

URUSEI YATSURA DISC 1, EPISODES 1 – 4

Ep. 1, Story 1: “I’m Lum the Notorious!”

When the left fielder shouts, “Ataru zo! Ataru!” he means (and this is what the subtitles say), “It’s gonna hit you!” But the character whose name is Ataru thinks that someone is calling his name, completely misunderstanding the shouting, with predictable results.

In the scene where Ataru first meets the invader (Lum’s Father), Ataru’s first response is to intone the phrase “Oni wa soto...” This phrase is part of the ritual incantation “Oni wa soto... fuku wa uchi,” which means Oni (devil/evil) outside the house, luck inside. This phrase is typically used during Makemaki (a kind of bean-throwing ceremony intended to ward off Oni). In this case, Ataru is invoking it against real Oni, in an attempt to make them go away.

Ataru saying that he’d “rather go to Iscandar than fight and be killed by an Oni” is a reference to the highly popular Uchuu Senkan Yamato (“Space Battleship Yamato,” better known in America as “Star Blazers”) anime/manga series, created by Matsumoto Leiji and Nishizaki Yoshinobu. Iscandar, a planet some 148,000 light-years from Earth, in the Greater Magellanic Cloud, was the destination of the Yamato on its original voyage, a last-ditch attempt to save mankind from annihilation, much the situation that Ataru finds himself in at this point, though he thinks the trip to Iscandar would be the less risky venture.

When Shinobu calls Lum “oni no onnanoko”--“Oni-girl”--the phrase has a double meaning. There is its literal description of Lum as a girl of the Oni, and its more common slang meaning of calling a woman a “devil-girl,” which roughly equates to calling a woman a “bitch” in English.

The word for Tag in Japanese is “Onigokko,” which, literally translated, means “Game of the Oni.” Naturally, therefore, the Oni would have it as their favorite sport.

Ataru has a number 4 on his running shirt. In Japan, “4” is actually an unlucky number, because it has two different pronunciations--“yon” and “shi,” where the latter “shi” also happens to be a pronunciation for “death.”

The guys interviewed on the news: Tanaka Kakuei was the Prime Minister who opened the way for normalizing relations with China (ending relations with Taiwan), and then went to jail in the Lockheed-Marubeni bribery scandal (think of Richard Nixon for an American parallel). He also provides a textbook example of pork-barrel politics: his home constituency of Niigata Prefecture still think well of him for all the good things he did for them, in spite of all the bad things he did in office--well enough to keep electing him in spite of his poor health. Again, like Nixon, he never admitted his guilt in the scandal. But unlike Nixon, he retained his popularity despite his involvement in scandal. Egawa Suguru, a high-powered high-school pitcher, became notorious for breaking the rules of the Japanese baseball draft, which require that one go to the team which drafts one, or not play at all. Instead, he cut an under-the-table deal to join the Yomiuri Giants, where he really wanted to go, by taking advantage of a loophole in the draft rules. His sneakiness, combined with a lackluster professional record, resulted in a love-hate relationship

with his fans. The joke here is that, even though the fate of the Earth is at stake, he still thinks only of himself.

When Ataru grabs Lum's horns, he starts muttering, "I can get married!" Lum misinterprets his meaning, and agrees to marry him. The joke here is based on a myth that says that an Oni has to grant a wish to whoever grabs its horns. Ataru simply wasn't specific enough about his wish. This particular myth originated in Nara, where deer herds are abundant, and bucks are routinely shorn of their horns as a method of population control.

Ep. 1, Story 2: "It's Raining Oil in Our Town"

The words "Senshoo," "Tomobiki," "Sembu," "Butsumetsu," "Taian," and "Shakkoo" are known as "Rokki," a kind of "Rekichu," or diary reference, in Buddhist reckoning. They refer to how "lucky" a given day will be. These names are used to determine which days will be best for important events, especially weddings.

"Taian," the luckiest day, means "great peace." "Tomobiki," which means "pulling friends" or "friends coming along," is the name of the high school and area of Tokyo (fictional) where much of the series takes place. It also means a day of no winners and no losers, wherein the early morning and late afternoon are lucky, and the rest of the day is unlucky, as opposed to "Shakkoo," which is just the opposite. People try to avoid having funerals on Tomobiki, because, as its name states, it will pull friends along, and cause them to suffer the same fate as the deceased. "Butsumetsu," which means "the death of Buddha," is considered the unluckiest day, and is also the name of the girls' school next to Tomobiki High. "Senshoo" means that the morning is lucky, and the afternoon is unlucky. It also means that one will be lucky with things which one is doing in a hurry. "Sembu" is the reverse: unlucky mornings, lucky afternoons, and luck in taking things easy. The joke about using these names for place names is that no one would normally even think of using them to name a place. Calling a school "Butsumetsu," for example, connotes a feeling of extreme unluckiness--certainly not a place where one would want to send one's daughter.

