

in some audience while I was still famous.”

“...WHAT?”

The play, “The English-Speaking Escort,” started rehearsals before the next “Pajama Boy Not Included” photo shoot. There were a few days where Yoshi missed rehearsal due to shooting on location, but his part really wasn’t very big and he was a quick study, so he didn’t hold anything up. Koji was right, when the play opened it was a minor hit due to having both Pajama Boys in it. And based on the buzz, Koji had gotten a major ad campaign as the Running Pajama Boy again for TK Sportswear. It was not as big or elegant as the Sleepy Pajama Boy for KSN Automotive, but his image, like Yoshi’s, was all over Tokyo again.

TESE, as the cast and techs called it, was a fairly stupid romantic comedy with the plot being about an escort service that catered to Americans. Koji played the sexy escort whose cock-teasing antics with rich Americans run aground when he falls for a millionaire playboy businessman on vacation in Tokyo. The owner of the agency does everything to keep his best, English-speaking escort from retiring. Yoshi played the owner’s secretary who’s in unrequited love with his wacky boss. The script also managed to get Yoshi and Koji into pajamas in scenes in a luxury hotel in the second act. There was a lot of shouting, slapstick and Koji kissing a very handsome American actor every night. The play was sold out for weeks on end and the theater was packed mainly with women. But no matter; everyone was delighted, except Yoshi who was merely tired from credibly delivering his ridiculous lines and standing around looking convincingly cute on stage four nights a week and a matinee on Sunday. But he was not unhappy; he liked working as part of a group again instead of a solo model and the center of attention.

In the midst of the renewed Pajama Boy craze, an article appeared in a weekly magazine demanding to know if Japan had gone insane. What could be the possible attraction for a sleeping and running juvenile boy? Did these lascivious, licentious, degenerate ads all over the country limn an inchoate pederastic lust for somnambulistic sex bordering on necrophilia with the Sleepy Pajama Boy, and a voyeuristic joy in gang rape should the Running Pajama Boy stumble in his flight? Yoshi, after he looked up all the words he didn’t understand, was, understandably, quite upset about the essay. “Why is it all about sex?” he practically shouted at Shimada, Takashi and Seiji one night after the play. At least one of them always made sure he got home safely, as some of Yoshi’s fans were a little too enthusiastic at the stage door. Koji had an escort of tough guys with him each night, but occasionally he accepted a lift home in Takashi’s Saab. However, that night only Takashi, Seiji,

Shimada and Yoshi were in the car on their way to a late supper.

“Because everything is about sex, Yoshi,” Shimada said wryly, and then smiled affectionately at his boyfriend’s exasperated eye roll. “Actually, I think that essay is more about Daitaro.”

“Huh?” Seiji asked.

“Y’know I was wondering about that,” Takashi said. “That essay has three of his favorite words—”

“Lust, limn and inchoate,” Shimada helpfully supplied.

“Yeah, and one or two I could let pass but three is awfully suspicious,” Takashi went on. “Add to that he’s been in an exceptionally good mood lately, I’d say—”

“We’ve found our Gigi,” Shimada laughed and Takashi joined him.

“I’m glad you two think it’s funny,” Seiji said, sounding disgusted. “Daitaro’s turned Yoshi and Koji into mental sex toys.” He relaxed somewhat when Yoshi patted his shoulder and smiled at him.

“And what else is advertising?” Shimada asked.

“Oh, Ryuu,” Seiji sighed dejectedly.

“I hear the play’s sold out and extending its run,” Takashi said. “I’m pretty sure that’s not the result Daitaro intended, if it’s his fault at all.”

“Why does he hate me so much, Ryuu?” Yoshi asked as if they were alone.

“Because he can’t figure you out.”

Takashi decided to work late that night. He was escorting Yoshi home after the play, Ryuu was in Moscow on a story and Seiji was home sleeping off a minor head cold, so he was on his own, and there was no reason not to get caught up and even a little ahead at the office. He was happy to see Yoshi home after performances when Ryuu was unavailable. It was too bad Seiji wouldn’t be there as he and Yoshi had become good friends. On nights when Seiji was free and feeling up to it, he and Yoshi often went out after the play. However, without Seiji, it would be an early night. Takashi would see the actor home and get home himself, probably well before midnight.

Daitaro was also working late and decided this was a good time to bother Takashi about Minoru Yamada’s daughter, Yoko, who had a big crush on Takashi and wanted to open marriage negotiations. “I mean, c’mon, Takashi, the girl has a real thing for you. I mean, she’s not even asking for a formal miai, just a nice meal in a five-star hotel with me, my wife, her family, your family, maybe one or two of her father’s friends—”

“That sounds a lot like a miai, formal or no, Daitaro,” Takashi

murmured under the cascade of words.

“Also, you’re great with women, they fall all over you,” he said, sitting on his employee’s desk. “And it’s not like you’re a married man.”

“I’m pretty much married to Seiji, thank you, Daitaro,” Takashi said, not looking up from the ad copy he was writing.

“And her father is way up the food chain of one of our hugest clients.” Daitaro went on with his hard sell. “I mean if you really wanted to fuck me later, you could grab YKT Automotive and start your own agency.”

“Ah, then I could do some huge ads of Yoshi sleeping on the hoods of convertibles,” Takashi said, stealing a glance at the desk clock. “Tempting, boss, but no sale.”

Daitaro made a disgusted noise and suggested they go have a drink.

“Can’t,” Takashi said pleasantly.

“Why not? What are you doing? Is it fun?” Daitaro could really be annoying sometimes. “I wanna come!”

Getting to his feet, Takashi put on a neutral expression. “Just a little chore—”

“I wanna come!”

