

This is the teaser chapter that I promised, a Ranma/HOTD crossover featuring Rika Minami as his aunt. I don't think it's up to my usual standards in terms of comedy, but let me know what you all think. Okay folks this has now been edited by Hiryo and myself.

Prologue: BAD Ideas, Long Term Consequences.

Genma Saotome grumbled to himself as he leaned back against the wall of the small exceedingly cheap hotel room that he had purchased for their time in this city, staring at the mountain of beer bottles in front of him. He hadn't actually intended to be here in Tokyo for long enough to force them to rent a room, just long enough to follow up on a rumor of a famous street fighter returning to the area in the hopes of seeing if there was any truth in the stories about him. Instead, a certain problem had arisen.

As that last word clicked in his brain, the middle-aged martial artist, who was currently about three sheets to the wind started to giggle maniacally, "'Risen,' hehe, that's funny!"

Then he sobered, shaking his head in irritation. "Bah, puberty. Who needs it?! And that daft boy is already putting things together. He knows now that his body reacts when he's around girls, and he keeps on asking me questions about it! Thank God that this is happening now, and not a few years ago when we were still being chased by that Okonomiyaki chef and his daughter."

Genma actually shivered at the word daughter and shivered again at the thought of women in general. Women, who needs them once the child is born and weaned off milk? Of all the things he could've gotten from his mother, her overabundance of sex drive was the last thing I wanted Ranma to inherit."

He shivered even worse, reaching for another beer and downing it quickly. "Damn Nodoka!"

Genma was not, as many might've thought, scared of women. And while he was misogynist, Genma wasn't a natural one. For he was afraid of one specific woman, his wife Nodoka. Their relationship had been arranged by their families, something that was not uncommon back then, especially from families of poorer samurai heritage. Indeed even today, it wasn't entirely unusual, although it was getting more so with every passing year. Young people just didn't seem to understand tradition.

However, even with the beer, the balding middle-aged man's normal gripe about that fact couldn't stop his treacherous mind from replaying the memories of their wedding night. He had of course met Nodoka several times, even his parents were not so traditional that they wouldn't allow the prospective bride and groom to meet one another. They were actually

jumping at the chance to get him wed quickly. His dread master had just been sealed away (hopefully for all eternity) and it was time to nail the wandering Genma's feet to the ground. Of course, that hadn't worked, although it might have if not for the temperament of the woman in question.

Nodoka came from a long line of demon hunters and what normal martial artists said about those folk was unprintable. Martial artist clans disdained them, saying Demon Hunters like the Fukajima Clan willingly added demon blood into their bloodline every few generations, played with sword hilts in preparations for their wedding nights, and had monstrous libidos as well as simply being insane in many ways. But before meeting Nodoka, Genma would have discounted those rumors...

Flashback:

Genma grunted to himself, working his hips slightly from side to side as he stood in front of the kitchen counter in the honeymoon suite that their parents had arranged for them. *That was pleasant* he acknowledged. *A good workout, though I'll need to do more hip work from now on. Hmmpf, perhaps there is some point to Genma's love of the female form. Although not their underwear. But that one type that she wore, that was kind of tasty actually. Who knew that underwear could be edible? I might have to look into something like that for myself, just in case I run out of rations on the road. Although obviously it wasn't very filling.*

As he went about the process of creating a meal to sate his hunger however, he felt two arms go around his shoulders. Blinking, he turned to find Nodoka leaning up into a deep kiss.

Nodoka was a slightly short woman of Genma's own age of mid-twenties, with auburn hair down to her waist and a decently chesty figure. She was currently also practically naked other than an open vest-like see-through negligee, the kind of thing Happosai would have loved to see.

"You didn't think we were done, did you?" she asked her tone somewhere between too sweet and challenging. "I still got so many things I want to try on my honeymoon! My parents never allowed me to have a boyfriend you know, said it would be a bad precedent. But that never stopped me from reading~~..."

With a gulp, the martial artist Genma allowed his newfound wife to pull him back into the bedroom, wondering if his hips and pelvic bones would be able to sustain this.

Several hours later, his stomach was really rumbling, and he forced himself out of bed. And this time he was able to sit down and eat a bit before Nodoka found him again.

And then again a few hours later, when he was in the bath, soothing his aching overworked muscles, she opened the door, naked as a jaybird and smiling happily. "Excellent, this will be another one off my bucket list."

Twelve hours later Genma felt as if his little staff would never rise again, and was in true pain in the hips and waist area. Although his core was fine, something he took a bit of pride in considering how much exercise he was getting. Still, the main issue was the chafing. His dick felt as if it had been rubbed by sandpaper.

He was once more in the kitchen hoping to get a full Saotome size meal, only this time by ordering in, having no energy whatsoever to actually cook. He was just about done with his massive order when the phone was plucked from his hand and a body pressed up against his back. As he stood there rigid with fear, a voice he had come to dread said into the phone, "He'll call you back..."

As Nodoka's other arm wound around his and started to pull him back into the bedroom, he whimpered. He really did then, wondering if it was possible to die by sex. Several days later, a dehydrated, corpse-like man checked out of the hotel, having learned the answer: No, but you might well wish it was.

When the woman at the desk smiled at him, he visibly shuddered, twitching back away from her as if she had just become a dragon, and when he heard the voice of his wife, he let loose a low squeak of fear, whimper, as he stuttered. "No, no more! No more!"

End Flashback

He shuddered again, forcing the memories away, rubbing his arms, and grabbing up another beer, nearly tearing the top off in his haste to open it, pouring it down his throat hardly bothering to gulp. After two more beers, he was once more pleasantly buzzed, the fear beaten off by alcohol. However, the problem still remained.

"What to do about the boys li, libid, the stiffies. I,*hick*, I know! The pen, pess, Penitent Monk technique! That'll wRR, wo, work..." he mumbled to himself as he slammed that can down.

Where he had come up with that technique Genma couldn't remember. He might've stolen it at one time from some monks in order to help him and Soun deal with the ancient master, but if he had, it certainly hadn't worked. Regardless, it would hopefully work for the boy. He finished off the beer, and then reached for another one. "Yesh, thas'll do nishely. But I'll need shhome more drink firshht."

He drank two more beers, putting them back like a trooper. Then, paused, debating on a fourth as his hand idly reached for another without any instruction from his brain.

In a thousand universes, Genma's hand would find an empty can, and he would call it a night, before enacting his plan the next day. In a thousand universes, he would be sober enough to perform the Penitent Monk technique on his son correctly, if unmindful of the long-term ramifications.

This was not one of those universes. In this universe, he found the last of the twenty-four pack of beer, pulled it out and drained it dry. Then he started to look for the scroll containing the technique in his ki-expanded bag, muttering 'Now wherrrshe did I putttts it...'

In thousands upon thousands of universes, Genma did not find the scroll of the Neko-Ken technique.

Looked at it blearily for a moment, Genma scowled drunkenly, remembering the fact when the boy was six years old that it hadn't worked when he'd tried it. Instead, it had led to his normally easy-going, biddable boy to attack his venerable father for no reason at all. It was as if the boy didn't want to be the ultimate martial artist! Yet the mental issues it caused had forced Genma to give up on the idea of the Neko-Ken.

He looked at it thoughtfully for a moment, or as thoughtfully as a martial artist drunk beyond all reason could look, before nodding resolutely. Yeshh, thisssh, perhapshs thissss will take the boys mind off thingsss! And besides, if at first you don't succeed, try try again."

The fact that he had already tried this technique four different times in succession the first time without success other than snapping what little sanity his son might have, did not occur to him. Pushing to his feet on wobbly legs, Genma went through the motions of thinking again, wondering where he could dig a pit and where he could find some starving cats. *Alley cats will work this time around too*, he mused, *I won't have to starve them so much*.

Still thinking thoughts that such that any act animal activist would beat him to death with their pamphlets and any father take a meat tenderizer to his head, Genma left the hotel room, scribbling a note in his drunken hand telling the boy he'd be back.

Not that Ranma needed telling later that night, when he returns to find his father gone, and a pile of beer halfway a few inches taller than his own body in one corner. "Damn pops! Maybe if you put as much money into our food then you doing putting away the beer, we might actually eat our fill occasionally without dine-and-dashing."

Shaking his head at his father's attitude, Ranma started to clean up, taking a brief second to try and read the unintelligible scrawl. "Can't make heads or tails out of that, geez.

He was halfway through cleaning the room when his father came back, smirking at the boy. He looked drunk still, and Ranma frowned, staring up at the taller man. "What are you up to pops?" he growled.

Genma huffed irritably. Over the last two years, the respect his son had towards him had decreased significantly and he just couldn't understand why. *Everything I do is for the art after all, doesn't the fool boy understand that!?*

Regardless rather than take umbrage at Ranma's attitude, Genma smiled at the boy. Ranma truly was his legacy in many ways, far better at twelve-years-old than Genma had been at that age, or anyone else he knew of for that matter. Indeed, the way the boy grew, learning

every technique so quickly actually gave him the warm fuzzy feeling for a few seconds. Until he remembered that there had been one technique that Ranma hadn't learned, and that was what he was there for tonight.

He took a long swig from the sake bottle that he had grabbed on the way, smirking at his son as he spoke with the careful pronunciation of the truly inebriated. "I found a new technique for you to learn boy. It's a mixture of drunken fist and blind fist. We'll start you off on the blind I think, it'll do for a good starting point. Besides, it'll be great for your blind spot training and, and situational aw, awarrrr, sixth sense."

Even in his intoxicated state, Genma retained just enough presence of mind to know how his son would react to the very idea of trying the to learn the Neko-Ken again. No, better for Ranma to be put through the training again without knowing first. *That way, the fear in him won't have time to build up right up until he's actually faced with it.*

"Now come on, boy. This technique's bettered learned inss he dark." Gulping Genma got control of his voice again as he tossed the cloth, he was carrying in his off-hand, to Ranma.

The younger man caught it, staring down at the blindfold then up at his father his eyes still narrowed in doubt. "A mixture of blind martial arts and drunken boxing? That sounds weird pops."

"Maybe, maybe not. We'll have to figure that out."

"And where did you find this technique anyway?" Ranma went on, still suspicious.

"Met a man down at the bar," Genma said nodding with all the attitude of someone sharing a great mystery.

Ranma was stilling frowning but he eventually nodded. It had been kind of boring since they'd arrived in this city besides his issue with his pee-wee, and learning a new style was always fun. "This isn't going to be another issue like we ran into with those monkeys, is it?" he asked, regardless. While bored, Ranma had no desire to deal with that level of trouble anytime soon. *Maybe if I get more bored though. Just hanging out practicing my katas while the old man drinks ain't my idea of fun.*

"I keep telling you boy, those weren't monkeys, those were monks," Genma replied tartly.

"Right, who just so happened to be as at home in the trees as the two of us, have tails, and use staves for weapons? Come on Pops, I was seriously worried about what would happen if we ran into a full moon while they were after us!" Ranma said, grinning at the joke before going on. "Still, it was good practice."

"Exactly!" Genma said with a laugh. "You're getting it."

Ranma rolled his eyes, wondering how much of this was a drunken caper from his pops, and how much of it was real. Still, it has been boring lately so I guess it doesn't matter."

"Follow me then boy," his father said, moving towards the window. He hopped out, landing lightly outside onto the rooftop of the next building over, then away, none of his drunkenness showing in his movements.

"Huh," Ranma chuckled smiling even as he hopped a what off after his father. "Maybe Pops isn't quite as drunk as he looks."

The younger Saotome was wrong. Genma was far **drunker** than he looked, but Ranma didn't know that.

They soon came to a bit of woods, where Genma ordered Ranma to tie the sash around his eyes, and then follow his voice. He followed this with lashing out occasionally at the boy, shouting out every time a blow landed that he needed to use his senses more.

The boy quickly got used to it, able to smell his pops' breath come close every time he was about to throw a punch. Eventually he was even trying to hit back, but given their size disparity, Ranma needed to get closer, well within Genma's own arm's reach, to land a blow. This didn't happen now, since Genma was quick to fall back or dodge, something Ranma could tell even with the blindfold on due to the old man's grunting with every movement.

However, this ended after a few minutes as they reached the forest. Genma pulled back, then watched as his son looked around, before stealthily – surprisingly so for a drunk - getting behind him, quickly tying his arms to his body.

"What the, Pop what're you doing? You said this was supposed to be training my sixth sense, not my kicks or anything else!" Ranma shouted struggling, but unable to break out of the rope tied around his upper arms, which pinned his arms to his side from the elbow up.

"This is for your own good Ranma," his father said, his voice somewhere between sententious and incredibly drunk. "You're being distracted, things, girls, things I'ke that. Can't have it, all for the art," Genma's voice trailed off.

