

Kumashiro: ***Who she is, and Why Tenchi loves her:*** Part 2

An Editorial by Robert Alderson



Now I would like to take a few moments to highlight some of the high-points that were instrumental in letting Tenchi finally fall in love with the young and vibrant Sakuya Kumashiro. After that, I will go into why there are ample reasons to actually like the girl and give her a second chance, even though most Tenchi Muyo fans seem to like to hate her, for little to no reason at all. Lastly, I will conclude by pointing out why she's still the best young woman for Tenchi (Within the Shin Tenchi Muyo Universe, of course) in spite of some of the monumental mistakes that she may have made in the past during her extremely short lifetime.

Highpoints in their relationship before they became official

I'd like to first acknowledge before I go into any further dissertation, that Tenchi and Sakuya were most and foremost friends. It is also my belief that it was their pre-boyfriend and girlfriend relationship that allowed him to *'lower his guard'* as it were and eventually fall in love with her. That being said, I can now get into the ***meat*** of this current topic for conversation.

I will apologize in advance, because they may be ***quite*** long.

Episode 8 is a good place to start off from. This is the time when Tenchi really begins to show somewhat of an interest in the young woman Sakuya Kumashiro. This is also the continuation to the origin episode, where we find out how Tenchi met Ryoko and the other girls.

Sakuya, at this point in the series is still acting extremely pushy toward Tenchi, almost suffocating him in her attempts to get him to realize just how much he means to her. So much so, that she decides to take it upon herself to show up at his house unannounced to surprise him. She also hopes to get a chance to finally meet his family. Unfortunately, the high-jinks that ensue because of her unexpected arrival are *anything* but pleasant. For starters, as soon as she arrives, Ryoko and Ayeka immediately confront her. Ryoko tells her that she never liked her, and threatens to give her a sound beating if she (Sakuya) doesn't reveal the location of the stolen crystals. Sakuya of course doesn't know anything about what is going on, but she takes all of the negative accusations about her in good stride. It isn't until Ryoko actually gets physically violent by striking a wall, knocking a hole into it, and threatening to do the same to Sakuya by throwing a punch directly at her face, that Tenchi finally steps in to defend the young woman's honor. Essentially stepping right in front of Ryoko's devastating punch, Tenchi gives the implication that he would gladly take a sustained injury for Sakuya, no matter how dangerous or fatal it might prove to be. He grabs Ryoko by her face and replies to her violent act by staring directly into her eyes, and defending Sakuya's character. This powerfully demonstrates that he already thinks very highly of

her despite the fact that she has presumptuously decided to show up at his house uninvited. He says with conviction that "*Sakuya would never steal anything.*" Of course Ryoko doesn't take the fact that he was standing up against her for another woman too amicably, but it goes a long way to show that at this point in time, Tenchi was already starting to grow quite fond of the personable young woman.

In the next episode, even though Tenchi and Sakuya never really interact much, toward the beginning, you can clearly see that Tenchi is steadily warming up to Sakuya as he displays this by dreamily gazing over at her as she talks with her friends from school, unawares. He's finally starting to realize that Sakuya really is a special person worth looking into.

The 10th episode is where Tenchi really begins to show more than just a casual interest in Sakuya, and it really shows. Again, toward the beginning of this episode we find Tenchi gazing up at Sakuya with a nice comfortable grin on his face, so noticeably, that even his friends begin to make notice of it and tease him. Sakuya however, is once again oblivious to his actions of gazing at her like a love-sick puppy. Sakuya begins to make extreme strides in her character development and level of maturity in this episode as well. We are given a glimpse of her true feelings for Tenchi, and are even told what her motivations for liking him are. We are finally given the chance to see just what it is about Tenchi that she likes, and we find out that her feelings for him go even deeper than just straight physical attraction, or preordained emotions. For the first time we get to see her character dimensionality – and it is *well* worth the wait. We get to see that she has very credible reasons for being interested in him, and that she is a very complex character as well.

