

Shadows of the Past

By: TRN

"Musashi! Nyasu!" Kojiro called through the mist (or was it smoke?) No answer. He carefully stepped forward looking around. "Musashi, Nyas-OW!" he yelled as something struck him in the cheek. He held his hand to the wound when a person shaped shadow began to appear in the smoke. "Musashi?" he called hopefully, hearing the clack of boots against the floor.

"Not Musashi, Kojiro, yes."

"No...no! It can't be!" Kojiro backed away, his heart thumping as if trying to escape.

The figure emerged, revealing a woman more terrifying than the Devil itself. Her jade eyes glowed with predatory delight, her blood red curls bouncing beside her face, the whip in her hand tightly curled like Nyasu's tail. "It's your beloved Rumika, yes. We will finally be married, yes."

"Get away from me!" Kojiro took off running. Almost immediately, he heard a "thwip" as Rumika chased after him, flailing the whip, laughing maniacally. Kojiro yelled as it cracked dangerously close to his shoulder and ran faster. He jerked to a stop as he came across a dead end. Dodging a blow from the whip that broke the trunk behind him to splinters, he ran the other way.

Around him, the smoke dispersed, revealing familiar yellow walls. "Not this place!" Kojiro panicked as he dodged another blow from the whip. He ran the other way as it broke apart a brick wall.

Thwip! Kojiro suddenly tripped as the whip wrapped around his ankle. Rumika dragged him across the floor to her feet.

"You can't run forever, Kojiro. Time to end your childish behavior, yes." In a flash, a Grass Type he hoped he'd never see again was standing above him, smirking evilly. "Rafflesia, use Stun Spore, yes." The yellow powder moved dangerously towards Kojiro. Suddenly something seized his head.

Kojiro jolted awake, trying his hardest to escape from whatever was on his head. The thing thumped against the floor with a "Doide!"

"Hidoide." Kojiro gently picked her up off the ground. "I'm sorry."

"Hidae." Hidoide smiled at him to show everything was alright. Alright? Everything was not alright! They were in Rumika's dungeon! They were going to be...

“Guu.” Kojiro felt Kiteruguma gently wrap her arms around him, her chin atop his head. Almost immediately, he relaxed as he realized he was safe in Kiteruguma’s den, far away from Rumika, extremely far away from... that place.

“Thank you Kiteruguma.” he said out of breath, clutching at her fur. He felt tears sting his eyes but he tried to blink them away.

“You okay Kojiro, meow,” asked Nyasu.

“Yeah. I’m...” An image of Rumika standing over him rested in his head, impossible to shake out. He trembled, causing Kiteruguma to hold him tighter.

“Doi de?” Hidoide asked with concern.

Kojiro smiled at her. “I’m alright. I just need some fresh air.” Kiteruguma let go of him as he placed Hidoide back in her leaf nest.

“We live in a tree, meow. We’ve got air,” Nyasu pointed out.

“Then I just need some time to clear my head.” Kojiro caught himself as he almost tripped over something small hanging around the entrance. It creaked and hissed angrily at him. “Sorry Mimikkyu!” Kojiro said as he stepped out of the den and stared at the night sky, taking deep breaths. *“You’re free now. Rumika’s nothing more than a memory. You’re safe from her.”*

Kojiro was no stranger to this routine. Every so often, he would have nightmares about his crazed fiancée. Every time, he would silently have to remind himself he was free of her and he would try his hardest to do it away from Musashi and Nyasu, not wanting to slow them down. Not to mention, there were things too horrible to retell.

“I am free now. Rumika is nothing more than a memory.”

“Going somewhere?”

Kojiro jumped as he finally noticed Musashi standing against the tree trunk to his left. “You scared me!” he said, trying to get his heart to calm down.

Musashi smirked. “Good. The Rocket Gang’s supposed to strike fear in the hearts of people everywhere.”

Kojiro stifled a laugh. Sonansu, who was right beside Musashi, moved over so Kojiro could join her.

“What are you doing out here? Bad dream?” she said. Kojiro nodded. “What about?”

Kojiro paled as Rumika flashed through his mind. "I'd rather not talk about it. What are you doing out here?"

