

URUSEI YATSURA DISC 21, EPISODES 79 – 82

Episode 79, Story 102: The House of Mendou - Summer X'mas

“The Young Master's combat-shooting skills are much improved!” - shooting instructor.
Fans of Japanese cinema might notice a clever visual reference and get a good laugh - The instructor here is modeled after Tanaka Kunie, one of the most popular Japanese actors.

“Hit!” - a banner held by Ataru.

A trivial, visual pun here is that Ataru is holding a banner that reads “Hit!”, which is “Atari!” in Japanese.

“That's the Kuroko Group's Cargocopter squadron, sir.” - Mendou's employee.

“Don't panic! They're Kuroko. Think of them as a part of the background.” - Megane.

The Kuroko Group (“Kuroko-gumi”) in UY has a basis in real life. In traditional Japanese theater, “kuroko” are stage assistants covered in black veils who act as invisible puppeteers, operate props or change sets, etc. They are officially invisible and not to be noticed.

Historically, Kuroko evolved during the Edo period, so their speech patterns are archaic at times. “What Fireworks!”, for instance, is based on an Edo-era phrase, “Tamaya!,” which alluded to a famous fireworks shop.

The main humor with these Kuroko in UY is that they perform ‘invisible’ acts in such a blatantly obvious manner!

“As you know, in high school baseball tournaments, there are spring tournaments and summer tournaments.” – Kuroko.

Needless to say, high school baseball tournaments are a very big thing in Japan, similar in popularity to collegiate basketball in the US. Scouts from professional teams seek new players during these events.

“Can I consider it to be a banquet?” - Sakura.

Like Cherry, Sakura uses traditional, sometimes archaic words when more modern, trendy words would normally be used.

Here, the word for ‘banquet,’ “enkai,” was used. Enkai can technically be called parties, but are more traditional in nature.

“Please, grab on. Why, you're so heavy... And why do you look so grumpy?” - Ryoko.

”Ryoko... Can't you differentiate between an octopus and your own brother?” - Mendou.

Japanese have always regarded an octopus as a kind of ‘grumpy’ creature, mainly because the early people have noticed that their siphon resembled pouted lips.

“And, awaiting you on the party floor is a deluxe, full-course Shishuu dinner!” - a Kuruko.

Chinese Shishuu dishes are more commonly known outside Japan as Szechuan dishes.

Episode 80, Story 103 : Panic in the Haunted Inn.

“How outmoded!” - Shinobu.

“How old-fashioned!” - Mendou.

“How dilapidated!” - Lum.

This sequence, which goes: “Koshokusouzen/Kyuutaiizen/Houkaisunzen,” results in a kind of humorous rhyme. As such, we've tried to capture the rhythmic feel in our rendering.

“Evil Spirits, Go Away.”

The writings on a wind-bell are a Buddhist invocation.

“H...Her shadow...” - Shinobu.

It is commonly believed in Japan that ghosts cast no shadows.

“Why, customers! Customers, dear!” - Obaasan.

“Baasan, customers! Customers!” - Ojiisan.

“Obaasan” and “Ojiisan” usually refer to “grandmother” and “grandfather,” respectively. In the real world, they are also used to address any old person, regardless of relationship. Here the terms are used for the innkeepers.

“O-” is an honorific that can simply be dropped, depending on closeness of the relationship among the speakers.

“Otama is her name? That nice lady, that is?” - Ataru.

Names beginning with “O-” are rare today, and were much more common in pre-restoration Japan. Female characters that appear in samurai movies often fall into this category. “Otama” is certainly no exception. The added humor here is how befitting the name for this character is, as “-tama” is written with a kanji that means “spirit!”

In addition, “Sudama Inn” (“Sudama-tei”) is a reference to a legendary creature called “sudama.” Tales often depict sudama as monstrous spirits that dwell in forests. It is said that they have bodies of Oni and faces of ordinary human beings.

“Are you really a ghost? Can you do the corpse-candle?” - Lum.

In various legends, ghosts (especially female ones) are often accompanied by corpse-candles. Hence Lum's curiosity.

It is said that such ghosts appear to people at night, chanting half-meaningless invocations like, “urameshiya” (which we rendered as “Prepare to meet your doom!”)

“I'm a Neko-mata!” - Lum.

“Now, why... Why am I a Zashiki Warashi?!” - Shinobu.

“What da hell am I?” - Ataru.

A Neko-mata is a feline goblin in Japanese legends.

Zashiki Warashi are spirits, most often harmless, that can only be seen by children. The story goes that families whose houses are inhabited by zashiki warashi will prosper!

On Ataru's head is a porcelain pig, which is something that's used to hold mosquito-repelling incense!

“Staring! Staring! Staring! A ghost, are you not?!” - Cherry.

“Jiin,” voiced here by Cherry, is actually an onomatopoeia for staring.

“I want Kakigoori! Kakigoori!” - Otama.

