressure. Looking down he saw a slight grimace on her face.

"Oh shoot! I hurt her already!" Furious with himself, Ranma quickly stood up, and started to form an apology. "A-Akane, I-I'm so sorry! I-I-I " hanging his head he closed his eyes and resigned himself to the mallet attack about to crash into his skull. A few seconds passed, Ranma was still standing . . . looking up he saw Akane just staring at him, with an expression he could only describe as concern or forgiveness, or something else that he wasn't even ready to *think* about yet.

"It's okay Ranma just be a little more gentle with me okay? I am not as strong as a mule, ya know," she smirked, making him blush using one of his own insults against him. But inside her head, her world was spinning! In her state of mind her knee-jerk reaction to his clumsiness had been delayed, so Ranma had been able to try apologize.

"That was so sweet! He actually thought he hurt me! He even tried to apologize, and was ready to accept punishment!" Using a supreme control that she hadn't even known she possessed, Akane overrode her mind and body's commands to leap into his arms and hug him to death.

Moving woodenly Ranma moved back into position behind Akane, and placed his hands again onto her back. Applying the gentlest amount of pressure, he started to stretch her out, "His hands are trembling!" She thought to herself, although the now kitten like force he was exerting wasn't really enough to help her stretch, she didn't really care at the moment, just the fact that Ranma's hands where on her, and that he was being so thoughtful, and careful with her . . . she wanted to cry!

Ranma moving outside normal stretching protocol, still crouching above her, started to kneed the muscles in her shoulders. He had no idea why, or how he even started! All he knew was that he was touching the girl that he cared most for in the world, and she hadn't smacked him yet!

"I must still be dreaming." He thought. Akane thought her mind was going to snap and she couldn't stop the electric sensations from running through her body, his touch was setting her on fire!!! She couldn't hold it back any longer and a small involuntary groan escaped her lips. *mmmmmmmm*

Ranma paused a minute when he heard that, then smiling stopped his tender administrations, before he lost his last vestige of control. Nudging her gently to a sitting position, he continued helping her stretch, as she leaned over to her left and right sides, stretching sideways now that she was done stretching horizontally. The sensations rapidly were fading from her body. Akane took a deep breath and let it out slowly, commanding her body to behave itself she put all her attention into stretching, as thinking about Ranma was starting to make her dizzy.

"Well I think that you are ready now Akane . . . want to begin?" Ranma, letting the instructor in him take control, stood up and again reached down to help Akane to her feet, not even hesitating this time Akane stretched her own hand up and accepted his help, since she also knew in the back of her mind that her legs were going to be wobbly after the sensations Ranma had been evoking in her. While standing however her clumsy nature reared its ugly head, and she tripped!

Ranma didn't even think, he just reacted. Seeing what she was about to crash into, he leapt with superhuman speed and strength, knocking her back, and killing her momentum as he held her in his arms. The next thing Akane knew she was lying on her face on something hard yet soft, pushing herself up with her arms, Akane looked down to see what she had landed on...and found Ranma's eyes looking back! He was breathing hard, and had a panicked look on his face, wondering why he looked so panicked she looked up, and saw to her horror, that if she had continued her fall unchecked she would have crashed right into the west window!

Ranma, with his heart still racing, simply held her. Not really caring what anyone would think if they walked in and saw them like that. Akane's control finally snapped and she broke down crying! Sobbing a panicked yet relieved cry into his chest. Akane let out all the emotions that had been building in her since she woke up. Clutching her savior to her she wept like a child. The fear of the moment quickly fading into tears of joy and something else that she still wasn't that sure of.

Ranma would always be there to protect her, she had known that for awhile now, but he had just demonstrated it again, throwing himself unthinkingly into danger for her sake.

Ranma, however much as he was enjoying holding his fiancée, was starting to grow uncomfortable with her tears though. Whispering he asked, "Akane . . . Akane, hey Akane, are you okay?" Wanting to check her for any injuries but holding back since she seemed okay, and he didn't want her to think he was a pervert.

"Oh Ranma," Akane managed to sob out. Not finding the words she needed she simply stopped crying as best she could and relaxed into his arms. Ranma was growing uncomfortable though on the hard wooden floor, and gently he again demonstrated the

mastery of his body, as only using his stomach muscles he raised them both into a sitting position. Turning her as he did so, with her ending up sitting crosswise in his lap, with her arms around his neck, and her face buried into his chest.

Letting things stay as they were, Ranma waited for Akane to come back to herself, and stand up. She finally raised her head from his chest with an embarrassed expression on her face.