Early on, Shinobu says, "Don't call for Lum! If you do, she'll take over your life for sure!" The word she uses in Japanese, "toritsukareru," implies something evil is taking over, say, a parasite or an evil spirit. In other words, it means that Megane's plot to sacrifice Ataru in a ritual aimed at summoning Lum back to Earth will result in Lum taking possession of Ataru if it succeeds--a sort of techno-magic pun.

The term "UFO" is used in the series to refer not just to "unidentified flying objects." Lum's spacecraft is referred to as "Lum's UFO," for example. This is because UFO doesn't mean "unidentified flying object" in Japanese. It means basically any alien spacecraft.

Ep. 2, Story 3: "Mail From Space--Ten Arrives!"

In this story, Ten, Lum's cousin, arrives on Earth like Momotaro ("Peach Boy," a famous character in an old Japanese legend), encapsulated inside a peach. In the Momotaro legend, a very old, childless married couple, find the gigantic peach, talk about it for a while, then decide to "cut it up and see!" And bingo, there is a boy inside! In the story, Mrs. Moroboshi says the same thing, and

then tries to slice the peach in question. The peach is very tough, and the knife doesn't go through--because Ten is doing the infamous Ninja sword-master trick! (Stopping the incoming swing of a sword with bare hands above his head, which in Japan is considered one of the most difficult techniques, which can only be mastered after decades and decades of sword training!) Ten's name is also a joke. It's derived from "ten," meaning "the place above the clouds, or heaven" where the Oni reside. Most people refer to "ten" as just that, and use "tengoku" to mean the utopia-heaven. And, on top of all this, Ten speaks in Osaka dialect.

Ten's calling Ataru's Mother "Oneechan" (dear young miss) in one scene is a blatant attempt to get on her good side. In Japan, most women above the age of about 30, especially if they are mothers, would be called "Obasan" (auntie), especially by young children. Calling Mrs. Moroboshi "Oneesan," let alone "Onee-chan," is either high praise or cheap flattery, depending on the situation. Needless to say, she eats it up with a spoon.

Propane delivery: In Japan, propane is a commonly-used fuel for stoves and heating. So propane companies deliver propane containers to homes.

Ep. 3, Story 5: "The Coming of Rei, the Handsome Shapechanger!"

This episode begins with a word play on "Ke." Unfortunately, unless you are able to read the Kanji used in the script, you can't understand it! Mrs. Moroboshi thought that Cherry said "Hair of something," though what Cherry really meant was "some evil thing." Both these words can be pronounced "Ke" in Japanese. Most likely, 99% of the original audience didn't get it as well!

Cherry follows up that pun with a somewhat more successful one on his own name. He introduces himself as "Sakurambo," writing it with kanji that read, "deranged monk." Mrs. Moroboshi misunderstands again, assuming the more familiar meaning of "cherry." Cherry then proceeds to reinforce her confusion by telling her to call him "Cherry," thus completing the pun.

The scene where Mrs. Moroboshi tries to keep her husband from leaving her after she gives Rei the eye is based on a classic Japanese melodrama called *Konjikiyasha*, originally a serial in the *Yomiuri Times* in 1897 by Ozaki Kooyoo, followed by a sequel in 1903 that was serialized in *Shinshoosetsu Magazine*. The story deals with the relationship between a couple, Kanichi and Omiya, who are engaged to be married. But Omiya decides to marry another man, because he offered her a diamond ring. Disappointed, Kanichi makes a famous quotation: "Tonight, I will make the moon cloud over with my tears." Eventually, Kanichi avenges himself by becoming a loan shark, and using the influence that this gives him to ruin Omiya and her husband. Mr. Moroboshi's use of a slightly modified version of this quotation in this scene, combined with the appropriately melodramatic background and music, lampoon yet another classic Japanese story.

Ep. 3, Story 6: "Die, Ladykiller!"

"Tora no Maki" (lit. "Tiger's scroll") is a nickname/synonym for "Anchoko/Anchoku" which means cheatsheet or super-easy study guide. In this case, it's a word play. Since Rei has tiger features, combined with the tiger markings on the scroll itself, his cheatsheet becomes 'Rei's Scroll,' or a literal as well as a figurative 'Tora no maki.'

