

on the set kept them from getting swept away by whatever strange magic Tanaka had terrorized out of the sweet kid who had once been Yoshi Katayama.

Yoshi had begun to dread waking up. Most of the time he could retreat into the robot-like mind he was using for the Boy. It was the only way he could do the things, even though they were pretend things, he was doing in the film. But the first few moments after waking, when he'd be back in himself and missing Ryu with a piercing ache, were the worst of all the aches he was feeling.

The shooting was going well, or at least quickly. Yoshi had figured out early on that if he gave everything he had in each take, they could get done sooner. The love scenes were freaking him out the most and he was glad when there were a lot of people looking on. It made it easier to disassociate his body with what he was doing with it. He began to live for the word "Cut!" It was his blessed relief and liberation.

It was not lost on Yoshi that Hashimoto and McAfee were being incredibly nice to him, protective even, and this helped him get through what he was going through. Yoshi began to almost feel sorry for the Boy in the story who was torn between hating the Sergeant and needing him to survive. And all the while feeling sorry for the Doctor, and confusing pity with love.

Norbert Waterbury had arrived the day before and he was the happiest jet-lagged person on the set. He was elated that Yoshi, Hashimoto, McAfee, and the whole cast were, as he said, doing such a great job realizing his intentions, as he'd realized Noreen Watson's intentions. One of the Japanese cast had murmured that realizing bad soft-core porn is never that difficult and the only good parts of the script were the ones Matsui-sensei worked on. Yoshi managed to avoid Waterbury, but he felt sorry that McAfee got the brunt of the worthless hack's attention.

"What an ugly stupid script," Yoshi thought, going over the next scene, the one where the Doctor comes back from the atomic bomb site at Nagasaki and cries on the Boy's shoulder and then they have sex. Yoshi put the script down, put the Boy "on" and looked up to find Hashimoto, "wearing" the Doctor, studying him with a complex blend of compassion, rage, sorrow, and lust.

Tanaka barked and they went to work.

"You really don't have to do this, Colonel," Shimada said in careful English. He was sitting next to Colonel Tran in the back of a nondescript

van being discreetly followed by an equally nondescript van full of armed soldiers. "I could have just rented a car and driven up there."

"I'm curious about what the Americans are doing up there," Tran said, offering Shimada a cigarette and smiling at his polite refusal. "One hears rumors. You offer a good route to find out what is true."

"Glad to help," Shimada said nervously. "It's mainly the Japanese production company up there, I think." He had a lot of respect for Tran, who was shrewd, wise and ruthless and devoted all of his talent and energy to making his country a better place. If that meant helping an upstart reporter on the trail of a murderous drug ring that dabbled in sex slavery get a story and run the bastards out of Vietnam and into Thailand, all the better. "I would have been happy to send you the novel," Shimada went on.

"Oh? You have the book?" Tran asked. "What's the story?"

"It's about the American occupation of Japan," Shimada said. "The story takes place in Tokyo."

Tran turned in his seat to stare at Shimada and made him repeat it. "The American occupation of Japan," Tran sighed. "The fucking Americans can't even let go of the wars they win."

Shimada cleared his throat and murmured, "So it seems."

"And what is your friend Yoshi doing in the film?" Tran asked blandly.

"He's, ah, he's, he plays a young Japanese man who, ah, befriends an American soldier, and...yeah..." Shimada looked out the window to collect his thoughts, which refused to be collected.

"Willingly befriends an American occupier?" Tran asked. Tran's English-speaking aide-de-camp glanced back at them from the front seat.

"Um, no, or yes, kind of," Shimada fumbled. "There's a rape, but not the man his character befriends. I think."

"It's possible," Tran said vaguely. "Japanese soldiers raped boys in China in the war."

"How do you know that?" Shimada asked, somewhat shocked.

"Japanese soldiers raped everything they could find wherever they went in that war," Tran said pleasantly. "Japanese soldiers did worse things in China, things that China is still angry about."

"Yes, that's true," Shimada said, wishing his English was good enough to change the subject without offending his host.

"But China has more problems than their history with Japan," Tran said with a chuckle. "Being outraged over history is a luxury in all the outrages of today." He looked carefully at Shimada to see if he understood and was satisfied with the reporter's gracious nod.

Tran's aide handed out substantial lunches. Shimada's breakfast

wasn't sitting well on his stomach; he thought lunch might help.

They rode in silence until they reached the outskirts of some grim little town. They arrived as filming was winding down for the day.

Yoshi had just finished the love scene with Hashimoto and was trying to get the creepy feelings to go away. It was supposed to be an awkward love scene that turns lyrical, at least that's what the Waterbury thing harped on before the shoot. It had gone well: they'd gotten most of it in one take, and only one section—the beginning where Hashimoto had a long, passionate speech about death, war, love, hope, the future, etc.—had to be redone. Yoshi had changed into his own clothes and come out to get a drink from the caterers when he saw Shimada arrive. After a split second of hesitation, he threw himself into Shimada's arms and couldn't stop shaking.

“God, Yoshi, what have they been doing to you?” Shimada murmured, holding his emaciated, wild-eyed lover in his arms.

Colonel Tran looked on impassively and then turned his attention to the small group around a scrawny bespectacled Westerner, presumably an American.

Breaking off in mid-sentence to Waterbury, Tanaka thought, “Oh shit.” He looked around for his Vietnamese intermediaries, who'd melted away at the first sign of the Vietnamese People's Army uniforms.