"T-Thank you Ranma, I mean it thank you." She smiled her beautiful smile at him, and Ranma lost all lucid control over his mind.

"Y-Your welcome." He replied, wanting to say three very different words. Standing up he continued to hold onto her, cradling her in his arms, Akane's emotion debated with her pride on whether or not she should get down,

"Oh I can stay here all day", emotion said.

"Shut up you wimp!" Pride shot back.

"But I like it here in his arms!" Emotion continued.

"You are a strong martial artist, and independent . . . stand up!!" Pride snapped back.

"Yeah?! Well you are a freak of nature, now go jump in a Koi pond and cool off!" emotion retorted.

"Don't make me come over there and tear you a new . . . a new something." Pride was at a loss on what she could tear in emotion. Pride however eventually won. ^_^

"R-Ranma, "she said almost apologetically, "Um, I can walk fine now, thanks."

"Oh," Ranma said, looking slightly disappointed.

Carefully he set her down onto her feet, keeping his arms around her waist, almost as if he was hugging her. The position they were in, and after what she had seen earlier, Akane made a mental note to get Ranma to take her dancing sometime. Grinning ear to ear she mentally pictured Ranma trying to dance normal dances, or say, the funky chicken! Hesitantly she broke the embrace though, turning her back to him, she looked out the window, and noted that not all that much time had passed since they had entered the dojo. Turning back to him with her composure back in place, Akane waded a little into unfamiliar waters, she asked Ranma for help.

"Well are you ready to teach me how to do that kata now?" She voiced with an uneasy smile. Cinching up her belt and taking a deep breath, Akane stepped into the default "student ready" position, with her feet set shoulder width apart, and her legs slightly bent, with her arms folded behind her back.

"Um, sure Akane...." Ranma said, " Where do you want to begin?" he asked. "Why at the beginning of course, silly." Smiling as she said so, and giggling a little, Akane let out a little of the stress she was feeling.

After a second Ranma joined in, and soon both of them were chuckling lightly. Recovering his composure Ranma started to lead Akane through the kata. He corrected her gently when she made a mistake and cheered loudly when she made it through the harder parts. Akane, for her part was trying to pay attention to what she was doing, but inside she was grinning from ear to ear.

"I never realized how patient Ranma could be, he is a great teacher!" She thought. Ranma was having the time of his life, not only had Akane not hit him today...yet anyway, but he was alone with her, getting along with her, and in effect, he was playing with his fiancée!

Ranma felt like jumping up and down and doing a victory dance and he almost laughed out loud as he imagined doing said dance on Genma's sleeping head! While he was doing his best to stay focused on training though, only about 25% of his attention was on her form mechanics, the rest of his attention was staring at Akane.

"She really does have a kind of grace when doing this kind of stuff." He thought. Finally they reached the end of the kata, and Ranma went to the north wall and sat down against it, "Okay Akane, now with no help from me lets see you run through it by yourself." He said with a silly grin on his face.

Akane got a serious look on her face, and resolving herself to do her best for her new teacher, she set into the kata, moving not too fast and not too slow, and with all the grace and dignity that she could muster, trying to dance through it as she had seen him do earlier, and with a slight smug expression on her face, she admitted to herself, that while not nearly as perfect as Ranma's demonstration, for the first time doing it, she was doing great!

Ranma sat there in a brooding silence, amazed at how quickly she had picked it up, "She must have really been paying attention to me . . ." He thought. He had already noted several small errors in her form, but he stopped himself from saying anything and thus kept his foot out of his mouth, besides she really was doing great! Finishing she bowed to the shrine, and then giggling she bowed to Ranma as well.

Ranma grinned and jumped up. He bowed as well. "So how did I do," she asked expectantly. "You were . . ." he paused a minute to make her sweat it out a little, since he enjoyed teasing her. Actually that was how he showed affection although he was not aware of it, was by teasing those he loved...well, except for Genma.

But before she could become angry he said, "You were great Akane!" He said, "Much better than any other first time student with that kata."

"Thank you Sensei!" Akane grinned. Then as impulse grabbed her, and she launched a snap kick at Ranma's head. Ranma of course dodged easily. "Heh ya wanna play dontcha?!" He taunted. Akane grinning crazily, launched kick after punch after chop rapidly increasing the speed of her techniques. Ranma adopted a more instructor like stance, and started to coach her.

"Don't twist your hips so much, that telegraphs what kind of kick you are about to throw, try not to look where you plan on punching, don't turn your back to me after that kind of kick."