Ranma groaned. Now he understood what was going on: his pops was trying to figure out a way to break his sudden interest in girls. Still, since Ranma had no idea where that was coming from or why his pee-wee was acting so weird all the time, he decided to go along with things. *After all, most of the time his ideas are fun if not honestly good ideas.* "All right pops," he said with a sigh "I won't fight it. But if ya try anything to my peewee or something, I'm going to bite your nose off."

"That's my boy. Rem, remember what I always say Ranma, everything, sacrifice for the Art," Genma muttered, really feeling the alcohol in his system now.

"Yeah, whatever," the young boy muttered, even as his father continued to tie him up.

Soon, Ranma was completely encased in thick rope which would not have been out of place on a ship at sea. Yet it was only when he began to smell something that Ranma's unease came back to him. "Er, what am I smelling pops?" *Heck, where in the world did he come up with this much rope anyway?* That question actually made Ranma more sanguine about what was going on since it spoke of prior planning rather than drunken madness.

Genma frowned deeply trying to force his abused brain to work as hard to answer that questions as he would have if he'd been asked the secret of life, then said simply, "Me."

Ranma was still laughing at that when Genma kicked him forward. The preteen had just a second to realize that he was now weightless and falling, before his eyes flew open behind the blindfold and a sudden, sick premonition hit him. *No, he wouldn't have...*

He didn't have time to finish the thought before he hit the ground inside a pit Genma had dug hours ago. He had a brief instant to recognize the sounds of hissing and cat noises all around him and for his brain to supply the answer, before the fear crashed down upon him and Ranma's self-awareness disappeared, replaced by the fear, and then The Cat.

Up above, Genma leaned up against the handy tree, finishing his sake bottle, and reaching into his dirty gi to pull out another, downing half of it quickly. He frowned then, staring at the large pit in front of him, where all noise had stopped. "Whash going on down there boy?" he shouted, surging to his feet with all the agility of a particularly fat cow, before slumping down, his stomach so suddenly starting to heave. *Oh dear, maybe I shouldn't've had that last bottle* he thought, his mind oddly lucid. Then he frowned. No, that can't be it.

I've only had five bottles. He conveniently forgot that those five bottles of sake had been drunk on top of twenty bottles of beer.

However, he wouldn't have time to mourn the loss of his remaining brain cells because a second later, there was a hissing shriek, and the cats were flung through the air. A few of them were still alive, although their bodies were slashed to the bone in many places, and they ran off, squalling in fear. Others were in pieces, torn apart by something stronger and faster than them.

Then Ranma was there, standing like a hissing tomcat on all fours, his back rising behind him, his hair on end, his eyes narrowed into a cat's slitted glare as he snarled. He was covered with slashes here and there, but there weren't nearly as many this time as there had been when he was younger, the fear kicking in even faster.

And the anger too. He took one look at his father, and shrieked cat-like battle cry, flinging himself forward with the intent to maim.

Drunk as he was, there was nothing wrong with Genma's self-preservation instincts. He pushed himself to his feet rolling away, only to be smacked aside and into a roll, which he turned into a leap, trying to put distance between himself and his furious son. But his

drunkenness finally cost him, and he couldn't get away before Ranma howled in fury and came after him. Every blow smashed a tree to splinters or hurling Genma's body through several others.

As tough and durable as he was, Genma couldn't take more of this, which was a mercy, frankly. He was smashed into unconsciousness soon, his body bloody from head to toe, and he lay on the forest floor his body, twitching.

Neko-Ranma snarled, staring at the hated patriarch, but he wasn't moving any longer, and Neko-Ranma snarled again this time in triumph before looking around. He was in a forest which was good, but his senses could smell the things of man beyond. That was annoying. Neko-Ranma was not a kept pet, he was a hunter, young as he was. And he was a hungry cat at present. That fact made his next decision for him, and he was off, bounding through the trees with justice done and food to be found.

When next he regained consciousness, Genma was sober once more, in pain not only from his wounds but a massive hangover and cursing the devil drink in a way he had never done before. "Dammit, don't tell me I really put the boy through that blasted Neko-Ken training again?! How drunk was I for me to think that was a good idea?!"

Irritated and annoyed, he looked around for the boy, trying to find some tracks, even taking to the trees since he knew the boy enjoyed to travel like that but he couldn't find any. "How long was I out?" he murmured, only then becoming conscious of his wounds. "Also, ow," he muttered shaking his head looking down at himself. The boy had done a number on him for certain. A few ribs cracks, several dozen deep lacerations, his gi nearly beyond repair and the side of his head felt like someone had stuck it under a train. His legs and arms were also cut in dozens of places but none very deeply. "Fine, first I'll heal, then I'll try to find the ungrateful boy."

With that, he was off, searching through the woods of the state park to find some poultices, aloe and other things of that nature. Astonishingly enough, he also found the half bottle of sake there. He picked it up, staring at it thoughtfully, before very deliberately using it to clean his wounds, hissing only mildly in pain at that, before turning his attention back to trying to staunch the wounds once they were clean.

Feeling light-headed he grumbled moving to lean against a tree for a few seconds, before shaking his head. "I'll find the boy eventually I suppose, right now I need to heal. Although I might have to find a new martial arts style or technique to get on his good side again. I can't honestly blame him this time," Genma said to himself morosely.

OOOOOO

Riruko Mito knew she shouldn't have come this way. Oh sure, the central elementary playground was nice and always in use during the day by dozens of little kids. At night was a different story, these days. But her dance club had gone on her for much too long this time, and to get home in time for dinner, she'd decided to cut through it.

This had proven to be a mistake. The stories about a gang of thugs in the area hadn't been real before this to her, but they were very real now she thought, as she tried to sprint through the trees away from her assailants. They looked to be around college age if not a bit younger. They also all wore typical ganger garb, expensive-looking undershirts and pants paired with a bit of bling, and knives. At least two knives per person from what she had seen. They had taken one look at her and her purse and tried to circle her, but Riruko had been too fast reacting to them before they could do so.

Looking back Riruko realized they were closing on her, and Riruko was just about to put on an extra burst of speed when she tripped suddenly over a root. A second later she found herself on her back as the boys clambered towards her.

One of them stopped well out of grabbing range, holding up a hand with a smirk. "We only want your money girl, nothing more."

"Are you joking?" said one of the others laughing loudly. "I mean, look at her!"

"That kind of shit brings too much trouble," said one of the third, smacking the second on the back of his head. "We'll just take the money and go. She won't tell anyone we were here, will you girl," that one asked leering at her. "Or does my friend here need to have a go with you instead?"

The girl shuddered and was reaching for her purse instantly. "D, don't hurt me, I'll give you all the money I have." It wasn't much, but she hoped it would be enough to get her out of here alive.

The second one still reached for her however, snarling rebelliously at the others. "I don't care what you say, I at least in going to get a feel of that chest of hers. It ain't like she'll lose anything."

This was interrupted by a loud growl from nearby. All four of the men turned, knives flashing in their hands as they did. The third man, who had corralled the second one, pawed something at his belt before pausing, pulling his hand away as he stared around. "What the hell was that?"

From out of the trees to one side of this small tableau came a young boy. He looked to be no more than twelve if that. He was standing on all fours, cocking his head to one side. He made a cat noise for some reason, a low, threatening growl, more like that of a lion warning off another predator from his prey than anything else.

Regardless, all four of the boy's real young men relaxed laughing. "What the hell, some little kid trying to play the hero?"

"No look at him," snarked one of the others. "He's playing cat."

"Go play somewhere else kid if you know what's good for you," the leader said, a scowl on his face from the fright the kid had given them all.

The boys snarled again, then leaped forward crossing the intervening distance faster than any of the gang members could blink. He slammed into one of the young men, hurling him back to crash into a tree with bone punishing force. Even as that one was in the aid the boy had somehow redirected his body to the side, lashing out at one of the others with a hand, which began to glow blue and white.

Claw marks appeared on the front of that young man's clothing, slashing his shirt and outer jacket to ribbons as well as the chest underneath them. He fell backward with a cry of shock and pain.

As the boy had leaped forward and dealt with his first follower so easily, the leader of the posse had hastily dropped his knife, reaching to the small of his back under his jacket. By the time he pulled out the gun that had been hidden there, the young cat acting boy had dealt with his other friends. When the boy looked over at him and he raised his gun and fired from the hip, missing as the boy ducked away yowling irritably at the loud noise.

Neko-Ranma had been having fun since leaving the patriarch behind. He'd first found a nice juicy deer which had led him a merry chase through the woods before Neko-Ranma could take it down. The meat had been succulent, even if he had to work on getting the fur off.

After that, he had found the edge of the forest, and, after deciding it was too confining and far too close to the annoying patriarch, Neko-Ranma had attempted to cross through the man country with its strange smells, rocks and many humans and moving things. He hadn't been able to get out of it, but he had at least found this little area where the smells of nature were closer than the steel and metal and all-pervading stench. Just a bit.

And now he had found four human toms accosting a female. Well, Neko-Ranma wasn't about to let them distress the girl, he could tell that she was afraid by the scent of her, and that just wouldn't do to Neko-Ranma's mind. So he'd attacked, putting the human toms in their places. He hadn't hurt any of them all that much, but he'd been certain to prove his superiority over them in no uncertain terms.

But now the last one was pointing some kind of tube at him. Some instinct had Neko-Ranma moving even before the handheld tube thing was pointing at him, then there was a series of loud bangs and flashes, causing Neko-Ranma to yowl in anger despite the fact the things the tube shot out missed him. That annoyed Neko-Ranma, and he slashed forward again with his claws as he got within range again once, then twice.

The man looked down in shock as his gun came apart, sliced through as if by a laser or something similar. Then the Neko-Ranma's paw hit him on the backhand and every bone in his hand from his fingers up to his elbow was shattered like dull twigs. He fell back screaming in pain until a foot slammed into his chest, hurling him back into the same tree that had so eagerly welcomed his fellows, the impact knocking him out.

With that done, Neko-Ranma moved over to the pile of enemies, patting each of them on the face, but none of them made more than groaning noises, and he meowed happily, before looking around at the girl, cocking his head quizzically and making an inquisitive cat noise. "Mrewor?"

She blinked, then said hesitantly, "Thank you?"

Neko-Ranma blinked back at her, confused by the human noises. Still, the fear scent was disappearing from the female now. That was good. Job done Neko-Ranma was about to leave. Certainly, the female scent was interesting itself, but Neko-Ranma didn't honestly know why, so he was hoping he could push on through the man-places to another natural area.

But the female tried to close with him. She paused as he turned, but he didn't do anything, simply sitting there and beginning to lick his paws. Neko-Ranma was after all fastidious, and he had gotten a tiny bit of blood on them. He spat it out, hissing at the taste.

Staring wide-eyed at Neko-Ranma, Riruko hesitantly held out her hand. She had no idea why this young boy was acting like a cat, or well, how he had done any part of what he'd just done, but she had seen documentaries on how un-gilded cats acted occasionally, and she did have a kitchen of her own, a little white lady named Lucy.

"Here Kitty," she said, crooning "smell me, Kitty, I'm a friend."

Curiously Neko-Ranma, leaned forward, pressing his face into the girl's palm, sniffing. That female scent filled his nostrils, making him a tiny bit lightheaded, but he ignored it, still able to smell some of the fear scent, which smelled musky and acidic to his senses.

He meowed then went back to grooming himself until he felt that same hand starting to scratch at his neck and ears. Then he began to purr. "PUuuurrrrr...." *Oh yes, that was good....*

Riruko smiled, continuing to scratch with one hand, while with the other, she pulled out her cell phone. First, she took a picture of the unconscious gang, then one of Neko-Ranma, who blinked, as she held the phone above his head, batting at it playfully with one hand. Riruko pulled back, and he tried again, another meow of pleasure coming from Neko-Ranma at the girl wanting to play with them.

But she instead pulled out a bit of yarn from her sleeve, which had torn before, dangling it in front of his face. A second later she was giggling as cat-boy began to bat at it playfully. With Neko-Ranma thus occupied, she was able to pull out her cellphone and call the police.

She was still petting and playing with that little cat boy when the police arrived. Neko-Ranma turned, going back up onto all fours as he hissed at the incoming voices. "I'm over here!" the girl shouted.

For policeman burst through instantly, and it was only the girl holding Neko-Ranma back, stroking his back and neck softly that held Neko-Ranma from attacking them. They were pointing those odd tubes his way, the same sort of flashy thing that another stupid tom had pointed at him. That was just asking for trouble in his opinion.

"Put them away please," Riruko shouted, "That guy over there, the one with the shattered arm, he tried to shoot this young boy and um, it did not work out for him. But he's not a threat, I, just I don't know why he's acting like this."

"Miss come away from him now," one of the officers ordered, not obeying her suggestion.

