

Tea for Two - Nabiki versus Shampoo?!?!?!?

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This story takes place immediately after "Nabiki, Ranma's New Fiancée!", the 92nd episode of Ranma ½. Shampoo has learned of Ranma's (temporary!) engagement to Nabiki but does not know that it has already been broken off.

Shampoo stood outside of the south wall surrounding the Tendo household, the early-evening breeze stirring her dark hair. It was precisely 8 o'clock, the agreed upon time. Armed with her favorite pair of chúi battle clubs, Shampoo was clothed in a red, sleeveless silk blouse with matching, calf-length trousers.

Taking a deep breath, the Chinese girl leapt lightly to the top of the wall and dropped to the ground on the other side. Carefully avoiding the koi pond, she made her way silently to the home's side entrance on slippered feet. *"I'll leave the South door open for you. Everyone else should be out, so we'll have the whole place to ourselves."* As promised, the glass partition slid aside easily; Shampoo removed her footwear and warily entered a dining room, dimly-lit by the hallway opposite the sliding door. A slender figure stood in the hall's doorway.

"Nabiki Tendo! I challenge you!"

"Hello, Shampoo. Right on time!" The slim figure indeed revealed itself to be Nabiki, the middle sister of the Tendo family. Shampoo had expected to find the older girl in a gi, prepared for battle, but instead she wore a simple nightgown, her feet sheathed in fuzzy mule slippers.

"The rest of the family, as well as Ranma and his dad, went out for dinner and a movie, my treat!" Nabiki explained. "That's why we have the place to ourselves. It's sort of an apology for the last few days; at least that's what I told them. I also said that I wasn't feeling very well and I'd probably just fix myself a light meal and go to bed early. We shouldn't be interrupted."

Surprised, Shampoo exclaimed, "You spent money to keep rest of family away for night? Now I know you serious!" Then her forehead creased in puzzlement. "Why then, you no dressed for combat?"

"Before that," replied Nabiki, "we need to talk. But first, pick up your shoes, please, and follow me to the dojo. There are guest slippers if you want them." Nabiki led the way to the Tendo dojo at the north end of the house.

“Why we not just fight now!” demanded Shampoo. “What need for delay?”

“That’s what we need to talk about. Lay your shoes and clubs down here and follow me. Master Happousai, the ol’ pervert, is unaccounted for and I don’t want him walking in on us.” Doing as bidden, Shampoo deposited her chúi and footwear in the nearest corner of the room and, barefoot, followed Nabiki upstairs. Reaching Nabiki’s bedroom, the taller girl opened the door and beckoned, “Come on in!”

Shampoo entered cautiously, half-expecting some kind of trap. It was a simple yet comfortable room. Against the wall on the right was a small desk with a bookcase next to it. On the left was a closet. Opposite the door was a window, the shade drawn down, and Nabiki’s bed. Artwork, decorated the walls. Curiously, a tea set was laid upon the desk, a ceramic teapot gently steaming. Two cups were laid out along with a variety of small cakes.

Nabiki entered the bedroom, locked the door behind her (“Just to ensure our privacy.”), kicked off her slippers and sat herself at the end of the bed, gesturing for the smaller girl to sit down at the other end. “Would you like some tea? It’s a special Oolong blend that I think you’ll like.” When Shampoo assented with a nod, Nabiki rose and poured a cup for each of them. “Have a teacake, if you like.” Shampoo sniffed her tea then took a delicate sip. It was, indeed, quite good.

“What all this about?” Shampoo asked. “Why we not fight?”

“You challenged *me*.” said Nabiki. “And as the one challenged, I want to establish some ground rules. I’m not a martial artist in the same way as you or Ranma. I only practice the Anything-Goes style to keep in shape; I wouldn’t even be able to defeat Akane in a match, much less you.”

Shampoo was confused. “Does that mean Nabiki concedes? You give up your claim on Ranma?”

“No, but I demand that you allow me my choice of weapons. It’s my right as the one challenged and it’s only fair!”

