

A Ranma 1/2 Fanfic Series: "Ranma Gets A Clue"
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Chapter 5, "A warriors duty."

"Do you agree to the terms set forth in this final contract?"

"Yes, with the provision that my company will retain the rights to the returns on the stock options listed in sub-paragraph eight title nine."

"Ah. Yes, yes. That can be arranged, let me make a notation here ... all right, now your provision is in the contract, provided that you agree that the dividends for the joint venture capital supplied as outlined in section four, sub-paragraph three, title twelve are met and accounted for."

"Agreed, my company sees no problems within that regard."

"Then our negotiations are done Mr. Ikisando. If you would be so kind as to sign here ... and here ... and initial here ... and there. Thank you Mr. Ikisando, it has been a pleasure doing business with you."

"You are quite welcome. Mr. Nakahara, would you show our honored guest to the door please."

"Before I go Mr. Ikisando, there was the small matter of your companies down-payment. Will that be cash check or charge?"

"Ha ha ha. I had quite forgotten about that, you are very astute. Yes, yes of course. Mr. Nakahara, the briefcase please. I trust you would like to count it?"

"No need for that Mr. Ikisando, if there is a problem my people will be in touch. Now if you would be so kind as to show me the door?"

"Certainly. Mr. Nakahara, would you escort our honored guest out please."

"Yes sir. Come this way please." The very large Mr. Nakahara beckoned the honored guest and set off down the dim hall way. His footsteps raising miniature dust clouds as he lurched along his way.

The "honored guest" was nervous. At the last minute this business meeting had been re-located to this shabby warehouse in the outskirts of the Akihabara district. This was NOT standard operating business procedure. But no matter, the money was in hand, and soon this would be all over. Lost in thought the "honored guest" almost collided with Mr. Nakahara as he abruptly stopped and opened the door. Bowing he wished the "honored guest" a good day and a speedy trip back.

Leaning against the door frame he stood with arms folded across his massive girth and watched the "honored guest" depart. The sky was over cast and the sun was trying it's hardest to peek through. The wind was soft but chilling, and the scent of decaying dust permeated the air. As soon as the individual with the briefcase was around the corner Mr. Nakahara spoke into a small transmitter sewn into the lapel of his very expensive pinstripe suit-jacket, which had to have been tailor made to fit his large frame.

"The target has left the premises, proceed?"

"Go," was all the answer he got, it was enough. Nodding his head ever so slightly, three young men gathered inconspicuously at a bus stop across the way, sitting and reading newspapers or standing and looking bored, rose as one, straightened their very expensive looking suits, and donning mirrored sun glasses, started off after the departed "guest."

Sensing that something was wrong, the departing business partner clutched their briefcase tighter and picked up their pace, searching for that infernal subway entrance, where was it?! Practically jogging now, the search became frantic, dodging around other pedestrians and stepping over or around objects on the sidewalk the "honored guest" wracked their brain trying to recall which block the subway station had been on. There, there it was! Up ahead next to that news-stand.

Breathing a sigh of relief the "honored guest" risked a glance over their shoulder, seeing nothing but the main sights one would normally see in a densely populated city area, trash, people and even a stray dog picking at the meager offerings of an overturned garbage can in a nearby alley. Sighing with relief the "honored guest" headed down the immaculate steps to grab the next train out of here. Preferably a bullet train.

"Where in the hell am I now?!" Ryouga muttered to himself as he walked along the city street. He knew this wasn't Akane's city, the buildings were smaller there, and everything was cleaner. The buildings here were large and close together, and this area was looking rather dirty and run down. Looking around at the rough looking people on the streets, the groups of young men clustered at the entrances to alley ways and the numerous people dashing here and there with nary a kind word exchanged between strangers, he made a decision that he did NOT want to be here when it got dark. And what the hell was making that smell?!

Jingling the few coins he had in his pocket, that he had made doing odd jobs for farmers and the like as he traveled, he decided to take a subway train out of here. "I wonder if the information booth could give me directions to where Akane lives?" He thought idly as he walked down the street looking for a subway entrance. This train trip, would actually be a small relief, and a chance to rest his weary legs and backpack sore shoulders.

