

A Ranma 1/2 Fanfic Series: "Ranma Gets A Clue"
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Chapter 7, "Morning Mayhem."

Pre-dawn in Nerima Japan. The air was crisp with life and the promise of adventure. The birds were starting to chirp and sing their praises to the world. As the sun climbed the horizon it brought with it the wind. The wind carried the scent of the world's sunrises, each more spectacular than the one before. The wind carried the scent of dust and pollen, of perfume wafting from an open window and the smell of rain on pavement. As the sunlight drifted over the canvas that was the Earth, it lanced across the landscape and illuminated a window. Akane Tendou's window.

Akane had a very comfortable bed. The western style mattress was padded with feather down, and her blankets were soft and warm thanks to Kasumi. As she lay asleep her body luxuriated in the feeling of floating in a warm sea of oblivion. The very essence of relaxation permeated her.

As she slept she dreamt. Akane was not especially known for her light sleeping habits. Quite the opposite actually. She was famous for tossing and turning in her sleep, at least she was famous in her household. As Akane turned in her sleep, her normal nocturnal acrobatics met with an unfamiliar shape in her bed which was impeding her way.

In her dreams, a wall appeared. An obstacle. Akane hated obstacles. Instinct told her to destroy the obstacle, and she agreed. She threw a punch at it.

Ranma was warm! He couldn't remember the last time he had been so warm! Ranma hated being cold. Ever since the "incident", he had made every possible effort to stay dry and warm. His body was also comfortable! He couldn't remember the last time he had been so comfortable.

The pleasure was running so deep, that Ranma's normal ingrained response to someone touching him whilst he slept was overridden. It was not worth it to break with the pleasurable sensations he was receiving in this warm place, just to do battle once again. If it was the old man he could always kick him around later.

In Ranma's dreams he was walking along a river bank with his mother and the old man. The sun was shining and the firm grass was slightly moist under his feet. The occasional wispy tendril tickled his legs. He was on vacation with his mommy and daddy. Oh how he

loved his mommy. The old man was a different story. But when you are six years old you still have a healthy respect for your daddy as well. Even if you don't like him all that much.

Suddenly the old man turned with an insane gleam in his eye and a maniacal laugh on his lips and threw a punch at Ranma! Desperately, Ranma looked to his mother for help. She looked back with that, 'make me proud of your manliness' look, that made his tummy feel funny. Ranma sighed and moved his incredibly agile six year old's body to dodge his fathers punch. Ranma squirmed out of the way with centimeters to spare.

Akane's dream wall shattered, but behind it stood a sinister looking man swathed in black. He was tall and wore a traveling cloak askew over his left shoulder, clasped at his throat with a symbol of a silver dagger. The cloak did not stir, though the wind was brisk. He smelt of dried tree bark and looked to live a rough life, his muscular build and callused hands suggested he was adept in the fighting arts. His hair was disheveled and his knee-high boots were muddy. He was smiling, but the smile made her nervous. The momentum of her punch carried her towards him and for some reason she couldn't stop. Then the man grabbed her arm and flipped her over his back in a judo throw, and put her in a strangle hold.

Akane's punch missed Ranma's head in the bed by mere centimeters. With the momentum she had placed into it as she rolled around on the bed, resulted with her laying almost on top of Ranma now. Ranma responded by grabbing the offending arm that now lay across him and rolled her over, then under him into a strangle hold.

Ranma was shocked. He was much stronger than the old man for some reason today! He had dodged the punch and now had him on the ground in a strangle hold. Maybe all those vitamins mom kept on force feeding him really did help? Grinning, Ranma looked up into the smiling face of his mommy. She looked very proud of him.

Akane countered her assailant's attack by darting her hands behind her head to gouge her assailant's eyes. Ranma ducked under the strike, but in doing so he lost his hold on her. Ranma couldn't believe how viciously the old man was fighting today.

Akane pivoted at the waist and shot an elbow at her attacker's sternum. But Ranma caught it and used it as leverage to turn her body mass under him again, and increased the pressure by snaking his knee over the backs of her knees. He then wrapped his arms around her torso, putting her in a bear hug and pinning her arms at her sides.

Akane squirmed with all her tremendous might and managed to twist into her attacker's arms so she was facing him. Suddenly Akane's dream shifted. She was sitting in a diner with Nabiki and slurping a fizzy strawberry soda through a straw. It was delicious! In the bed Akane started to suck on Ranma's earlobe.

Ranma's dream couldn't handle Genma sucking on his earlobe so his dream shifted to a faceless girl kissing his ear. Ranma sighed in appreciation, and encircled the girl's waist and hugged her close to him.

A light was blinding Ranma. Even with his eyes closed it dug into his eyelids and burned uncomfortably. Slowly Ranma started to come back to consciousness. His day started off with the unwelcome caress of a sunbeam darting past Akane's window blinds to settle on his face. Of course, Akane! As awareness started to flood his senses, a very important fact struck him. There was something warm and cuddly in his arms, and something was sucking on his ear!

Realization struck Ranma, and his eyes snapped fully open. Akane's hair was partially in his face. He had his legs entwined with hers and his arms were hugging her close about the waist. He had enfolded her like any lover would, and it felt ... right. It was Akane who was sucking on his ear.

'Oh man, oh man, oh man, I am in trouble!' Gently Ranma pulled his head back and thankfully she stopped. He was about to take his arms off her when she rolled over towards him, decreasing his leverage and increasing hers with her weight on his arm and chest.

