

“Was it?” Takashi asked, not even trying to hide how little he cared. “The army sounded too dramatic, like they’re declaring war on us.”

Shimada shook his head. “No wonder I hate advertising.”

“Now, now,” Takashi soothed. “How’d the loop sessions go?”

“Oh, fine,” Shimada said, remembering how stressed Yoshi had been about seeing Tanaka or anyone or anything connected with “The Occupation Boy” again. Shimada was so concerned, he’d handed a primo story to another reporter in order to accompany Yoshi to the sessions. But surprisingly, once Yoshi was in the studio, he was all business. He overdubbed the dialogue where it was needed and they were done in half a day. Tanaka had sent someone from the post-production side of things, who’d never met Yoshi and couldn’t care less about the scandal around the film, to supervise the recording session. “The actual, edited, cleaned-up movie is much better than what I saw. It actually looks pretty good, the little snippets I saw of it, but I can’t...”

“Can’t?” Takashi prompted after some silence.

Shimada turned and faced the man who’d gone from rival to enemy to friend over the years since they met at university. “I really love him, Takashi,” Shimada said with raw honesty. “I can’t separate Yoshi from the character, I can’t know what he went through and then just sit in a theater or on a couch and watch him be abused for the amusement of the masses. Or something.”

Takashi averted his eyes from the naked emotion in his friend’s face. “I understand,” he said quietly. “Kimura Kano is madly spinning this film as a great work of art. Something that provokes, enlightens and uplifts the soul as only a heartbreaking work of singular genius and the courage of post-war Japan as seen through the eyes of one of its victims.”

“You. Are. Fucking. Kidding. Me.” Shimada droned into Takashi’s deadpan stare.

“Ryu, I just won an award for the Uniflora Perfume campaign,” Takashi said with a wry little smile. “But even I couldn’t make up that much bullshit.” He waited politely while Shimada laughed. “How’s Yoshi?”

“He’s good. You’ll see at dinner.” Shimada looked at his watch and they started walking again.

“How are you and Yoshi?” Takashi asked. “If that’s not too personal a question.”

“We’re fine, we’re getting back to what passes for normal for us,” Shimada said neutrally. “We made it through this. We can make it through anything.”

However, the larger picture of the Shimada-Katayama relationship had become somewhat more complex.

“You—you—you want to do what?” Shimada asked, clutching the sheets to his neck.

“I said I want to top.” Smiling serenely, Yoshi tugged at the bedclothes his lover was holding like a shield before him. “It’s wonderful; I’ve had a good teacher. I can assure you of that.”

There wasn’t much Shimada wouldn’t do for Yoshi—cause an international incident, renounce his family, watch high school kendo matches—but he really wasn’t sure he could let Yoshi fuck him. “I know that, but I’m not sure I’m ready for this,” Shimada murmured, letting Yoshi kiss him. “I need to think about it.”

“How long do you need?” Yoshi asked, tilting the bedside clock’s luminous dial up.

“Are you on a schedule?” Shimada asked, mock horror mixed with laughter as he rolled around the bed with his lover, who was also laughing.

It was so good to have Yoshi snapping out of his funk. After they got back from Vietnam, Yoshi slept for three days. Not long after their return, a messenger from Tanaka delivered Yoshi’s passport and luggage. There was also a letter from the production company’s legal department expressing their profound displeasure with Shimada’s actions and Yoshi’s lack of resistance to them. Shimada forwarded the letter to Renge, who forwarded it to Media Mondial’s legal department, who sent their own letter suggesting that Yoshi was being held against his will in Vietnam and Shimada had, with the very gallant Colonel Giang Tran’s very able assistance, rescued a Japanese national from unlawful confinement. The production company’s lawyers sent back a letter essentially saying, “You wouldn’t dare,” to which Media Mondial responded with a four page letter that boiled down to, “Do you feel lucky, punk?” and the matter was left there. However, on any and all contact Yoshi had with the production company, such as the overdubbing dialogue sessions, he was accompanied by a Media Mondial attorney. For all the saber-rattling on both sides, no one wanted “The Occupation Boy” affair to blow up into anything larger than it already was. They knew this because the Japanese government had told them so.

Yoshi pushed Shimada down into the pillows and held him there with a long, sweet kiss. Feeling Shimada’s resistance dwindling and relaxing

into the kiss, Yoshi pressed his advantage and was able to put his calf between Shimada's calves.

Breaking the kiss, Shimada asked in a husky whisper, "We're moving kind of fast, aren't we?"

"Shhhhh," Yoshi sighed. "At this rate, we'll be here until Hillary Clinton's second inaugural, if she gets the nomination."

Through Renge, Yoshi had refused to attend the Japanese or American premiere of "The Occupation Boy." The Japanese production company had made polite noises about the contractual obligation for publicity. Renge told them that Yoshi couldn't attend due to the psychological trauma he'd suffered at Tanaka's and Waterbury's hands during the principal photography. Furthermore, Yoshi would not even be in Tokyo for the premiere and then, through Takashi's and Kenzu's discreet channels let rumors percolate that Yoshi was recovering from his ordeal at a remote and exclusive mental hospital that was very much like an expensive spa. Not wanting any more bad press, the production company didn't press the issue.