Ep. 4, Story 7: “Kintaro From the Autumn Sky!”

Mr. Moroboshi's first lines in this story are a quotation from a famous letter called “ippitsu keijoo,” which is considered a best shortest letter, from the Edo era. It was written by a samurai servant, and addressed to his wife. “Hi no youjin”--Literally, “Watch out for fires.” Fire was the primary cause of disasters back then. “Osen nakasuna”--Lit. “Don't make the children cry.” Parents wanted (they still do, of course) their kids to be peaceful and happy, and never wanted them to feel unhappy about anything. “Uma koyase”--Lit. “Let the horses eat all they want.” Back then, people (esp. samurai) raised horses, and horses meant transportation. Actually, much more than that, as a Samurai's job required responsiveness and ability to move about quickly.

The letter is considered the best, because it told the basic necessities for the author at the time, using so few words. The joke here is that Mr. Moroboshi is answering Mrs. Moroboshi's question about what he thinks of his family by reciting the Ippitsu Keijoo.

“Koinobori” are carp streamers, a kind of flag shaped like carp, raised to celebrate Children's Day in the spring (May 5). The joke here is that no one raises them in the autumn.

“Mushiboshi” is what people do to dry out clothes, etc., stored up for a long time, to make sure that bugs and mold don't take up residence in them.

“Urusei” can mean Planet Uru, and is thus a homonym joke for ‘loud/obnoxious’ just like in the series title.

Ep. 4, Story 8: “Gonna Live Like a Man!”

When Kintaro says, “At the very least, take us to Tokyo Tower or Nijubashi!” he is referring to two famous landmarks in Tokyo. Tokyo Tower (which appears at the end of Ep. 2, Story 4, “Mrs. Swallow and Mrs. Penguin,” is to Tokyo roughly what the Eiffel Tower is to Paris (except it is only half as big), and Nijubashi, or “double bridge,” is one of the bridges to the Imperial Palace.

The “Nanking string balls” to which the pre-school teacher refers are known as “Sudare.” Sudare is a kind of meshwork, made using bamboo. It is usually used to roll sushi or futomaki (thick sushi). At many festivals, there are dealers/magicians who demonstrate the sudare by dancing with them, often doing some ‘magic’ tricks by folding, spreading, and twisting the sudare into many different shapes. This has been going on for many generations.

“Issun-hooshi” is the Japanese version of Tom Thumb. Only one inch tall, he nevertheless possessed tremendous strength, and eventually beat up lots of Oni.

About the string of insults Ten hurls at Kintaro near the end of this episode: “Kappa-danuki” is not an animal. Kappa is a legendary amphibian monster, which is sort of like a frog-man, with a sharp beak, and a bald spot on top of its head that holds water. Many centuries ago, people used to cut kids' hair to shoulder-length, and shave the top off. This was customary, and was called the “Kappa” hairstyle. The water allows a Kappa to come out to the land for a short time, just enough to feed on the blood of their victims. “Tanuki” literally means raccoon. In Japanese fairy tales,

raccoons are often portrayed as blatant liars. So, when someone calls someone else a “tanuki,” s/he means a ‘liar.’ By putting these two words together, you get ‘bald-headed liar.’ “Manjuu-hage” is similar. Manjuu is a round ‘cake.’ The word “Manjuu” is sometimes used in conjunction with something else, like an umbrella. Manjuu-gasa (Manjuu-umbrella) is a hemispheric umbrella, so named because Manjuu looks hemispherical when it's cut. Hage simply means bald-headed.

Lum cleaning Ataru's ears is a customary thing for a woman to do to a man she is intimately involved with, whether it be husband and wife, boyfriend/girlfriend, geisha and sponsor, etc.

At the end of this story, when the preschoolers are watching the news reports about Kintaro, they comment that Kintaro is trying to tell them that life is more about money than rank or prestige. The joke is that the kanji “Kin” on Kintaro's garment, which is “Kin” of Kintaro, also means gold and money. So his name is “Money-boy,” and money is what he lives for.

Lum no Love Song (Lum's Love Song)

Lyrics by Ito Akira and Kobayashi Izumi
Music and Arrangement by Kobayashi Izumi
Performed by Matsutani Yuuko

Don't get so fidgety!
You're always looking all over the place!
Stop looking away from me!
More than anyone else, I
love you, love you, love you the best!
love you, love you, love you!
love you, love you, love you!
love you, love you, love you!

