

An Ancient's Return

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Well, this is my Inuyasha fan-fic rewrite.

Hope you all enjoy.

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1 - Stumbling

Aside from her being raised in a bilingual household and having a mother that would never let her 'explore', Atsuko was an average American child. Some liked her generally easy-going, cool temperament—others hated her stiff moral code and the fact that she never resisted speaking up about something she considered wrong. She went through her primary school years with a few good friends and tried to use her secondary school years to 'find herself' as most children do. By the time she had graduated high school, then finished her first year of college she had come to a realization: she had no idea what she wanted to do with herself. Of course the fact that she hadn't really taken more than a few hours in total over her lifetime probably had something to do with her lack of ideas.

Her independent nature put her off from any work that forced her to constantly work on a team. After all, the last time she had been on a team, (a tennis team in her sophomore year of high school,) she hadn't ever properly played doubles simply because she only cared about her own performance. She was told to drop from the team and Atsuko obliged, shrugging it off as something she just wasn't meant to do. Her next attempt at finding out 'where she belonged' was joining a martial arts class after school. This, however, only led to her being overly ambitious and fracturing several bones in her right hand's pinky and ring finger from trying to chop through double boards without knowing the proper technique. Another endeavor had her actually joining a group of her own accord—the school's magazine. This effort ended well enough for the magazine, but after her unsuccessful attempt at leading the group that was putting together the project, Atsuko pretty much swore off groups altogether.

On a more suitable note to her temperament, she decided to begin volunteering at a local animal rescue and rehabilitation center in the middle of her junior year of high school. After being taught the basics, she was let loose to attend to duties set to her by a bulletin board. The animals didn't give her trouble, at least not like humans had in her previous endeavors. Despite the wishes of her parents, she kept this 'hobby' going even through her college courses.

Her mother, Masami, was especially against it because of her not being supervised—a trait that would have been acceptable for a mother, if Atsuko were still a young child. That particular quirk had always bothered Atsuko, since curiosity was also part of her personal mix of traits. Her mother never allowed her out of her line of sight—an issue that kept Atsuko from ever being able to enjoy 'exploring' as a child. Something about a mother's eagle eye piercing your back just sucked all the fun out of trying to find the start of a new adventure; especially when she tended to call you by your full name in a very displeased voice when you tried to avoid her gaze by ducking behind a tree trunk or some pile of debris.

Thankfully for Atsuko's relationship with her mother, such overprotective behavior wasn't allowed to continue via the insistence of the volunteer coordinator of the rescue center. Besides, her mother never took part in aiding her daughter in tasks so she was only being a hindrance when keeping watch over her when she took some of the domestic rescue animals out for walks in the forest surrounding the backside of the center.

Those particular woods, however, had always held a bit of fascination for her; and an opposite feeling for most of the animals she walked through there. It took Atsuko 'till the summer between her second and

third year of college, until she finally decided to thoroughly investigate the area. She did this on her own time—after a midday to evening shift as a volunteer—and took a little time to ask the manager of the center if she knew what she might find out there. All the manager knew for sure was that it bordered on the local ‘national forest’, which was convenient for releasing the wildlife the center rehabilitated.

Why Atsuko even wanted to know ‘what was out there’, she had little idea: perhaps it was the result of some kind of a ‘gut feeling’. Then again, it could have been from watching too many episodes of stuff like *The X-Files* and *Searching for Bigfoot*. Either way, she went with the urge and set out with her backpack, (only containing a small survival kit and a sleeping bag in case she got lost out there,) and a larger-than-average flashlight with new batteries clipped onto one of the belt loops on her dark green jeans.

The night was still a few hours away, so using the flashlight wasn’t likely but she had brought it for the same reason she had her backpack—‘just in case’. This thought was pounded into her brain by her parents as soon as she started volunteering at the center. Her mother always used the excuse of, ‘so that you’ll be safe, even if I’m not around’. Atsuko hadn’t really believed the justification, but she went along with the sentiment to keep her mother from freaking out. Masami’s version of ‘freaking out’ wasn’t pretty to see—try looking up a conniption fit and you might understand.

The trip was proving to be rather uneventful, though Inami did find it odd that she felt as if she already knew her way through the nonexistent paths in this forest. The birds were quiet if they even spoke up at all, and the only rustlings that she heard were quickly shown to be something harmless like a squirrel hurrying to get up a tree from the ground cover.