Getting into the spirit of things, Ranma threw soft kicks and a few punches at her. Akane instead of trying to imitate Ranma's speed, simply blocked his techniques. "Harder!" She fairly screamed. Wanting him to actually spar with her for once. She increased the intensity of her attacks, trying to goad Ranma's anger so that he would attack her and stop his constant dodging. But Ranma's training had conditioned him to accept pain, and while a few of her techniques were actually connecting now, he refused to use even 1/4 of his full speed or power against a girl, especially THIS girl. Akane was starting to get angry now. She couldn't help it.

"Why does he do this to me? Why won't he treat me like an equal? Why can't he just ignore that I am a girl for once?" Starting to glow a slight red, Akane launched a suicide attack at Ranma, aimed right at his head. The speed of her attack was a little too fast, and Ranma knew that if he dodged it she would be seriously injured because her trajectory had her going towards the wall a little too fast, and he doubted she had control enough to check her attack in time. If he blocked it effectively so that it wouldn't hurt him, then he would possibly break or sprain her wrist.

So Ranma did the only thing that he could do, he shifted his body so that she would connect with his stomach muscles and braced for impact. "Ranma!!!" Akane's battle cry came out as she rushed towards him, but in the nano-second that she had between punch and impact her mind screamed, "Something is wrong, he isn't blocking!! He isn't dodging either!!" At the last second she tried to pull her punch, but her momentum carried her the rest of the way, and she connected solidly with Ranma's torso. Up he flew to the rafters and he hit with a *splat* Doing his impression of "The human pancake," on the wall. Then he slid down the wall head first to the floor.

"Shoot!" Akane said to herself as she ran over to him, "He was supposed to block that . . . why did he just take it?" Kneeling besides him she looked down at the mostly unconscious Ranma, he was moaning slightly, and Akane simply put her arms under him and held him, cringing as she waited for his furious words. Looking down she saw him staring at her, and quickly she tried to blurt out an apology.

"Ranma I'm . . . sorry . . ."

Casting her eyes down she waited for him to call her uncute scream at her and storm off, a tear slid down her cheek, as he wiggled out of her grasp. Closing her eyes she told herself that she deserved it. Then Ranma did something that she was totally unprepared for. He squatted down next to her in silence.

"Akane..." he started.

"Y-Yes?" she hesitated.

"T-That was a good shot." He said, punctuating his statement with a light jab on her shoulder. He then forced a grin through his pain to show her it really was okay. Noticing her gaze was still on the ground, gently Ranma reached his hand down to her chin and lifted her gaze to meet his. Showing her his eyes, which at the moment were filled with something that was confusing the hell out of Akane. She didn't know how to deal with this Ranma! This Ranma was kind and sensitive and very patient with her. He wasn't behaving like he was supposed to!

"Oh Ranma I'm sorry!" She sobbed as again she collapsed into his embrace, and Ranma did something that Genma would kill him for, he cried with her. Holding this beautiful girl in his arms, on this perfect morning, listening to her sobbing on his chest, feeling her warm tears soak his gi, and her hands gripping his back, Ranma gained a new perspective on life.

"Shh shh shh" He tried to comfort her making funny sounding cooing noises. "It's okay Akane I'm fine"

Mentally slapping herself, Akane forced herself to get under control. Sucking her breaths in slightly and her chest heaving, her emotions running rampant through her mind and body Akane just sat there for a minute. In the empty silence Ranma added with a grimace.

"You know you really do need to work on your control . . ."

Grabbing at the chance to have a talk with Ranma, Akane tried to voice her concerns. "Why, why would you ever spar with me seriously?" With her looking up at him with those tear-streaked eyes, Ranma had no recourse but the truth. "It's partly because of how I was raised and partly because I-I don't want to hurt you Akane . . ." he trailed off.

"But I am a martial artist too ya know. I can take care of myself." She countered.

"Yes but..." Ranma tried to argue, but all of the arguments that he wanted to use right now, sounded stupid in his head.

"Besides I have seen you fight girls before." Ticking off her fingers as she went, "You've fought Ukyou, Shampoo-several times and you fought Kodachi as well...." Grinning smugly at him Akane waited for a reply.

Ranma knew he was trapped. "Y-Yes that is true, but I don't think I could live with myself if .

. . . if I hurt you A-Akane . . . " Ashamed Ranma looked down at the floor. Akane's heart froze. He CARED for her, he really did!

