

American aspects covered, but omitted the native Japanese angle. He's protecting our history and national interest," Renge added, his voice a little too bland.

"And maybe a whiff of nationalism," Shimada said under his smile.

"It is the 21st century, Ryuu," Renge said.

"Some things are timeless," Shimada sighed. "Come on, Yoshi, sooner done, sooner home." He gently towed his lover toward the group around Matsui for introductions.

Yoshi never quite got used to being examined by strangers; he still felt like a strange animal or a thing when it happened. He dearly hoped this would be the last time it happened, too. Yuu Tanaka and Matsui-sensei were at least discreet about looking him over, but the American producer, John Burton, was bold and rude enough to walk a complete circle around him.

"Perfect," Burton murmured in English, staring hard at him. "Simply perfect."

Yoshi lowered his eyes more in rage than modesty. Shimada drew him to his side, and said, "Yeah, well, I understand your script isn't in such great shape," in English and then they all waited for the flurry of translation to die down.

"We are lucky, Mr. Shimada, to have Mr. Matsui to help us," Burton said dryly in English and then introduced Yoshi to his American co-stars, Robert Hashimoto and Edward McAfee. They were both much more polite than Burton had been. Hashimoto's Japanese was fluent, but clunky, so he alternated between English and Japanese, although never in the same sentence. The American screenwriter, Norbert Waterbury, was doing a lot of talking, Shimada was doing a lot of answering, and Tanaka and Matsui-sensei were doing their best to ignore them.

Waterbury: "Everyone knows about Hiroshima, it's famous, but they forget about Nagasaki."

Shimada: "Not in Japan."

Waterbury: "But they're good at forgetting about the rape of Nanjing and the atrocities in Manchuria."

Shimada's jaw dropped. He was nearly recovered enough to say something sharp about the forgotten fire bombings of Dresden and Tokyo when Yoshi, poor kid, tried to come to his rescue.

Yoshi: "What was the rape of Nanjing?"

Matsui: "Something that happened in China in WWII."

Yoshi: "Is it a big deal?"

Trying to forestall an outburst from Shimada, Renge stepped in, and said: "To some people. For most of us it's just one more thing nobody can do anything about."

“Don’t you study history in school, Yoshi?” Burton asked pleasantly.

“Of course,” Yoshi answered. “But Asia has a lot of history to study.” He smiled inscrutably and drew Shimada toward the buffet table. “These people are assholes,” he said, not realizing Tanaka was within earshot. Shimada sighed and put himself between his lover and the director.

Tanaka laughed softly and looked around Shimada at his star. “Well, cheer up, Yoshi,” he said. “Your English language skills will get a good workout on this film.”

“Gee, thanks,” Yoshi said, not even trying not to pout.

“If this Waterbury character is the level of American writing talent on this thing, I can’t wait to read the script and the novel,” Shimada said. “Why are you on this sick project? You seem like a normal person for a filmmaker.”

“Oh, I’m in it for the money and the glory,” Tanaka said with a straight face. “Unlike Yoshi, I didn’t get threatened with a lawsuit if I didn’t do this film. They just offered me too much money not to do it. And, to some extent, I’ve got the same issue Matsui-sensei has; I want to see it done right or as right as possible.”

“Good fucking luck,” Shimada said, smiling at Waterbury.

Tanaka glanced at the screenwriter. “Oh him, he’s on a plane back to Los Angeles tonight,” he said under his breath because Waterbury was heading their way. “He’s done as much damage to a bad novel as he could; now it’s up to our side to fix as much as it can be fixed.”

“Uh, look, I’m sorry if I offended you,” Waterbury said and smiled grimly at Shimada’s noncommittal nod. “But Japan is weird,” he went on, undeterred by the silence around him. “I mean, here you have a beautiful culture, but all American girls want to read are those dick-less gay comic books. They’re crazy for them, what’s that about? I mean, that’s why Noreen Watson wrote the novel about the Occupation, to get in on the Japanese gay sex craze going on now in the US. And it sold like mad. It’s well-written, she’s a good writer, but she said in an interview that it’s weird how American girls only want to read comics and watch cartoons about hot guys fucking each other nowadays. And the whole Japanese manga thing where no one looks, y’know, Japanese. She wondered if that’s some kind of internalized racism to go with the internalized misogyny. Anybody know?”

No one did, and the party broke up shortly afterwards.

“Get him out of this freakshow,” Shimada snarled as politely as he could at Renge in the car.

“Can’t,” Renge said, gripping the wheel tighter than necessary.

“Fuck the money,” Shimada said, sounding very tired. “And the lawsuits.”

