

Turning and Turning

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/229862) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/229862>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Multi
Fandom:	Toki o Kakeru Shoujo The Girl Who Leapt Through Time
Relationship:	Konno Makoto/Mamiya Chiaki/Tsuda Kousuke
Characters:	Konno Makoto , Tsuda Kousuke , Mamiya Chiaki
Additional Tags:	Chromatic Source , Japanese Character(s) , Future Fic
Language:	English
Collections:	Parallels Fic Exchange 2011
Stats:	Published: 2011-07-28 Words: 2,761 Chapters: 1/1

Turning and Turning

by [starlady](#).

Summary

A lot can change in twenty years. Some things don't.

Notes

Thanks to [Nele](#) for the beta. Any remaining errors are of course my own.

1.

A Brazilian scientist had already invented the technology that would become known as Time Leap when Kousuke and Kaho finally got married, just after they turned thirty-two. It was more because their parents offered to help them pay for their own apartment if they did, as Kousuke told Makoto candidly, then because either of them really felt any especial desire to be married, particularly to each other.

"I'd have refused even so," Kousuke told Makoto over the phone one night, on speaker in her silent lab at the museum, long after the last train. "But--"

"Idiot," Makoto snorted, picking up her brush, and then she repeated it loud enough for him to hear over the connection, through his drunkenness. "What else would you do?" *Who else would you do?*

"Well--" Kousuke is quiet for a long moment, quiet enough that she can hear the sound of the street beyond him through his heavy breathing. She hasn't asked, but he's probably just stumbled out of some hostess club in Roppongi, soused on his company's dime. Hopefully he'll have the sense to stop for ramen before he gets in a cab.

"If Chiaki were here," he says at last, and Makoto pauses between brushstrokes to be grateful that he's drunk and they can both pretend this never happened tomorrow, if Kousuke even remembers it happening at all, "we'd have been able to work something out."

I'll be waiting for you in the future. It's been fifteen years, and she can still hear his voice in her head like he was speaking into her ear.

Makoto swallows, puts down her brush. "Yeah," she says, speaking past the tightness in her throat. "Yeah, we would have. Just--just the three of us."

"Just like always." Kousuke falls silent again. "Do you really think--" he says abruptly, and Makoto can't bear to hear him ask the question that she's been asking herself for all of her adult life.

"I think you should stop for ramen before you find a taxi, Kousuke," she says firmly, cutting him off. "Otherwise you'll be hungover in the morning."

Kousuke laughs, in that drunken way that people laugh, except it comes out sounding like grief. "Thanks, Makoto," he says. "You're coming to the wedding, right?"

"Of course I am, you idiot, unless you forget to invite me."

2.

Kousuke and Kaho eventually have their obligatory child, a daughter they name Tokiko, along with half the other parents of girls in Japan that year. Makoto shows up to the birthday

party with the requisite wad of cash in a beautiful envelope, just like she did at their wedding, and finds herself surprisingly charmed by Tokiko, who is a charming baby. Since she'd always known she wasn't going to get married--she'd left that to Miyuki--Makoto had never given babies much thought; it wasn't like there were hordes of them toddling around her departments in college and graduate school, or at the museum.

Kaho notices it too. "She likes you, Makoto!" she says, clearly pleased that her daughter finds something pleasing about Makoto. "Just look at her!"

Makoto looks. Tokiko stares back at her equably, her eyes as dark as the fine cap of hair that's covering her soft skull. She wonders what Tokiko is thinking, right now. "She's so fragile," she says, before she can help it, and wants to slap herself at the shadow that draws over Kaho's expression.

"We all are," she says quietly. In the opposite corner of the room, the TV/net panel is very pointedly shut off.

Tokiko and Makoto getting along becomes highly relevant two years later, when Kaho uses her government-allotted Time Leap to jump back to a few hours before the Starfire bombing in a desperate attempt to pull her elderly parents out of their house in time. She never comes back, and of course there's no way to find one more set of remains in the midst of the utter devastation that's now northeastern Tokyo.

Makoto does something similar, except she uses her Time Leap to walk in to the museum on what had been her day off and take a very particular painting right out of its case.

"Restoration!" she snaps at the startled guard, flashing her credentials, and he falls back in confusion.

"Makoto?"

Makoto looks up to see her aunt standing in the entrance to the gallery, looking confused. Kazuko has been director of the museum for the past four years, and she's done a brilliant job of managing the various departments and the tensions between them, chivvying the disparate energies of the staff into more or less the same direction.

"Aunt Kazuko," Makoto begins, unfortunately before she has time to decide what she's going to say next. "I'm sorry,--I--"

But of course her aunt understands. "I see," she says, her eyes sliding between the painting and the silvery 84 on the inside of Makoto's left arm. "How long?" she asks, looking up at Makoto, direct and unruffled as always.