What stood out to me in this episode were the events that took place shortly after they all left from school and headed home that afternoon. The show cuts to a scene of Sakuya walking home as she is still deciding what to do about her growing feelings for Tenchi. Later, after Tenchi finally arrives home at his apartment physically exhausted from the events of the day, he finds two recorded messages on his answering machine. One of them is from Ryoko and the second one Sakuya. When I think about Tenchi's reactions to the two messages on the machine, it surprised me with how extreme and opposing they both were. With Ryoko he was very surprised, albeit in a negative way. He looked like he wanted to try to get out of it somehow, but was frightened into going anyway. I definitely got the impression that he didn't want to go on a date with her at all. However, with Sakuya's message he was equally surprised but in a positive way. I could tell that he definitely would have preferred going out on a date with her instead of Ryoko, but due to the circumstances was unable to, and this deeply saddened him. My guess is, he really wanted to go out with Sakuya that day, but he knew that if he did so and snub the date with Ryoko, there would be hell to pay, and Ryoko made that point painfully clear to him on her message.

Here is a point that only recently came to me...It would appear that given the circumstances, Tenchi called back neither of the two young women to confirm the dates for that weekend, as he would most assuredly not have decided how he was going to deal with it in the first place. I conclude that he went to the park begrudgingly that day to meet up with Ryoko, knowing that she would be there, but also hoping at the same time that Sakuya would interpret his non-response to her message as an answer from him that he couldn't make it. Sakuya however had *other* ideas and decided to come along to the park anyway and wound up waiting all afternoon for a young man who would *never* show up to meet with her. Bummer. (It's a good thing that she brought along a good book.)

Episode 10 continues to touch me in ways that few others have done to this day. The high point in this episode was when she finally voiced to him a heartfelt explanation as to why she cares so much about him after she saw Tenchi with Ryoko together in the park. She then went on to plainly state her faults, i.e. not having the best figure, not being able to cook very well, being noisy and a little bit hyper. (It gave her a touch of humanity and humility that sorely lacked in the other girls. She was clearly aware of her faults and limitations, and made sure to point them out to

Tenchi. *whether or not she was trying to incur sympathy from him is another matter altogether. Although I think she was merely pointing out to him the fact that she wasn't perfect, and shouldn't expect perfection from her, but that despite it all she was willing to give her **all** to the man that she loved, whether it was to Tenchi or not.) I found this scene to be deeply touching on multiple levels...when she ran off crying, apparently upset over those events that she just witnessed, I found it difficult to hold back tears myself. Don't get me wrong, I'm not professing to be a sissy by any stretch of the imagination, but I *am* trying to convey just how much those scenes were emotionally moving, if you take the time to actually "*take-in*" what is *truly* going on in them.

Apparently, I'm not the only one who was adversely affected by that episode. Tenchi was also affected profoundly by seemingly losing the woman in his life that he had been apparently growing to love. By episode 12, it becomes painfully apparent that Tenchi misses Sakuya terribly and that he intends to do something about it. I should also note at this time that Tenchi was really confused by his growing feelings for Sakuya and his attraction to Ryoko, so much so, that it wasn't until Sakuya left his apartment abruptly in an emotional outburst, that he realized that he wasn't going to just *let* her run out of his life without him putting up some type of fight to try and keep her in it.

This is probably the moment in time when he actively began to fall in love with her. Although admittedly he wasn't completely in love with her yet, still the seeds of love were definitely sewn that day.