He had been walking for what, three ... four days? Ryouga finally saw an entrance up

ahead on the other side of the street, and quickly crossed. He was in such a hurry that he almost ran over three guys in very nice looking business suits. All of them were about his height but with slighter builds. Their hair all had the look of professional stylists and expensive up-keeping. Smiling as one they fell over each other apologizing to a bewildered Ryouga.

"A thousand pardons young sir, we should have been watching where we were going!" They all quickly apologized and bowed, then practically leapt down the steps." They were obviously in a hurry.

'Hey, what nice guys.' Ryouga thought to himself. 'You wouldn't expect to find anyone with manners in an area like this, I wonder why they were all wearing those sunglasses though ...' the sun wasn't even out, the sky was very overcast. Looking up he saw the sun peek through a gap and just as quickly get swallowed up by the foreboding clouds.

Shrugging his shoulders, Ryouga walked down into the train station, sniffing slightly at the irritation the fumes from the underground tunnel were causing his nose. He was already composing a small speech for the information booth, to ask for directions to someplace he couldn't remember very well and couldn't name, in a location he wasn't sure of ... without sounding like an idiot, he was very good at that.

Nervously and with a growing sense of dread, the "honored guest," clutched their briefcase close. Where was that damn train?! Standing on the loading platform felt too open and vulnerable, instincts were demanding a safe defensible place to hide in when these kind of emotions were being felt. Looking at their wrist watch for the fifth time in as many minutes, the "honored guest" who was starting to feel like an "honored chump," decided to get a cup of coffee to help pass the time, and turned and headed toward the snack area. Taking deep breaths in order to try to calm themselves. 'I refuse to be afraid ... I refuse to be afraid ...' they repeated while they walked.

Ryouga stood with right hand behind head, elbow crooked, in the classic stance of embarrassment. Nervously he asked the clerk on duty if she had ever traveled around Japan, and if so to describe the various districts she had been in, seeing as he was fresh off the farm and looking for "adventure" as he had put it.

The young female clerk smiled shyly at him and patiently told him that she had never traveled outside of the immediate Tokyo area, but had been to almost all of the districts, and so she started to describe all the districts that she had been too. One of the distinct features Ryouga remembered about Akane's town was that stupid water canal he kept getting knocked into, or falling into. Ryouga kept steering the conversation in that direction.

"Kansai sounds lovely, but I love to be able to sit and stare at water for meditation and

relaxation purposes, do you know of any place like that." The clerk replied in the affirmative and promptly started talking about beach-front properties and the beauty of the Kyushu island, which she was quick to point out she had never BEEN to, but had heard great things about. Ryouga had to keep steering her in the direction of land locked water without sounding like he was impatient or a complete idiot.

Finally, in frustration, the clerk said, "Well the only other place I know that has water, that isn't an ocean or a lake or a river or even a large pool would be the Nerima district, which has that grubby water canal. But that is just a small district, mostly residential. Surely you would rather see something more exotic in your "adventures", than a water canal?" She raised an eyebrow at him. Ryouga smiled and asked her to continue, silently repeating the name of 'Nerima' over and over in his mind, lest he forget. A sudden very female and very terrified scream pierced his thought process and stopped the clerk's recitation cold. She immediately picked up a red telephone and spoke rapidly into it.

"Security to gate four of the poetry platform now! I have a code thirty seven emergency in progress, hurry!!" Looking up to calm her guest the clerk found herself gazing at a blank wall. 'I wonder where that nice young man went to ... ' she thought to herself as she got up to go meet the security team and point them in the right direction.

Ryouga sprinted in the direction he had heard the scream. Listening for anything that would help him find the person in trouble, silently praying he could find her in time to help her, furiously he cursed his inability to go in the direction he wanted to, especially in times like this. The scream he had heard had most definitely sounded like a woman's scream. Ryouga had received very strict upbringing where women were concerned. "Protect and serve," just like a police officer his father had said, when he had been around anyway, the curse was hereditary. Those instructions were inscribed on his brain, he could NOT ignore this, like many Japanese would do in this situation, their excuse, "best not to get involved," just wouldn't cut it for him.

