

Pig Tailed Girl's Secret

Chapter 12 Ryoga's Hell

Ranma was happy to see Ryoga, he saw the boy as a friend and something more. He hadn't seen Hibiki in so long. Kuno and Akane looked between the two. Ranma was looking at Ryoga like someone who'd been missed, while Ryoga who had been so fierce before had melted looking at Ranma like he couldn't believe the boy was in front of him. Nabiki was the one who broke the silence. "Ranma-sweetie, who is this?"

"This is Ryoga Hibiki, we went to school together. He was my first real friend." Ranma said. Hibiki blushed faintly.

"Why does he want to kill your dad?" Akane asked.

"Yeah...why do you want to kill Pop?" Ranma asked, not in an against it way, just a curious way.

"Ranma, because of him I've seen hell, he ruined everything." Ryoga shook in anger.

"Ooh spill the tea." Nabiki said wishing she had some popcorn.

"You want me to share my tale of woe?" He asked.

"Uhh sure..."

Before he could talk his stomach growled. His whole face turned red. “I umm I...”

“You haven’t eaten in awhile haven’t you?” Ryoga’s blush grew. He just nodded. “Wait here, don’t go anywhere.” Ranma looked to Kuno. “Don’t let him leave.”

Kuno ordered some food at Ranma’s request it was all specific stuff.

Saotome left, and after a few minutes he came back with armfuls of different breads. Ryoga’s stomach growled, and he dug in. Kuno set up a picnic right there. “I’ll start things off.” Ranma said.

Years ago Ranma went to an all boy’s school, where he met Ryoga Hibiki. “Pops thought it would toughen me up being around other guys all the time, he always said weird stuff like I had to be a man among men or something like that. School was intense, especially at lunch it was always a battle ground, boys fought over each piece of bread. It was brutal!” That was how they met.

Ranma rarely ate so he didn’t hold back when it came to getting a decent meal. He took Ryoga’s favorite sandwich and it was the last one. This happened every day, starting a fierce rivalry between them. “Sounds like you took his lunch.” Akane said. “Are you two really friends?”

Ryoga finished chewing and swallowed. “You don’t know anything woman...” He huffed. “I might have been the top dog until Ranma came along but I had my own problems.”

The Hibiki family had a problem with...direction...

Ryoga rarely saw his parents in person, they were always traveling, often leaving him alone for long periods of time. He was financially set up and covered but he couldn’t even worry about that. They had a financial manager that made sure their home was always taken care of.

He started having his own issues, getting lost on the way to school. The school took mercy on him, when he finally made it to class he had a mountain of homework and various assignments waiting for him. When he tried to go to get lunch he got lost, and he always showed up late so usually his favorites were always sold out. A teacher always had to take him to the bathroom so he wouldn’t get lost. It was embarrassing. “No sense of direction at all.” Kuno said.

“What does that have to do with Ranma?” Nabiki asked.

“He...he noticed...” Ryoga had been too proud to ask for help, lot of what was given or set up for him was out of pity.

“Hey Ryoga!” Ranma found Ryoga outside his house.

“What are you doing here Ranma?” Ryoga hissed defensively.

“Nothing buddy, wanna walk to school together?” Ryoga blinked.

“Uh sure...fine...whatever...” They walked to school and Ryoga arrived on time, which almost never happened. Usually he stayed in class over night which didn’t really count. Usually if he went home it was a coin toss when they’d see him again.

“So he walked you to school every day?” Nabiki asked. Ryoga nodded.

“That’s so sweet!” Kuno said.

“I was the strongest guy in school, and Ranma came in and hit my life like a hurricane, he was stronger, faster, made everything look so easy. It bugged me!”

Ranma chuckled.

“We started fighting every lunch, and he messed with me and made me race him to the lunch room.”

“But wait...” Akane put the pieces together.

Nabiki smirked. “Clever Saotome.”

“I didn’t realize what he was doing at first, but when I made it to the lunch room I was able to get my food while also paying for Ranma’s meals.”

“Really?” Akane shot him a look.

“I did win the race, and I was hungry.” Ranma did what he had to, to survive, he often antagonized other boys scoring food for breakfast or dinner as needed. He put his sport services on bid to earn money.

“Things were rough at the start, but then Ranma didn’t show up to school for some reason, things sucked...” Things had gone back to Ryoga’s normal and the lost boy lost his anchor for the week.

Nabiki looked to Ranma. “What happened?”

“Oh um...” Ranma rubbed the back of his head sheepishly.

“It was a long time ago.”

Kuno put his hand on Ranma’s shoulder. They shared a look, something Hibiki noticed. He sighed. “Pop found my emergency stash of money and blew it on a bender. He didn’t work just drank and drank, so we had no money to pay bills. I took the week off from school to do some odd jobs to make sure we didn’t lose our rental space.”

