

URUSEI YATSURA DISC 5, EPISODES 17 – 20

Ep. 17, Story 34, “Demonic Jogging”

Ataru's quotation of “A lion will exert himself to the utmost even when entering a tiger's den to throw baby rabbits off the cliff!” (Lion wa tora no ana ni haitte usagi no ko o gake kara tsuki-otosu no ni mo zenryoku o tsuksu to iu) is another example of his mangling of Japanese quotations and proverbs. The line is partially based on an old saying from China, “Koketsu ni irazumba koji o ezu,” which literally means, “You can't get the tiger's cubs without entering the tiger's den,” (eg: “No risk, no reward.”) Next, Ataru piles on a reference to the manner in which lions treat their young. Supposedly, because they are by nature independent, lions push their cubs off cliffs so as to foster independence, at least in the survivors. Finally, never content to leave well enough alone, Ataru (aka the Lion) attempts to use the above as a rationalization for crushing Mendou (aka the Rabbit). Despite the fact that a lion would not exert himself any more than was absolutely necessary to accomplish a task, Ataru intends to show no mercy, so he cooks up this half-baked excuse.

Ep. 18, Story 35, “Girl's Day! The Coming of Ran”

Girl's Day, March 3, is celebrated with displays of dolls in traditional Japanese dress, usually arranged in seven levels representing the various tiers of feudal Japanese society, with the Lord and his Lady on top, and their various layers of servants below. These dolls are known as “Ohinasama.” Of course, Lum has her own alien versions of these dolls.

Boy's Day, March 5, is also officially called Children's Day, which has its own set of dolls, decked out in armor. Unlike Girl's Day, Children's Day is a national holiday.

Ep. 19, Story 37: “The Tearful Diary of Tomorrow”

Ataru saying “The early bird gets the worm” is an idiomatic rendering of the Japanese original, “Hayaoki wa sammon no toku,” which would literally translate as, “Waking up early is worth three mon,” mon being an old standard unit of Japanese currency. The meaning is that, by getting up early, one can either find three mon lying around that nobody else has noticed yet, or else find an early bargain while shopping.

When the jogger says, “Take him to the Public Health Center!” or, “Hokenjo,” she is referring to a facility that has no functional equivalent in the US. The Hokenjo provides a number of health-related services, available to the public for free, or at reduced prices, paid for by Japan's national health insurance system. The Hokenjo provides such services as immunizations, AIDS and other STD tests, sheltering stray cats and dogs, and other health services.

When reading Ataru's diary, Lum mentions that the day is “Butsumetsu,” which is a direct tip-off to Japanese viewers that today isn't Ataru's day. 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. For details, see Ep. 10, Stories 19-20, “Pitter Patter Xmas Eve, Parts 1-2.” For Ataru, it seems, every day is “Butsumetsu.”

The ramen delivery-man saying, "Mountain!" and Ataru replying, "River!" are literal translations of the original: "Yama!" "Kawa!" Used this way, these words are a password/countersign combination so common as to be stereotypical in Japan.

Ep. 19, Story 38: "Whose Kid is This?"

The "Tsurezuregusa," by Yoshida Kenko, is a collection of essays from the Kamakura Era, believed to have been written between AD. 1310-1331. It is most renowned for two essays in particular, "Sooheki" and "Makura no Sooshi," which are considered the greatest essays in the history of Japanese literature.

There is a brand of instant ramen called "U.F.O." in Japan. It's possible that Chibi's remark about the alien's spacecraft being "a ¥100 UFO" is a pun on this brand-name, as it apparently existed back when this story was made (early 1982), and would probably have cost about that much a serving.

Ep. 20, Story 39: "Sleepy Springtime Classroom"

The name Shunmin, lit. "Spring Night's Sleep," comes from a Chinese saying: "Shunmin akatsuki o oboezu," which means that the Spring nights are so short and comfortable that one can easily awaken in the morning.

"Sleep! Sleep!" The original, "Nemure, nemure," are the lyrics to Schubert's Lullabye, set in Japanese.

"Acho" is a Japanese dig at Bruce Lee and other chop-socky films. It's essentially the sound made when a movie martial artist uses his art, be it karate, tai chi chuan, etc. She's basically being deliberately silly, copying and parodying Bruce Lee's moves and noises.

Manchinro and Heichinro are two famous Chinese restaurants in Yokohama Chinatown. They get used a lot as names of Chinese characters in Japan, when a writer is feeling too lazy to find anything else.

"Non-stop bullet-cloud!" The original, "Chootokkyuu!" means "Super-Express," referring to the fastest of the Japan Railways (hereinafter JR) trains, better known to most English-speakers as the "Bullet Trains." Put together with the line preceding it, in the original, "Nikyuu yori tokkyuu ga kagiru de no," which means, "No second-class; only the best," this refers not just to the grade to which Shunmin gets promoted, but also to the classes of travel on JR trains: Second-class (Nikyuu), Express, or first-class (Tokkyuu), and Super-Express, or Extra-first-class (Chootokkyuu). However, these terms also refer to grades of sake, which Manchinro has been drinking, and so it is possible that he thinks that sake is what Shunmin is talking about, not her promotion.

Ep. 20, Story 40: "Peach-blossom Poetry Contest"

"Waka" literally means "Japanese song." But the kanji for "song," "uta," which is the "ka" in "Waka," can also mean "poem." This leads to Ataru and Mendou's confusing argument about

whether “Waka” is poem or song, and then to the inevitable “Waka/Baka” (poem/idiot) joke.

Ataru saying, “A peach petal got in my nose,” is nowhere near as funny as the Japanese original, because that line, “Momo no hana ga hana ni haitchatta,” is a pun. The words for “flower” and “nose” are pronounced the same in Japanese: “hana.”

Otomo no Yakamochi was a poet from the Nara Period (AD. 710- 794). He is considered one of Japan's thirty-six greatest poets. More of his poems are included in the Manyooshuu (the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry) than any other poet. He was also one of the editors of the Manyooshuu...

When the Peach Spirit shouts Ataru's name, it would appear to be in response to his per-sistent entreaties that she do so. But given the following situation, i.e., when Kasen hits Ataru and the ground Ataru is standing on, it takes on an added significance: “ataru” is normally an intransitive verb in Japanese, roughly meaning “to be hit.” So the Peach Spirit shouting “Ataru!” is more a cry of, “You're going to get hit!” than Ataru's name. For further reference, see Ep. 1, Story 1, “I'm Lum the Notorious!” and the Inaba-kun TV Special (OVA 1).

When everyone says, “Absolutely! Moroboshi Ataru, number one!” it is a reference to a popular and extremely long-running series on NHK (Japan's public broadcasting network), NHK Nodojiman (NHK Singing Skill Contest). The show travels all over Japan, and in every city, town, and village, they find some twenty or thirty amateurs who are willing to attempt to sing on TV. If their performances are good, they get to sing all the way to the end of their chosen song. If not, they get gonged. A panel of commentators provide additional color. The joke is that, when these people get up on stage, they introduce themselves first by their number (ichiban--number one, niban--number two, etc.), followed by their names, and sometimes what they are going to sing. Kasen's line, “I'm the canary who forgot how to sing!” is originally from an old children's song, a sad lullabye that was popular in the pre-WWII Shoowa Era (c. 1925-1940).

The Peach Spirit saying, “Good-bye, good-bye!” is an in-joke. The original, “Sainara, sainara,” is the trademark of Yodogawa Nagaharu, a famous movie critic. He ended each of his shows with that expression.