Episode 13 didn't provide too much as far as character development or interaction between the two star-crossed lovers, however somewhere during the beginning of it, Tenchi and Sakuya were both attending what appeared to be some sort of gym class at school. As Tenchi was taking a slight break from whooping his friend Tsuchida's...posterior, in what I believe to be his martial arts class, he dreamily gazed and waved over at Sakuya who coincidentally was also waving back at him with the assistance of her two friends, with an embarrassed look on her face. Again, not much, but it does do a pretty good job in depicting the fact that Tenchi is quickly becoming more and more comfortable around Sakuya, and also his willingness to accept that maybe it really is ok for him to enjoy himself in Tokyo apart from his family in Okayama. Later in the episode Sakuya and Tenchi are together alone enjoying some nice quality time together. It seems to be, for the moment, on a friendly basis, but again, if you are astute enough to read between the lines, its beginning to become apparent that Tenchi is indeed growing some serious feelings toward the young woman Sakuya.

Perhaps one of the most "telling" events among their burgeoning relationship occurs during episode 14. In a shot that eerily mirrors a scene between Achika and his father Nobuyuki from the "Tenchi Muyo: in Love" Movie, Tenchi is sitting alone working on a picture that he is drawing. Sakuya comes up from behind and comments to him about how good it is.

Among my personal favorite episodes are 15 and 16. In 15, we are treated to a very peaceful scene between Sakuya and Tenchi at the Tsuchida shrine. Sakuya has just lovingly prepared breakfast for Tenchi and has brought it to him that morning before school, so that they can spend a little quiet time together while he enjoys the food she made for him. They share a nicely tranquil moment alone, and Tenchi even comments on how much he enjoys it that way. Something most folks may not have noticed thus far is how much Tenchi has softened up in his treatment and dealings with Sakuya by now. An excellent example of this is in how he speaks to her. If you listen really carefully you'll notice that when he talks to her, he speaks really softly. He talks to her in this manner because to him she is very precious, and his growing feelings for her are really beginning to show. In fact, it is getting harder and harder for him to be able to suppress them from Sakuya, and the others that they constantly hang around.

I like this episode because it exemplifies exactly how far their relationship has grown thus far. Tenchi even finds himself trying to decide whether or not it is the right time to tell her how he truly

feels about her during the school's after-carnival wrap party. His willingness to help her out, and spend all day alone with her also betrays his true feelings for her. The high point in this episode was nicely climaxed by the scene of Tenchi and Sakuya as they together stood by the edge of the roof looking out over the school campus enjoying each other's company. Love was definitely in the air that day, and they were making steadily weaker attempts to hide it all from everyone successfully.

Amagasaki is caught in the wrestling ring with the famous female wrestler Ikarinu Sadako for the wrestling match-up of his life. As Ikarinu disappears in a brilliant flash of light after her eventual defeat by Amagasaki, the spectacle startles Tenchi so much that he instinctively pushes Sakuya out of harms way and falls on top of her in order to shield her from any harm with his own body. As he does so their lips come dangerously close to almost meeting. They lay there, transfixed for a few moments, staring into each other's eyes. It wasn't until Amagasaki startled them, that they finally parted ways in their near kiss. I've personally found this scene to be one of the most gratifying in that we get a first glimpse at how much they've both grown toward each other, and how natural it was for them to be so close and almost kiss one another for such an extended amount of time without ever trying to pull away.

The last episode to show the two young lovers before they both became officially boyfriend and girlfriend would have to be #16. I love this episode for a myriad of different reasons. For starters, it starts off early with Tenchi and Sakuya both at the school's carnival working together to run her crepe stand. Tsuchida shows up carrying a big *fish* in his arms (don't ask me why because I'm still at a loss trying to figure that one out...) and reveals to Tenchi that he will ask a girl he's interested in to go steady with him at the wrap party after the carnival has ended (personally, I think he's referring to Sakuya's friend Matsuno, but I can't conclusively prove that one way or the other). They talk for a few moments, and he brings up the issue of whether or not Tenchi will reveal to Sakuya his true feelings for her at the party because of a legendary old school tradition. (I'll take this time to mention that Tenchi at this particular instance has made *no* attempt to deny having any feeling for her to his friend. In fact his response to Tsuchida seems to indicate that he has come to terms with it, and that he doesn't particularly care whether or not his friends know about how he feels for her at this point) The Wrap-Party Legend states that; *Whoever tells the person that they love their "true" feelings while at the wrap party...they will be together forever.* Tenchi's also been thinking about telling Sakuya something regarding his feelings, though he hasn't yet decided what it will be to tell her. As Tsuchida departs company from Tenchi, he wishes him good luck with Sakuya.