'Oh great. I can just see the headlines. "Local Boy Found Dead. Body Discovered in Violent fiancée's Room Beaten to Death with His Own Dismembered arms" She's gonna kill me if she wakes up with me in her bed! I gotta think of something!'

Ranma lay there for awhile, trying to figure out what to do. Unfortunately he was a boy, and she was very much a girl in his eyes at the moment, at least as far as his hormones were concerned. It was kind of hard to ignore the soft flesh of a young girl pressing against you when you are a sixteen year old guy. She was affecting him in ways he was not prepared to deal with. His breath shortened to shallow gasps. His nerves were tingling and he felt dizzy.

You never really appreciate how wonderfully different girls are from boys until you hold one in your arms. She was much lighter than him, so thankfully his right arm which was under her waist wasn't going numb. Her hair was light and wispy and was tickling his face. Granted he couldn't see much with a face full of hair, but that was the price one paid to hold a beautiful girl in one's arms. His other arm was draped loosely over her waist and his hand was resting on her firm belly.

He couldn't help himself. Ranma very very slowly started to rub her abdomen in concentric circles. This was without a doubt, hands down, the most erotic thing Ranma had ever done, and he was enjoying it immensely. The tiny hairs on Akane's abdomen tickled, so Ranma regretfully stopped. If they were tickling him he had no doubt they were tickling her, and he wasn't really eager to get on with the beating he knew he had coming today, as soon as she woke up.

Sighing, Ranma crooked his chin over her neck and, interlacing his fingers, hugged her tightly. If he was going to die today, at least he could get to claim he had hugged her first.

"Having fun?" Akane whispered softly with her eyes still closed. Ranma of course froze. Fear and resignation raced through him as he braced for impact. Wincing his eyes closed, Ranma waited but nothing came and Akane didn't move.

"Um ... not that I'm complaining or nuthin Akane, but ... aren't you gonna cream me now? I mean, you don't have to, but I, I mean you, I mean ..." Ranma couldn't believe how stupid he sounded. So he shut up.

Akane laughed a small laugh. "Why would I hit you?" She lilted in a merry tone of voice, her eyes still closed.

"Um, because I'm in your bed for one. And 'cause I'm touching you ... and because well, you always, I mean ..." This was not going the way Ranma was used to, maybe last night with Nabiki fried her brain or something.

"I invited you in here, why would I hit you for doing what I asked you to do?" Akane asked as she rolled over so she was face to face with Ranma. "Besides I kinda liked it when you rubbed my tummy, it felt ... nice. No one has ever touched me like that before, ever." Akane blushed and shifted her gaze to Ranma's chin. She couldn't believe how giddy she was acting.

Ranma's senses had not had nearly enough. More More More they cried. If he didn't get up **now** he was going to start something they might both regret later. He started to lift himself out of the bed, but Akane held onto his arms.

"Um, Akane, you're ... I gotta, I gotta go..."

"Not yet you don't." Akane breathed sensuously as she pulled Ranma down on top of her and started to kiss him eagerly. Ranma mentally shrugged and kissed her back greedily. He cupped the back of her neck in his right hand and propped himself up off of her with that elbow, and encircled her lower waist with his left arm. She tasted exactly as he remembered, but this time she was much more aggressive in her kissing technique. She drank his attentions in like she was sampling the finest nectar of the gods and it might end soon. There were no small kisses, no sucking on his lips. No fooling around. This was serious stuff.

It was like she was trying to devour him through his mouth. Ranma returned her passions with equal abandon and they lay like that for what seemed like ages. Regretfully, Ranma tried to break the kiss, and tried to just stare into her beautiful eyes as he held her pajama clothed, very warm and now slightly sweaty body under him. Akane wasn't having any of that. With a primal growl she threw him under her and resumed ravishing him with kisses.

Sighing Ranma lay back down and rolled her so he lay beside her and closed his eyes as he cradled her in the "spoons" position, the front of his knees pressed against the backs of hers, his arms wrapped around her shoulders, their forms fitting together perfectly, this was fun for Ranma, but he did it mostly to get her to stop momentarily. Akane giggled and yanked the covers back over them. Ranma resigned himself to lay with Akane as long as she wanted, and damn the consequences. If Soun walked in and demanded he marry her ... then so be it.

Kasumi lay awake in her bed listening to the antics of her younger sister through the heating vent, and smiled to herself. 'It took him long enough.' She mused. Ranma had been dancing around any issues of affection ever since he had walked through the door all that time ago. And a merry dancer he was. Kasumi had almost been to the point of clubbing him over the head and inducing amnesia ... Akane desperately needed someone to love, and to return that love. Sure Akane had her sisters and her daddy. But that wasn't the kind of attention she needed. And she definitely didn't need the attentions of any of those knuckle heads at the high school throwing themselves at her, what had gotten into those young men's minds anyway? Akane had not been the same happy self-assured girl since mom died. Now, Kasumi hoped, with Ranma's help they could turn that around.

Ranma was slowly, ever so painfully slowly, bringing Akane out of her shell and breaking down her emotional walls. Ranma was quite possibly the only person alive in the world who could shrug off Akane's emotional and physical shield of abuse and come back for more with an open heart and understanding. Kasumi smiled and sat up in bed. At least from the sound of things Ranma was still being the gentleman, despite Akane's invitations, for now.

Bare foot, Kasumi padded across the soft carpeting of her small but functional room to her dresser and slid the top drawer open soundlessly. She pulled a thin bathrobe out and wrapped it around her pajama clad, supple young body, and headed to the bathroom. It wouldn't do to have the doctor see her partially unclothed, he might die from the nosebleed.