"He's not trying to hurt me!" the girls shouted back, trying to protect either the boy or the police, she didn't honestly know at the moment. "Just listen!"

Neko-Ranma hissed, thinking that these newcomers were again trying to scare the female or something, even though he was somewhat bemused to note that they all had the same kind of human-style fur. But the girl's hands on his shoulders pressed him back down, and she went back to petting and stroking his back causing him to calm down.

"Please, don't try to do anything. I think... I don't know why, but he's acting like a cat, and cats can be very nasty if they're on the hunt. Those four were the ones who attacked me, he saved me," she repeated then frowned angrily. "I told this all over the phone, and you people still come in the air with the guns out? What the heck, did you think this is America or something?"

Sheepishly, three of the police put their guns away, while the fourth took some more convincing. Insanity wasn't something they regularly had to deal with, yet when they did, it got very nasty, very quickly. And a young boy acting like a cat surely was being crazy.

Deciding that the humans had yammered at one another long enough, Neko-Ranma thumped his head into the girl's legs, causing her to look down at him, he moved against her, twisting and turning around her until she stumbled, and fell to her knees. The policemen who had been moving forward cautiously quickly began to reach for their guns again, but he simply crawled into her lap, and curled up there, purring happily, as she went to work on his back with both hands now laughing quietly.

This is been the weirdest night of my life. No one's ever going to believe any of this. But I have the proof, Riruko thought to herself, chortling happily at the idea, given the number of pictures she'd taken.

When the police tried to come towards her, Neko-Ranma's head flew up, his eyes opening to slits from where they'd been closed in bliss. A low warning growl came from him far deeper and more dangerous sounding than a young, seemingly pleasant young boy should be able to emit as he began to somehow make himself look bigger in threat.

"MRreeeeoowwww...."

"Don't you know anything about cats," Riruko said shaking her head, "he is a tomcat. A young one too," she cooed, scratching under his chin and causing Neko-Ranma to flop to his side, blissfully wondering if maybe he should roll onto his side or back, but deciding that he preferred to be curled up like this. "You all are guys, tomcats can be vicious to one another if they meet when on the hunt or if one invades another's territory."

"And you think you're his territory now?" asked one of the policemen skeptically.

"Well, thankfully he hasn't tried to mark me in the traditional manner. But I am his friend, aren't I?" Riruko cooed again, giving his ears a particularly strong stroke, causing the rumbling purr to grow even louder.

So loud that the policemen heard it from where they were standing, and as one they turned to one another, shaking their heads. "All right, this is just too weird for me to deal with said one of them I'm calling it in."

Moments later other people arrived, EMTs from an ambulance parked on the street first of all, who began to load the horribly wounded gangbangers onto stretchers, whistling at the amount of damage done. All of them were still alive, even the one whose arm looked like the world's tiniest car had hit it at speed. But it was doubtful if any of them would be waking up anytime soon judging by the bumps on their heads, which was probably all for the good. And they would all bear scars for the rest of their lives from what looked like extremely sharp cuts.

Several more policeman arrived too, including a few policewomen. Two of them instantly moved towards Riruko, and though he raised his head, sniffing the air and bristling slightly, Neko-Ranma didn't do anything else. "Hold out your hands," Riruko said, getting a kick at the moment out of ordering police officers around. "Let him smell you."

The two policewomen looked at one another, then shrugged and held out their hands. They'd been warned, so this didn't seem all that stranger than anything else they've been told about what was going on tonight.

Neko-Ranma leaned forward, sniffing at their hands. Then as the girl didn't seem in any rush to go back to petting him, he got up and began to pace around, sniffing the air. There were more female scents and more male scents, and Neko-Ranma was wondering if maybe he should leave.

“I don’t suppose anyone has any food on them?” one of the policewomen asked. “My dog is always a little bit happier once he’s got some food in him. Certainly friendlier to strangers anyway, the useless fat slob. Would it work the same for cats?”

One of the policemen ran off and came back with a donut of all things. The other policemen all glared at him, and one of them muttered “way to be a stereotype Tai,” causing the man to blush a little.

“Shut up you,” Tai muttered back. “They’re tasty and have lots of sugar in them, I bet he’ll get a kick out of them. Whatever he’s acting, he is a young boy after all.”

With that, he held out his own hand holding the donut towards the cat-boy.

Neko-Ranma sniffed at the round thing, then when the scents hit him meowed happily at the offering. Plucking it out of the man’s hand he moved away to curl up around it, fastidiously munching it quickly and then licking his lips and paws.

“Good grief, he really does act like a cat,” muttered one of the EMTs.

“Do you think there’s any way we could get him to come with us? I mean there are a lot of questions we need to find the answers to about what is going on here,” one of the policewomen asked.

Riruko held up a wallet, saying, “This was on him, I found it in one of his pockets.” The police officers all looked at her and she shrugged. “What? He was in my lap for a while there you know, and he didn’t seem to mind. But the only ID is a picture tag from an elementary school though it’s not one I recognize. It says his name is Ranma Saotome though, so that’s a start anyway.”

When one of the officers held out a hand Riruko tossed the wallet to him, standing up and massaging her thighs, which had been in danger of falling asleep under the weight of the boy. For all that he was short, he was a sparkplug of muscle and bone. *Though I probably should’ve figured that one out for myself given how he tossed those four idiots around like nothing.* All of the girl’s earlier fears about the men had faded since she had been saved.

“So, what now?” Riruko asked looking around at them all.

A loud gurgle interrupted them, and everyone’s eyes turned back to Neko-Ranma, who looked a little sheepish, then meowed loudly, and moved off through the woods. Playing around with the humans was fun, and he **really** liked the smell of the girl, and how soft she’d been to nuzzle against and how well she scratched his head. But food was more important especially with so many human toms around along with older females.

One of the officers made to stop him, but Neko-Ranma simply hopped up, landed on his head, and kicked off, leaping up into the woods above them, with a cheerful “Mreep!” thrown behind his shoulder.

The officer picked himself up, shaking his head quickly. "How the hell did he do that?! He went from a standing start to landing on top of my head and then up into the tree... I, I didn't even feel his weight until he kicked off!"

All of the officers looked at him, shaking his head, and gesturing. "Come on, let's get a move on."

Chasing after him, the racing police were only able to keep Neko-Ranma in view because he instantly made a game of it. He stayed just out of sight, letting them close for a bit before hopping away, cheerfully leading them a wild goose chase. This went on until one of them returned having left to pick up several more doughnuts. These had then been injected with knockout juice.

"Hopefully this will be enough," the man muttered, laying it out on the ground. Then, feeling very stupid he shouted out, "Here kitty, more donuts for you!"

Neko-Ranma turned and saw the small tasty things in the man's hand and on the ground in front of him. As his stomach rumbled once more, Neko-Ranma looked down at it, patting it, with one paw, and then leaped down towards the man. He backed away, but left the offerings, and Neko-Ranma moved over to the box, leaning down fastidiously and picking one of the tasty round things out with his teeth.

He ate them all quickly and was about to move away when he suddenly started to feel tired. Confused, Neko-Ranma thought for a moment whether or not he was hungry. Then his body decided to tell him that he was much sleepier than he was hungry, at which point Neko-Ranma curled up and went to sleep right there.

"Well, that worked," said one of the officers with a chuckle. "Now, let's see if we can load him into one of our cars without waking him."

OOOOOOO

The next morning, Ranma woke up leisurely for once without his father waking him up with the cry of, 'Wake up boy it's time to train,' or simply a bucket of water to the head. It was only when he looked around that he realized something else was unusual.

It wasn't every day after all that he woke up in a jail cell. "What the heck?" Then the memory of the pit and the screaming hordes of cats came back to him, and he paled. "Oh shit, what the hell did I do?" Quickly flipping himself up off of the bed, Ranma moved over to the jail cell's door, rattling it on its hinges as he shouted out, "Hey, what am I in for exactly?"

“Protective custody kid,” came a male voice from one side. A policeman in a traffic cops outfit came by, nodding pleasantly at him. “So, you’re back in what your normal frame of mind or something now? You want to explain what that was last night?”

“You tell me what happened last night,” Ranma said defensively, “and maybe I’ll tell you, what I was, why I was, you know...” he trailed off, looking away and glaring at a random wall humiliation, the shadow of fear, and concern visibly warring on his face.

“You got in a fight with four gangsters, apparently protecting a teenager who had wandered into the park at night. Put all four of them in the hospital too, even one a who it had a gun.”

“Unless they’re already pointed your way guns aren’t actually all that hard to dodge,” Ranma said reciting something his father told him.

“By the time they are up and pointed at you boy,” Genma said you need to be moving already. “It’ll be several decades before you can toughen your skin enough to take even a normal bullet.” Despite thinking them the weapons of a coward, Genma was too good a teacher not to include some basic lessons about guns and how to deal with the people using them.

“That makes some sense I suppose. Anyway, that’s what happened from our end. So, what was with acting like a cat?” the man asked bluntly.

Ranma scowled, looking away again. But with the police involved he knew he couldn’t get out of answering. “Look,” he said at last, “I only want to go through this once okay, so maybe you should get whoever is in charge of my case or whatever to come down here with a recorder.” His stomach rumbled at him, and he patted it. “And some food would be nice.”

“Fair enough kid,” the policeman said with a nod turning away to hide a slight frown. Whatever this was about, troubled the youngster greatly and that was not a good thing.

Moments later a few more people came by. One of them was dressed in a doctor’s outfit and told Ranma they were going to take a blood sample, in order to see if they could track any more records for him other than the photo ID, he had from his last attempt at going to school.

Ranma laughed, holding out a hand. “Sure, you can try, but I don’t think I’ve ever done anything wrong so I doubt I’d been your records. I’d bet you a lot you could find a lot of small-time stuff on my old man though.” *Serves him right for putting me through that training again,* he thought to himself, vindictively.

“Maybe not, but we could possibly connect him to you, if that’s the case,” the doctor said.

Left unsaid was the fact that due to the temporary madness the boy had exhibited, he was most definitely a person of interest that the police would want to keep track of and thus

the blood sample now would possibly be useful in the future. He frowned then as he had to really force the needle in, and Ranma didn't even flinch, causing the doctor to frown.

He tried to wrench Ranma's arm around again, muttering about finding another spot, as he pulled out another needle, but then found himself on the ground, and then lifted up into the air, to slam against the far wall. The other policeman quickly shifted to a defensive stance, and Ranma scowled but release the doctor. "I don't like being pushed or prodded," he said simply, holding out his arm again.

This time the doctor kept on pressing down until the needle finally sank into Ranma's arm, taking the blood sample quickly and retreating out of the cell. He closed it behind him, something Ranma made note of but didn't argue against right now.

After covering Ranma's rights, and then giving a broader idea of what had been going on last night to bring the police into it. They then bluntly asked Ranma to give a brief overview of himself, and then explain why he was acting like a cat.

This explanation did not go over well. "And you've never settled down anywhere? You've just been moving around your entire life?" said the woman incredulously. She was a social services worker, called in to help in this case, and if she hadn't actually talked specifically to the girl from last night, and seen the video footage from her phone, she would have believed a word of it. Even now she was having trouble understanding how a boy no more than twelve had been able to practically cripple four fully grown men.

"I don't believe you either," the policeman said, scowling. "That's crazy talk, to escape your fear of cats you become one?"

Ranma scowled, and marched up to the bars, thrusting his arms out, but the two officers and the social worker retreated scowling at him. "Back away from the bars," the inspector ordered.

But Ranma ignored them, grabbed the door with two hands, and lifted himself up, you will be kicking the lot with as much force as his body could muster. The simple lock bolt shattered and the door swung open.

Ranma was than in their faces before he either of the two policemen could raise a weapon, not that they were actually armed here in their own precinct. Even as other police officers appeared racing down after hearing the loud retort, but he simply held up his arms, then pulled off his shirt and turned around gesturing angrily at his back. "Look for yourself numbnuts!"

Covering his body, visible only if you were looking for them, or were very close, were hundreds of tiny, almost imperceptible claw marks. They covered his back and the back of his arms. They were, the social services were woman reckoned, easily enough to get the boy's

father locked up for life. *And seeing him just kick his way out of a jail cell, certainly has me convinced that he really did do those things in the videos.*

With the evidence of the fact that he had indeed been practically tortured by cats in front of them, the police had to admit that his explanation was the only one they could come up with for how he'd been acting last night.

At that point, Ranma's prints came back, as well as his blood work. He was correct, he didn't have any records of any kind of crime, but the blood sample had allowed them to find and at least the name of his mother. However, there was no other information about her whatsoever. Not where she lived, worked, her last name, or anything. The idea that someone could exist like that was a shock to the system of many of the police although Ranma seems to take it in stride.