Sliding his hand along Shimada's inner thigh, Yoshi eventually got him to relax enough to open his legs a little. While distracting the older man with playful nips to his neck, nipples, chest, and belly, Yoshi was able to wedge his body between Shimada's akimbo legs and lower his mouth to Shimada's erection. Yoshi ran his tongue over the head of his lover's cock before taking it in his mouth and pumping the base in the same rhythm as his sucking. Having planned for this and merely waiting for Shimada to be relaxed and aroused enough, Yoshi stealthily removed the tube of lubricant from under the pillow where he'd stashed there earlier.

"Okay, what's that?" Shimada asked, alert but not alarmed, and glad Yoshi wasn't stopping his excellent blowjob. He examined the container Yoshi held up for him in the dim light. "Oh, okay," he said with a dramatic sigh. "I love you, I trust you, you'll stop if I'm in agony, you'll—"

"Of course!" Yoshi pulled his mouth off so quickly, Shimada squeaked in surprise. "I wouldn't do anything you wouldn't do. I'd never do anything to hurt you, Ryuu. I love you. I just want you to be happy."

"Oh, touché, Yoshi," Shimada thought, but said, "I know." He gently stroked Yoshi's hair off his forehead. "I know, and, honestly, I've wondered what it was like for you...you know?"

"Well, now you can find out!" Yoshi began to cheerfully take the cap off the lube.

Shimada took it and recapped it. “It’s not like you have a train to catch,” he said, gently urging Yoshi back to his cooling erection.

The premiere of “The Occupation Boy” was a gaudy event in both countries. The film was gossiped about and admired for its artsy rendering of a badly written, lurid and titillating novel aimed at women who enjoy reading novels about men in love making out with each other. As a historical epic, it got a big horse laugh from what was left of the Greatest Generation, and was compared to “Hogan’s Heroes,” but not as funny, therefore not as good. Along with McAfee and Hashimoto, Yoshi’s performance was singled out as rising above mediocre material and proving that he was more than just a pretty face. Nevertheless, Yoshi asked that his name be withdrawn when it was short-listed for a prestigious acting award. He wasn’t an actor, he didn’t want to be one, and he didn’t want any more attention than he’d already had from the stupid movie. After a brief run in theaters, “The Occupation Boy” went into rental release, where it finally sank into oblivion except for the few die-hard yaoi fangirls who bought heavily discounted copies of the DVD before it sank completely below the pop culture radar.

Once Shimada decided to relax, he really relaxed, and Yoshi gently inserted a lubed finger. Shimada tensed and said, “Wow, that feels strange...”

“Bad strange or good strange?” Yoshi asked, stilling his movements.

“Um...good strange,” Shimada said, and relaxed again under Yoshi’s gently stretching him. And it was Shimada who eventually opened the condom and rolled it down Yoshi’s beautiful arching cock.

No one who cared for Yoshi was ever able to sit through a complete screening of “The Occupation Boy.” Not even Nakadai-sensei, who’d spent hours photographing him and, to some extent, terrorizing good pictures out of him. After seeing twenty minutes of the film, Nakadai contacted Yoshi through Renge to express his admiration for Yoshi’s efforts in a bad film and sympathy for what he must have gone through. He also wanted to hire Yoshi for fashion shoot, but was politely informed that Yoshi had retired from modeling.

Pressing gently into Shimada’s body, Yoshi was hypersensitive to every fleeting expression and sound no matter how subtle as he worked his condom-sheathed erection all the way in. He was spooned up

behind Shimada so he only had his right profile to gauge his reaction to this first-time penetration. “Are you okay?” he asked over Shimada’s shoulder.

“Mmmmmmmmmmm.”

Which was all the answer Yoshi needed and he began to gently fuck Shimada. Reaching around, Yoshi placed his hand over Shimada’s and pumped his erection in the same rhythm. Neither of them lasted very long. Yoshi clung to Shimada’s waist as he made one last deep thrust and gasped against his lover’s shoulder. Feeling Yoshi’s cock pulsing inside him sent Shimada into his orgasm with one or two quick strokes of his own hand. They lay in each other’s arms as they came back to a more earthbound state.

Slipping out, Yoshi disposed of the condom and brought a warm damp towel back to bed. He wiped down the parts Shimada would let him, which were Shimada’s belly and hands. “How was I?” he asked.

“You were great,” Shimada said sleepily.

“I wanted you to come first,” Yoshi said, curling into his side. “Sorry.”

“Meh...next time,” Shimada said, and dozed off as Flounder settled onto his chest in the loaf-of-bread position.

Shimada traveled the world as an investigative journalist getting in and out of trouble for a few more years. He eventually settled into an editorial position with a media conglomerate where he bailed out, scolded, and fought for journalists like himself writing top notch stories on the rights and wrongs of the world. Yoshi finally went to graphic design school, but ended up going into fashion photography at Seiji’s and Takashi’s suggestion. After all, they had reminded him, who thought up the Pajama Boy in the first place? Hearing about Yoshi’s new career from Kenzu at MM agency, Nakadai-sensei asked to see his portfolio and liked it very much. He hired the former pajama model as an assistant and sent him clients when Yoshi set up his own studio.

The End