The bathroom was silent in harmony with the house, as it was every morning when Kasumi took her quiet time in her bath. She could hear her own breathing echoing off the tile walls. Luxuriating in her morning rituals, Kasumi took her time washing her body, lathering herself up and rinsing the foamy cream away in rivulets down her legs in gentle tickling streams with the faucet head. The bath was finished filling when she was done, and Kasumi gratefully lowered herself centimeter by centimeter into the steaming crystal clear water. Truly this was one of life's greatest pleasures.

Akane twisted in Ranma's arms under the covers and resumed kissing him. She kissed his nose, his eyelids, his cheeks, she brushed his lips with wet kisses, she trailed her kisses up and down the sides of his neck and gently sucked on the hollow of his throat.

Ranma's arms were strained so tight the muscles felt like knotted cords of rope. He was

gripping the bed sheets and biting down on his lower lip trying not to cry out or respond to Akane. It wasn't working very well.

If Ranma didn't get away **now** his last vestiges of control were gonna abandon ship. Desperately Ranma threw the bed covers off and waited for Akane to pause. Grinning despite himself, Ranma kissed Akane's nose with a quick peck and leapt off her bed in a forward somersault.

"See ya downstairs." Was all he said as he made his exit post haste. Akane sighed mightily and lay down on her bed arms and legs akimbo and grinned the triumphant smile of she whom hast won the battle.

'Okay, that was nice.' She sighed.

Ranma hopped, skipped, and jumped downstairs, he even turned a quick cartwheel at the foot of the stairs. He headed to the kitchen to grab himself a cup of tea and hopefully calm down. Man, but now he was wired!

Ranma almost ran by the kitchen and had to lurch to a halt; throwing his weight in reverse and back-peddling to clear the entry way. Ducking under the curtains, Ranma entered his morning quiet place. Glancing out the window, he estimated he had about five minutes.

Moving to the cupboards, he got out all the fixings for instant tea. A kettle and the box of tea bags. Simple described Ranma perfectly today. The kitchen tile was cold this morning, but Ranma was too hyped up to be bothered by that. The sun streaming in through the kitchen window glanced off the highly polished counter tops and made all the cookware gleam with almost animated light. Not mindful of the peaceful tranquility for once, Ranma whistled while he worked. He was not in the self meditating, reflective mood today.

As the kettle started to perk, the steam tickled his nostrils with it's warm clean smell. Of course the kitchen always smelt clean, this was Kasumi's favorite place we were talking about.

Ranma got out a tea cup and placed one of the bags of tea in it. The steaming water poured over it started to seep through the tea and gradually the water started to turn green. Ranma placed the cup on the table and sat in one of the chairs turned around backwards and waited. A couple minutes later Kasumi entered the kitchen. She did not make entrances, she did not make a spectacle of herself, but her presence always drew notice anyway, such was the power of Kasumi.

Kasumi smiled at Ranma as she passed him to get her morning cup of tea. Ranma smiled behind his cup rim as he sipped and waggled his eyebrows in greeting. Kasumi giggled

quietly at his silliness.

With careful deliberate motions, Kasumi arranged her tea. She added a splash of fresh squeezed lemon juice from the lemon wedge she was using and a dash of honey to her tea. Not the traditional method of drinking tea, but she happened to like it this way, and tradition be damned.

The lemon scent carried all the way over to Ranma and only served to heighten Ranma's already rapid fire synapses today. As soon as Kasumi sat down she started quietly talking to Ranma. There is something about a low spoken human voice that, no matter who you are, that is very soothing and relaxing, and seeing as it was Kasumi ... well that just made it a hundred times better.

"So, how goes the war Ranma?" She asked as she sipped her tea and smirked slightly. Her elbows were propped up on the table so she didn't have to move very much to sip as she talked. "I didn't hear any screaming today. Does that mean that not only did Akane let you sleep in her room last night with her, in her bed, but she remembered about it in the morning as well? You must be quite the lover..." She smiled a bit more as she continued to sip, only Ranma could know she was kidding, because he was the only one that got up with her every morning and just talked with her. At least ... he was pretty sure she was kidding ...

He was nevertheless amazed that she could know such intimate details so quickly and was sure he was blushing. 'I swear she must have supernatural powers or something.' Ranma thought flippantly as he answered out loud. "Yeah well, you know how it is, I am considered the greatest love god around these parts. I have to live up to my name." Ranma made a respectable effort to keep a smile off his face.

"Is that so? Remind me to find out for myself sometime will you?" Ranma face faulted and started to choke on his tea. Generally Kasumi didn't play around, **this** much. Sputtering, Ranma did a verbal sidestep.

"Yeah well anyway, how is Nabiki doing? Is she all right?" Ranma said, diverting the way the conversation was going as fast as possible, but also out of genuine concern.

Kasumi, grinning on the inside, tallied another notch on her mental, verbal sparring score board. She had made Ranma back down today so she got double points. Usually he would just plod on and wouldn't even realize he was losing the game. She still had so much to teach him, if he ever expected to live with any woman in peace, he had to learn how to chat.

"Nabiki is doing fine, and sleeping like a rock, like she usually does. She is going to be quite sore today I assure you, which means she will be cranky. I would suggest you stay out of her way today." Kasumi remarked as she set her cup down and padded over to the refrigerator in her bare feet. Opening the door with a slight hissing-pop sound, she rummaged around inside looking for something.

