Tales of Nashi:

Episode 2: Promises

 Nashi awoke to the sounds of clattering pots coming from the kitchen below. Nashi checked his eyepiece for the time, he had only gotten 4 hours of sleep and still managed to sleep in.

 Unmei flashed a quick message. *Good morning. Better get up if you don’t want them noticing.*

 “I know, Unmei. I’m getting up, I’m getting up.” Nashi managed to growl out lethargically at the kami. Unlike most kami adjusted to modern life, Unmei did not have a normal physical body. She existed purely as a sort of program, freely managing all aspects of Nashi’s technology.

 Nashi was grateful for the help. He had always suspected that she was born from his drive to find his mother, but he was never certain, and neither was she. It had been a surprise when she appeared one day in his eyepiece, acting as if she had always been there. Since then, she and Nashi had been inseparable.

 “Nashi! Are you coming down for breakfast?” Nashi heard Rumi call from down below. Rumiyo had taken the unofficial position as head of the household since his mother disappeared and his father had confined himself to his study to grieve.

 “Yeah Rumi, I’m coming,” Nashi replied before quickly changing his clothes and heading down.

 When he arrived, Nashi found Rumi alone at the table, her thin hands cradling a cup of hot tea. A neat breakfast of rice, topped with tofu, and still steaming cup of soup awaited him at the other end of the table. As he knelt to eat, Rumi spoke.

 “Up late again, Nashi?” Her piercing blue eyes reminded him of mom’s.

 “Uh, yeah. One of my drones needed a camera replacement so I had to- “

 “I know you’ve been looking for mom, Nashi. But you need to stop,” Rumi about slammed her teacup down. “This isn’t the first time you’ve come down late because you haven’t slept. I’ve noticed. Your brothers and sisters have noticed. You are worrying us, and I do not need this right now. Mom is gone and I am the one that has to make sure everything is ok!”

 Nashi shook his head dismissively when he heard what she wanted to talk about. “Well, I’m sorry that I’m inconveniencing you Rumi but no one else is doing anything to help. Mom has been gone for more than a year and no one is anywhere near close to finding her! But I am! I am so close!”

 Nashi very nearly brought out the chip showing the reality chip, but he resisted.

 “Nashi,” she began, taking a more neutral and calming position, “mom is no longer on this plane. It is out of our hands. Only Kaito and Mr. Cat can help mom now.”

 “Well, I’m not going to sit around Rumi. I promised that I would find mom and I will! You and Hiro and dad and the rest can sit around and doing nothing but won’t!” Nashi stood, forgetting about his breakfast, and moved to leave.

 He did not hear Rumi move but he felt her hand on his shoulder. “Now that’s not fair Nashi. We all miss her.” Her voice was soft, but Nashi could hear the pangs of pain in her tone. “But we need you here. I need you.”

 Nashi met her hand with his paw before gently shrugging it away. “It’s better for you not to worry about me Rumi. For so long I didn’t feel I belonged anywhere. I felt as if everyone was trying to replace my biological parents. But then I came here, and I felt welcomed. It isn’t the same without her Rumi. No one is. I’m going to find her. I’m going to bring her back.”

 Nashi turned to Rumi’s eyes before giving her a hug. ‘But I need to find her my way.” Nashi turned to leave, Rumi swiftly floating behind him. Nashi touched his eyepiece, sending a ping to Unmei. He strode past the sliding doors into their cloud garden, a small porch overlooking a lake of swirling clouds.

 “Nashi, come back. You’re still a child!” Rumi called, still following.

 Nashi looked back at her again. “I’ve grown up more than you think Rumi. I love you.”

 Nashi stepped off the porch and plunged into the clouds. The condensed water clung to his fur and stung with bitter cold before opening into a large expanse of blue sky. The city of Otawara stretched out before him, expanding into the sea of clouds. Moonfolk and large vehicles floated in the distance, with occasional glimpses of sky-sailing mechs flying by.

 Just as planned, his glider, guided by Unmei, raced to catch him. Nashi activated his magnetic locks on his feet-straps, attaching himself to the glider as it rapidly slowed and braced him.

 Nashi looked back at his home. Rumi was floating some distance from him where she had dove to try to catch him. Nashi felt tears well in his eyes. It felt as though he was saying goodbye for a long time but he didn’t know why. Rumi, her own eyes welling, only bowed her head.

 Nashi bowed back and let his glider take him from the city. From his home. From his family.

 There was another place he could go. Another place he needed to go. Boseiju, the neon city. Not only did he have another workshop there but another family of sorts. While not his first choice, he had no choice but to go back to the Reckoners.