Meanwhile Sakuya is talking with her two friends Sugano and Yoshinaga at the front of the booth and Sugano brings up the fact that Tenchi is sweet because he's helping her out so much and he's doing it all for...*Surprise*...Sakuya. Yoshinaga says that she's lucky to have a boyfriend like Tenchi. Sakuya immediately refutes the statement of him being her boyfriend and her friends are really shocked at hearing this news because all of her recent behavior around him seems to indicate otherwise. (Again, no denial was made by Sakuya that would indicate that they haven't yet come to terms with how they felt about each other, only that they were not *officially* together as boyfriend and girlfriend. She and her friends apparently already knew that they had a very close relationship, and seemed very comfortable with the way it was going so far.)

The next scene with Sakuya and Tenchi together is the lunch break scene. They are both comfortably seated at a secluded table in presumably the school cafeteria, and Tenchi is happily enjoying his lunch there right in front of her. The food was cooked and prepared by Sakuya herself, and he tells her that he's never tasted anything "*so delicious*". She replies that it's "*gourmet cuisine*". At this point he realizes that she's doing it to impress him, and it *does*. (A side note; it's really nice that we see this side of Sakuya once more. I remember in episode 10 she tearfully admitted to Tenchi that she couldn't cook and burned everything. Now she's matured enough in the series to evolve into a better person by learning more home economics skills, which shows how much she's willing to change herself and her skill-set in order to win Tenchi's

heart fairly. I don't know about everyone else, but I think it shows really nice character development and growth on her behalf. She's changed a lot already within these last six episodes into a better person, and it shows.)

Alas...Now comes the big scene between the two. Toward the end of the episode comes the "**Big-Payoff**", the climactic scene between Sakuya and Tenchi where it all comes together...16 episodes of torture as we were mercilessly forced sit through the buildup to this monumental scene, wondering whether or not Tenchi would *ever* make any type of decisive move toward Sakuya regarding their rapidly growing relationship, and boy...it doesn't disappoint. It's perhaps the single most pivotal scene in the whole series that determines whether or not Tenchi has actually fallen in love with Sakuya. Though he never tells her so, or even admits it to himself until episode 25, I have speculated that it was in fact *here* that he actually *did* fall in love with her. Considering the backdrop of where he first kissed her, it makes a **ton** of sense. Sakuya poured her heart out to him under the romantic light of the full moon, as they were looking down at the school after sundown together on the roof. He was really impressed by her compassionate attitude toward the other girls' actions regarding the unfortunate chain of events that transpired earlier that disastrous day. She even humbly mentions that she needs to thank them for saving her life. (Now if that isn't humility, especially after all that she's been through, like almost getting herself killed because of the bumbling interference of Ayeka and the others, I don't know what is...) After that, he gazes at her with love in his eyes and written all over his face. Her outlook about the whole affair drew him to her like a magnet. With the moon hanging beautifully in the background, it was as romantic a backdrop as they were ever going to get, and it was the perfect time. He held her face tenderly as he drew her closer to himself for their first kiss. Her face and sparkling emerald green eyes were wonderfully highlighted by the moon's beautifully diffused glow. They kiss, both of them drawn into the spirit of the moment. The kiss was as natural as it was beautiful, and its length betrayed the sheer passion and love shared by the newly formed couple.

After that, it appeared that they were both *officially* together as a couple...and they both made a pretty attractive couple as well.

That is what happened to make Tenchi fall in love with Sakuya. In short, she **earned** his heart, and he willingly gave it to her.