"Roger that, no Nabiki today, got it." Ranma resumed calmly drinking his tea. It was going to be a long day, but then again, every day in his life was long, not that that was necessarily a bad thing ...

Kasumi returned to the table bearing the fixings for western style cereal. She then went to the cupboard and retrieved two white ceramic bowls, painted with cherry blossoms in their interiors. Setting the bowls down with dual clunks, she poured the cereal and then milk into the bowl, the snap and crackle of the grains as they decayed in the milk was a soft pleasant sound right then. Ranma smiled at Kasumi and started to eat his, food was always welcome as far as Ranma was concerned.

Tofu entered the kitchen with his usual professional demeanor in place. That is, until he saw Kasumi.

"Why... hello there Kasumi! What on earth are you doing here?" Tofu said to the sink.

"Why I live here doctor, would you like some breakfast?" Kasumi almost sighed aloud. When was he going to get over this *shy little boy* routine? It was adorable, but it was also getting old. Tofu was dressed in the clothes he had on yesterday. He looked normal enough, except for the fact that his glasses were reflecting an abnormal amount of light. But in comparison with a boy who turned into a girl, it wasn't that strange.

Ranma looked up and sighed. Pushing his chair back with a noisy scrape, he walked over to the doctor and led him by the arm back to the table. Sitting the doctor down, Ranma went back to eating, there was food to be had after all. He could mess around with the goofy doctor any time.

The house looked quiet. The leader of the team assessed all the entry points and sighed. This was not going to be a walk in the park as it were. With all the possible exit and entry points, his small team couldn't possibly cover all of them. But they would do what they could.

The leader keyed his entry code into his left wrist data pad, and a short thin wire extended from a headset he was wearing, it beeped a go-ahead signal. He spoke into it softly. It was powerful enough to pick up the tiniest of whispers.

"Re-enforcements are in place. Orders?" A raspy voice answered, "eliminate as many as you have to, without killing them if you can, but make sure you get the girl or take her out! She knows too much! Out." The receiver snapped off and the mouthpiece automatically returned to it's off position.

Holding up his right hand out of the shadows the leader clenched a leather clad fist which make a slight creaking sound, then held up his other hand with all five fingers spread apart, then clenched them then opened them again. Everyone knew the hand signals, attack in ten

minutes, take your places.

Kasumi gave Tofu a slightly frustrated look and got up from the table after she had finished her tea. She headed out of the kitchen without a backward glance. Ranma sighed and leaned over and slapped the doctor on the cheek harder than he needed to.

"It's okay doc, she's gone now, you can act like a normal person." Ranma droned.

"Ouch. Ranma I would appreciate it if you would refrain from slapping me in the future ... it doesn't feel very good you know."

Ranma gave the doctor a surprised look. Of course he knew, he got slapped just about every day of his life from somebody. What was Tofu whining about?

"Sorry doc." Was all he said, he then resumed eating.

The doctor rubbed his cheek for a few seconds glaring at Ranma, then shrugged and pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose. The doctor proceeded to pull the tome of prophecy from last night out from behind his back and set it on the table in front of him. He opened the book to the passage he had shown Ranma last night, pulled out a pencil and started making notations and muttering to himself as the pages creased and crinkled under his attention.

"Now, if memory serves me, this character here means 'light', and this one following it is vaguely reminiscent of the Da Juan character set ... I think scholars call it the great seal type now. I think this was used during the Shang and Zhou dynasties. But now look here, towards the end of the passage here ... I would swear that this character here for 'redemption' is drawn in the Xiao Juan character style or the small seal type. That type was promulgated as standard by the first emperor of the Qin Li as the clerical official form in the third century b.c.e, that character type was used until the middle of the third century c.e. Now ... look here ..."

Tofu muttered as he turned the page of the tome. "The title of this section was written on the same day with the same ink and brush, if I know anything about these things, and I do; then the title was written in the Zheng standard form started in the 'three kingdoms period' - I think they called it 'jinli' during their time period of the Tang dynasty, now I think it's commonly called 'Kaishu'. But that's ... impossible. How in the world could that passage have been written on the same day by the same hand with the same ink and brush, yet span such a huge time span judging by the script style used... I don't think I ever noticed this before ... this is most odd.

Ranma pushed his chair back and started to walk for the back door. Interrupting the doctors quiet studies.

"Hey Ranma where are you going?" The doctor asked without looking up.

"Practice, wanna come with?" Ranma asked over his shoulder hopefully. It would be great to learn some of the stuff the doctor knew. Nodding, the doctor carefully closed the book and followed. Kasumi re-entered the kitchen a minute later to start breakfast. She watched the man and the young man square off in the garden through the window as she worked. She secretly held great fascination with the deadliest of the arts. She couldn't help but be impressed with some of it, even though it was rather gruesome sometimes.

A cool morning breeze played over the courtyard as Ranma made his way over to the cherry tree and leaned casually against it to watch Tofu's warm up kata. Ranma generally didn't use fighting stances. At his level of skill, a fighting stance was too much effort to use against most of the people he fought with. But he was thinking about using one as he watched Tofu warm up. As he watched, Ranma resisted the urge to scratch his shoulder where the tree was making him itch.

This was the first time Ranma had seen the doctor use anything resembling traditional martial arts. His kata wasn't a violent one, nor complicated. The doctor had nothing to prove to anyone. His steps were precise and made little soft swishing sounds in the cool firm grass as he moved, his kicks made no sound as his feet cleft the air in the patterns he was weaving accompanied by his hand motions which were sharp and deliberate. You can tell a lot about a martial artist by what kata they do and how they perform it. The doctor's kata attested to his mastery of his art in his simplicity and confidence in his movements. This... was going to be a **good** fight. Ranma grinned.