Whether or not it was . . . L-Love . . . he still cared, and Akane threw away the last of her inhibitions. She threw herself into his arms, and hugged him fiercely. Ranma panicked at first, then relaxed into her arms, and held her as well, "This is the first time we have ever willingly hugged each other!" He elated to himself. "I wonder if . . . "

His mind trailed off as Akane seemed to collapse into him, they were now laying side by side on the dojo floor holding each other. The force of her throwing herself into him had knocked him down. Tentatively Ranma reached over and stroked her hair.

Akane was in heaven, she curled up into Ranma's side and pulled back her head a little so that she could look at her fiancée's handsome face. Ranma met her gaze after about a second. They simply stared at each other, both wanting to go further, but neither one knowing how to broach the subject, nor did they know how far the other was willing to go. Ranma gazed at Akane and looked into her eyes, leaning his head forward moving his mouth towards hers, he stopped and waited and looked again, blushing, and Akane nodded her assent. Grinning, Ranma completed the movement, and their lips brushed.

His touch was like fire! Akane's whole body felt like it was glowing! Where he was resting his hands on her back, she could have sworn she was getting burned, her back arched involuntarily towards him as his lips brushed hers, and she faintly *moaned* her assent again. Ranma then leaned in and kissed her closed mouthed. His lips were somewhat moist and the electric sensations he was provoking in her were making her blush furiously and she tightened her grip on him. *moaning* into his still closed mouth, Akane opened her lips slightly prompting without words for Ranma to go further. Ranma in turn parted his lips slightly, and Akane with very little control left accepted the tip of Ranma's tongue, this being the most intimate she had ever been with him before, or any other man for that matter, Akane's head was swimming.

Ranma was shocked as all hell, she had opened her lips and was sucking gently on his tongue. Unfamiliar feelings were building up in Ranma, and combined with the heat of her body, the scent of her, and what she was allowing him to do, Ranma allowed something inside of himself to snap, and opened his mouth fully, sucking crazily on her tongue, and rolling her over on top of him so that he could feel every part of her touching him.

Akane was a little shocked at first when Ranma responded like he did, but her mind was not in any kind of a state to stop, nor think reasonably, and she let go entirely and felt herself falling, the room seemed to dim out of view, and then she closed her eyes and let the sensations rule her, caressing his teeth and sucking alternately on his tongue and lips. Akane was enjoying letting herself be female, even more so since she was doing this with HIM! Even more important, while she was enjoying having Ranma touch her, the fact that he had

been so kind and open with her, and the way he was behaving, meant the world to her.

Ranma was also in his own little world where only Akane existed was starting to feel TOO light headed, and so gently he broke the kiss. His head was swimming, he looked up at Akane and saw a flushed face, lightly coated with sweat and a happy grin plastered across it. She was panting slightly, and neither one of them knew what to say.

Akane however noticed the position of the sun, and the fear of someone walking in on them overpowered her desire to lay on Ranma all day. Gently she rolled off of him, and sat facing him. "Ranma I . . ."

"Shhhhh" he said gently not wanting to spoil the moment. He turned her so that she was facing away from him, and placing his back against the wall he pulled her back to sit in between his legs. Gently he pulled her to lay back against his chest, lovingly he ran his fingers through her hair, and felt as she adjusted her gi modestly as she sat lying against him. Their moment was shattered however when Kasumi's high pitched voice rang out from the household,

"Breakfast everyone!" Faint stumbling sounds could be heard from the direction of the house, which could only have Genma stumbling-falling down the stairs in his rush to get food.

Akane leapt away from Ranma, and as he got up , they both just kind of stood there, neither sure how to end the moment nor if anything was necessary to say. Akane still giddy and way to confused, with emotions and feelings still running through her, simply smiled at Ranma and turned her back to him and walked out of the dojo. Ranma following suit, though after he exited the dojo, he leapt up to the roof top and into his room, so he could come down the stairs and therefore not raise any suspicions.

Humming quietly to himself, Ranma walked down the stairs this time. Pausing at the landing to simply watch his new family. Genma as usual trying to inhale everything, even the plates if he wasn't careful, Soun sitting at the head of the table with a toothbrush in his mouth reading the morning paper. Nabiki yawning into her teacup and looking disheveled. Kasumi looking perfect as always sitting by Nabiki and refilling their plates and Akane sitting at her usual spot next to Ranma's eating daintily.

With a grin Ranma waltzed into the room, and sat next to Akane, not saying anything he simply smiled at her and sat down and started eating. No one seemed to notice, and Akane just blushed as she looked up, then continued eating.