"I never even really consider the fact that I'd have a mother, so the fact that I do somewhere out there is kind of strange. I wonder what kind of Art she knows," Ranma mused aloud giving the word Art a particular weight that the others somehow heard but could not understand. "Or maybe that's why my old man isn't with her, if it ain't the Art, he doesn't care about it." By the boy's expression, this attitude had rubbed off on him to a large degree which was worrisome.

Yet this didn't leave them with many options.

"You can't just keep him here," the Social Security worker said later that morning. Ranma had of course been let out of his jail cell, and was currently in the police precinct's exercise gym, with all lot of off-duty police looking on, betting how much he could lift or squat, with Ranma cheerfully demanding some of the proceeds.

"I know that, but tell me if you think he would be able to even find a foster home with that kind of attitude. And with how much time he spent on the road, you know he won't have the right education for his age level," the inspector in charge of Ranma's case replied. "He's a nice kid, under the bluff attitude and the defensiveness anyway, but there's no way a normal family would be able to handle him."

"I agree," the Social Security worker replied tartly. "But unless you want to adopt him as a mascot for your precinct or something similar, we need to find him a home. A stable one for preference, and one with enough resources to possibly offset the years of neglect on the educational front of the very least."

"Adopting him as a mascot for the precinct might work," the inspector replied with a laugh. "According to the ladies, he's cute enough to be a mascot, and if he's as strong as he is now when he grows up, he'd make a fine police officer."

The Social Security worker rolled her eyes and was about to reply scathingly to the idea that the man's sense of humor was misplaced, I.E. that he had one at all since she felt that was

some kind of defect in people when the door opened and the doctor came in. "I just got another return on the blood sample," he said without preamble. It isn't an exact match, but it is enough to say that they have a family connection. And it's one of our own. Minami Rika, recently inducted into the SAT..."

The Social Security worker and the detective looked at one another. "That'll work," they said as one.

OOOOOOO

Minami Rika scowled angrily as her phone went off, frowning as she reached for it over her live-in girlfriend, only to find her hand disappearing into marshmallow hell.

She grinned wolfishly at the feeling, then her fingers began to dance in that heaven, causing it to jiggle and quiver, then a moan to appear from above. "Hehehmmmm...again?"

"Be a love and grab my phone, would you?" Rika murmured.

"Come o~~n," that voice moaned again. "It's our day off, can't your work at least give us twenty-four hours? I'm a teacher and I get more time off!"

"Time and crime wait for no woman love," Rika said. "Now hand it over," she repeated, her fingers finding a hard nipple, and twisting lightly, as her hands emerged from marshmallow hell, otherwise known as her girlfriend's chest. She opened one eye and watched as the other woman twisted around, reaching for the other side of the bed. The two of them had switched positions in the night, not exactly an uncommon occurrence given their nightly activities. Whenever they had the energy anyway.

As she watched that chest jiggled and wiggled, acting almost like so much Jell-O and Rika couldn't stop her eyes from simply staring at it. Shizuka had a chest that looked like it should be on some statue to a fertility goddess rather than a Japanese woman. Rika knew for a fact that Shizuka's chest was a J-cup, whereas Rika was barely a D. Still, given the amount of crap her chest had brought her, Rika wouldn't switch their figures for anything.

Shizuka turned to her, her own eyes widening just slightly as Rika hopped out of bed, moving to open the curtains. With Shizuka mewling at the light, Rika flopped down onto the bed next to her girlfriend, putting an arm over the other woman's shoulders before she hit redial, pulling the phone to her mouth. "This had better be damn good captain. I'm supposed to get three days off after training is complete and we're not even a day into that time."

"It might be," said a deep masculine voice on the other side of the phone. "I got a call from the Shibuya Police Department."

“What? Why? I’ve never been to Shibuya. I worked out of Roppongi,” Rika interrupted. Then almost feeling her captain’s glare through the phone, Rika subsided with a muttered, “Sorry, captain I just can’t think of a reason why they’d contact you.”.

Two months ago Rika had successfully transferred from the Roppongi riot squad into the SAT or Special Assault Team. After nearly months of intense training, she had finally been accepted into one of the SAT teams. As such, Rika didn’t want to make waves. Just because she was one of the best snipers they’d seen in the last five years, was no defense if her captain thought she was unprofessional.

“Do you have a brother?”

The question came out so abruptly, that Rika’s breath hitched as if she’d been punched. For a moment she considered denying it. But the very fact that her captain was asking was enough to make it clear that he already knew the answer. “I changed my last name and distance myself from Genma Saotome after our parents passed away,” she said. “I did so very deliberately captain, if my big brother is in trouble, it’s got nothing to do with me. None of his debts or anything can touch me legally, I made damn sure of that when I abandoned the Saotome name.”

“So, you would deny any relation?” her captain asked while Shizuka stirred next to her, blinking in surprise at hearing the name Rika had gone by up until their last year of high school. She even knew about Genma too, despite his being more than eight years older than them.

Yet something about the way he asked that made Rika hesitate and she sighed. “What’s this all about, captain?”

“Your brother apparently married and had a son. Did you know that?”

“I knew he was married,” Rika replied. “Our parents arranged it about.... four years before they passed away? But no, I didn’t know that they did had a kid, I cut off all ties with him when I was seventeen and started to get a hint of well what kind of man he’d become.” *Thanks in part to that old pervert’s training, but I’m not going to mention him. Mentioning Happy, and the fact that the guy might well be more than several hundred years old would not go over well I imagine.* For herself, Rika figured there were a lot of things in this world that she had never seen. As long as that was true, she’d keep her eyes and mind open.

The man on the other side of the line grunted. “The boy, whose name is Ranma, showed up recently on the police’s radar. He was involved in dropping four gang bangers who had attempted to accost a girl in a park.”

“Dropping?” Rika asked quizzically, knowing that was a pseudonym for disabling someone, knocking them out in some fashion without killing them. “A boy did that? He can’t be older than what, 12?”

“Pretty much. And yes, I meant dropping, and he did so, hard. One of them, I saw a picture of what your nephew did to his arm, and I’ve never seen the like before, his bones were just crushed from the finger to the elbow, so bad some of them ruptured the skin. The others weren’t hurt nearly as much.”

“Okay... I suppose I could see a kid trained by Genma being that strong, though it probably wouldn’t have been easy. But if so, I don’t see a problem, he was acting in the defense of another person and his age should negate the severity of his means,” Rika replied, frowning. “So why are you calling me?”

“Your brother has been found guilty of child abuse and neglect in absentia,” the captain said bluntly. “So, we’re searching around for someone who can look after the kid. And frankly, given his abilities, tossing him into the foster program would be a mistake of the first degree.”

Rika blinked, her face twisting into such an expression of incredulity that Shizuka began to giggle. “You’re asking me to look after a kid?!”

“No,” her captain replied, his tone telling Rika he was reining in his temper. “However, your name came up in conjunction with your brother’s. Normally your changing your name legally would have absolved you of any connections, that’s true, but you’re the closest living family we can find, the boy’s mother is completely off the grid somehow. That means the police want you to at least meet with the kid, and then formally decide whether or not you want to look after him. Because let me tell you, no one who’s met the kid thinks it’s a good idea to put him up for adoption. I was not understating things when I said that was a disaster waiting to happen.”

Rika sighed. “You said he’s twelve?” *At least I don’t have to worry about basic manners or diapers or anything similar.*

“Yeah, twelve and about as antiauthoritarian as you can get apparently without actually being a thug, judging by what the police inspector handling his case said to me. Frankly, a lot of what they said makes little to no sense, but we’ll see what you think when you meet him,” her captain replied.

“Do I have to set up an appointment, or can I just show up?” Rika asked.

“You have twenty-four hours to meet the kid or else they’ll have to figure out long term quarters. They can’t keep him at the police station any longer.”

Rika groaned, tossing the phone onto its holder with a clang. She was half tempted to roll over and just bury her head into Shizuoka’s breasts again, but while that would certainly make her feel happier, it wouldn’t solve the problem. “Come on,” she said hopping to her feet again, ignoring the fact that she too was gloriously naked, until she heard her lover’s indrawn hiss.

She turned and saw the look on her girlfriend's face and flushed, smiling as any insecurities about her own figure faded at the look of frank desire that Shizuka was wearing. Sure, her own trim, athletic form wasn't as womanly as Shizuka's overdone voluptuous form, but she was still attractive, still turned heads, including the one most important head that belonged to her lover.

She grinned, shaking her head, setting her light purple hair to bouncing. "None of that love, I've got to get going."

"That fat fool Genma had a kid?" Shizuka said, then frowned. "EWWW. Still, I hope he isn't like that old creep Happosai. I still remember when he stole my bra in high school." She pouted, "It was my first silk one too! Do you have any idea how hard it was to find those things in my size even then?"

Rika rolled her eyes, but Shizuka continued to ply her with questions as she dressed quickly. She stopped though to kiss Rika farewell by the door, while still being naked, as Rika moved away to grab up her Ducati 1098s. It was a sleek, well-made bike, and fast, which was just as important for Rika. When she was alone, she liked to speed as much as possible, a holdover from her first job in the police as a traffic cop.

Several hours later, Rika was pulling into the police precincts parking lot in Shibuya, ignoring the look she was getting from the local police as she pulled off her helmet, setting it on her Ducati, and entering quickly. She flashed her badge at the front desk and I said simply "I'm Minami Rika. I presume that you're still holding my apparent nephew?"

"For a given value of 'holding'," said a middle-aged man's voice from one side. She turned to face the middle-aged man who was sitting at a nearby desk, but he was already standing up and gesturing her to follow him. "Come on, we're keeping him downstairs."

"You're keeping him in the lock-up? Is he a danger to others or something?"

"While he could be, no he really isn't a danger to anyone else. But we're not exactly a kindergarten, Lieutenant," the man growled. "It was either keep him in one of the cells or one of the break rooms and given how much traffic a breakroom gets, we can't afford to just turn one into a bedroom."

"How long have you been holding him?"

"A day and a half by this point," the inspector replied as they pushed the door open into the basement of the building. The man frowned then staring into a jail cell that was empty and had the door open. "Or he was," he growled, looking down at the broken lock. "Damn it, I thought we told those idiots on night watch not to lock him in!"

"We did, they ignored us," said an officer who had entered behind them. "On the plus side at least they'll be the ones paying for the damages this time. And it isn't like he's going to run away. He gave his word to stay here right?"

"Yeah. I guess the kid just got bored. Can't say I blame him really," The inspector muttered.

"Heh, now this takes me back," Rika murmured, staring at the broken lock. "I remember seeing Genma doing insane stuff like this. Still, where would the kid go?"

"Probably the roof. He's mentioned saying something about wanting a room with a view, and he seemed to like the idea of being up there when Shino, one of the officers here, suggested it. We would've put him up there if it hadn't rained last night," The inspector grumbled, then turned back into the elevator. "And you're taking this a lot more calmly than I would in your place."

"Meh, breaking locks through brute strength isn't the strangest thing I've seen martial artist types do," Rika said with an eye roll.

They took it up to the top floor, then entered a maintenance stairwell heading up to the roof and a metal door there. Opening it, they came out onto an open patio area which was mostly for smokers and a few people who wanted to eat outside there was a small picnic table set to one side and several ashtrays, the rooftop circled by an iron fence.

Rika, however, was not looking at any of that. Rather, she was looking at the young boy who was apparently contemplating suicide balance on the top of the fence. "Don't jump!" she shouted, racing forward, knocking the inspector aside.

The boy twisted around and seemed to lose his balance. Both officers now raced forward but the boy dropped down his full body length then grabbed at the top of the fences with one hand. In the next instant, he had flipped himself up, landing with all the easy balance of a cat, as he frowned at the two of them. "What the hell, why are you two shouting? I was just doing my daily kata."

"Kata?" Rika said, her brain is only slowly rebooting as she slowly remembered stuff she had seen when she was younger.

Ranma smirked, then twisted so that he stood facing along the edge of the fence. "Watch." With that, he turned away from them and moved across the top of the fence.

His movement was easy, calm, controlled as he wove through a martial arts kata whose complexity and speed took Rika, no mean martial artist herself especially after the past two months, breath away. *Okay, I recognize some of that from Anything Goes, but damn if he doesn't make it look better than Genma ever did.*

"Like that," Ranma said with a grin, twisting himself off of the fence easily to land in front of the two policemen, looking at the two of them thoughtfully, although Rika noticed that his eyes seemed to gravitate to her.

What Ranma saw was a twenty-something-year-old woman who was very physically fit and tall for a woman, maybe five and a half feet or so, maybe more if the hair was added in. She had thin, powerful-looking legs contained in formfitting jeans, but moved easily in them despite their tightness judging by how she had rushed forward a second ago. She had a leather jacket on open at the moment to show the top half of a police officer's uniform, although hers was little more body-hugging than most he'd seen and had several extra pockets along the waist. Around her neck, she wore something that looked almost like a dog's collar.