Kasumi chose the last part of the doctor's kata to enter the garden. When he was bowing the finish of his form he couldn't accidentally hurt himself or anyone else. She walked briskly over to the doctor since it was still cool outside and she wanted to get back inside soon. Kasumi offered the doctor his morning cup of tea, shivering she held the steaming cup out to him. The doctor, stuttering as usual, accepted the cup, and promptly spilled its contents on his feet. Ranma groaned with impatience. Kasumi giggled and produced a soft well worn cloth from within the folds of her apron, and quickly wiped his feet off. Mercifully, Kasumi went back into the kitchen promising to return with more tea in a moment.

Ranma sidled up to the doctor and raised his arm to wave his hand in the doctor's face. Nothing. So Ranma raised the stakes and used his index finger to poke the doctor in the forehead. The doctor lost his balance. Coming back to his senses Tofu pinwheeled his arms frantically and cried out, then lost it and fell into the koi pond with a rather loud splash.

Ranma braced himself for impact. He hadn't meant to dunk the poor guy, just snap him out of it. That water had to be **cold**. He would know since he had made several daily trips in there himself. To his surprise the doctor just sat in the shallow water, arms and legs akimbo with water rivulets streaming down his face. Curious, Ranma watched him. As he watched the doctor just sat in the frigid water with a silly grin on his face ... then he started to laugh. It started low and infrequent, then cascaded into a full out belly laugh. It seemed the doctor

thought some things were oddly funny?

Gleefully the doctor jumped out of the pond and bowed to Ranma. Ranma, confused, bowed back.

"Ya know Saotome..." The doctor said as he came to stand next to Ranma and slapped him on the back. "It's been a loooooong time since someone has had the audacity to do anything like that to me. The last person who ever did anything like that to me, was my last sensei. You are truly a worthy opponent, this will be a good match."

Ranma grinned and stepped away from the wet man. Water was taboo with Ranma lately after all. Ranma sized Tofu up as he retreated to neutral ground. Tofu was good; he wasn't even shivering after a dunk in freezing water! Mentally shrugging, Ranma squared his shoulders and nodded his readiness as he held his hands low in front of him in a loose guarding stance. The doctor met his gaze and tensed his muscles, that was the only visual clue Ranma got. Then the doctor attacked.

Suddenly the doctor was behind him?! Spinning, Ranma lashed out with a medium powered foot sweep, testing the doctor. The doctor kicked out with his own foot and caught the top inside portion of Ranma's ankle with the tip of his shoe. Every nerve in that leg promptly went dead.

Cursing, Ranma jumped out of the doctor's range. 'Shoot, I forgot about that. I can't let him touch me, every touch of his won't be designed to do damage, he uses shiatsu techniques, he will simply try to render me ineffective. I will have to use defensive counter attacks against him.'

Smiling, the doctor started to walk towards Ranma. Ranma wasn't so confident any more. Cautiously, he waited. The doctor attacked in a blur; shooting finger jabs to Ranma's neck and slashing chops to his ribs. Ranma used his knees and elbows and anything else he could think of to block and parry with, and tried to get a clean shot in. Whenever he could, Ranma only used bone or non sensitive tissues to block with, dampening the doctors shiatsu. Of course blocking with your knees and elbows and palms didn't feel very good either.

Ranma took a punch to the head from behind then Tofu got him hard in the chest with a collapsing palm strike. How in the hell had the doctor hit him in the back and from the front at the same time?!

Dazed, Ranma turned around and froze. There was a ... ninja? crouching behind him in a battle stance. At least he looked like a ninja. He was dressed all in black and was armed to the teeth, with both modern weapons and archaic ones. Tofu looked the man up and down and grimaced. Ranma, scratching his head, walked around the guy peering at him curiously,

finally Ranma stopped in front of the guy and said,

"Okay I give up, is it a costume party today or something? Who are you and why did you interrupt our match?" Ranma quipped.

The man said nothing but held up both fists and pointed to either side of himself. Out of nowhere about half a dozen similarly clad men hopped off of roof tops and from behind trees and rushed the household. They gathered in the courtyard around their presumed leader. The wind seemed to grow much colder, and Ranma involuntarily shivered. Ranma didn't like the way this morning was shaping up.

"Oh hell no. I know you goof balls aren't interrupting my match, most people would have more sense than that." Ranma berated the one he assumed was the leader with his hands clasped behind his back. A sudden splash stopped his tirade as another ninja leapt into the koi pond. The water found it's way to Ranma of course. Ranma clenched her hands into fists.

"I can't believe you just did that. Get ready for a hospital trip moron." Ranma said as she flashed into action. Leaping from where she stood, Ranma jump kicked for the man standing in the pond, aiming for his head with the practiced motions of a confident professional. Without even flinching, the man in the pond jerked his head back quickly at the last possible second, letting Ranma sail by unmolested. Landing on the opposite side of the pool, she turned to face the man, her face the picture of utter astonishment. No one except maybe Cologne or Happosai had ever moved that fast in a fight with her before.

"What in the hell ...?" Ranma muttered.

"Oh dear, Ranma dear, do you want me to bring you some hot water?" Kasumi's voice carried from across the courtyard accompanied by the squeaking sound of the door opening. The smell of breakfast cooking for the family wafted out. Spinning on his heel, Ranma saw Kasumi making her way over to them. Things has gone from bad to worse, with Kasumi present things were now a lot more dangerous!