Confident in her own ability, Shampoo agreed. “Why you want to marry Ranma? You love him too, or is it scheme?”

“I do love Ranma,” Nabiki replied. “But not in the way you think. I think of him more as a friend, or maybe a cousin? But not romantically. Not really.”

“Then why all this?” said Shampoo, drinking more deeply of her tea.

"Some people think that I'm Ace." Seeing the confusion on Shampoo's face, she continued, "you know, asexual? But that's not true. I've had crushes. My first crush was Kuno-kun, 'way back in Grade One. I even got him to sign a contract promising him to marry me! Kasumi helped me with it. Kuno signed it, too--in crayon!" Nabiki chuckled. "Kasumi and our teacher were both witnesses! Oh, but you need more tea, don't you?" Getting up again, Nabiki filled Shampoo's cup again, also topping off her own. Then she continued.

"I've got a secret, though. Nobody else knows. Kasumi suspects, I think, but Daddy and Akani are clueless. The truth is that I'm bi. Not all of my crushes were boys."

Caught by surprise, Shampoo nearly choked on a bite of cake. Quickly washing it down with her drink, she asked, "Why you telling this to Shampoo?"

"Because, dear Shampoo, you are one of those crushes!" Nabiki continued before the other girl could interrupt. "I started falling for you the first time I saw you. You're strong, confident, beautiful. How could I not be attracted to you? Well, except for the times when you were trying to kill Ranma, female-Ranma or my little sister. But that's all water under the bridge."

This was all making Shampoo dizzy. Attempting to stand up only to find that her legs didn't want to support her, Shampoo sank back down onto the edge of the bed, draining her cup of tea. She was beginning to feel feverish.

"I've seen the way you cuddle up to Ranma, Shampoo, even when he's in his female form. I've wondered if, maybe, you could cuddle up like that with someone else. Maybe even with someone like--me?"

Shampoo took a good, long look at Nabiki, maybe for the first time. She really was a lovely girl, elegant, slim but not skinny, her dark hair in a cute bob, always fashionable, with a shrewd, intelligent gaze. Was the warm feeling coming over her really just a fever? Or was it something else? Still, something nagged at her. "But Nabiki is engaged to Ranma. Shampoo hear it earlier today." Why did her head feel so fuzzy?

"Oh, that's over with", Nabiki purred. I gave Ranma back to Akane this afternoon. The whole thing started out as a squabble between Akani, Ranma and myself. I was never really serious about it!" Seeing that Shampoo's cup was empty, Nabiki carefully took it from her hands and placed it back on the tray with the tea set next to her own, nearly full cup. Nabiki's hands were warm and gentle.

"Shampoo live by Amazon Code. She only be with ones who first defeat her in battle." The Chinese girl tried to sound confident, even defiant, but the words seemed hesitant even to her.

"And you have been defeated, my dear," Nabiki replied, sliding next to the other girl. "Just not in the sort of combat that you're accustomed to. Remember, you agreed to allow me the weapon of my choice. That weapon is my wit. Right now you can't even hold a tea cup, much

less one of your weapons. Your life is mine, if I choose to take it. By your own code, you belong to me.”

“Hai-ya. So, you kill Shampoo, now, is that it? You end my shame?”

“Oh, my sweet Shampoo,” Nabiki cooed, “there’s no shame in losing to a superior opponent. And I *certainly* don’t want to kill you.” Shampoo wondered when the girl’s shift had slipped from her shoulders to puddle on the floor. Nabiki really was quite lovely. “I’d much rather get to know you better. Much, much better.”

Shampoo whispered, “Shampoo think she might like that.”

“Wo ai ni.”

What the middle Tendo sister did not tell the Chinese girl, as the pair sank onto the very comfortable bed, is that she might have also been aided by the custom blend of tea she had obtained with the help of an herbalist’s son who had owed Nabiki some favors involving the purchase of photographs of a certain sister and a certain “female” friend. That could remain her little secret.