Ryoga's hand balled into a fist. Kuno wanted to get his sword and run Genma through.

'I knew something was wrong...' Hibiki thought Ranma was the golden boy, he had no idea the pain and problems he carried. He had actually tried to go check on Ranma at some point it took him a couple days to find Ranma's rental space.

Ranma wasn't there, but Genma was...

"Ranma are you here!" Ryoga called out. Genma groaned.

The man was clearly drunk. "Boy? Is that you?" He couldn't see clearly Ryoga looked like Ranma with booze goggles.

"Where have you been?!"

"Ugh he reeks!" Ryoga pinched his nose.

"What's you say boy!?" Genma threw a booze bottle at Ryoga who dodged. He got up, moving aggressively. Who knows what he would have done to Ranma had he gotten his hands on him, or Ryoga in this situation. Thankfully he had whisky legs and he stumbled and fell.

Hibiki ran. He never told anyone what he saw that day but he realized something. Ranma Saotome had a sucky home life. Even though he didn't see his parents he knew they loved him. Birthday cards, christmas cards, monthly check in notes if they missed each other, daily or weekly calls to check in and

give updates, it was phone tag but there was still love behind everything.

Ryoga remembered that and it was another reason why things changed.

“So you missed him?” Nabiki brought things back on topic.

“I uh...well...maybe!” Ryoga blushed. “I realized things were better when Ranma was around.” After Ranma came back he never explained what happened just moved on like everything was normal.

“He started inviting me over, which was great I got to enjoy a proper shower or a bath. Even sleeping on Ryoga’s couch felt like heaven back then.” Ranma remembered those days fondly. He had no idea Ryoga was offering him an out, giving him a place to crash so he didn’t have to go home to Genma. Hibiki didn’t understand how small this kindness felt in Ranma’s life. “We studied together, watched movies together, played games together, ate together, we even bathed together. It was the best.” Ranma said. “We even slept together one time.”

There were gasps. “I mean in the same bed!” Ranma blushed. “Ryoga had a really bad dream.”

“Shut up!” Hibiki said with embarrassed anger. It was a bad nightmare, he was lost in a maze struggling to find the exit,

but no matter how fast he was or how strong, it didn't matter he reached the end an old man. He collapsed and withered away alone...

Having Ranma in his bed, close, it helped keep the nightmares away. "Is it just me or did these two seem like a married couple?" Someone whispered.

Ryoga coughed.

"I started noticing things. Ranma would forget his books and he'd take mine or push himself on me so we'd share."

"Yeah...Pop kinda...pawned my school books..."

"What?!"

'That rotten...' Ryoga growled.

"It's fine...it's in the past...I had Ryoga so it all worked out!" The excuses just came out. Hibiki blushed. "Ryoga was the toughest guy in school I loved sparring with him."

"We...ahem...spent more time together and it was okay, a little rough and tough but I'd call us friends." Ryoga said, looking at Ranma with a bit more than friendship. Kuno had seen how Ryoga had looked at Ranma when he saw him.

School was a battlefield, life was a struggle, but the two weirdly anchored each other, just being there in ways that

seemed small but made big changes. Looking back Ryoga pushed himself harder having Ranma as his rival. “Then you vanished again.” Ryoga punched the ground, cracking it.

“Vanished?”

“Yeah kinda.” It had been close to graduation. “Ryoga said he wanted to meet me, he said he had something important he wanted to tell me, he wanted us to have a man to man duel and truly settle things.”

“Uh huh?” Nabiki said, eyeing Hibiki. Ryoga was blushing.

Ranma had waited in the vacant lot behind Ryoga’s house. “I waited him for three days.” Jaws dropped.

“That is some devotion.” Kuno said warmly.

Ranma chuckled. “I was used to it kinda, I knew I should have picked Ryoga up but he wanted to face me properly...” He shrugged. “After waiting three days I was exhausted and then Pop showed up and took me away.”

“I knew it!” Ryoga snapped. “I knew you weren’t the type to run away from a challenge. I wanted to be sure you’d be there so that’s why I challenged you.” He had tried to find them, and it took another 3 days. By the time he found the rental place again Genma had packed up and abandoned it taking Ranma with him.

Panic had hit him. ‘No I have to...I have to find him...I have to tell him...’

“Ryoga, now that I’m thinking about it. What did you want to talk to me about that day?”

Hibiki’s whole face went red and he began to twiddle his fingers. “I um...I...uhh...” Nabiki knew instantly and even Kuno put the pieces together. “There’s more to what happened!” He said changing the subject. “After you left I found notes on where Genma was taking you, so I followed.”

“You did...” Ranma gasped. “Wait did you follow us to China?”

Hibiki nodded. “It was hard tracking you both down, especially with my...condition...but I knew only one thing Jusenkya!”

Ranma’s eyes widened. “You didn’t...”