Tofu immediately went into comatose mode and started talking to the tree. Kasumi ignored him for the time being and, spinning on her heel with hands on hips, addressed the black clothed men in her yard.

"Um, excuse me but you were not invited in here, so I would appreciate it if you left... now. I don't want to have to call the police." Kasumi faced the nearest man and stared him down with her hands on her hips. The man nearest Kasumi, whom she was addressing, looked to his leader in question. The leader nodded.

With a feral grin the man turned back to Kasumi and took one step closer to her. He then pivoted at his waist bringing the full might of his upper body strength into play and caught the side of her face with a tremendous slap! Ranma thought she heard bone cracking from where she stood. Kasumi crumpled like a rag doll.

"She was a feisty one wasn't she? Women, should be seen and not heard. Got that bitch?" The man sneered as he looked down at Kasumi, a very self satisfied grin pasting his otherwise expressionless features. Ranma was beside herself. Holding her face in her hands Ranma mumbled,

"I cannot..." She paused for a second as she tried to collect her thoughts and framed her face with her hands as she stared bug eyed at Kasumi's attacker. "I cannot believe ... I simply can't believe you, oh my lord, I can't believe you did that! Dude ... do you have any idea how dead you are right now?" Ranma asked incredulously. The man folded his arms and glared at Ranma.

"I wouldn't make promises I couldn't keep little lady, but bring it on girly. I could use a stretch."

"I wasn't talkin bout me buddy." Ranma said as she nodded to Tofu who was now kneeling over Kasumi, trembling in rage and terror, frantically he ran his hands over her prone body, tilting her head this way and that, checking vital signs and what have you. As Ranma watched she noticed something she had never seen before. While holding Kasumi's limp body in his arms, the doctor's glasses cleared sharply. Meanwhile the doctors eyes seemed to fog over as rage and hatred started to possess him.

Carefully, the doctor laid Kasumi back down and took off his wet shirt and rolled it up to lay across her face. Turning calmly back to face her attackers, the doctor actually bristled. Ranma couldn't help snickering. This was going to be funny.

Tofu did not exude a battle aura, he did not make any battle cries or promises or threats. He didn't make any speeches or invoke old traditions such as giving his name to those he was about to do battle with. He just started walking towards the one who had hit Kasumi.

The man ran and threw a blistering punch at the doctor's head. Tofu simply moved his head to the side. The man then threw punch after punch, increasing the speed of his attacks with every second. Tofu switched from simply dodging the attacks, to holding his ground and slapping the attacks wide of his face. Infuriated, Kasumi's attacker threw another vicious volley of strikes at the doctor. Tofu swatted them all away. Tiring, the man took a step back, gathered his breath then launched himself into a suicide punch, throwing his whole body weight into the attack, using the same hand that he had struck Kasumi with.

Not even flinching, Tofu whipped up his left hand and caught it. Manipulating quickly with his strong and nimble fingers, Tofu snapped the man's wrist and continued to press down hard, bringing the man to his knees whimpering in pain, then let go, grimacing in disgust. Tofu stood in front of the man and calmly waited for him to get back up. The man jumped back to his feet with the absence of any pressure on Tofu's part. He then tried a last desperate one-two front kick, back leg round kick aiming low with the first then trying to swing the round kick, hard, up high aiming for the head or neck.

Tofu sidestepped and whipped his head under the kick, then, using the heel of the side of his hand below his thumb where the bone and wrist are, he clotheslined the man hard in the windpipe, dropping him again.

The man writhed on the ground, choking on his own vomit. Ranma stood looking at Tofu with her mouth hanging open. She had had no idea the doctor was **this** good. The man staggered to his feet and looked wildly about to his companions for help. They all stood impassively, waiting for a signal from their leader.

'Honor among thugs ...?' Ranma thought curiously assessing the situation. Kasumi's assailant drew a sharp breath and decided to charge the doctor and tackle him, so he could use his strength against him. The man rushed Tofu who was still just standing there. The fact that this man was still coming after everything Tofu had done to him, spoke of great stamina, stimulant drugs ... or insanity.

Tofu pressed the palms of both his hands together, forming a wedge, then thrust it right in the charging man's sternum. The man abruptly stopped as he crashed into a wall of pain. Tofu then collapsed his arms into twin forearm strikes to the man's throat and ribs. This time though as the man started to crumple Tofu caught him by his broken wrist and just stared into the man's eyes. Tofu had yet to utter a word. The leader said his first word then.

"Go!" With that, every man in the courtyard leapt at Tofu. Keeping firm pressure on the man's wrist, Tofu spun left and right, snapping out chops and palm strikes to vital areas on his attackers. Each attacker met with either sharp pain or promptly fell unconscious. The lucky ones were unconscious. With every movement Tofu made the man at his mercy cried out in pain. His cries were being drowned out by his comrades battle shouts though.

Still moving with the man's wrist under his control, the doctor leaned back sharply to avoid a sword swing that would have taken his head off. Then completed the motion into a back flip kicking under the swordsman's chin at the apex of his motion, all the while mangling Kasumi's attacker's wrist. The doctor seemed to be having fun throttling these people, but he wasn't showing it. Finally there was no one left standing in the courtyard except Ranma and the doctor and the lone leader.

The wind whistled sharply through the trees then, and a koi jumped in the pond. The leader was outnumbered and outclassed and he knew it. Instead of attacking as Ranma thought he was going to do, the man charged towards the house.