She also wore a gun, a big pistol of some kind, way bigger than most of the guns he'd seen the police use before. It was well hidden, but Ranma saw a bit of the handle sticking out from under her leather jacket.

Beyond that... well, she was damn pretty. She had a slightly pointed chin, below full lips painted in that red stuff girls used, tanned skin, and slinky-looking purple hair. And for some reason, Ranma's eyes kept on going down the open front of her leather jacket to her legs and back again.

As he took in her body Rika realized that he was looking at her in two very different ways. One was evaluating her as a possible threat, and she saw he spotted her gun and her holdout dagger. One the other hand, while his eyes didn't linger on one bit or another so to speak, it was very clear that he liked what he saw and that he didn't really know how to be discreet at all. *Damn, puberty seems to have hit him hard hasn't it?* Smirking she placed one hand on her hip as she introduced herself. "I'm Minami Rika. And I'm also apparently your aunt."

"Huh, does that mean your related to my, what's the that word again, mother?"

"What's the word again'?" Rika repeated, looking confused.

Ranma shrugged, looking uncomfortable. "Well for the longest time I didn't realize what, you know, most families were like. It was only when I went to school last year that I finally figured out that most people have both moms and dads. And it was only yesterday that I learned I might have had one."

"...Okay, there's a lot wrong with that statement," Rika said slowly, glancing over at the other policeman, who nodded soberly before she turned back to the youngster in front of her. "But no, I'm not related to your mom, although I might have met her very briefly once." Rika actually hadn't really liked the woman all that much. Nodoka had been going on about how 'manly' her son would be and how many grandchildren she would have whenever they'd med. That was more than a little disturbing at the time since she wasn't even pregnant just yet. "I'm related to your father."

Ranma's eyes widened, and he looked at her in startled. "Wow! Damn, you must've gotten all the looks in the family then. You two look nothing alike."

“Heh, aren’t you a little charmer,” Rika replied with a laugh.

“I wasn’t trying to be, I was trying to insult him. Idiot Pops.”

Still chuckling, Rika shook her head. “I like you kid. But what does he look like these days anyway? Has he lost all his hair yet? And I remember him needing to use glasses the last time I saw him,” she asked, while the other policeman’s eyes sharpened.

“Well, he’s kind of tall I guess. He’s got big broad shoulders and is generally sort of built like a wrestler. He’s a little overweight, not much yet but his drinking’s pouring on the pounds,” Ranma said with a wicked grin. “Hell, maybe he’ll be so slow I’ll finally get in a few wins without Pops giving himself a handicap. He wears glasses all the time now and yeah, he’s completely bald at this point, which is just hilarious. He tried so hard to protect what little hair he had left for over the past two years, I laughed so hard whenever one of his ‘surefire hair products’ failed that it’s not even funny.” Oh and he wears this dirty gi most of the time. Don’t know why I was able to earn enough in underground fights to get clothing like this after all,” he said gesturing down at his silk pants and shirt.

“Underground fights?” Rika asked quickly before the inspector could say anything.

“Shit!” Ranma stiffened, then looked away. “I’m not telling you anything about that. Part of the agreement that let me fight in them was I can’t blab to the authorities. The police are the authorities so there you go. I’m a martial artist, and part of my Code is that when I give my word, I keep it. I promised them I wouldn’t mention it to anyone, and I won’t.”

Judging from the mulish expression on his face, Rika realized that no, they weren’t going to get in any information on that score out of Ranma, and so she backed off, much to the disappointment of the inspector. “Huh, you any good?” she asked innocently. “I mean, the whole kata was impressive, but can you actually fight?”

Ranma grinned. “I’m the best. Pops is training me to be the best.” His eyes darkened for an instant as he clenched his hands into fists. “And then he found that freaking Neko-Ken crap! Freaking stupid technique, he thought it was a way to just jump straight to the top without any more work or something, but instead, all it does is drive me crazy!!”

“Tell me about that,” Rika said, moving over to sit on top of the picnic bench, while Ranma flipped himself up to squatting on the nearby fence with every sign of enjoyment. It was evident that whatever else he’d been trained in, Ranma’s mastery of balance and heights was just phenomenal.

By the time Ranma finished explaining the training, Rika was prepared to both commit fratricide and throw up. Feeling both at the same time was very odd, and it put her slightly off-balance. “Well kiddo, by law, because of his attempt to force you through that, my brother lost all right to calling himself your parent,” she began, figuring to lay out the why of what was going on first. It would give her a little more time to come to a decision anyway.

Ranma's eyes widened at that, and he looked confused. "How does that even work? I mean, he's my Pops, my old man. He, he's the only thing, well he's just been there my entire life you know. Saying that you won't let him be my Pops anymore, it feels weird."

"A parent has certain rights and responsibilities to his kid," Rika said using the masculine pronoun to make the words sink in more. "He's not supposed to abuse them, he's not supposed to take advantage of them, he's supposed to feed house and send you to school."

Ranma's look of disgust when she mentioned school did not bode well, Rika reflected. "Pops said that was a waste of time, and he only sends me there when truant officers spot us," Ranma said with a shrug. Gotta say I agree with them. School's boring as heck. And if you ignore the Neko-Ken, everything else he's put me through was just training. You have to bleed and sweat if you want to be the best. I love the Art, and I want to be the best!"

"Regardless, you're supposed to go," the inspector said with a scowl and a shake of his head.

Rika was more conciliatory. "I will agree that most school is boring, but it's still necessary." Ranma grinned at her at that, but she went on quickly, "However this whole Neko Ken thing, well that's is too much Ranma."

"Exactly. The police have already charged him with child abuse, and if we catch him, he's going to jail."

Ranma just stared at him for a moment before looking over at Rika and when she shrugged, he burst out laughing. "Yeah, no, the only way you'd capture him is if you knew where he was and then, like, put some of that sleeping stuff in the food at nearest all you can eat restaurant, and then put up a going out of business sign!"

"I'd agree, but that doesn't really matter right now. If Genma comes along, I'll deal with him," Rika said before she could realize what she was saying. The words once said though felt right, and she smiled holding out a hand. "Anyway, the point is kid, Genma can't be trusted to look after you, and because of your age, you can't be left alone. So, how would you like to live with me?"

OOOOOO

"Damn police," Genma muttered to himself shaking his head angrily as he stared down at the ground in front of him. He had found Ranma's trail eventually, although he'd lost it several times thanks to the odd way the boy moved through the city. Then he'd found the park and the signs of a scuffle which was almost entirely obscured by the trample of police, a mark

on the ground he knew particularly well given how often he'd had to run away from or hide from the police in the past.

Thinking hard, Genma wondered where it would they would have done with the boy, and nearly snorted at the idea of putting Ranma in a normal lockup, or a hospital. At this point, the boy's ki healing was almost as good as Genma's own, something he was quite proud of and he didn't doubt that what wounds the boy had before were now fully healed.

Regardless, the police were always hard to deal with these days, with how they all shared information on computers and that junk. "Still, if they took him to the nearest police station, I can pick up some kind of trail there. Although I'll probably have to do it under some kind of disguise. The boy doesn't know better than to give out my description after all..."

OOOOOOO

Ranma whistled as he stared at the Humvee parked in the small walled apartment complex's parking area, shaking his head. Actually, to call it an apartment was a bit of a misnomer. While the complex didn't have a lawn, each apartment was two stories and had their own parking areas. "Now that is a proper kind of SUV. The kind that can actually go off the road none of the fancy crap."

"You know anything about cars?" Rika asked.

"No, but I've seen those Land Cruisers and other stuff get stuck off-road, always found it hilarious," Ranma said as he hopped off the bike. Seeing him so excited about being on the bike behind her had been a treat, since before that he had seemed so abnormally cool and collected for a twelve-year-old. Hearing him whoops and laugh had been fun as heck. *Although having him pressing up so close behind me did raise, heh, another issue. Still, it's probably best to address that kind of thing after Shizuka has seen to him.*

"Come on kiddo, let me introduce you to my friend," she said aloud.

Ranma nodded, and the two of them entered and the meeting between Shizuka and Ranma went about as well as Rika could have expected.

The blonde nurse took one look at Ranma, and squealed, "Oh he looks so cute! Before crossing the intervening distance and scooping the boy up in her arms burying his face in her chest while Ranma was still gaping at her. Even dressed for work, Shizuka had a body that could twist heads right off.

Now he was flailing his voice muffled in the confines of Shizuka's vast chest. "I can't breathe!" he shouted, flailing around without actually hurting the woman. "Is that what those things are for, are they some kind of weapon to suffocate your opponents?!"

"...What?" Rika and Shizuka asked as one, as Shizuka released the boy.

This allowed him to take her form in again, and he did so once more, his eyes going wide once more.

Shizuka stood about a handspan taller than Rika, with blonde hair cascading down her back rather than short and tied in a ponytail. She had green eyes, wider-looking mouth, and thinner shoulders along with thicker hips. And a truly gigantic chest, one fully capable of swallowing Ranma's head, held at bay only by the determination of her blouse and a long lab doctor's coat, tied closed.

He muttered something under his breath, backing away rapidly, then stared down at his own body for a second growling. "Oh, what the hell! Why the heck are you standing up again!?! What is with girls and this thing," he muttered, reaching down to smack his own crotch, wincing at the pain of it but still glaring. "Is Pops right, is this thing some kind of distraction from the Art?"

The two women exchanged glances, then after Rika introduced her, Shizuka asked, "Tell me, exactly how many years have you spent in school Ranma?"

Ranma thought for a moment, scratching the side of his head as he seemed to count on his fingers. "If we're talking about a year like three-hundred and sixty-five days, about a year and a half. I've never been forced to stay in school longer than a month at a time though," he said proudly. "My Pops and I have always moved on as fast as we could whenever those truant guys would find me."

Shizuka's smile became a rictus now and she almost glared at Rika, who twitched her shoulders her eyes wide as if to say 'I didn't even know he existed, don't blame me!' before the nurse turned back to Ranma. "Well Ranma, we will talk about your boy bits later. Right now..."

"Boy bits? Does that mean girls don't have them? I mean I know you've got those things up top, but you're different underneath too? Can I see?" Ranma interrupted before going on authoritatively. "And let me tell ya, I don't think those are very good as weapons. Not unless you've studied some kind of grappling school."

"No," Shizuka said firmly, reaching out to smack him lightly on the nose with two fingers, causing his eyes to cross as he looked at her fingers. "And you shouldn't ask such questions right now. We'll cover all that later." She then pouted. "And my chest is not a weapon!"

“Heh, I know a lot of boys who’d beg to differ, and I’d agree with them. Those things are lethal,” Rika snarked, getting a smack on the hip for her troubles. Laughing she turned away, heading into the kitchen. “I’ll start up dinner while you two talk.”

Shizuka nodded at that, turning back to the confused young boy. “For now, have you ever had a physical?”

“I’m very physical,” Ranma said with a laugh, actually leaping up and doing a flip midair, to land on both hands, performing a perpendicular pushup, then pushing himself up and away, to land easily on the table to one side balancing there so well that the cups and saucers didn’t even twitch. He then hopped off, although the hop-off did rattle them. He pouted at that, before turning back to wink at Shizuka. “See?”

“Well done, but I didn’t mean are you physical,” Shizuka said even as she clapped. “I meant has a doctor ever looked at you?”

“Not unless they did so when I was asleep at the police station. Oh, I’ve had broken bones and such set, but not often. My pops usually saw to any cuts and stuff I got when training,” Ranma replied after a few minutes thinking. He then scowled, looking as if he wanted to back away. “This isn’t going to involve needles or anything, is it? I’ve had my fill of that recently.”

“In that case, why don’t you hop into the shower over there, and then put on a towel. We’re going to test your reflexes, look for odd bone contusions that kind of thing. Don’t worry, none of it will hurt. As for needles, I presume that the police did some kind of blood work on him?” she said turning back to Rika her face assuming as much of a glare as she ever could.

“Yeah to connect him to me at all they had to. He’s clean,” Rika said, which prompted Ranma to laugh and say, ‘Not yet I’m not!’ as he turned towards the shower.

Under Shizuka’s continued glare, Rika held up her hands defensively and said, “Don’t look at me like that, I didn’t even know he existed, it’s not my fault. And at least this way, we know at least one area he’ll need quite a lot of education in.”

“I imagine that’s going to be the norm rather than unusual with him,” Shizuka said. She looked as censorious as Rika had ever seen her, her full lips ruler-straight, as her eyes narrowed dangerously, her arms crossed under her bust, almost disappearing under them in fact. “And how exactly did your brother get away with keeping him out of the education system for so long?”