Poor, put-upon, exhausted Robert Hashimoto wound up translating Tanaka's Japanese into English for Tran and Tran's English into Japanese. Tanaka was desperately trying to think of some way of getting rid of Tran and his troops. He had another day of his assistant director shooting pick up shots and he'd planned to spend that day getting Yoshi Katayama's head back together. He'd been rough on the kid, but, damn, it was worth it for what they had on film. So, Tanaka was formulating his gracious brush-off when Waterbury had a brainwave.

“Let's show them the digital video!” the screenwriter cried, completely failing to notice Tanaka turning to stone next to him. “They've come all this way, it's the least we can do!”

“That would be fascinating,” Tran said pleasantly.

While the video files were being organized on Tanaka's laptop, the catering staff pulled themselves together enough to serve tea and the last of the canned cookies they'd brought from Japan. Colonel Tran complimented them on their hospitality and said he looked forward to seeing what they were doing.

“You'll love it!” Waterbury enthused, waving his hands around and completely missing the bland menace in Tran's voice. “It's like a romantic look at the Americans in Japan after the war!”

“Romantic,” Tran repeated blandly, turning to look at Shimada still comforting Yoshi. “How interesting.”

“I don’t think you want to see this, Ryuu,” Yoshi said when they were called into the makeshift sound stage area.

“Why not?” Shimada asked, not removing his arm from Yoshi’s shoulders.

“It’s—” Yoshi began.

“Mr. Shimada! Thank you for bringing guests!” Waterbury enthused and took a seat next to Shimada.

“You’re, um, welcome, I think.” Shimada exchanged worried looks with Tanaka, sitting beside Waterbury, as the lights went down.

Ultimately the opening chase and rape scene would be edited into a smooth and seamless dreamscape that was almost sexy. Unfortunately the handheld video work was choppy and almost made the camera into one of the rapists. Shimada’s breakfast and lunch and the heat and the jostling van ride hadn’t really agreed with him, and now this vile thing he had to watch being done to the man he loved was simply too much for his already outraged digestive system. So when his gorge started to rise, he decided that Norbert fucking Waterbury’s lap was the best possible place for it. He felt a little bad because some of the vomit got on Yuu Tanaka, but when he found out what he’d done to Yoshi on location, he was sorry he didn’t puke more evenly on both the bastards.

While Yoshi was outside with Shimada, who was rinsing his mouth out with brandy, and Tanaka and Waterbury were changing into clean clothes, Colonel Tran and his men continued to watch the video. Tran was not amused, he was, in fact, infuriated by a story he’d consider disgusting in any circumstances. And the fact that it had been made in his country by foreigners just made him angrier. He sent his aide and most of his men to escort the film crew to the airport as soon as they could pack up. Tanaka started to object, but thought better of it. Whatever needed to be done could be done in Tokyo or with stock footage or not at all. Tran and his driver hustled Yoshi and Shimada into the van and drove off. “We will drive you to the airport,” he said to Shimada through clenched teeth.

“Thanks,” Shimada said, still weak from vomiting. He translated for Yoshi.

“Thank you, I want to leave,” Yoshi said carefully in English to Tran. “Oh! But Tanaka has my passport,” he said switching back to Japanese, which Shimada translated into English for Tran, who sighed and stared at Yoshi for a few minutes.

“Then if you don’t have a hotel, you and your—your lover can stay at my apartment until the Japanese Embassy can issue a passport,” Tran

said evenly after he'd decided Yoshi and Shimada should not be anywhere near that vile film situation again.

Shimada and Yoshi were profuse in their thanks for the offer of hospitality but they were able to get a room at a hotel near the airport.

"I'll do what I can to expedite Yoshi's passport," Tran said as they were parting. "It is, however, up to the Japanese embassy how they handle it."

"There'll be a scandal, Colonel," Shimada said with a smile. "You just kicked a Japanese-American production out of Vietnam."

"I'll see them in hell," Tran said, and then smiled at Yoshi. "Take care of him."

"How did you know he's my lover?" Shimada asked, the newshound rising up in him. "You knew I was—"

"Homosexual?" Tran asked. "Of course. Don't you think we found out everything there was to know about you when you started asking interesting questions on your last visit?" Tran offered a microscopic bow and walked out of the hotel lobby.

"Who was that, Ryuu?" Yoshi asked in the elevator going up to their room.

"A great man," Shimada said softly.

They were exhausted, Shimada from his day and Yoshi from the filming. They took a quick, chaste shower together and fell into bed and immediately asleep.

Very early the next morning, Shimada's cell phone went off.

"Ryuu! Where the hell are you? Where's Yoshi?" Takashi was practically yelling. Shimada could hear Seiji in the background trying to calm him down. "Are you in jail or prison?"

"I don't think the cell reception is this good in Vietnamese jails, Takashi, but I've no personal experience to draw on," Shimada said blandly. He put his arm around Yoshi, who'd woken and started away from him. "It's okay, Yoshi, it's just Takashi freaking out before breakfast." Yoshi was more reassured than curious and went into the bathroom. "Hey, I get a question now: what's up with this call?" Shimada asked when the bathroom door was firmly closed.

"It's all over the news that the film crew was deported from Vietnam at gunpoint," Takashi said. "Aren't you watching the news?"

"No, actually, I was sleeping," Shimada said. "Unprofessional of me, I know, but there you have it."

"Ryuu! This is serious!" Takashi was yelling again. "No one knows where you and Yoshi are. The production company's spokesperson said you and Yoshi were taken away separately!"

"Well calm down, Takashi, it's hardly time to send money, guns