As she started to feel the need to get back to the center and give up on finding out whatever was making her so interested, Inami stumbled into a small clearing. It held the ruins of a small structure, as if there were once a home had been there ages ago. With a minor moment of hesitation expected of a reasonable person that had seen a handful of horror films, she went to check out the remains.

Nothing about her tiny journey had given her the impression that she would break through the ground within the first ten steps. By the time her brain even registered that rotting wood was what she’d stepped on and broken, it was too late to react. Her outcry was cut short as her head hit the side of the well and knocked her out of her conscious mind.

2 - The Strange and Familiar

Author's Note:

This story contains an OC and an alternate reality of the actual series. If you do not like either of these changes, deal with it if you still wish to read-- otherwise click the 'back' or 'close' button on your browser now.

Critiques are welcome, flaming is not. Flaming in comments will be flagged as spam/reported because I gave you this very clear disclaimer up front.

*I do not own anything related to Inuyasha.
I do, however, own the character of Atsuko Keigl.*

Chapter 2: The Strange and Familiar

Atsuko expected her body to be sore when she woke and tried to get up. Unexpectedly, but fortunately, the experience actually wasn't painful. With that strange bit of information tucked away, she started to take in her surroundings. The walls of the well were covered with ivy and other vine plants, and she took her time tugging on each that she saw to see if they might be her ticket up and out of the well. By this point she just wanted to get back to the center and head home, she'd had enough curiosity-quenching adventure for the day. Just when she was about to give up on the vines and start trying to either climb up the stones or shimmy up like one would in a chimney, she found one that seemed strong enough to hold her weight.

As she was about to start hauling herself up, her mind contemplated her backpack—would the vine be able to hold that as well? She was still wearing it and the vine held as she grasped onto it with all her weight already about five feet off the dusty bottom. Atsuko shook her head, though not too much as to disturb her flora savior, and continued upwards. It was only a few more pulls before she could start to feel her arms burning. “Lactic acid...” she breathed. “Damn it. I get a break like this and I can't even get myself out?!” Her voice echoed her frustrations as she growled out the last bit, gritting her teeth. “C'mon you weakling, move it!” It wasn't the first time she'd talked to herself like this, and she was sure it wouldn't be the last. Atsuko was one of those girls that didn't need rivals to put her down: she did it herself well enough.

She forced herself to get moving again, her eyes shut tight as if such a motion would shut out the growing discomfort. It took her much longer than she would ever admit to anyone else, but eventually she pulled her way to the lip of the well. She dragged herself up and over it before heaving a relieved sigh. “There now, that wasn't so hard, was it?” she asked herself, her arms hanging limp at her sides. Her eyes had been closed most of the way up, and only as she let them flutter open in that moment did she realize she was somewhere else. Somewhere that wasn't the woods at the back of the rescue and

rehab center.

Where there had been fall foliage still littering the forest floor and a small clearing around her as well as ruins before her, now there was only a meadow-clothed hill. The clearing was much larger here, as if nothing aside from short grass dared to grow near the well she had just come from. The playful squirrels and humming cicadas were gone, replaced by the occasional small bird flying overhead. For the first few moments of this recognition, she simply sat there with wide eyes in shock. After that phase wore itself out, she scrambled to her feet in a jolt of an adrenaline rush. “Just where...” she started, not really needing to finish the inquiry aloud. Instead of finishing that thought, she went onto another one, “where’s the center?”

“Mumbling to yourself like a crazy, you are,” a rough voice spoke up from nearby. The sound reminded her eerily of a croak.

Atsuko whipped around, finding a creature already within thirty paces of her. Instantly her mind thought to compare it to a frog, a toad even... but neither walked on two legs or wore what looked like a dress. This... thing... was speaking her mother’s language. Despite the moment making her heart beat at her insides, the chance to speak in familiar words was comforting. “Who are you?” Her voice came out as little more than a timid imitation of her normal voice. She wanted so desperately to sound strong, confident even, but apparently that wasn’t something she could muster.

“You know, the crazy ones are the best in this time of year...” he murmured, a thick tongue lapping out to lick at dark green, bloated lips.

She put her hand to her flashlight, knowing that was all she had to use besides her bare hands to try and defend herself with. Hopefully her intent to beat him to a pulp if he had the kind of ill intentions that she thought he did was much more than what she could muster for the intent of her voice.