“By probably moving around as often as possible like Ranma said,” Rika said with a sigh. “You’d be astonished how easy it is for someone to get themselves lost if they really know-how, something Genma no doubt learned from Happosai. Then too, most of the old martial artist types, they don’t use computers or even much in the way of paperwork, is all word-of-mouth,

rumors handshakes and so forth. He could stay with them and no one would be the wiser outside the martial arts school they were staying in.”

Ranma left the shower then, still toweling off his head, giving the girl the older women a full frontal view of himself, before pulling his towel around them. Rika just blushed faintly, shaking her head and resolutely did not look below the belt. Shizuka did, her lips pursed as she noticed several scars. There were more than a few on the sides of her his thighs, as he turned away, and several hundred tiny, almost unseen scars on his back, although the largest was a single long scar on his side.

When Shizuka made to open her mouth though, Rika grabbed her arm and pulled her close, whispering. “Don’t ask about the lighter scars, I already know that story, and I’d much prefer that you ask something new so that you can keep dinner down. I’ll tell you that one later.”

Shizuka frowned, then nodded, and reached forward, pulling Ranma into a sideways hug as she directed him to sit down in one of the kitchen’s chairs.

“Now, let’s get the easy stuff over with. We’ll test your hand-eye coordination, reaction time and so forth. And then, I’m going to have to ask you a series of questions Ranma. Most will be about what you’ve been eating, the exercises you do on a daily basis, and other things of that nature. Then, we’ll get into the harder stuff where I try to figure out,” Shizuka said already holding a finger in front of his eyes “how bright you are, and what grade you should be put in.”

“I thought my grade level was chosen by my age?” Ranma said as his eyes tracked the finger “Am I supposed to catch it, or just watch it?” He asked, his hands already flying up faster than Shizuka could track.

Rika could, with relative ease, but Shizuka barely had a second to try and pull her hand away before Ranma’s fingers were around her own, gripping very lightly. “I win,” he said with a laugh.

She laughed too, and he released her digit. “That wasn’t part of this game,” the nurse said with some amusement. “Just track it, I want to see how far your peripheral vision goes to either side, and whether or not you can follow rapid movements.”

“Your hand's going to have be moving a lot faster than that to call it ‘rapid’,” Ranma said, still grinning.

Shizuka giggled, and the exam continued.

Later, Ranma was told to head out into the sitting room where he promptly fell asleep on the couch, kicking his feet up, as he watched TV.

“I’m assuming physically we can say that he is beyond healthy?” Rika quipped shaking her head as the two of them cleaned up after dinner. Shizuka had kept the conversation going

throughout the meal, interjecting little questions and problems that Ranma would have to solve. He seemed to have fun with it, although he only became interested when Shizuka put the problems to him and asked him to treat them like a problem in a sparring match.

"It's not even funny how healthy he is," Shizuka muttered. "I've seen high school track stars, people who are probably going to go to college on scholarships, with less physical ability than Ranma has. His muscle tone is off the charts, his strength is just incredible, his speed is... if I want to actually try to track his hand speed, I'll need a milometer. I swear to God, he moves them faster than a thrown baseball."

"He might," Rika replied with a nod. "Although he was an asshole my brother, was one of the best martial artists I've ever met, and that's including the SATs training staff. In fact, I bet Ranma could beat most of them straight up in a fight, except maybe the hand to hand instructor. So, nothing unusual physically?"

"All of that's unusual, just not in a bad way," Shizuka giggled. She laughed a lot, it was part of why Rika like her so much. With the life they had both led when they were younger, Shizuka's ability to just roll with the punches and never take anything seriously was a tremendous draw. "But he does show some signs of malnourishment. Nothing major, not yet, if we get him on a steady diet. Though I doubt he'll ever be as tall as he should be."

"And how is he mentally?" Rika asked, fearing the worst.

"Actually, I'm quite astonished at how bright he is," Shizuka said thoughtfully. "I think he's extremely intelligent, going by the speed with which he was able to solve some of the logic puzzles and other things I gave him without him noticing. But Ranma's knowledge base is just as extremely small. He's got an extremely good memory, for anything in the last few years anyway. Long-term memory, that's an entirely different story, and is quite frankly, shot to hell and back. So much so that I had to ask him if he'd had any concussions. Once I describe the symptoms, well let's just say that your brother should never be near me when I have a scalpel."

Shuddering, Rika nodded and Shizuka went on. "His science, math and social studies knowledge are practically nonexistent. Language arts is somewhat good I think, although we'll have to see what his writing ability is like. His history knowledge is actually quite good if concentrated on wars. Oh, and Ranma can speak English pretty darn well, better than me anyway." Shizuka pouted at that before going on. "I just can't see him being in a regular school for his age group though. Not for a long, long while until we get the rest of his knowledge base up to the rest of his age group. We'll have to hire a tutor or something similar."

Rika groaned aloud but nodded. "And you don't have a problem with him staying with us?"

"No. He's a funny kid, seems bright enough, and certainly isn't a pig or anything. He just doesn't have anything near to what I'd call a normal person's sense of normal interactions,

what is and isn't allowed in society, how normal kids his age act and so forth. Still, we can work with that," Shizuka said with a smile. "Besides, he's family, right?"

"I suppose," Rika said with a nod and a sigh of relief. Ranma had grown on her like a weed throughout the day, and she was interested to get to know him better.

OOOOOOO

Finding the precinct where his son had been taken was relatively easy. He'd simply gone to the nearest one and then found a hiding place in the parking lot near the entrance. Places like that were always good places to listen to rumors. Once hidden he simply waited, listening for conversations about a young boy with a pigtail or a boy acting like a cat. This took no time at all as he figured, the 'neko-boy' still being the talk of the precinct.

He found out relatively quickly that Ranma was no longer there, but where he had gone from the precinct was either something none of the talking policemen knew about or had been kept deliberately secret. Regardless, Genma decided he would put off searching for tracks until daylight at the very least.

If the boy had left on foot, he'd be able to find the trail then. If not, well it wouldn't be the first time, he snuck into or out of a police precinct.

OOOOOOO

The next morning, Rika was surprised, yet also somewhat unsurprised to find that Ranma was awake at around eight in the morning and was outside practicing his martial arts on the balcony of the second story of her apartment. "Do you normally wake up around this time kid?" she asked, yawning mightily.

"No, pops would've gotten me up even earlier," Ranma replied.

Scowling at that, Rika shook her head. "Tell me, why exactly do you want to learn all this martial arts stuff anyway?"

"Because it's fun!" Ranma replied with a laugh. "Because it's my life because I enjoy it a lot? Isn't that enough?"

"You don't want to actually do anything with it? It seems kind of strange," Rika led, trying to figure out more about the young boy who she had decided to take in.

Ranma frowned, pausing mid-kata, twisting around to look at her. "The Art is a way of life, it's not just an ability or skill that you turned to something else. But yeah, I do want to do

some stuff with it. Have fun, become the best, and I suppose defend other people. That's part of the code the martial artist after all."

"So, you want to become a policeman?"

"Probably not," Ranma said with a laugh. "Most of the police I've met are kind of lame, and your uniforms are not my kind of thing. Did you know that they thought they could try and force me to wear a uniform at the last school I was at? I just ignored them. And then when they assigned detentions I just didn't go. I mean what are they supposed to do, force you to go?"

"Peer pressure and actually caring about authority figures is supposed to do the work for them, although obviously that failed in your case," Rika said with a laugh. *Antiauthoritarian right.*

Shizuka joined them, coming out of the bedroom and flopping down into a chair next to Rika, mumbling as she leaned against her girlfriend, sipping at her coffee. Rika hated the stuff, thinking it far too sharp, but Shizuka needed the help to get up in the morning.

As the two of them talked quietly, Ranma's eyes found their way down to Shizuka's breasts again, before he tore them away. "What is up with that?" he muttered loud enough for them to hear.

"What is up with what?" Rika asked.

"What's up with her chest? It's a like a, like a black hole or something sucking in my eyes," Ranma muttered, forcing them away again.

"You're not supposed to admit that," Rika replied with a laugh, "but between you and I, my eyes sometimes stray that way too." Then she sighed and asked the question she had been dreading. "Did my never-do-well-brother ever sit you down and talk to you about, about, well, girls? The birds and the bees so to speak?"

"He's told me a lot about birds, which are worth the effort of hunting down and which aren't, and how to get honey out of honeycombs without getting stung. Is that what you mean?" Ranma asked.

"No, no it isn't. I meant has he talked to about girls or girls and boys and how they're supposed to be active around one another in the past year or so? When your eyes, that is when your interest slowly started to notice that girls were somehow interesting?" *Goddammit, I'm not a mother, I'm not even 30 years old, and here I am preparing to give the talk?*

"No, he never had that kind of talk with me. Although, come to think of it, when my pee-wee started to act all weird, he started to drink a heck of a lot. I figured out it got like that when I thought or looked at pretty girls, but then figured out it was rude to let it happen in public. That's about all I know," Ranma replied.

Nope, Rika thought, *nope not gonna go there*. “Tag, you’re it, love,” she muttered, patting Shizuka on the head.

Shizuka looked up at her blinking as Rika moved away, watching a delivery truck pull up. “I’m it, for what?”

“You’re the nurse, you get to give them the talk,” Rika replied, waving her hand at the delivery guy who had just gotten out of the truck.

Ranma however just hopped over the balcony, landing easily two stories down, his knees flexing noticeably, but without any other sign of stress. He walked up to the front gate and waved at the gaping deliveryman opening the gate and taking the box from him. He frowned at the weight of it, as the man muttered, “I need Minami Rika’s signature for that kid, how did you...?”

“Thank you,” Rika said, reaching to take the clipboard from the guy and signing her name quickly. “Ranma, if you could bring that up to my room?”

Ranma did so, then watched as Rika gleefully tore apart the box containing whatever was inside like a kid at Christmas. She pulled out what looked like parts for a gun, and he rolled his eyes. “Really, guns? You’re into that kind of thing?” he asked with all the disdain a twelve-year-old could contain when backed by a lifetime of his father pumping his head full of nonsense.

Rika looked up at him, one eyebrow twitching dangerously. “Kid, while I fully realize that you are a martial arts prodigy, not all of us can be that good with just our hands and feet. And sorry to say, but guns are the way of the future. Only Neanderthals like Genma can even dream otherwise. Besides, how many guns have you actually ever seen in action?”

“Well, none,” Ranma muttered. “Though I took out one guy who was using a handgun when I was in the, the furry demon fist.”

“Pistol,” Rika corrected. “The gangster was no doubt using a pistol. The guns I can own as a SAT team member makes any gun that a gangster get seem like a cheap imitation.”

She looked at Ranma thoughtfully, then over to where Shizuka had once more fallen asleep outside, her head lolling to one side and drooling her feet propped up onto the small outside table. “Tell you what kiddo, what do you say I take you into work for a bit? I think you need to get some of Genma’s ideas knocked out of your head.”

Frowning at that, Ranma asked “What ideas? I’m not giving up the Art,” he said, mentally digging his feet and mulishly glaring back at her as if the very idea would make him bolt right now.

“No one is asking you to,” Rika soothed inwardly amused at the look Ranma was giving her. He probably thought it was a fierce, stubborn look, but to Rika it made him seem cute.

“However, that doesn’t mean that you can’t have other interests. And it certainly doesn’t mean that you can’t broaden your horizons as a person.”

At the confusion on Ranma’s face, she smiled thinly. “I mean, going to school, learning all that stuff that you find boring or useless to the Art, finding other things to spend your time on, gaining friends, and interacting with people outside of your father or other martial artists.”

Ranma still looked a little defensive, but when Rika had said friends, his little face had twisted into an expression of wistfulness, but then he frowned. “Okay, I get all that I suppose, but what it got to do with me going into where you work?”

“You said earlier that you think the police are kind of lame. I’m going to show you that’s not the case.” Rika figured that if she could prove that police work could be really interesting and grab his attention like that maybe she could motivate him to branch out from just being martial arts mad. It probably wasn’t a perfect solution, but it was the only one that she could come up with. *That and he said guns were lame*, the sniper thought, silently furious.

“Are we going to take your bike?” Ranma asked enthusiastically.

“Yep,” Rika said with a laugh, opening a locked door to one side and putting the gun parts in, with Ranma looking over her shoulder. He whistled at the number of weapons already inside. Even if he didn’t know anything about guns, he could certainly count, and there were at least three rifles, one that looked a little weird to his eyes with a bigger barrel and no scope, and a crossbow that looked really high tech.

“Come on my little adrenaline junkie, let’s get a move on,” Rika said, pushing him towards the spiral staircase that led down to the rest of the apartment. She looked over at her still sleeping girlfriend. “And Shizuka,” she caroled, “I fully expect you to give Ranma the talk sometime soon.”