Ammari sowasowa shinaide.
Anata wa itsudemo kyorokyoro.
Yosomi o suru no wa yamete yo!
Watashi ga dare yori ichiban
Suki yo... suki yo... suki yo!
suki yo... suki yo... suki yo...
suki yo... suki yo... suki yo...
suki yo... suki yo... suki yo!

On nights when the stars are twinkling,
I dream all about you.
I love you, but you act like you don't know.
I bet you're crazy for someone else by now!

Hoshitachi ga kagayaku yofuke
Yumemiru no anata no subete.
Aishite mo anata wa shiramburi de.
Imagoro wa dare ka ni muchuu.

Ah! Men all have
so many loves.
Ah! You're spreading them all over,
and making me worry!

Aa otoko no hitotte
Ikutsu mo ai o motteiru no ne.
Aa achikochi ni baramaite
Watashi o nayamaseru wa.

Don't get so fidgety!
You're always looking all over the place!
Stop looking away from me!
More than anyone else, I
love you the best!

Ammari sowasowa shinaide.
Anata wa itsudemo kyorokyoro.
Yosomi o suru no wa yamete yo!
Watashi ga
dare yori ichiban.

Ah! How many lovers
does a man want?
Ah! Love only me,
and me alone, always.

Don't get so fidgety!
You're always looking all over the place!
Stop looking away from me!
More than anyone else, I
love you the best!
Always the best!
Everything about you, I
love, love, love,
love, love, love,
I love you the best!

Aa otoko no hitotte
nannin suki na hito ga hoshii no.
Aa watashi dake aishite yo
Itsudemo hitori dake o.

Ammari sowasowa shinaide.
Anata wa itsudemo kyorokyoro.
Yosomi o suru no wa yamete yo!
Watashi ga
dare yori ichiban.
Watashi ga itsudemo ichiban.
Anata no subete ga
Suki yo... suki yo... suki yo...
suki yo... suki yo... suki yo...
Ichiban suki yo!

Uchuu wa Taihen da! (Space is Super Weird!)

Lyrics by Itoo Akira

Music and Arrangement by Kobayashi Izumi

Performed by Matsutani Yuuko

Let's put weird and weird together,
and make it even weirder!
Weird, weird space is
super-weird!

This vast space is
unbearably strange.
Nonsensical things happen on
an everyday basis.
Even so, we mustn't be surprised.
Let's calm down and talk about it.
Hold on. What? What?
Something's weird!
Hold on. What? What? Something's
surely a little weird!
If it isn't weird, it won't be fun.
If you act like it's no big deal,
it'll be too ordinary.
Let's put weird and weird together,
and make it even weirder!
Weird, weird space is

Hen to hen o atsumete
motto hen ni shimashoo.
Hen na hen na uchuu wa
taihen da! da da

Kono hiroi uchuu wa
tamaranaku fushigi ne.
Detarame na jiken wa
atarimae no yoo ni okiru.
Sore demo odoritai shite wa ikenai.
Ochitsuite hanashiaimashoo.
Chotto chotto nani yo nani yo
nani ka hen da wa.
Chotto chotto nani yo nani yo
doomo sukoshi hen ne.
Hen de nakerya tanoshikunai.
Sumashite itanja
atarimaesugiru.
Hen to hen o atsumete
motto hen ni shimashoo.
Hen na hen na uchuu wa

super-weird!

If it gets weird, it becomes fun!
Hearts pop up and fly away
into the night sky!
Let's put weird and weird together,
and make it even weirder!
Weird, weird space is
super-weird!

Let's put weird and weird together,
and make it even weirder!
Weird, weird space is
super-weird!

Let's put weird and weird together,
and make it even weirder!
Weird, weird space is super-weird!
Super-weird! Terrible!

taihen da! da da

Hen ni nareba tanoshikunaru.
Kokoro ga hajikete
yozora e tobidasu.
Hen to hen o atsumete
motto hen ni shimashoo.
Hen na hen na uchuu wa
taihen da! da da

Hen to hen o atsumete
motto hen ni shimashoo.
Hen na hen na uchuu wa
taihen da! da da

Hen to hen o atsumete
motto hen ni shimashoo.
Hen na hen na uchuu wa
taihen taihen taihen da!

The words “hen” and “taihen” in the above song have dual meanings in Japanese, thus making for interesting puns in the original that are practically untranslatable in English. To try and get at least part of the second meaning of “taihen” being not just “super-weird” (as opposed to “hen” being merely “weird”), we made the last repetition of “taihen” at the end of the song translate as “terrible.” Apologies for any confusion--not that things aren't confused enough already, without our help!