"Next Tuesday," Makoto says thickly, past the lump in her throat. "You shouldn't--it'd be a nice day to take the day off."

When she jumps forward to her own time, she finds that her aunt still went in to the museum that morning. Years later one of the cultural recovery teams will find what's left of her in the remains of her office; as near as they'll be able to ascertain, she died quickly.

So Makoto moves in to Kousuke's apartment, because she has no apartment left and Kousuke has no idea how to deal with a two-year old. Neither does Makoto, really, but she doesn't have a job anymore either, just a government-issued ration app and a bunch of business cards with a degree she can't use and a title that's irrelevant printed on them.

And, surprisingly, it works. Makoto can cook, and between Kousuke's salary and her savings and her aunt's estate, they have plenty of money, and Tokiko stops crying and asking for her mother after a while. She sleeps between her father and Makoto on their futon, Kousuke's long arms around them both, and Makoto's heart nearly stops the first time Tokiko calls her "Mom" in the morning.

She freezes, because Kousuke is still holding her tightly--an illusion of safety, to be sure, but a necessary one--and she can feel him inhaling sharply too, his body going tense against hers.

"I--" Makoto tries to think what to say, but can't think what to do besides turn her head into his neck, breathe in the scent of him. Together with Tokiko's kid's shampoo, it's the smell of home.

Eventually, Kousuke shakes his head against hers, maneuvers to kiss her lightly. "Don't be sorry," he whispers. "I'd rather be glad of what we've got."

Makoto thinks, if it weren't for the familiar ache of *his* absence, she might be able to call the feeling that rolls over her, nearly smothering, happiness.

3.

They're in the grocery store about a year later, deciding whether to have chazuke or okonomiyaki for dinner, when Tokiko runs around a corner straight in to the legs of a man a few years younger than Makoto, with rather striking auburn hair in no particular arrangement. "Hey!" he yelps, catching Tokiko, who looks up at him, startled, clearly trying to decide whether this development merits tears. But he knows how to handle children, because he just says quietly, "Be careful, huh? Where's your mom?"

Tokiko, guileless, points behind her at Makoto, who still hasn't gotten used to the ability of a four-year old to make utter mayhem out of a half-meter gap between them and their parent. The man looks up from his crouch on the linoleum, apparently not caring about the fabric of his pinstripe suit against the tiles, and when he meets her eyes Makoto's knees just give out, the bag of peaches she'd been holding under her arm spilling out and rolling all over the floor.

"Chiaki," she whispers.

His eyes widen, and he looks between her and Tokiko and back a few times before apparently deciding to stare at her. It would be funny if Makoto could breathe properly past the sensation of her heart being squeezed like a lemon inside her chest, emotions and memories filling all the places where she's patched and broken inside.

"Makoto?" he asks hoarsely, and Tokiko extracts herself from his loose grip and crosses to Makoto, who takes her into her arms automatically.

"Mom," she asks, putting her face into Makoto's neck, "who's that?"

If Chiaki looked stunned before, he looks gobsmacked now. "Mom?" he mouths silently, and Makoto feels her cheeks heating, which only makes her resentful.

"This is my old friend Chiaki, Tokiko," she answers. "Chiaki, this is Tokiko."

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Chiaki!" Tokiko says, turning in Makoto's arms and smiling at him, and he meets her eyes and smiles back, involuntarily.

"Nice to meet you too, Tokiko-chan," he says, and then looks back at Makoto. "You--"

Makoto sighs and picks herself up off the floor. She's so used to falling over that the pain in her shins barely registers. "Are you busy?" she asks.

Looking closer, she can see that yes, Chiaki is a few years younger than her, somehow--she'd always thought, feared, that when they finally did meet he'd be an old man, and she'd be so much younger--but it's hard to tell directly; he looks tired, but his intelligent features are just as handsome as she remembers, if not a little more so.

He shakes his head. "Yes--no--that is, I can take a break for a few hours."

"All right," Makoto says, and extends her hand to Tokiko, who's collected the peaches back into the plastic wrapping. Silently, Chiaki hands her the last one, and she gives him a big, open smile.

Outside, on the way back to their apartment, Makoto tries to explain. "Tokiko isn't my daughter," she says quietly; "she's Kousuke and Kaho's."

"Kousuke..." Chiaki repeats, and Makoto wonders whether the yearning note in his voice is just an artifact of her own feelings. "But she called you 'Mom,' Makoto..."

"Kaho died in the Starfire bombing," Makoto says dully. "My apartment was destroyed, and the museum was ruined, and Kousuke had no idea what to do with a child..."

Chiaki straightens, but he doesn't quite look her in the eye. "You and Kousuke," he repeats, and doesn't say anything for the next few turns, as Makoto leads him through the narrow streets of their neighborhood, dodging the kids who are starting to arrive home from clubs and cram school. Tokiko alternates pacing a few steps ahead and lagging behind, but she's usually fairly clingy, and she takes Makoto's hand when they cross at a traffic light without complaint.