Kakigoori resembles those typical sno-cones sold at beaches in the summertime. Basically, it consists of crushed ice topped with fruit-flavored syrup.

Episode 81, Story 104 : Oh! The Memories of Mother

In the convenience store scene, the animators have squeezed in a fair amount of visual references and puns. Just to give you an idea, here we'll explain a few:

The instant ramen noodles are named “Oshii” and “Kubo,” named after the series director, Oshii Mamoru, and the producer, Kubo Makoto. One of the customers (visible just before the “Oshii” ramen shot) here is none other than a caricatured Mr. Oshii!

Underneath the “Oshii” ramen logo is a phrase that reads “Umai!” (“Tasty!”) which is humorous when considering that “Oshii” sounds like “Oishii,” the latter being another way of saying “tasty!” Ryuunosuke picks up an instant ramen. On it is a picture of what looks like an anime show. This one is partly a spoof of “Xabungle,” Sunrise's popular robot-comedy anime series that was being broadcast around the same time as UY. Another side note - instant ramen manufacturers often obtain license to use images of anime characters!

“Shige! Sabu! Kazunori! You're supposed to be house-sitting! What're you doing over here?! Didn't I tell ya to look after Akemi and Tamiko?!” - lady.

The names are those of the chief staff members and their relatives!

“Awesome! How did you come up with such an awesome dish as this?!” - Ryuunosuke.

“That one...? Well, you boil water, warm it up for 3 minutes still in its pouch, then cut it open, and pour it out onto a plate...” - Ataru.

In Japan, many of the most popular instant foods come contained in plastic pouches that simply need to be warmed up. For obvious reasons, they are often considered “cheap” and housewives have a hard time admitting that they use them.

“Awesome! It's really awesome... Your cooking is great, Ma'am!” - Ryuunosuke.

Visible on Ryuunosuke's rice bowl are drawings of "Piyo Piyo" chicks that pop up on other works by Ms. Takahashi.

"My Dad can only cook grainy curry, or oden, or ramen with almost nothing in it! Talk about a real limited repertoire!" - Ryuunosuke.

A curry can get "grainy" by overusing flour; perhaps Ryuunosuke's father uses it to get as much volume as possible!

Oden is a very simple, common dish, somewhat like a stew with tofu, vegetables and chunks of baked fishmeat, etc.

Ramen is almost always served with a few ingredients and garnishes like vegetables and meat.

"Yes... 'Twas the spring of your father's 18th year, as fifteen years of war and civil rebellion came to an end..." - Ryuunosuke's father.

What he describes are historical facts that are randomly put together!

"Fifteen years of war" usually refers to the time period between 1931 and 1945, just before WW2 and includes Japan's involvement with Manchuria. Other tidbits mentioned are from all over the historical timetable. Obviously, when they are put together, they don't make any sense!

The idea is that Ryuunosuke's father is trying to make his story sound exciting and real, by "borrowing" things from history!

"Iskandar," of course, is a reference to Uchuu Senkan Yamato, or Star Blazers.

"See, our water heater's broken down and..." - Ataru.

Bathtubs in most Japanese houses are built next to water heaters. So here, Ataru and co. are on their way to a public bath-house.

"...and so, on today's Wai-Wai- Wide Show we have our always-popular, ongoing investigative report on runaways." - TV announcer.

"Wide Shows" ("Waido shoo") are similar to TV talk shows we have in the US. "Wai-Wai-Waido Shoo" is a trivial pun; "wai-wai" can be considered somewhat like "yeah! yeah!"

"No doubt about it. Boys tend to resemble their mothers, or so they say... Oh boy!" - Cherry.

The line is a pun relying on "oya" (parent) and its homonym that means something to the effect of "Oh, no!"

"M...Maybe it turns out that Mama's some really ugly bitch. No, worse... Could she be an animal, or a Bug Eyed Monster?!" - Ryuunosuke.

This is a reference to "Bem," a classic anime show about three creatures that hope to become human. The three creatures were created by a scientist who had high ambitions of producing beings that would free the world from all the demons. But these creatures turned out to be physically gruesome - they were 'big-eyed monsters' (hence the term 'b.e.m.'). They had special

powers to change their appearance to something somewhat human-like, but when they are fighting the evil demons they reveal their monstrous looks!

Episode 82, Story 105: Full of Sunshine, Full of Amours

“Sakura, did you come here by yourself?” - Shinobu.

“None of your damn business!” - Sakura.

Here, the three guys - Mendou, Ten and Ataru - are drawn to look like Egawa Suguru, then a baseball superstar. Egawa, though one of the most eligible bachelors at the time, was more often made fun of for being quite a cunning character. For more on Egawa, see our Vol. 1 liner notes.

“A handsome man... Let me be a handsome man... I've got it!” - Iruka (Dolphin).

“Get serious!” - Lum.

“Iro-otoko” is often used to mean a “handsome man.” The word is written with two kanji characters - one for “color” and another for “man.” Hence the “colored” man pun!