

New Years At The Takasu's

“Okay... Got it!”

Ryuuji flips the switch on the power outlet located behind the TV, connecting to the kotatsu's heating element. The kotatsu sat in the very centre of the living room.

“Alright everyone, the kotatsu's ready... Uwah!”

As Ryuuji calls his family to join him underneath the kotatsu, he is greeted by the sight of all three of his daughters already helping themselves to the warmth of the air underneath the kotatsu's heavy blanket. They relished in the warmth wearing their nightwear.

“Nnnngh... So warm...” moaned Katsuko as she poked her head out from under the blanket, her feet protruding from the other side. Haruko and Mitsuko were in the same position at the other sides of the kotatsu.

Ryuuji moved to the side with Haruko's feet poking out of it. It was the only side without anyone's head coming out of it. He lifted the heavy blanket. “There's no space to put my legs anywhere...” He said, dejected. The girls had large bodies, so what Ryuuji saw under the table was like a brick wall. He was almost as big as they were, so him being able to fit underneath the table was out of the question.

“Mmh... Dad... Can you bring the mandarin oranges here...” Haruko tiredly requested. Ryuuji let out a sigh and walked to the kitchen.

Yuuchi enters the living room with his handheld gaming console in hand, his eyes glued to the screen. He wanders to Katsuko's side of the table and sees the space under the table fully occupied by his sisters.

“Oi. Move.”

“Ngeeh...”

Yuuchi furrowed his brows at Katsuko. He placed his little foot on one of Katsuko's large breasts, then gave it a little stomp.

“Hey! I said move!”

“Ngh...”

Katsuko annoyedly groaned as she rolled over and gave a little way for Yuuchi to place his legs under. Yuuchi was quite small, so he was able to barely fit his legs under the table next to Katsuko's head. Over the table, he continued pressing the little buttons on his device while he let his legs toast.

“Ngaa... Just kidding! RAAAAHH!!!”

“Uwah!”

Katsuko suddenly grabs Yuuchi by the legs and pulls his light, slender body underneath the kotatsu, like a crocodile dragging a deer into water. With their heads peering out of the blanket, Katsuko puts him in a headlock and brushes her knuckles against his head.

“Owowowow! Hey! Stop!”

“Hahah!”

Katsuko released Yuuchi from her headlock and playfully gave his head a little shove. Yuuchi grunted, then went back to playing his game with his body under the table, just like his sisters. Katsuko stretched like a cat and shut her eyes as she rested her body on the cushioned mattress under the kotatsu.

In the kitchen, Ryuuji lifted five boxes of mandarin oranges out of the fridge. While he was handling them, Taiga entered the kitchen. She donned a light, pale green sleeveless dress.

“My mother sent quite a lot of oranges, didn’t she?” Taiga said.

“Well, she knows how much the girls eat. I’m pretty sure two of these boxes are for Haruko alone.”

“She doesn’t plan on eating that many in one sitting, does she? She’ll upset her stomach like that.”

“I think you’d need a third box of oranges for that to happen. I’m more worried about the pile of orange skins this is going to create. It will make for some good compost though.”

Taiga went closer to Ryuuji and wrapped her arms around his abdomen from the side, leaning her head against the side of his chest. Ryuuji held Taiga’s upper arm. They let out a little sigh as they calmly watched from the kitchen’s open window as their children relaxed under the kotatsu.

“I think I had a good year this time,” Taiga told her husband.

“Yeah... I had a lot of fun this year,” Ryuuji responded.

Taiga looked up at Ryuuji. “You know, if there’s no space under the kotatsu, we can always find warmth in bed,” Taiga says with a mischievous grin as she gently stroked Ryuuji’s hard chest. “Hahah... Maybe when the children are asleep,” Ryuuji chuckled.

Taiga and Ryuuji brought the boxes of oranges to the living room. The children climbed out from under the kotatsu’s thick blanket and surrounded the table to help themselves to some sweet mandarin oranges, letting the orange skins form a pile tall enough to reach their heads where they sat.

It’s been a good year.

Author’s Letter:

I am writing this as of 27th December 2024. “Toranoko!” has yet to become anything real, but day by day, I have many new ideas of what I want to have in its main story. But my biggest concern when it comes to it is how I want to introduce it to everyone. Maybe if people see what I can make, they’ll be convinced enough to support me? I prepared this little piece as a test document for my dedicated “Toranoko!” website. I thought it was a neat idea.

And you don’t know me, but I really did have a good year. I’ve experienced new things. I’ve performed well in school. I truly felt alive. Hopefully, Porter Robinson has another concert in Singapore. But not too soon, at least, not while I’m away on national service in the next 3 years. Ah, I really wish I’d stayed after his recent concert to meet him.

For 2025, I am going to focus on delivering “Toranoko!” as written stories to everyone. I started learning to draw at the very start of 2024. Now that the year is over, I’ve gotten my art skill to be good enough to draw characters that are... legible. But with how busy I am with school and life, I feel like focusing only on my art would just get in the way of doing what I want to do; telling stories. I’ve attempted Drawabox to get a hold of the fundamentals, but I can never stay committed to it. So with my art skills in the rut, I’ve decided to focus mainly

on writing. I won't stop drawing, but I won't be drawing so actively anymore. I will provide some illustrations for my webnovels. I hope to gain more support for the years to come.

- **IF270**