“I did. On my journey I saw hell.” He cried tears. “If not for the kindness of a red haired beauty I don’t think I’d have survived.”

“Red hair...” Kuno began.

“Beauty?!” Ranma blushed. ‘Wait a minute I don’t remember meeting Ryoga, even as a girl how is that possible?’ He shook

his head. ‘I mean it’s not like I’m the only person in the world with red hair get a grip Saotome!’

He saw how Ryoga blushed when thinking about her. “I’m glad you met someone Ryoga, I always felt you’d find someone.”

“It’s just a crush, I don’t even know her name, but she saved me and took care of me, when I was in a bad place.”

“Don’t be so modest Ryoga, as your friend I’m telling you, you should confess to her. You are a good guy any girl would be lucky to have you.”

“Any girl...right...” Ryoga chuckled.

“I mean it, we went to an all boys school sure, but you are strong, smart, determined, and you are really good looking. You are a catch!” Ranma’s praise made Ryoga’s heart skip a beat.

“Thanks Ranma!” He shook his head and cleared his throat. “After everything Genma did I swore he’d pay for what he did to us...I mean me...” He had done some detective work. “Someone mentioned he was coming here and you’d be joining Furinkan Academy. I had hoped to deal with Genma and then find you.”

Ryoga took Ranma's hands. "Ranma, I'm sorry I was so young and stupid, I didn't know how bad you had it and I wasn't strong enough to protect you. My journey through hell did one thing it made me strong, and I swear I'm not gonna let Genma get away with things anymore. Please if you must hate me I'll accept that, but I'm gonna protect you now!"

"Nope, I'm good, if you wanna kick Pop's ass I totally get it!" Frankly nothing of value would be lost if Genma Saotome was to expire. "But I don't want you to become a killer, you've always been a good guy Ryoga, you deserve happiness in life and after." He held Ryoga's hands. "Let's reunite our friendship and kick his ass together."

Hibiki smiled. "I...I'd like that!"

"Traitor!" Genma came swinging. He'd come too and managed to sneak off to fill some buckets of water.

The man came at them with a bucket of water Ryoga dodged and Kuno covered Ranma. Tatewaki got drenched but not a drop got on Ranma. "How dare you boy, I made you, you owe me everything!" He pointed at him. "How dare you turn against your father everything I've done was to make you a man, strong and skilled in the arts. You dare side with this lost little nobody!"

Ranma glared at his father. “Without me you wouldn’t even be living at the Tendo’s right now. I brought you here, everything you have is because of me.” God holds up a sign: How delusional. “Without me you’d have nothing.”

“That’s just not true Mr. Saotome.” Nabiki stepped up. “If you wanna leave that’s fine but Ranma and I have a contract, he’s gonna be leading the Tendo Dojo now as an instructor and he’ll be paid well. You can cry to daddy all you want but Ranma’s place is secured both in the home and the dojo. No marriage required.” Akane was shocked to hear this, but she was too stunned to speak on it.

“You...what...you can’t do this...” Genma sputtered.

“You and daddy can come to some other arrangement for your living expenses because as of right now you were a guest and you’re pushing your welcome.” She crossed her arms. Ranma had other things going for him but need not give Genma too much information. Technically he also had a boyfriend and a place he could live at outside of the Tendo Home. Be it roof, clothes, food, or a dojo Genma couldn’t take any of it away.

“Tch...” Genma retreated.

“Hold it Genma Saotome!” Ryoga chased after him.

“Wait Ryoga!” Ranma called but it was too late both of them were gone. “Oh no!”

“Not to worry, I’ll have Sasuke follow him, he won’t get lost hopefully.” Kuno said.

Ranma turned to him. “Thanks Kuno, so much!”

Tatewaki got up. “I’m gonna get changed, this cold water is giving me a chill.” He headed off and Ranma watched him go.

Nabiki nudged him. “You might want to follow him.”

“Huh? What for you?”

“Because your ex just sprang up and your new BF might feel weird about it. Especially since he clearly has feelings for you.”

“What?! Ryoga but we weren’t, he’s not...he likes girls it wasn’t like that.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes!” Ranma hissed, but then looked a bit sad. “Ryoga didn’t swing that way, and besides he’s got that red haired beauty.”

“Isn’t that you?” Akane asked.

Ranma shook his head. “No this was the first time I’ve seen him in years. I’d remember meeting him as a girl.”

Nabiki sighed. “Still, you might at least want to talk to Kuno, I feel there’s stuff there.”

“Fine, I’ll talk to him.” He didn’t think it possible for Kuno to be jealous of Ryoga. They were just friends.

To be continued...Kuno’s Devotion

While Ryoga chases Genma, Kuno goes to shower and get changed. Ranma meets up with Tatewaki and hopes there’s not an issue. Kuno shows there’s no issue at all his feelings haven’t changed.