"Get away from meeeeeee!" There it was again. Skittering around the corner which led to the snack area Ryouga saw a young woman dressed in a business suit, being lifted off the ground from behind with both her arms locked behind her back. As he watched and ran a briefcase fell from her left hand. Recognizing who was holding her, Ryouga ran faster. She was being held by one of those, apparently not so nice, guys Ryouga had almost trampled earlier, now he wished he had.

Running as fast as he could, he knew he couldn't stop what was about to happen, but gritted his teeth and ran faster all the same. Another of the well dressed men stooped down and grabbed the briefcase and promptly ran in the direction of the exit. The other pulled out something small and black out of his suit jacket, and swinging hard brought the object down on the young ladies head. Her struggles jerked to a stop as a sickening *thud* knocked her unconscious. The man holding her, dropped her and she fell ungracefully face first into the ground.

Ryoga was beyond pissed. Sprinting like he had never sprinted before, he screamed as he ran, shrugging off his pack about ten steps away from the men, he was hell bent on showing these goons, you do NOT hurt girls.

Hearing Ryoga's scream the two remaining guys looked up startled, and saw a crazy person charging them. Grinning the man who had been holding the young lady reached into his left armpit area under his coat, and brought out a very large and powerful looking hand gun. It was a police issue service sidearm he had taken from an off duty army officer he had robbed, on leave in Yokohama a few months back.

Ryoga, noticing the gun, switched game-plans and directed his charge to the goon holding the gun. The unknown man grinned as he pulled the trigger.

The *crack!* of the hand gun's report in the ceramic tiled underground tunnel was deafening. At the last possible second Ryoga dodged. He had been watching the muscles in the man's gun arm and hand, and most importantly the trigger finger, so he knew a split second before the goon pulled the trigger. Spinning to his left in a 360 degree spin that few could follow with mortal eyes the bullet whizzed by his face with inches to spare. Finishing the spin he made contact with the gun goon.

Slapping the outside of the gun mans right hand and wrist area with his left hand, he drove his rigid fist pinkie side first, hard into the nerves of on the opposite side of his wrist. Paralyzing his hand. At the moment of impact with his right hand he slide his left hand up the mans wrist to the top of the gun barrel and wrenched the gun out of the surprised mans hand. Breaking his trigger finger in the process. The entire disarmament took less than a second.

Continuing the force of the spin he had started disarm him, Ryoga spun with enough force to turn any male ballet dancer green with envy. Completing the spin he caught the very surprised man with a close fist hammer blow to the area just under his ear along his jaw line. He was out in a split second. Anything harder would have snapped his neck. This took place in the total elapsed time of two seconds.

Dropping the hand gun, Ryoga leapt on the back of the other man trying to run away in the direction of the exit. Tackling him, the other man tried to squirm out from under him and Ryoga shifted his position to straddle him. Trying to pin the mans arms behind his back. The man in the suit grabbed Ryoga's ankles and using an incredible strength kicked his own legs out from laying behind himself, to in front of himself. Then twisting violently he pushed up and back on Ryoga's ankles, effectively breaking his grip and throwing Ryoga off of him. Ryoga was shocked, no one could wrestle with him and win, it wasn't possible.

With his grip broken, Ryoga threw his body weight backwards into a half hand spring, then with his palms firmly supporting his momentum and weight, reversed his motion to land

quickly on his feet, using a martial arts technique many know as a "Chinese get-up." Not pausing for a second Ryouga jumped in suit-boys direction throwing a viscous snap kick at his head, aiming for maximum damage with the ball of his foot for the bridge of his nose. The man in the suit jerked his head to the right, just barely missing the brunt of the blow, but taking a mean graze across his left ear, which was now ringing. He was out-classed and he knew it, desperately the man turned and ran again.

Ryouga was not about to have any of that again. Jumping over the mans head he landed a few steps in front of him, and even as the man tried to reverse or re-direct his momentum, Ryouga spun on his left crouching leg, supporting the sweep with his left palm he pivoted his body weight and caught the man on the right knee-cap, the front right knee-cap. The knee snapped under the force of the blow and the man went down in a heap, crying out in agony over his shattered knee, he wouldn't be running anywhere any time soon.