“It’s very boring—”

“I wanna come!”

“You’d be bored—” Takashi put on his coat.

“I wanna come!” Daitaro planted himself in front of the younger man.

“No?” Takashi suggested, cursing himself for staying late.

“Yes!”

Catching sight of Daitaro with Takashi at the theater, one of the stagehands yelled, “Goddammit, Yoshi, can’t you leave us girls at least one attractive man in Tokyo?!” This got a general laugh and some mildly curious looks.

Yoshi gave the girl’s arm an affectionate squeeze. She’d been one of the most helpful people in getting him up to speed on stagecraft, or whatever it was, so he didn’t make a complete fool of himself in rehearsals. “Oh, that’s just Ryuu’s dad,” Yoshi said coolly.

“I am not his dad,” Daitaro fumed. “I’m his older brother!” This got another laugh. But Daitaro hardly noticed it, he was staring hard at someone behind Yoshi.

“I told you you’d be bored,” Takashi said blandly, but was ignored because Daitaro was wholly engrossed in staring at Koji Kawazu, who was strolling up to join their little group.

Koji and Yoshi had roughly the same lithe build, big brown eyes

and luxuriant jet hair, but the resemblance abruptly ended there. Koji was a few centimeters taller than his fellow pajama boy, his facial features were sharper, more masculine, and his eyes were not as large and dreamy as Yoshi's. He had fuller lips and a jawline one could break bricks on. Sleek, angular, and very sexy: Koji had taken his natural talents and added a graceful gait and tremendous poise to the already man-killing mix. He'd learned his composure in yakuza gambling dens, and he never intended on going back there. But it was a useful cool: a polar attitude that came in handy when sizing up a mark or a foe, while they stared, fascinated, by his approach. "You look a little like Shimada-san," Koji said when he joined their group and introduced himself.

"Does he make you call him -san?" Daitaro asked, shamelessly staring at him.

"He completely ignores me," Koji said with a pout. "But if I ever did address him, it would be respectfully."

"I'm a lot nicer than my little brother, Kawazu-kun," the elder Shimada brother drawled. "You can call me Daitaro."

"Oh, please call me Koji," the other pajama boy purred. And then asked if one of them could give him a lift downtown where he could catch a bus home.

Takashi and Yoshi hesitated but Daitaro had no problem volunteering Takashi's car for the job. "Too bad I didn't bring my Mercedes," Daitaro said smugly.

"Maybe not," Takashi murmured.

"Eh? I mean it's more comfortable," Daitaro went on. "And speaking of comfort, why don't we grab a late supper at Papa Elysium?"

"Oooh! Is it open?" Koji asked sweetly. "It looked divine in that magazine article on it."

"It should. We did the press and the club was designed by that trendy asshole architect," Daitaro schmoozed back.

"You don't call him that when he pays his bills on time," Takashi said, herding them to his car, wishing Yoshi would say he was tired and wanted to go home.

"Do you know Norboru Suzuki? I've read he's a very sexy person," Koji said, leering playfully.

"I can't say I've ever found him sexy," Daitaro said, simply leering. "But he's rich and builds sexy buildings, I'll give him that. Let's try it, Takashi. If they kick us out we'll go to Shakey's Pizza or something." This got a chuckle from Koji.

"I think—" Takashi began.

"I'm kind of hungry, Takashi," Yoshi said. "Could Seiji join us?"

Not only did they get the best table at Papa Elysium, but the trendy asshole architect, Norboru Suzuki himself, was there and made sure the management gave their party an enthusiastic welcome. He even sat with them long enough to be introduced to Yoshi and spend a few moments talking to Koji before he rejoined his wife and their party at another table. Daitaro took charge of ordering the food, so there was lots of caviar, smoked salmon, escargots à la bourguignonne, red pepper rouille, shrimp toasts, duck terrine with wine-glazed shallots, curried wild mushroom pate, duck pate, and champagne. Lots of champagne, maybe too much champagne, but certainly enough champagne for none of them to notice the mob of photographers having a field day with the pajama boys partying with two suit-wearing creative-types. Koji was often in the gossip papers, but it was a rare thing for him to be seen with Yoshi, let alone at a trendy new night spot.

Daitaro insisted on driving Koji home in his car, so Takashi, who was by then sick of both of them, gladly dropped them off at SM's office building. "Thank God they're gone," he said to Yoshi, watching them go into the crystalline lobby.

"D'you think that's a good idea?" Yoshi asked. "Koji's kind of...of fast and isn't Daitaro married?"

"Who cares at this hour?" Takashi asked, hoping that light in the sky was man-made and not dawn. The small noise Yoshi made in response sounded sad to him. "When does Ryuu get back?"

"Next week," Yoshi said. This meant Yoshi had a weekend to get through alone.

"Why don't you come stay with us?" Takashi suddenly suggested. "Seiji's over his cold and I have to work most of the weekend, so he'd probably love to have some company."

"Sure!"

Takashi pointed his Saab homeward. "We'll lend you some pajamas and you and Seiji can do whatever tomorrow."

"There's a show at a gallery I heard about..." Yoshi said, sounding sleepy, but happy.

Takashi let him doze for the rest of the trip to his and Seiji's apartment. After he got Yoshi settled in the guest room, he sent Ryuu an email telling him where Yoshi would be that weekend, but not mentioning the party at Papa Elysium with Daitaro. The next morning he had an email from Ryuu thanking him for looking after Yoshi. And by the time Takashi got to the office, photos of Daitaro sitting far too close to Koji were all over the gossip magazines in print and online.

But all Daitaro had to say about it on the following Monday was,