“It will embarrass a lot of good people, Ryuu,” Renege said, also sounding tired. “Matsui-sensei is involved, and Yuu Tanaka isn’t exactly a lightweight either.”

There was silence in the car until Yoshi spoke up, softly, but they both heard him, “It’s only a couple of weeks of them, I can live through it for a couple of weeks,” he said, looking out the window. “And my English isn’t very good so I won’t understand most of the bullshit they say.”

Three days later Yoshi left with the production company for Vietnam.

Food and shelter had been scarce for weeks in Tokyo. The Boy and his High School mates had been living in the ruins, scavenging as best they could, many of them died. When the Americans came they gave them food, sometimes without a hand job, usually in exchange for one. That wasn’t all the GIs wanted, this much the Boy understood, but it was all he could bring himself to do to survive.

Tanaka thought a lot about the novel’s opening paragraph when they got to the difficult part of the shooting. How long, he wondered, would Yoshi Katayama have lasted in the perverted postwar Japan that this crazy novelist envisioned? Probably not very long.

But Tanaka had one of Burton’s assistant producers on location with them and on his back to get more out of Yoshi. In addition to a nagging-through-the-translator American AssProd to deal with, Tanaka had a bad script to direct into a good film and that alone was more than enough to worry about. That and doing justice to the poetic repairs Matsui-sensei had made on the Japanese language parts of the script. Tanaka planned to direct and edit as if it were some weird fantasy, which is what the book was and the script had become, instead of the gritty realism of the original screenplay. His intent when he took the project was either to kill it mercifully or just make some artsy pornography out of it. That became impossible due to Matsui-sensei’s involvement, so Tanaka had to make the best of it. When the idea of a film of “The Occupation Boy” began to surface, the last thing the Japanese cinema community wanted was some music video director on his first film to butcher it if it could be salvaged.

Ginger Mayerson

While Tanaka disliked the project, he liked shooting it in this obscure part of Vietnam where no one could see him struggling with actors, the weather, Burton's AssProd, and his own conscience.

FADE IN:

RUINS OF TOKYO DAY

BOY being chased by 2 GIs, running, looking over his shoulder, GIs catch him, rip his pants off, rape begins, BOY screams, is hit over the head, rape continues

SERGEANT run into the frame, reacts in horror and anger, runs to the rape scene.

SERGEANT  
(in English)  
You men! Stop!

GIs run off.

SERGEANT  
Shit.  
(lifts unconscious BOY  
and carries him out of  
frame)

FADE TO BLACK.

“Okay, let's do another take in five minutes,” Tanaka said. “Yoshi, I need to talk to you.”

Tanaka was a fine director and a fine person, but at that moment he had a film and reputation to save: not that it was all riding on Yoshi's acting, what there was of it, but the director was going to get something out of this difficult kid if he had to beat it out of him. It was obvious to everyone by then that Yoshi was on auto-pilot and just going through the motions. For a better actor, this wouldn't have been a big deal, but Yoshi wasn't a good actor and was holding back. Tanaka decided to try something the Americans called Method Acting.

“Yoshi, on this next take, I want you to remember a time when you

were very afraid,” Tanaka said. “And be that afraid for this scene.”

“Why?” Yoshi asked. He sounded as tired as he looked, so his not unreasonable question came across as a defensive whine. He wasn’t sleeping well and was on edge from it; that much was clear to everyone. But no one objected because it was the perfect look for the Boy he was portraying. Nevertheless, Yoshi was overreacting to Tanaka’s suggestion.

Noticing Yoshi’s body tensing in anger, Tanaka figured he could work with that. “Because you’re doing a horrible job, Yoshi, all these people are depending on you—”

“To—to what?! Run? Get my clothes ripped off?” Yoshi yelled.

“Yeah, isn’t that all you’re good for?” Tanaka raised his voice, glad to see the kid seemed to be holding back tears of rage or frustration, but there was an emotion to exploit.

Yoshi threw a clumsy right hook at him. Tanaka’s backhanded slap was only half as hard as it could have been. There was a gasp nearby and shocked looks from the small crowd they’d drawn. “We’re shooting!” Tanaka yelled, dragging Yoshi, struggling and crying, into position. The director called over one of his toughest production assistants to make sure Yoshi stayed put and ran when camera started rolling. “You’re scared, Yoshi,” Tanaka said, shaking him. “You’re fucking scared out of your mind. And we’re going to do this until I get what I want.”

BOY POV coming to in a clean, white room.

DOCTOR

(in white coat, moving around the room with his back to the POV, looks over his shoulder, says in Japanese)

Oh, you’re up.

(crosses to BOY on cot)

BOY

(recoils from him, the BOY has bruises on his face and arms)