Getting up heavily, winded but otherwise none the worse for wear, Ryouga walked calmly over to the man he had just seriously damaged. Squatting down next to the mans head, he reached down with his right hand and grabbing a fistful of hair, jerked the man into a half sitting position.

"Now ... you and I need to have a little talk ... about why men should never, ever, ever hit women." To punctuate his point Ryouga slapped the man's broken knee with his other hand. Groaning, and suppressing a sharp intake of breath the man spit in Ryouga's face. Without breaking eye contact with the man Ryouga calmly unwrapped one of his bandannas from his forehead, and wiped his face off. Throwing the bandanna in a corner, he recoiled his hand from the toss, and slapped the man across the face, hard. Keeping his voice calm and his face expressionless Ryouga continued.

"That was not very polite. Didn't your mother teach you anything about manners? First I catch you picking on a girl, who better not be dead right now, or I swear you will wish you died first, then you go and spit in my face? That's very naughty." Clucking his tongue at the man Ryouga waved his index finger in front of his face, as a father would do to scold a disobedient child.

"So ... tell me Mr. Manners, why exactly did it take three of you to beat up on one little girl? Afraid she would out muscle you?"

"I am not going to tell you anything. You might as well just kill me and get it over with. You can tell who ever sent you though, that my boss does not like double crossers, whoever sent you will pay, I swear it." The man hissed through clenched teeth, his breathing labored.

"Oh no you have me mistaken suit boy. I aint gonna kill ya. No no no. That's too good for someone that beats up on girls, no ... I'm going to turn you into the police, after I drag your

gimpy ass over to that girl and make you apologize to her." Terror raced across suit boys eyes at Ryouga's mention of the police, he had strict orders NOT to be captured by the police. He had been assured that if he was ever captured by the police, that it would be a short stay. Ryouga continued without noticing the change in his captive's demeanor.

"However I don't want you to give me any trouble while I carry you over there, so I am going to knock you unconscious for a few seconds. Say night night suit boy." As Ryouga cocked his hand back, flexing the fingers he would need to use to render the man unconscious, the man locked gazes with him, and smiling, bit down on something in his mouth, hard enough to make a loud cracking sound. Holding Ryouga's gaze, the man's eyes glazed over and he gradually went limp in Ryouga's hold.

Taking the fingers he was about to use to press the man's knock out centers in his neck, Ryouga felt for a pulse. There was none. Shrugging, Ryouga dropped the corpse on to the tile floor, it's head bounced once. As far as he was concerned, he got off easy. 'Strange time for a heart attack though.' He thought as he jogged his way back to help the girl, a minute later after too many wrong turns, Ryouga finally found the girl. Running to her side he picked her up and held her in his arms as he knelt on the floor, quickly he searched for a pulse, it was there and quite strong. With relief he saw her chest rising and falling with her breathing. Brushing her hair out of her eyes, his heart stopped for about two beats. It was Nabiki!

In name of all that was holy, what on earth was Nabiki doing in an area like this? Alone! Sitting there dazed Ryouga felt a tap on his shoulder. Talking over his shoulder Ryouga deadpanned, "Nice of you guys to show up. You didn't miss any donuts or anything on your mad dash over here did ya?"

Smiling sarcastically Ryouga glanced over his shoulder and froze. About six uniformed security guards were standing there, none of them smiling, all of them with their weapons drawn and pointed at him!

"Um, hi guys." Ryouga said in an icy tone of voice. Is there a reason you are pointing your guns at me?" Ryouga snapped.

Pushing her way to the front of the crowd the information clerk shouted, "Wait wait wait! Put those damn things away. I vouch for this guy, he didn't do it. He was talking to me when she screamed. He must have gone to help her... right sir?" The pretty lady asked, while checking his eyes for the honesty of his answer, she was very good at judging these kinds of things. Ryouga nodded an affirmative. His attention back on Nabiki.