I apologize for doing such a lengthy episode summary, but it seemed appropriate to do so in order to accurately explain all of the highlights in their relationship that were instrumental in their becoming an official item. Now that that has been covered, I will now get into a matter that I have found to be of extreme controversy.

Why most people who hate Sakuya should give her a second chance

Who wouldn't mind having a friend like Sakuya? Realistically, she is everything that a person could want in a friend. As I've stated earlier, among Sakuya's most valuable personality assets is that she's kind, sweet, cheerful, outgoing, sincerely humble, and she's never hesitated to apologize for anything wrong that she has done, or any misunderstandings that she may have been a part of. She's also very polite and always extremely forgiving. She's a very likable person who will also stand by you if you ever need someone by your side. That being the case, considering all her pleasant attributes, why is it that some individuals just seem to have an insatiable **need** to be a hater toward her? Actually there are a lot of different reasons why. But the most common reason is stated by Mishi on her awesome web site, so succinctly and so to-the-point, that I just have to quote it from her site word for word, and it is: "...She's Tenchi's first kiss. She's Tenchi's first love. And most importantly, they know that they can't do *anything* about it..."

Now admittedly that may seem a little harsh, but when you really sit back and think about it...it makes tons of sense. I have had countless discussions with folks who claim to hate Sakuya, and very few of them seem to hate her for any other reason other than, 'Ayeka and Ryoko were there *first*, and **she** was the one to show up and win Tenchi's heart...it's not fair! Ryoko and Ayeka were there first...one of **them** should've been the one to get him. Not that interfering little...' Though it's true that Ryoko and Ayeka were *there* first...that hardly seems like a justifiable reason for someone to fall in love with another. People seem to keep forgetting that love is one of those emotions that really *can't* be adequately quantified or defined. No one really knows how it works, or why some people fall in love with other people, who to us, may seem like total jerks. Suffice it to say, Tenchi fell in love with Sakuya. **She** was the one to win his heart, and that fact seems to really cheese a lot of people off. I will now take this time to step down from my soapbox.

Why Like Her?

So what am I getting at? Simple...people who claim to hate Sakuya certainly have the right to do so, but wouldn't it be better, and much more fun to watch the show and judge the character by her own merit and not by some over developed sense of loyalty for another character, a character who could **never** return any gratitude for such loyalty.

Uh oh...I'm about to step back up on the soapbox again...Think about this illustration; suppose you have two children, (Or siblings, as the case may be) and both of them have radically different personalities, one being very overbearing...and the other very generous and kind, with a propensity to often emotionally display to you their feelings excessively. Based on most Tenchi Muyo fan's response to Sakuya, I should only love the **oldest** one, merely because that one was there *first*. I knew and thus loved the eldest child *before* the other, so I won't even attempt to try and get to know or love the second-born. But my point is, just because you like Sakuya, doesn't mean that you have to like Ayeka or Ryoko any less. Who says you can't like them all? Who says that liking Ryoko automatically means you have to hate Sakuya? Personally, I **like** Ryoko...but don't think for a second that just because I think Sakuya is really cool, that I like Ryoko less than I did before...if anything it makes me appreciate what it was about her character in the OAV's that I liked in the first place. In fact, Ryoko being awesome is the *reason* I got into the Tenchi Muyo craze.

Again...my point is...go on ahead and like Ryoko and Ayeka, they're certainly awesome characters, and I'm not saying that you shouldn't, but just don't hate Sakuya merely because you like the others...if you want to talk about fairness, that isn't fair.

Whew...now that that topic is done, it's now time to discuss why Sakuya really is the best woman for Tenchi. (Within the Shin Tenchi Muyo Universe, of course.) But that's a topic best left for next time.

And I'm spent for today. Tomorrow I will wrap up my comprehensive Sakuya coverage by discussing why Sakuya really is the best woman for Tenchi within Shin-Tenchi Muyo.

Until next time, faithful reader...

-Excelsior