He threw the kitchen door open so hard, one of its hinges snapped. The slamming door made enough noise to wake anyone who might still be sleeping.

"Look out!" Ranma and Tofu screamed as they gave chase. The ninja bounded up the

stairs and down the hallway with Ranma and Tofu in hot pursuit.

Akane threw open her bedroom door just as Ranma and Tofu cleared the stairs.

"What on Earth is going on?!" Akane shouted at them. The ninja leader didn't even pause as he threw her violently aside, his head whipping back and forth searching frantically for something. With Ranma and Tofu almost on him, the ninja finally spied Nabiki's name on her door and threw himself at it, drawing a throwing knife he kicked open the door.

As his arm cocked back to throw, both Ranma and Tofu finally reached him, and with all of their combined might; tackled him. The force of their impact shattered the door frame. Breathing hard, they stood up, the would be assassin lay unmoving at their feet breathing shallowly, his knife embedded in his shoulder.

Panicked, Ranma darted her gaze around Nabiki's room, daring to hope she was still alive... with a relieved release of breath Ranma spied her finally, Nabiki was huddled up at the foot of her bed with her blankets tousled around her. She was looking about wide eyed and obviously had just been startled out of sleep, but otherwise okay.

Tofu, without saying a word, stood up and raced back down the stairs. Ranma wanted to follow, but had someone she had to care for as well.

Crouching down, Ranma bent over Akane. Picking her up, she carried her downstairs. "How is it I always seem to be carrying you lately?" Ranma muttered as she carried Akane downstairs. As she reached the foot of the stairs, Ranma heard a door slam open.

"What in the nine hells?! What's happened?! Oh my ... **Nabiki!** My baby! Daddy is here! I'll save you! RAAAAANNNNNMAAAAAAAA, now what have you done?!" Soun screamed. Grimacing, Ranma quickly made her way to the kitchen. Faintly she heard Nabiki cry out as she made her way to the kitchen.

"Hello, is anyone gonna tell me what on earth is going on? Daddy it's okay, I'm fine, stop crying already! You're getting me all wet. Ranma! Could you at least remove your garbage from my room please?! Daddy ... knock, it, off! You're gonna flood my room... Raaaaaaanmaaaa!" Nabiki shouted downstairs in frustration.

Chuckling softly to herself, Ranma set Akane down in one of the kitchen chairs and set about making a kettle of hot water, both to distill some medicated tea for Akane to help with the headache she was bound to have, and to change herself back into a man. While she waited she watched the doctor.

The world seemed to sense the doctor's mood and mother nature herself seemed to call

the world to silence out of respect for Tofu's pain. The doctor made his way back outside to Kasumi in a world gone silent, the only sound being his footsteps softly pressing the grass down, kneeling beside her, he gently picked her up. With a careful gait he carried his one and only love back inside her home, a home that was no longer a sanctuary.

Kasumi probably weighed at least 100 to 135 pounds. Tofu didn't even seem to notice. He was moving as skillfully and gracefully as Ranma had ever seen the doctor move outside of Kasumi's presence; slowly he carried Kasumi into the house. He passed Ranma without a word and lay her on the floor in the living room.

Dashing into sudden speed, he ran upstairs only to return seconds later with his medical bag and a large blanket. Kneeling, almost in reverence, the doctor set about helping Kasumi, examining and cleaning her wounds.

She had a few lacerations on her cheek where the man's nails had gouged her was already swelling up huge with purple and yellowish swirls. Tofu was pretty sure nothing was broken, but he wouldn't know until he got her x-rayed. As soon as he was done he pressed a serious shiatsu point on her neck, she would be unconscious until he pressed the counter point, this would allow her to rest and regenerate much faster.

Finished for the time being, Tofu removed his glasses and set them on the table, then knelt on both knees beside her, folding his hands in his lap and hanging his head he started to cry softly.

Ranma knew Tofu blamed himself. She felt bad for him, she would feel the same way. A shrill whistle shattered the moment, and startled, Ranma leapt to snatch the offending noise making kettle off the stove. Ranma, was now breathing hard, with adrenaline surging through her from the scare that stupid whistle had given her. Now irritated, Ranma continued to watch Tofu as she poured some of the hot water over her head to change back in to a guy. Sympathy or not for Tofu, there was the question of personal dignity to be considered. Then he set about brewing a strong tea for Akane, mixed with a mild pain killer.

Ranma then pulled up a chair next to Akane in the kitchen that only a little while ago had been bright with laughter and life. That same kitchen now seemed to harbor only grief and despair. Ranma tilted Akane's head back and pinched her nose shut. Then he slowly poured a little of the tea into her mouth.

Sputtering and choking, Akane's eyes snapped open. The first thing she did was deck Ranma. Ranma went flying into the fridge as Akane's eyes snapped open.

"Hey! Whad'ya do that for?!" Ranma demanded from the floor across the room now, a nice little bruise already welling up on his cheek.

"Sorry, reflex action." Akane blushed. Ranma rolled his eyes.

"Right." Getting back up he sat back in his chair, then, thinking better of it, scooted away from Akane, keeping a wary eye on the unpredictable violent girl.

"Okay Ranma spill it what happened?" Akane said as she hunched over in the cold hard chair and sipped her tea, man did she have the mother of all headaches.