The guards bowed as one mumbling apologies. Then the one in front snapped an order to go look for the real perpetrators. "Move it you slugs, go go go!" Off they went charging after their captain. The clerk stayed behind. Surveying the damage, and noting the bullet mark on a concrete pillar in front of where the damaged suit boy was laying, and the gun at his feet, she raised an eyebrow.

"You did all this huh? Against this guy? With a gun? I'm impressed." Taking over his shoulder without looking at her Ryouga continued to tend to Nabiki,

"I didn't do it to impress you or anybody else, I did it because it was the right thing to do. I have to get her home! I'm sorry miss, please excuse my manners, I'm worried about her. What was the name of that district with the water canal, I... I forgot." Ryouga blushed, ashamed that he had to make a fool out of himself, again!

Perplexed the lady asked, "you planning on taking her with you on your 'adventures'?" Looking at him doubtfully, she started to wonder about his sanity.

"No no no. She lives there."

"Oh well, in that case ... come with me." Motioning with her hand towards her booth the girl started to walk. Rapidly Ryouga stood with Nabiki cradled in his arms, scanned the ground for anything of hers she may have dropped, then set off after the pretty young clerk, he was not about to get lost again.

Reaching her booth the clerk typed a few commands into her terminal and the faint buzzing of a printer could be heard from under the counter. Smiling she slid two all day passes across the counter. They read, "unlimited passage: all rail lines, all destinations." Startled Ryouga looked at the clerk doubtfully.

Answering his unasked question, "because the rail company has a policy to make passengers feel safe after something like this, because you did a noble deed and ... blushing as she spoke, because you're cute." Pushing the tickets towards him she blushed even harder. "Take them silly. Take her home. Go on." Grinning like a five year old who has just been told he can have a cookie from the cookie jar, Ryouga grabbed the tickets with his right hand as he shifted Nabiki slightly so she was resting further up on his arm.

Smiling shyly at him the clerk watched him go. When he was around the corner, her knees finally collapsed and she sunk ungracefully into her chair. Sighing dreamily, she had to take several deep breaths to calm down. 'They don't make them like that any more.' She thought. 'Oh shoot! I should have gotten his phone number or something.' She berated herself.

Ryouga boarded the next train leaving for the Nerima district. At least that is what the ticket taker told him as he handed back his tickets. Taking a seat against the wall he watched the doors and the people as he cradled Nabiki's still limp form. Her head was lolling in the crook on the left side of his neck and shoulder, his left arm supporting her shoulders and his right draped over her knees and holding her firmly. Holding her, he cradled her like a giant infant. He received several stares, but true to Japanese form, no one said anything, and almost all of them stopped staring when he glared at them.

Time passed and Ryouga had to fight to keep himself from relaxing and letting the soothing rocking motion of the train and the rhythmic clicking of the tracks lull him into unawareness. Akane would kill him if he let her sister get hurt.

Sitting up straighter, Ryouga played a mind game to keep himself awake and sharpen his senses. He studied everything with his eyes. The small tear in the seat over there, the slightly dimmer bulb in the ceiling across the way, sending flickering light to it's section. The small corners of dust in the window pains the cleaning people had missed. The blend of human smells wafting from the enclosed space. Grocery bags and old shoes and perfumes and colognes. Diligently he cataloged everything in his mind. It was one of his favorite mind exercises. He hoped that one day he would get good enough at this, that he would remember places, and wouldn't get lost anymore.

The controlled hiss as the train's hydraulic brakes did their job to stop it, and the polite clipped tones of the conductors voice announced his stop. Gratefully Ryouga stood and stretched his leg muscles. His arm muscles were starting to feel a little worn, but he would endure.

Stepping off the train he walked along the boarding platform, looking for the exit sign and promptly ran into something. Taking a step back he found himself looking at a uniformed police officer, who was now eyeing him suspiciously.

"Hey, you there. What's going on here?" The police officer demanded. Ryouga realizing he was carrying a beautiful unconscious young woman in his arms, dressed in a business suit, and he was dressed in his dingy traveling clothes with a grubby backpack strapped across his shoulders. Of course this would look bad. Instantly he came up with a plausible cover story.