To her surprise though Shizuka wasn’t asleep. Instead, the tall blonde turned towards her, winking back as she leaned over the back of the patio chair, her breasts held up and thus pressed up and out even more than normal by the back of the chair. “I’ll prepare some paper puppets,” she said with a giggle. “Just don’t expect to get his mind back all in one piece when I’m done.”

Ranma frowned from where he was about to step onto the first step of the spiral staircase looking back. “What’s that supposed to mean? Are you talking about some kind of training? Because I gotta tell you, if you’re trying to offset the fu, furry demon fist by breaking my mind in a new way, I don’t think that’s going to work. Two breaks don’t fix the initial damage. I should know I’ve had more than one broken bone on top of a break I had already.”

“Nothing like that,” Shizuka said with a smile looking past Rika’s delectable rear and hips at Ranma flashing him a wink. “I’m just going to try to cram a lot of information into your head

all at once about something you should've been learning about in bits and pieces up to this point. Trust me, it'll help with your pee-wee issue," she finished with another giggle.

"In that case, I'm all for it. Being around girls at all is getting a little weird at this point," Ranma said, forcing his eyes away from where they had tracked down to Shizuka's chest as she talked to him. Despite the distance between the staircase and the balcony along with the intervening glass, that view still grabbed his attention far too much for his liking. *A black hole, that's what they are.*

"Famous last words," both women said as one, before laughing.

Ranma could only stare at them in confusion, which made them laugh harder, which made his eyes go in different places, which made him feel uncomfortable and made him start glaring down at his lower body again. Thankfully for him, Ranma's thoughts on this matter were soon torn away by the sheer joy of being on Rika's motorcycle again. Hanging on with his legs he threw his hands up in the air shouting as if he was on a rollercoaster.

Well, at least I know one way to get his attention. Rides on my motorcycle for now, and eventually driving lessons after might prove to be a good incentive, Rika thought, smirking inside of her helmet.

Ranma didn't know how long they were on the bike, only that it was far too short a time for his liking before they were pulling into what looked more like a small military base rather than a police precinct. There were even guards at the entrance, although their weapons were out of sight. When Rika flashed her ID, they let the two of them in, although Ranma received a few curious glances.

They didn't linger anywhere long enough for Ranma to make an impression of anything inside the building before they were outside on the safe portion of what was obviously a shooting range. Ranma caught the headphones that Rika tossed him, as well as the glasses a second later, putting them on as several people were already shooting downrange. "Safety first kiddo!" she shouted over the sounds of gunfire.

All of the police officers here were using guns he'd never seen before, wearing a uniform that Ranma hadn't seen before, and seemed to be taking their training seriously, something he approved of even if he didn't approve of the guns themselves. "What are we here for again?" he asked.

"You said that a cornerstone of your Code as a martial artist is to defend people. Well, that's what police do Ranma. But if you think the regular police are tame, then maybe the SAT is something you should think about in the future when you're old enough. Because the SAT isn't like most police forces."

This drew several loud shouted comments from around them, as various other members of the SAT on the range heard her, and made their own opinions of the regular police in

comparison to the SAT very plain indeed. Ranma laughed at that, looking around even as more than a few of them were looking at him quizzically.

“We aren’t called in on small-time stuff, speeding, stealing, not even assault or murder or anything else the normal police can handle. We’re called in to deal with terrorist acts, kidnappings, hostage situations, gang wars, VIP protection and extraction, things like that. We’re authorized to use lethal force, we use any and all weapons and most of us are martial artists too. Maybe not up to Genma’s standards, but you might find some people here that can give you a run for your money. And of course, we also rely on guns. I’m rated master sniper, the best in Japan.”

That idea, being the best in something, resonated with Ranma but before he could say anything about it, Rika turned, thumping him hard in the chest, causing him to stumble back and gape up at her. He’d known Rika was in good shape, but to actually force him back like that, wasn’t something that any of the other policemen he’d seen could have done despite their age difference. “And you called my guns lame,” she said flatly. “Well, I’m going to show you that you’re wrong.”

Moments later, Ranma was gaping at the ten targets that had been set a little under two thousand yards downrange. All of them had been backed by metal plates as thick as his finger, which had been penetrated by the bullets that Rika had fired. The range supervisor moved out of his HUD and grabbed them all, coming back and around the firing range to lay them down on the floor, shaking his head. “Headshots for the first six, then body shots after that when you went to full auto. That’s even better than you normally do Lieutenant Minami.”

“Just making a point Sir,” Rika replied saluting instantly as the man took off his own helmet, and visors revealing the thin, weathered features of her commanding officer. “Sorry sir, I know it’s not exactly regs for me to be here all when I’m supposed to be off duty, or to have a civvie with me but...”

The man waved her down looking down at Ranma who was looking up at him, had talked to one side. “If I had a problem with it, you would never have gotten through the front gate. And this is the brat I suppose?”

Ranma’s eyes narrowed and he replied before Rika could. “I’m not a brat Old Man. I’m just Ranma, a martial artist,” he said almost challengingly.

“Well I’m the captain here, that means I’m in charge. Which means until proven otherwise, you’re a brat in my eyes,” the man said with a sneer. “Still, you seem to have a lot of energy. Do you want to see how you do against our obstacle course brat? Do well enough, and maybe I’ll upgrade you to kid instead of brat.”

Rika winced, but Ranma replied just as she knew he would be hopping on his feet and saying “Sure if you want to be humiliated, Old Man.” Watching Rika shoot was interesting, and yeah okay it made him change his opinion of guns a bit. But they still seemed a little lazy to

Ranma. Anyone could pull the trigger after all. But if this guy thought he was going to be intimidated by some kind of obstacle course, he didn't really know what he was in for.

The captain's eyebrows rose incrementally at being called old since he was only in his forties. "Then get going," he ordered.

Several minutes later, he was staring at Rika then back over to the obstacle course, where Ranma was literally hopping through it, laughing all the while as several other SAT people who had been on the course training gaped at him.

He was even helping a few of them along, waiting on top of the rope tower, hauling them up one after another. He was extremely strong for his age, as strong as a normal man. But it was his speed, dexterity, and agility that were just incredible. Only his best troops could have done as well, and they certainly wouldn't have been having fun as Ranma was.

"Okay, color me impressed, kid," he shouted, gesturing Ranma over to join them. Ranma did so, while the rest of the SAT people on the course finished their run. "Maybe all the stories I heard about you martial artist types are actually true."

He looked over at Rika, gesturing with his head towards Ranma. "You're going to keep the kid?"

"Yes sir," Rika replied promptly, ruffling Ranma's hair who was smiling at being 'upgraded' to 'kid'. "I think we've got a lot to teach him and he's kind of grown on me."

"Good." He looks back at Ranma thoughtfully while Ranma smirked up at him, holding up a V sign. His lips twitched at that, and Ranma's smirk widened slightly to see if. Evidently the captain wasn't just an old sourpuss, there was a sense of humor somewhere in there. But when the captain spoke his voice was still stern. "But you're still on your day off. I expect you both back here Monday, but for now, get out of here."

Ranma smiled, patted his stomach and left quickly heading towards the main building. Rika stayed behind looking at her captain quizzically. "Sir?"

The captain looked at her with a faint smile. "You thought you were the only one with a connection to the martial arts world? I have an old friend of mine from way back who used to own a dojo before his wife..." He shook his head. "Let's not go there. Anyway, I actually know a good deal more about the martial arts world than you might think. That kid's good, **very** good for his age, but is not nearly as tough or as skilled as he could be the future. And I've seen reports on his father, and more importantly," he finished sternly, reaching over to thump her on the shoulder, "his teacher."

Rika winced. "I didn't mean to hide it, Sir, I just well who would believe that there was someone could live as long as Happosai has."

"I talked to some witnesses of Happy's little escapades," Lieutenant the captain growled. "He's real enough to me. So the idea of helping to train up a young martial artist right, well that's not something I'm going to turn down."

Rika frowned but nodded. It sounded a little too clinical when he put it like that, whereas she was more interested in just helping Ranma grow as a person beyond the mold Genma had forced him into. But, she couldn't argue with it either. "Still Sir, I don't know how long our training is going to keep his attention. Give him a few months, and I don't know if it's going to push him at all." That took her pride to admit it, but Ranma was already far more agile and fast than she was.

The captain waved her concerns off. "As I said, I have connections on the martial artist side of things. Let me handle that. You just see to the rest of his education. And figure out what to do if his father comes for him, which he certainly will."

"Permission to shoot first, sir?" Rika asked, her tone saying she was not at all joking.

"Permission granted, but don't expect your first shot to be the last," her captain replied with a laugh, waving her off.

OOOOOOO

Genma growled irritably sneaking in from the roof into the precinct. "Now, if I were the records room, where would I be?"

Several hours later, he had turned his attention to exploring each separate office, only to find most of them had their records on computers. Foiled, Genma was just to the point of basically taking one of the policemen hostage in order to get some answers, when he overheard a conversation.

"... So, it's hoped that the boy's aunt will be able to keep out of trouble at least. Still, with that attitude and his already apparent physical abilities, that's going to be an uphill battle," a female voice was saying. "Yet for us, the paperwork's all finished anyway, so I think we can call this case closed."

Instantly moving in that direction, the large man hit himself in a corner far better than anyone his bulk should be able to, watching as a middle-aged woman with a severe, almost cold expression left the office that she had just been in, shaking hands with the inspector there in a perfunctory manner before leaving. The man muttered something about her being a cold fish, but Genma wasn't listening. Instead, he was watching her and the folder she was holding under one arm.

Unfortunately, she entered an area filled with more police officers, and Genma had to pull back, retracing his steps up to the roof and out. Outside he waited for the woman to leave, cursing volubly as she did so in a car. "Honestly, doesn't anyone walk anywhere these days? Reliance on guns and technology has weakened the Japanese people."

Hopping away, Genma kept the car in sight, until she pulled into a stop. There, he hopped down and rushed forward. Before the woman even knew what was going on, she felt something hit her on her neck, and she was falling unconscious. Hours later, she woke up in her apartment with her fridge raided to the bedrock, and all of her spare change and yen taken. Also missing was the folder of the case of one Ranma Saotome.

Long before the woman woke up Genma was off, reading the folder as he moved away from the scene of his crime. After all, he was just trying to get his boy back, surely anything you did in the pursuit of that could be seen as allowed even under the code, right?

Shaking that thought off, Genma read through the file, scowling as he learned that the police had decided he was no fit parent for his boy and had even gotten the local magistrate to agree on removing Ranma from his custody and slapping an arrest on sight order for Genma. "How dare they! Stupid pencil pushers, what did they know about the Art!"

Then he read the name of the woman who had taken his son in, and his eyes widened. "Now there's a name from the past." The file even listed the address she was staying in, and he smiled. It might take him a few hours to get there, but he'd soon have the boy back.

OOOOOOO

Back at the apartment that evening, Ranma was gleefully telling Shizuka what he'd been doing with Rika, explaining the obstacle course which he thought was just plain fun, and how he'd then gotten into a fight while Rika was talking to the captain, resulting in a split lip and black eye. "That martial arts instructor they have is actually pretty good. Not up to my level of course, but still darn good for someone who hasn't had my training. And when he started to grapple with me, I was actually in danger of losing!"

Shizuka's eyes had glazed over, completely uninterested in martial arts or combat of any kind, as Rika had rolled her own eyes. How the kid had been able to get in trouble in the five minutes he'd been alone she didn't know, but he'd certainly made an impression on her fellow SAT officers. After seeing the bag next to her girlfriend though Rika didn't linger to give her side of events. No way did she want to get dragged into the explanation Shizuka was going to give Ranma soon.

When there was a break in the conversation, Shizuka's eyes slowly came into focus again. "Well, that was all interesting Ranma and happy that you have made a friend at least."

"I wouldn't call Musa a friend," Ranma interrupted, shaking his head. "He's a little too old for that, I mean he's thirty years old!"

Shizuka laughed at that with all the enthusiasm of a twenty-something who firmly believed that she would be so for the rest of her life before going on quickly. “Anyway, I promised to tell you something about why your eyes gravitate here she said pointing at her chest wiggling it deliberately and giggling as she watched Ranma’s eyes track the movement before he looked away resolutely. She also noticed his physical reaction, since it had been on display since the moment he got back. His eyes really hadn’t been able to leave her chest for very long even as he was talking about what he and Rika had been up to that day.

“Right?” Ranma muttered, shaking his head I mean right just what is up with that he asked plaintively. Looking back at her chest. “I mean it’s like I can’t even look away sometimes!”

Shizuka smiled at that and began to pull out several dolls from her bag, setting them on the table in front of the sofa as she knelt there on the other side. “Well Ranma, first of all, you have to understand that there are fundamental differences between boys and girls, that really explain why they are called boys and girls. It ties into where everyone comes, and how babies are made...”