"Couldn't sleep. Things have been too exciting lately," said Musashi, looking at the Z-Ring around her wrist.

"Sonansu," their friend cheered.

"So I thought why not enjoy the quiet," Musashi continued, looking at the distant multi colored orchids and climbing day flowers. Kojiro followed her gaze, the terror from his nightmare slowly ebbing away. The wind gently blew through the branches above, letting a stream of moonlight illuminate Musashi. Kojiro took a moment to admire Musashi's shining eyes when he noticed something wet sparkling on her cheeks.

"What's the matter?" he asked. Instantly he covered his mouth.

She shot him a glare that said to leave things alone. "Nothing at all. What's there to be upset about?" Musashi said, wiping her cheeks aggressively with her glove.

"Son an."

Musashi tossed a glare at Sonansu. "You keep quiet!"

Kojiro frowned. He knew how much Musashi hated to be seen as weak, almost as much as he disliked seeing her upset. Then an idea slowly started to form. "*No! Bad idea Kojiro, bad idea! But,*" Kojiro glanced at Musashi, "*she needs me. I trust her with almost everything else. Can't I trust her with this?*"

"I'll tell you about my nightmare if you tell me what's bothering you," he said quietly.

Musashi gave him a look of surprise that can not be described on paper then resumed her neutral expression. "Only if you go first."

Kojiro gulped. This was for Musashi. "I dreamt...I dreamt..." Musashi touched his hand in a rare display of tenderness. Taking a deep breath, Kojiro continued on. "I dreamt I was back in a horrible place. I dreamt I was back in that place, being chased by, by...her," Kojiro almost choked.

"Who is she?"

Kojiro could barely speak her name. "Rumika."

Musashi frowned for a moment. Her brow unfurled as she remembered. "Oh." Kojiro nodded. He saw her wince.

"Sosa?" asked Sonansu.

The three of them stood in uncomfortable silence, Kojiro burning with shame. *"I shouldn't have told her."*

"But you know you're safe now right?"

Kojiro turned to her. How could they be sure? What if Rumika was still following them after the incident in Sinnoh? What if his family happened to be vacationing on one of the islands?

"You got away. Isn't that what matters? If they come after you, well for one Hidoide won't take that fiancée of yours lightly." Kojiro smirked at that. "And Kiteruguma will be there to take you away." Kojiro stifled a laugh at that. As troublesome as she could be sometimes, Kiteruguma was good to have around. "And Nyasu and Sonansu and I, we'll be there to get you out."

He smiled at her. "Thanks Musashi."

Musashi rolled her eyes. "Hey, we're friends. It's what we do."

There was a moment of silence.

"And what about you, Musashi?" Musashi looked away. "Musashi?" He gently took her hand in his.

"I had a bad dream too," she said quietly.

"About?"

Musashi hesitated. "I dreamt I was left behind by my...by people who I thought cared about me." That was all she said but Kojiro could tell there was more than what she let on.

"That won't happen," he said. Musashi looked at him bitterly. "I... Nyasu, Sonansu, and I, we...we couldn't get by without you."

"Sonansu!" Sonansu shouted in agreement.

Musashi's gaze softened, her eyes trembling.

For a moment, the two were lost in each other's gaze, Kojiro's leaf green and Musashi's storm blue. Two complete opposites yet unable to exist without the other.

Snap! The two of them clenched each other's hands in fright as something rustled in the forest. It sounded big.

"Gu."

Kojiro and Musashi sighed in relief as Kiteruguma left the forest. She must've left the den while they were talking. Now she carried a leaf of honey in her paws. Kojiro felt his mouth water.

"After a nightmare like mine, I could use a snack," he said cheerfully. He heard Musashi's stomach growl in agreement.

Kiteruguma picked the three of them up under her arm and took them back into the warm den. Mimikkyu and Hidoide came back from the entrance of the den. Hidoide hopped into Kojiro's lap while Mimikkyu sat down beside Musashi's hand.

"Are you two alright, meow," asked Nyasu as he sat beside Sonansu.

Kojiro smiled at him. Rumika scared him, he would always be afraid of her, but he would never be going back no matter what she and his parents would try. And if in some unforeseeable future they did get him in their clutches, he knew his friends would be there to get him out.

"Never better."