"My uh, my sister here tripped and fell at the last station boarding the train. I have to get her to a doctor. I am afraid I have never been to this town before, is there a doctor near-by?" Eyeing the shabbily dressed young man doubtfully, the police officer decided to buy the story.

"About half a block away. I'll take you there. Come with me." With that the officer abruptly turned and marched to a door marked in large red kanji, "forbidden, police only!" Ryouga hurried to catch the door before it closed. Stumbling for a second he started off after the officer, in the well lit, dust free passage. As he walked he noticed that unlike all the other tunnels and walkways through subway stations, this passage did not have any turnstiles or other crowd controlling devices, and was perfectly straight. 'This must be one of the passages the police use when they are chasing someone.' Ryouga idly thought.

Opening the door at the end of the passage, the police officer looked over his shoulder to judge the young mans progress, noting that he was easily keeping up the officer started to jog. Law abiding citizens courteously stepped out of the obviously hurried law officer. They had no desire for trouble. Ryouga followed in the wake the officer left. In no time they came to a squat modest office building, it's signs proclaiming a doctor with a general practitioners license, as well as skills in the herbal and shiatsu area's. Opening the immaculate glass door for Ryouga, the officer watched as Ryouga went inside and asked for a nurse. Satisfied that this was on the up and up, the officer started back to his patrol.

Ryouga called for help again as he lay Nabiki on the couch in the waiting room. She had been out cold now for about twenty minutes, long enough to be a symptom of a concussion, a condition he was very familiar with.

"Well now, what seems to be the trouble? I was just sitting down to eat my lunch ... do you have an appointment?" A pleasantly polite male voice intoned from behind Ryouga, accompanied by the sharp sliding sound only Japanese shogi doors can make. Looking over his shoulder Ryouga sighed a sigh of resigned acceptance, 'it would just have to be one of THOSE days,' he thought as he watched Doctor Tofu entering the room, wiping his hands on a cloth towel. His ever present glasses gleaming with the reflected light of the brightly lit waiting room.

"Of course I can make an exception if it's an emergency but ..." his words trailed off as he noticed Nabiki lying unconscious on his couch. "Oh my word, Nabiki!? What on earth has happened to you. Oh hello Ryouga. Do you know what happened to her?" Tofu asked as he rapidly knelt beside her and checked her pulse and gently pried her eye open to check the dilation of her pupils. They were dilated, but not fixed. A good sign. If they were fixed and dilated, then most doctors would give up on the spot.

Picking her up like his own child Tofu started to walk into his examination room with her, continuing the conversation over his shoulder.

"So Ryouga, do you know what happened to her?"

"Yes doctor. She was struck on the head by some guy that was trying to rob her. I was running to help whoever had screamed, I saw the guy do it. I didn't get there in time, didn't get there when she needed me. I'm sorry doctor, I should have run faster. I didn't even know it was Nabiki. Will she ... will she be all right doctor?" Ryouga choked out.

"There there Ryouga, it's okay. She will be just fine. Why don't you go pour yourself a cup of tea and have a seat in the waiting room? Calm your nerves okay?"

"But doctor can't I stay here? Make sure she's all right?"

"Well Ryouga, I will have to undress her to examine her, and make sure she is all right,

would she object if I allowed you to stay? Are you two an item now?" Backing quickly towards the door, blushing furiously, and willing away a nose bleed, Ryouga stammered, "No no, that's ... um, never mind ... I'll, um ... be waiting outside ..." he quickly slid the door closed and leaned against the wall trying to catch his breath.

Smiling to himself Tofu chuckled at the boys almost indecent amount of modesty. He had only been kidding. He didn't need to undress the young lady for a head wound. Sighing to himself the doctor worked rapidly and professionally with a skill few could even hope to match.

Cleaning and examining her wound, he washed away the small amount of blood on her scalp and in her hair, and rubbed a pre-made salve he kept on hand for minor abrasions. Massaging her neck muscles and stimulating several key pressure points he slowly brought her closer to consciousness. The pain would be excruciating, so before he brought her out of it. He pressed a few leaves from some very potent pain relieving plants between her lips and waited while the needed chemicals and nutrients soaked into her blood stream, he gently bandaged her head as he waited. A few minutes later he tapped the final pressure point on her neck.