Reiko was upstairs putting together her latest gun, a Springfield M1A Super Match. She had just lovingly set the sight in place, raising it to her shoulder and looking down the sight when she heard a scream of “It goes where?!” from below.

“I see that Shizuka has started to educate the poor boy. Better her than me.” She heard Shizuka laughing, and shuddered. “Much better her than me.”

OOOOOOO

The next day, Ranma was practicing roof popping having been told he had the afternoon himself because Rika and Shizuka wanted to spend some time together before Rika had to report for work at the SAT with Ranma in tow. Shizuka still had a week before school started from the summer break, and she would be spending time looking for tutors for Ranma. Ranma wasn’t looking forward to that, but he figured that it was part in parcel of living with the two women.

A lot of what it happened over the past few days he wasn’t quite certain he liked but there were a few things that he really did enjoy. First of all, he liked having an actual bed to sleep on. True, it was a pullout bed, but it was still a sight better than the floor of any hotel or tent where he and his father stayed since most of the time the old man wouldn’t spend extra for a double. For another, he liked Rika and Shizuka. They were funny, seemed to like him, although a lot of their conversations included things, he had no idea and were just interesting to be around.

He didn’t like the sympathetic or sad looks he got when he had to admit his ignorance about various topics. It made him feel weak, and one thing that his father had pounded into Ranma’s head almost from the get-go was that a martial artist could never be weak.

Yet this was offset by having three square meals a day, which apparently was going to be a major fixture here. Shizuka had explained to him - after the ultra-embarrassing, we will never talk about this conversation again topic had been examined in minute detail - that Ranma was actually just shy of being malnourished. They had caught it early enough it was possible for him to get over it quickly enough with the right foods and continued exercise. But even so, it was annoying to think that his father had shortchanged him there.

Although if they think they're going to get me to go to school without a fight they have another think coming, Ranma thought grimly. He was all for a lot of the changes in his life, but that one, that one he was going to fight tooth and nail on when it came up. The idea of tutors was okay, but he still didn't see the point of science or math or even language arts. If Ranma could read, what did it matter if he could write? He wasn't going to be making any scrolls of his own anytime soon.

But the girls had also bought him clothing that morning and had even stated that in a few days Shizuka would be taking him out to shop for an actual bed of his own rather than a pullout bed which sounded kind of cool for Ranma. In fact, over a period of two days going on three, the apartment had become something Ranma had never actually had before: a home.

"There you are boy!" yelled a voice nearby.

Hearing that familiar voice, Ranma groaned, coming out of his midair kata and landing easily on the next rooftop, twisting around to look at the where the voice had come from.

There his father stood, his arms crossed as he stood on another rooftop nearby. Well, it's good to see that you have kept up your training at least. Still, three days lollygagging around is enough. Let's go," the old man said brusquely gesturing over his shoulder with a twist of his head.

"...That's it!?" Ranma shouted back, his happiness at seeing the old man disappearing instantly. "You put me through **that** training again Pops and you're not even going to apologize?"

Genma huffed, shaking his head sadly. "I'll apologize, but you have to understand that there must be sacrifices for the Art.

"Yeah," Ranma said leaping backward without even looking where he was going to land on another roof further away from his father. "Well, so far, all you seem to have been sacrificing belongs to me. My sanity and my health!"

"And my time boy," Genma growled back leaping after the youth. "Do you think I've spent the last seven years of my life trying to make you the best martial artist you can be without sacrificing things of my own? And that doesn't even mention the wounds you gave me when under the influence of the Neko Ken!"

“Judging from that stomach of yours you haven’t sacrificed nearly enough!” Ranma shouted back, giving his father the stink eye before going on with a laugh even as he put another rooftop between the two of them. “Besides, you’re no longer in charge of me. The police have decided that you are no longer fit to be a parent! They even got a judge is okay on it, so it’s all nice and legal,” he teased.

“What does legality matter in the bonds of family. You can’t honestly be saying you don’t want to be my heir any longer, are you?” Genma asked, suddenly afraid.

“I’m not saying that all pops, but you need to realize that I’m not going to go along with things any longer either. I want to live with Rika, she took me in, your sister I mean. And when we were going to tell me about her or my mom, this Nodoka woman, anyway?”

Genma stumbled, looking around fearfully. “Don’t say her name!”

“So there really is a reason why she’s not in my life,” Ranma said feeling a bit of sadness at the idea. Not much, he hadn’t had that long to get used to the idea of even having a mother, let alone missing time enough to miss one though.

“Yes, there is,” Genma said, shaking his head. “Just hope we never actually run into her again. For both our sakes. Now come on boy, enough of this! We need to get out of here before those foolish police realize that I’ve come for you.”

Ranma grinned as a crack was heard from a rooftop in the distance behind him. “Too late. Let’s see how good you are at dodging bullets Pops, after all the talk about how guns are weak and everything.”

He watched as his father danced away quickly, the bullet impacting the roof he’d been standing on. Another bullet was already coming his way and Genma yelped as he dodged side, staring around him and wondering where the shots had been fired from. It was only when Ranma started to race towards a specific rooftop more than a thousand yards away and four blocks away that he realized how far the shooter had been.

Amazing, whoever is firing at me is an incredible marksman, Genma thought almost admiringly as he dropped into an area between two houses, landing on a roof there. He ignored the father and the tiny baby girl who was staring at him from where they had been playing in the backyard of their house, racing along the fence, then leaping off into the street where he landed on a car, then up and over it.

On her rooftop, Rika cursed, growling angrily as her brother dodged in and out of sight. “The old guy is good,” she acknowledged, ratcheting another round into her new rifle.

Next to her, Shizuka pushed herself up from where the two of them had been laying out in the sun on the roof of their apartment complex. “You really are shooting right off the bat, aren’t you?” she said only slowly waking up from her catnap.

“You heard about the Neko-Ken, if that wasn’t enough you already said that Ranma was malnourished, and those concussions you mentioned too! Are you really arguing that Genma deserves this?”

“No,” Shizuka said with a yawn, “I’m just wondering how much troubleshooting like this in the city is going to bring to you.”

“I’m using a silencer,” Rika muttered, even as she reached into her duffel bag, pulling out two large handguns. She clicked off the safeties and then waited by the rooftop as Ranma arrived, making one of those fantastically long leaps of his, rolling as he landed.

“Okay,” he grunted, moving one of his shoulders, “That was a bit too far.”

He looked up at Rika, then over at Shizuka, blushing hotly and turning away, growling out, “Come on! I don’t want to see that, especially not after yesterday!”

“A part of you does not seem to be going along with that concept,” Shizuka said with a giggle, gesturing down to Ranma’s crotch which again showed his rising attention to the girls. Shizuka had noticed that the boy was gifted in that area when giving him his physical, but she had decided that making fun of him for it was going to be her new pastime until Ranma gained some self-control.

Before Ranma could reply to that, Genma had leaped after the boy, coming up from the street. He squawked then quickly changing his direction very in midair as only a master of the Anything Goes School of aerial combat could when another bullet rang out, silenced but still audible to their ears.

Genma landed on the rooftop as he continued to dodge, shouting out “Is this any way to,” dodge, “greet your,” dodge, “honorable elder brother?”

“I don’t see an honorable anyone here!” Rika shouted, even as she continued to fire, controlled quick shots, first one handgun, then the second. The next bullet actually hit him in the shoulder, and he howled in pain, but the bullet didn’t actually penetrate, bouncing off, in such a way that made Ranma’s eyes widened from where he was squatting down on the far side of the roof. “Damn, Pops has been holding out on me.”

“I have not!” Genma huffed, rolling off the roof for a second holding on by his fingers before flipping himself upwards. “I said it would be decades before you could take shots like that, and I meant it.” This momentary distraction cost him, however, as two more bullets slammed into his chest, and he stared across at his little sister. “You’re really trying to kill me...”

“Oh, they’re rubber, get over it!” Rika growled. Oh, the first bullets she shot from her new rifle hadn’t been, but they had been along the lines of a warning shot. “Quit being a baby.”

Several more bullets flashed out, leaving dangerous welts on Genma’s body, as he tried to do desperately to dodge this way and that. But without the muzzle flash and with his sister

doing a good job of camouflaging where she was aiming, one out of six shots hit. When she clicked dry on one of her handguns though he charged forward, only to be surprised as she did the same.

She used that pistol to block his first blow, pushing it upwards, and putting her other gun under his chin. He ducked backward and they danced away from one another, with Genma growling angrily. He was being hampered by the fact that he didn't honestly want to hurt Rika. A woman she might be, but they were family, whatever her last name change might mean legally. And there were just some lines that Genma would not cross. On the other hand, beyond using rubber bullets instead of regular, Rika was pulling no punches at all.

Still, once he closed there was no way she could win. Watching, Ranma knew it, although seeing Rika use those large handguns had been interesting. There was definitely something there, something cool could be done with the guns, he was sure of that.

However, that did not mean that Ranma was just going to let his old man win. Not after being put through the Neko-ken again. Flicking up a rock with a foot into his hand he waited, then hurled it at his father's feet just as he was about to launch into his final series of attacks on Rika.

The rock hit his ankle, causing Genma to lose his balance and fall sideways. He turned this into a roll but another rock flung at his feet caused him to lose control of his roll's trajectory. When he came out of it he stumbled right into where Shizuka had been standing, his head slamming into her bikini-clad bust and sticking there as he flailed.

"I knew it!" Ranma shouted laughing and hopping up and down like a jackrabbit pointing at Shizuka. "That chest of yours really is a black hole!"

"They are not!" Shizuka pouted, pushing the fat older man out of her chest, and then winding up with a punch to the temple that hurled him several steps sideways.

Rika blinked.

Ranma blinked.

Genma blinked. Then he stumbled, his legs going out from under him as he turned to look at Shizuka before his eyes rolled up in his head as he fell forward, splayed out on the roof.

"Is he unconscious!?" Rika gaped, shaking her head. *I knew Shizuka was strong but that was something else.*

Shizuka knelt next to get men felt for a pulse and nodded. "Out like a light, with a possible concussion. She then looked down at her own hand and said. "Also, ow, I think I might've broken my wrist."

"I'll teach ya how to throw a punch for real," Ranma laughed, shaking his head as he looked at his Pops. "Though you do realize, even if you put handcuffs on him, they're not going to hold him for long."

"Thanks for your help there, kid," Rika said looking over at Ranma. "Although I don't think you meant for it to turn out like that."

"No, I thought you'd be able to get the upper hand for a bit, but my Pops is too good."

Rika grimaced at that, acknowledging the point. Once Genma had closed in with her, she hadn't landed a single bullet or punch. Even a minute longer she would have been beaten aside, and he would've no doubt taken Ranma with him. That made her smile. "I note that you didn't immediately go with him like you threatened to do when we mentioned school, Ranma."

Ranma flushed looking away and poking his fingers together sheepishly. "Yeah well, he didn't apologize for the Neko-Ken, except saying that old lame line about it being a sacrifice for the Art, that was not cool. Besides, I might be getting interested in those guns of yours after this," he said gesturing to the litters of rubber bullets that were scattered across the rooftop.

"That still leaves what to do with him," Shizuka said nudging Genma's side with a foot.

"Ship him to Timbuktu," Ranma suggested. He heard the name described as someplace far away, so he figured that was a good idea. "He'll come back eventually, and maybe by then you two will have made the mistake of forcing me to go to school so I'll want the second option."

"How about someplace in the Americas or Africa," Rika said with a wicked grin, not acknowledging the rest of what Ranma had said, thinking he was joking. Probably. hey had time to change Ranma's mind on that kind of thing if they sent Genma far enough away anyway.

"That works," Ranma said with a nod. "I'll go get a box. But ya should hogtie him and cuff him for good measure, just in case."

Rika shook her head with another laugh, and hearing the sounds of distant sirens, began to open up as her cell phone to start dealing with the aftermath of this little escapade.

Whatever was going to happen from here on, I really don't think it's ever going to be boring having Ranma around.

End Chapter

Well, there you have it one and all, my idea of a new Ranma/HOTD crossover. I am uncertain if I was able to portray Ranma's age accurately in this, but I hope I came close enough. From here on practically everything but the eventual arrival of the zombies is up in the air. What I don't want to see in this is me using the same girls and the same tropes as in *Horse of the Dead*. So Ranma is going to have a lot of issues with being around girls and how to deal

with them. We're not going to see any speedy teenage relationships going from near zero to one hundred. We're also not going to head straight into the zombies, there will be at least a dozen chapters of 20,000 words or so to deal with building up to that point, introducing characters from both animes, showing Ranma having adventures on his own with his Pops and Rika and so on.

Anyway, I hope you all like to this, but remember, it probably won't be picked up as a full-time story for a long while. I am serious about my desire to finish at least two of my other works before taking on a new project full-time. That being said, Happy New Year everybody!