“Your first season, I’ll bet,” he murmured, cocking his head a little to the side as he clearly began to use his bulging amphibious eyes to ‘survey’ her. “I couldn’t have picked up your scent as easily as I did without you being unmarked...” He paused in his gazing to lick at his lips again, only gleaning a disgusted stare from Atsuko as he locked eyes with her. “Don’t worry, I don’t bite to mark like so many others do...” With that said, he was only ten paces from her, having closed the gap far too quickly for Atsuko’s liking.

“I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about, zit-face,” she snapped, finally starting to retreat from his deliberate advances. She bumped into something with the heel of her right foot as she did, he took the moment that she turned her head back to see what in the world was stopping her to pounce. The grunt of effort was audible, and as she scrambled back to try and avoid him she stumbled over what had been blocking her. Atsuko curled up, clamping her mouth shut and closing her eyes to prepare for the impending impact—an impact that never came.

“Ugly old fart...” another male voice spoke up, totally different from the amphibious creatures’. It was rough, but much more ‘normal’... almost like the humans that she was used to.

Atsuko fluttered her eyes open, only to see blood on the ground near her. At least she was pretty sure it was blood. The smell was similar to blood, but the coloration was all wrong. Dark, almost like tar, and it

was much thicker than she remembered her own having been when she injured herself. She scrambled to her feet, nearly tripping over nothing in her haste to get away from the gore. Her eyes shifted through the puddle, to the body of the now dead amphibious assailant and to the newest arrival. He was dressed in red, though at least not in something akin to a dress like the creature had, but the clothes were unfamiliar to her. She knew she was probably staring, but it was only long enough to take him in. His silver hair dipped down past his shoulders, though she couldn't quite see where it ended—not that it mattered once she noted his ears. They twitched the moment her eyes made contact, as if they were able to feel her gaze. For the briefest of moments, Atsuko felt the urge to touch them but she shoved the need down in order to not seem any more crazy than she probably already seemed.

“Stupid season...” he muttered, his gaze not even seeming to register that she was there as he pulled up the limp body of the amphibian and wiped off his claws on the dress it still wore. “Nothing but trouble, horny frack-off bastards—” he paused, it was then he seemed to actually notice her. “Don't get any stupid ideas, girl. I didn't do that to 'save' you. He was just an eyesore and a bastard.”

“Even so,” Atsuko said, glancing again at the limp body before returning her eyes to her 'savior', “thank you.”

He didn't say anything, simply replying with a 'tch' before heading off down the hill. At first, Atsuko didn't follow him, but as she looked past him and noticed the village ahead, she took up a jog to catch up to him. “Not to be a pain or anything—” she started, only to be interrupted by her current target for 'follow the leader'.

“—you already are, fledgling.” He muttered. “Just leave. Now. I don't want to deal with more horny demons coming onto my turf to get with you.”

Atsuko pursed her lips, exhaling a long breath softly to keep her calm as best as she could; he was already proving to be an irritation himself. She closed her eyes as she spoke, walking by now so there wasn't as much chance of her stumbling or running into him. “Look, buddy, I have no idea what you're talking about with this 'fledgling' crap—just like I had no idea what that toad thing was talking about the 'season'. Could I just have you help me to get to that village? I need to ask someone how to get home. That's all I—” She was abruptly interrupted as she found herself bumping into him. Her fluffy-eared leader had stopped, and she backed up a few paces as he glanced over his shoulder at her. This time he really seemed to see her, though he did not catch her own gaze as he surveyed her clothes, her backpack. “What?” she started, not being able to ask the second part of that question before he had his own.

“Did you... come out of the well?” his voice was much softer than it had been previous to that moment, Atsuko thought she could even pick out a note of hope in his voice.

“What?” she had asked the stupid question before she'd even realized it, causing him to revert back to almost exactly the same as he'd been before.

“The well in that meadow back there!” he snapped. “Is that where you came from?”

“Not exactly...” she admitted. Atsuko only let the 'answer' hang in the air for a few moments before getting back to her original intent. “Look, I just want to get home, okay? So long as you get me to

someone who's able to help, I'll be out of your hair."

"Yeah, yeah," he muttered, returning to his previous walk with a dismissive wave. "There's an old hag of a priestess down there, she'll probably be able to help."

Atsuko followed carefully behind, unsure of what had just happened or if she could really rely on him for this. As much as it was bugging her that she couldn't just say she didn't need his grouchy assistance and find her way about by herself, she wasn't the kind of independent that was stupid.