Nabiki's eyes snapped open. Her first facial expression was one of terror. Throwing her arms up in front of her face she cringed. Not feeling the blow she expected to come she peeked out from under her arms. Seeing the welcome safe sight of Dr. Tofu broke her final wall. She wailed. Crying out in terror she hugged herself and rocked side to side on the table. Helping her into a sitting position he held her while she cried. Ryouga in the waiting room, winced at her outcry. Blaming himself for her pain he made several promises to himself at that moment, mostly about what he would do when he caught the rest of the guys responsible for this.

Nabiki clung to the doctor like a drowning man would to a life raft. Finally minutes later her world stopped spinning, and reality started to invade again. Realizing what she was doing she violently commanded her body to behave itself. Shutting her tears off immediately was not possible, but she did manage to slow them to the occasional sniffle. Sniffing the antiseptic environment around her, she winced at the bright lights needling her sensitive eyes, trying to sit up straighter brought a gasp of pain, and she slumped back into the doctors arms.

"What on earth happened to me doctor? How did I get here? I wasn't even close to home when this happened." She whispered to the doctor, probably the only man outside of her daddy she would allow to see her cry. And even worse have to hold and comfort her, she was supposed to be stronger than this!

"Well I don't know the whole story, but from what Ryouga tells me you were attacked by at least one man, and he hit you on the head with something. From my examination of the wound I would say a black-jack. Quite a nasty little illegal weapon."

"Ryouga? What do you mean Ryouga? Where did he come from? He wasn't with me."

"Well like I said, I don't know the whole story, you'll have to ask him, but I do know he carried you in here." Nabiki's heart swelled, and she immediately was fighting back tears, as she blushed. 'How sweet.' She thought.

"I should probably go thank him." Sitting up and hopping off the table quickly, her legs abruptly buckled and if Tofu hadn't been expecting it and caught her, she would have fallen, hard.

"You need to rest young lady." He said in the concerned tone of a worried parent. You lie here and try to go to sleep, I'll go talk to Ryouga for you. Without waiting for an argument he walked to the door and shutting off the light switch on his way out, opened the door to go talk to Ryouga.

As the door opened Ryouga hopped to his feet, a worried look in his eyes. Upon seeing the doctor smiling he sank back into the couch. His worry leaving him. The doctor sat and talked with Ryouga and listened as Ryouga told his version of the story, leaving out the parts when he had to ask for directions and got lost of course.

The doctor as he listened to Ryouga's story felt his biceps clenching as his hands made fists. It had been a long time since he had felt the need to strike someone, back in his training days he had always been more interested in techniques such as shiatsu and Akido. Brute force martial arts had never appealed to him. But he did know how to punch and kick, very well according to his own sensei whom he still went to see every Saturday. Oh how badly he wanted to have been there, to have been able to strike out at these cowards who preyed upon women!

Ryouga completed his accounting of the incident, and nodding the doctor told him to wait there while he telephoned the Tendou residence, to inform them of Nabiki's whereabouts.

Picking up the phone in his anteroom he dialed, silently praying that if Kasumi answered he would be able to, for once, act like a normal person. Whatever gods were up there decided to smile on him. Akane answered the phone.

"Hello, Tendou dojo." She said in a sing song voice, she sounded happier than she had been in a long time, but that was neither here nor there."

"Akane, I am afraid I must be the bearer of bad news. Nabiki is here at my office, she was

assaulted."

"Nabiki?" A sharp intake of breath followed by a muffled shout as Akane covered up the mouthpiece and shouted the news to the family. A mad scrambling noise was heard in the background, and Akane said breathlessly,

"We'll be right there." Then she hung up. Nodding to Ryouga, Tofu went back into the examining room to check on Nabiki.

Sitting back in the soft fabric of the couch, Ryouga tried to relax. Letting his eyes fall halfway closed, he started to hum to himself as he usually did when he was anxious and needed to unwind.