"Yes," Makoto says eventually. "So. What happened to you? Has it been twenty years for you, too?"

"Oh." Chiaki blinks. "Right, the Time Leap." He sighs. "As soon as I got back to my own time I learned that I'd jumped back into the past, to a year after Starfire, once I'd finished my

doctorate. Apparently they wanted a four-dimensional calculus specialist to begin working out the math on the restoration protocols. So, after I finished, I leapt back again, and--here I am."

"Those pass?" Makoto asks, blinking. The restoration and recovery protocols had only been introduced into the metropolitan assembly last month, and they'd stirred up a firestorm of controversy. A lot of people want to leave the devastation as a monument, but just as many people don't want to let time have whatever they could snatch from its clutches.

"Yeah," he says, "in the next session." Chiaki turns his head to look at her. "Makoto--"

"We're here," Makoto says as they turn into her building's parking lot, navigating around the group of kids playing catch in the open area out front. She lets Tokiko press the button when Chiaki has followed them into the elevator.

On their floor, Makoto opens the door to the apartment, reminding Tokiko to take off her shoes in the entryway before she goes tearing inside. Makoto and Chiaki follow at a slower pace, and in the kitchen, Makoto slices one of the peaches and arranges the slices on a plate before she pours them both cold tea.

Chiaki takes off his suit jacket and perches on one of the stools at the table, hunched over his cup like he's protecting a chest injury. After she chugs her tea Makoto stands up, planting her hands on the table. "Don't look like that, Chiaki, you idiot," she tells him sharply. "You haven't even asked me anything, and you're making all these assumptions--And, yes, we are, but that's not--"

She rounds the table and grabs his hand, so quickly that his tea sloshes onto his sleeve, but neither of them pay it any attention. Chiaki is looking up at her in shock. "Makoto--"

"Come with me," Makoto interrupts him, and all but drags him across the hall into the tatami room, which doesn't have an air conditioning unit and is more or less sweltering. Makoto hits the switches for the fan and the overhead light at the same time, and pushes Chiaki into the far corner of the room, where the viewing alcove is.

"You see?" she asks, stepping behind him so that he can get an unimpeded view.

The painting that he'd so wanted to see, that started it all, is displayed in pride of place in the alcove. It's really too wide for the space, strictly speaking, but Makoto hadn't cared about that. Chiaki sucks in a breath, and he stares at the painting in silence for a very long time. Makoto thinks, privately, that it's her aunt's best work of restoration, as well as Kazuko's only grave marker. She puts a single fresh flower in the bowl in front of it every day; lighting incense would endanger the painting.

"You said you would," Chiaki says at last, bending his head so that his hair flops into his eyes; she can't see his expression. "You said that you'd do your best to preserve the painting, and--and you did." His shoulders shake gently, and Makoto wonders whether he's crying.

Without thinking about it, she puts her hands on his shoulders and stands on her tiptoes, pressing her face onto his shoulder. "Of course I did," she says. "Did you think--Chiaki, I

never stopped. Never. Not then, not now, not ever."

He turns, so quickly she can only let out a squeak, and hugs her to him, his mouth against her ear and her face against the bend of his neck, just like the last time. The only time. "I missed you," he says, the words low and fierce. "Makoto, I--I love you. You and--" He takes a ragged breath, and Makoto brings her arms up to hug him back.

"I know," she says, "I know, Chiaki. Just the three of us, right? Just like always."

"Yeah," he says after a long moment, squeezing her even tighter, if that were possible. "Just like always. Forever."

For once in her life Makoto loses track of time, wrapped in Chiaki's arms in the hot room, feeling his heartbeat against her skin with the mingled scent of his body and whatever laundry soap he used in her nose. Eventually she hears the door to the apartment open and then thud shut, and then Kousuke's heavy footsteps.

"Makoto?" she hears him asking. "Makoto, where--" He stops talking, and Makoto knows he's looked into the room.

Against her head, she feels Chiaki look up, and then she hears Kousuke's wordless exclamation. "Kousuke," she says, turning her head so he can hear her better, "Chiaki's come home."

Chiaki swallows. "Yeah," he says, looking at Kousuke. "I'm home."

After a long moment Kousuke steps into the room and wraps his arms around them both, pressing a kiss to each of their heads in turn. A slow start, maybe, but a good foundation. "I can see that," Kousuke says, holding them tightly, his voice shaking. "It took you long enough, you idiot."

Makoto's already seen that the number on the inside of Chiaki's arm reads zero. He could get another Time Leap, of course, but there's no need anymore. All three of them are finally right where--right when--they should be, and they finally have plenty of time to get things absolutely right.

And this, she realizes when she starts crying, is what happiness feels like.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!