"Yeah well, it's like this. I really dunno what the heck just happened. Me an the doc were out back sparring a little ya know... all of a sudden these whacked out dudes wearing black monkey suits hopped the wall and started causing trouble ... Kunou woulda loved em ... anyway the doc an me asked em ta take a hike and they didn't leave so we fought em. Then Kasumi came out and one of the guys knocked her out -" Ranma was startled out of his recitation by the sound of breaking ceramic as Akane suddenly dropped her tea cup.

Whipping his head around to face Akane, Ranma sucked his breath in. She was doing it again! Her face had gone blank and her eyes were starting to show signs of silver.

Slowly she turned her gaze to rest on Ranma. With the voice of someone not to be trifled with, Akane demanded, "someone hurt Kasumi? Who did it? I'll kill him. Where is he?" She growled. Ranma, making "evil be gone" warding gestures, tried to calm her down, and at the same time get some distance between them, just in case.

"Geez Akane, ya gotta calm down. It's all right, the doc and me took em all out, and the doc really messed up the one that hit Kasumi... there's no one left ta kill. Akane? Akane?!" Ranma's voice rose in concern as he watched her. Finally after a few seconds, her shoulders slumped and she dipped her head to her chest. Looking back up she was the same again, but as he watched her while walking back to his chair he saw her eyes flash the color of quicksilver at the same time that he thought he heard the low ring of a chime, just as fast her eyes flashed back to normal again. Ranma was about to start back into his story when someone knocked on the front door.

Glad for the excuse to get away from Akane, Ranma bounded for the door. Flinging it open, Ranma came face to face with about twenty uniformed police officers, all with their sidearms drawn and pointed up in ready positions. Ranma sweat dropped.

"Look, if this is about that over due library book ... I told that lady on the phone that our pet pig ate it, and that I would have the money soon ..." The officer that had knocked on the door looked at Ranma funny then shook his head.

"No son, we got a call about an armed forced entry a little bit ago. Is everything okay?" Ranma squinted at the cop sizing him up then shrugged.

"Yeah everything is fine now, they're all out back knocked out cold, feel free to arrest em or whatever voodoo it is you do."

"Thanks kid, we'll do that." The officer said, then nodded to his men who re-holstered their weapons and started towards the back of the house.

Ranma went back into the house with the officer in charge at his heels. His eyes were already adjusting to the dim interior of the house compared to the front entry way.

"So who called ya anyways? I know I didn't." Ranma started to ask.

"I did." Nabiki said from the top of the stairs. "No one would tell me what was going on, so I called the police. There's one up here officer." Nabiki called to the lone police man next to Ranma.

Nodding, the officer walked up the steps to the top landing, Ranma following rather close, almost like he didn't trust the officer, but who could blame him after the mornings events. He didn't really trust cops all that much. They never seemed to be there when you needed them, and they always were there when you didn't need them.

Crouching down, the officer examined the man Ranma and Tofu had tackled. The officer looked closely at the splintered door frame, and the pitiful condition the man was in and made a face. Then back up to Ranma. Ranma grinned and shrugged.

"Trust me, he asked for it." Sweat dropping, the officer said, "Riiiiiiiiight." Nodding his head in the direction of Nabiki's room the officer raised both of his eyebrows. Peeking his head in Ranma sighed.

"And what happened to him?" The officer said indicating Soun passed out on Nabiki's bed. Nabiki, sweat dropping, stepped in front of a conspicuous baseball bat leaning on the wall near her bed.

"He, uh ... fainted, yeah... fainted." Ranma shot Nabiki a, "whatever you say," look over the top of the suspicious officer's head. Nodding in acceptance of Nabiki's thin story the officer went to work.

Working quickly, the policeman placed handcuffs on the would be assassin and searched him, then with Ranma and Nabiki in tow carried him down stairs to where Tofu and Kasumi were. With the officer walking in front of them Ranma leaned over and whispered, "flood averted?" - "and baseball bat slightly dented." Nabiki confirmed without even looking a little guilty.

Ranma sweat dropped, Nabiki cast a nonchalant look in his direction, "Akane doesn't have the monopoly on violence in this house ya know." She grinned and quickened her step to catch up to the officer. Thus they were so engaged when they barged into the room with Kasumi and Tofu.

The doctor didn't even look up when they entered. The policeman took the whole scene in, and wisely left Tofu alone. Sitting on the couch, the officer took out a notepad and assumed a serious face.

"Okay lets take it from the top, what in the world happened here? You've never seen these men before you say?"

Ranma and Nabiki sat on the floor, and Akane came in from the kitchen. Ranma watched her warily, but all she did was lie down next to Kasumi and hug her close. Nabiki answered for the group.

"No we haven't"

"And you have no idea why they attacked you?"

"Well... I might have an idea, but I'm not sure ..." Nabiki started. She then related the events that had happened the day before to the officer.

Sitting back in the couch with an exasperated look on his face, the officer scribbled while Nabiki talked. When she was finished he informed them, "well I'm not sure about the rest of them, but this one - " he indicated the one lying handcuffed on the floor. "I am pretty sure I know of. His name is Lien Chou-Yu. He is a member of a ruthless Chinese triad operating out of mainland China." Pausing for a second and smiling, the officer quipped, "You haven't managed to irritate anyone in mainland China lately have you?" The officer joked. Ranma sweat dropped and hurriedly shook his head.

"Well I haven't done anything to anyone in China but I am getting awfully sick of these guys." Nabiki grumbled. As the policeman made his way to the door, collecting his charge as he went Ranma smiled and tried to lighten the mood.

"Well I'm wide awake now, how bout you guys." Everyone in the room, including Tofu rolled their eyes and threw various items in Ranma's general direction.