Therefore he heard the door opening to the office, but since his mind judged this to be a safe place, he ignored it. He did however feel it when a weight was introduced near him on the couch, as his body due to gravity, automatically sank towards the dip being introduced in it's immediate area.

Cracking his left eye open Ryouga found himself looking at a very striking young lady of about sixteen or so. Dark hair a slight shade of bluish black, more blue than black, long and silky cascaded down her back and recklessly over her shoulders.

Her skin looked pale and soft, her legs were long and slender and she was neither plump nor a waif. Her eyes were what drew him though, they would be the most striking shade of green if it wasn't for the fact that they were blood shot and all around her eyes the skin looked puffy and red... like she had been crying. She sat there sunk into her own little world on the couch, looking absently at the far wall, not really seeing anything. Ryouga doubted she was even aware of his presence.

Clearing his throat to get her attention had the desired effect, she noticed him all right, and screaming a shout of surprise jumped all the way across the couch. Breathing heavily she stammered, "you ... you scared me ... sorry I screamed ... it's been one of those days ya know?"

Scooting back towards Ryouga on the couch she held her hand out in the western style and said, "My name's Midori, what's yours."

"Ryouga... Ryouga Hibiki... how do you do." Smiling shyly the girl ran her eyes up and down his body, her gaze lingering on his ample biceps. Ryouga was starting to feel uncomfortable.

Leaning forward she started to speak ... "Wanna know a secret..." she began. Ryouga sat frozen praying for divine intervention, he didn't know how to talk to a girl! Especially a gorgeous one! That was Ranma's thing. Before he had a chance to reply the examining

room's door slid open and Tofu backed through the door carrying a tea tray.

"Hey Ryouga I noticed you didn't take me up on my offer of tea, would you like some now?" Turning around the doctor's very astute eyes took in the situation and he came to Ryouga's rescue. Setting the tray on the coffee table he sat in between the two, and while pouring out three cups of tea casually asked the girl,

"So Midori how are things going for you, have things gotten better since we last talked?"

"Well not really doctor. My dad has to go and drag me over here after mom died to, 'get back to your roots,' as he put it. I have no friends, my Japanese is terrible compared to the other girls I go to school with, and I'm just, well I'm just so lonely!" She wailed slamming her fist into her thigh to punctuate her statement. Her eyes suddenly watered and she winced as she sucked her breath in sharply. She had forgotten about her injury.

Ryouga was making himself busy examining the beautiful lacquer work on his tea cup. Polite people did not eavesdrop on young ladies conversations. They were both ignoring him for now.

"But Midori I thought you said you were working on getting a boyfriend. What happened to that?" Tofu watched her eyes over the rim of his steaming tea-cup as he took a small sip. The tea was awfully sweet today.

"Yeah well ... things haven't quite snapped into place yet ... to be honest I doubt he even knows my name yet. I only have one class with him, home room, and he usually sleeps during that class ..." She trailed off, looking embarrassed into her cup as she realized she wasn't alone with the good doctor.

"Ryouga, could you do me a favor please?" Ryouga jumped at the chance to get out of this awkward situation.

"Sure doctor, anything."

"Could you go outside and change my business sign to read closed, I have the feeling I am going to the my hands full tonight as it is." With that the doctor turned back to a whispered conversation with the pretty girl. Sighing with relief Ryouga walked out the front door, his only reminder of the girl was her lilac perfume that was wafting around the room, and trailed out the door after him.

Finding the business sign hanging from a slender chain on a hook in the wall, Ryouga flipped it over to read, "Closed." His mind still in a daze he hopped up onto the nearest wall pillar and sat hugging his knees to his chest. Rhythmically he started to control his breathing, and to force his jumbled mind to relax. As he sat there the disassociated sounds of the city washed over him and helped bring on a kind of peace.

The rising pitch and fall of shrill children's voices as they played. A dog barking in the distance, and the chirping songs of the birds as they basked in the afternoon sun. Sun? Looking up Ryouga saw that the sun had indeed forced it's way to the fore-front of the cloud bank. As he watched he could see the clouds dissipating as the sun's dominance asserted itself and it shined down benevolently. Everything was finally right with the world again.