

lightly teased. "One of those fine Nagasaki days to be in a goddamn good mood?"

Ikoma merely scowled at him. A riposte eluded him; he hadn't seen Shimada in such a good mood since the reporter moved to Nagasaki. "You look like you're in love," Ikoma ventured.

Shimada stopped typing but didn't look up at him. "You ought to send one of your really good art writers to interview this artist," he said, and began typing again.

"Ah ha," Ikoma thought, but didn't say anything. He just went back into his office and waited for Shimada's reviews to hit the copy queue. Then he called one of their art critics to interview the gallery owner and the artist. "Damn you, Shimada, you always come back with some of the best writing, even if you don't know a damn thing about the subject." After reading the lukewarm, but almost poetic, restaurant review, Ikoma was about ready to bet money Shimada was in love. He looked up speculatively when Shimada stuck his head in the door.

"I'm leaving, if you want any re-writes now is the time to ask me for them," Shimada said, trying to read Ikoma's unreadable look.

"No, no...no, seems fine to me," Ikoma drawled. "I think you should review more restaurants."

"If you like," Shimada said, matching Ikoma's cool tone. "Just send me, I'll find something to say."

"Just you?"

"I might take someone with me," Shimada said slowly. "If there's enough in the budget for it."

"Perhaps you should write some sports as well," Ikoma said. "I should get you some ball game comps." He watched Shimada nod. "One or...two seats?"

"I don't know," Shimada said. "I'd have to ask him—"

"AH HA!" Ikoma bounced in his squeaky editor chair. "You are seeing someone!"

Shimada rolled his eyes. "Well, there's no law against it."

Ikoma beamed at him. "Nope. Lemme know what you two lovebirds want to do and I'll have my assistant dig up comps or whatnot to cover it. It will give me a vicarious thrill to sponsor your new romance. Who is the lucky guy anyway?"

"Remember that kid I rescued—"

"The kid in the alley?" Ikoma asked. Shimada nodded. "I hope he's legal." Shimada nodded. "Well, that's good...um..." Shimada laughed, something Ikoma heard very seldom since his friend had moved to Nagasaki to work for his paper.

“Look, Jun, I’m leaving,” Shimada said, still smiling. “I’ll call tomorrow for leads. If you want to meet him, next time Yoshi has a free night, we’ll all have dinner. Good enough? Later, pal.”

“Ah, so there IS something to look forward to,” Ikoma mumbled, watching Shimada walk out with the spring in his step that could only mean he was in love, or going to be in love very soon. Ikoma had mixed feelings about this: he wanted Shimada to be happy, but Shimada’s first love had left a lot of scars on the guy. But people do heal up and love again, at least Ikoma hoped so. He wished his friend and...and...Yoshi! Yeah, that was the kid’s name. He wished Shimada and Yoshi the best. But Shimada had loved Seiji Hayashida so deeply, anyone new would have a very tough act to follow, and he wondered if Shimada realized this.

Unaware of Ikoma’s gloomy train of thought, Shimada felt happier, lighter and more optimistic than he’d felt since he left Tokyo almost a year ago. He grocery shopped and even bought some fancy cat food for the furry little hellion at home. Yes! Home! He had a home, a lover, a cat, a job he liked, in a city he was used to, and all was right with the world. At home, he stopped by the landlord’s office to renegotiate Yoshi’s contribution to preparing the apartment. Shimada could be quite persuasive and even guilt-inducing when inspired by affection and protectiveness, and eventually the landlord gladly relented and gave the happy couple even more off the next month’s rent than he’d originally offered Yoshi.

“You look different, Mr. Shimada,” the landlord observed as Shimada was leaving.

“Oh? How so?”

“I dunno, younger somehow, cleaner, too,” the landlord mused. “And taller.”

“Younger, cleaner, taller, eh?” Shimada grinned at him. The landlord looked alarmed and took a step back. “I’m surprised you recognized me at all.” He bowed politely and took his groceries upstairs where he immediately sought out the long mirror in the bedroom. “Taller?” he muttered. “Well, maybe I’m standing up straighter.”

The cat made a show of ignoring him from its excellent vantage point on the couch as Shimada put the groceries away. Shimada glanced at it from time to time, idly wondering if it was a male or female. On very slim scientific evidence, but sound-ish observation, Shimada deduced from the cat’s big head and bull neck that it was a tom cat. He further deduced that he was a neutered tom, because the place didn’t smell of cat spray and the cat was far too mellow to have

nads, at least far too mellow in Shimada's rather limited experience with cats, neutered or no. He liked cats, but his gender precluded him from being able to see expressions on their faces. They all looked horribly bored to him except for the occasional flashes of interest in food or prey. But he still liked them.

There were no signs that Yoshi had been home. Shimada figured that the kid must go from school to work. He further wondered how much Yoshi worked at the café and it began to dawn on him how very little he really knew about the boy he was living and rapidly falling in love with. "Ah," he thought bravely. "There, I've thought it. I'm falling in love with the kid and I know almost nothing about him. I know he's legal, goes to high school, works in his uncle's café, and makes noise in bed. Oh, and he likes cats." Shimada made himself a good cup of coffee and realized he was looking forward to finding out more about Yoshi Katayama.

Around nine thirty, when his evening started to drag, Shimada wondered if he shouldn't go to the café and walk Yoshi home. He used to spend his evenings writing at the newspaper, drinking with Ikoma, or drinking alone. If he was going to sit at home waiting for Yoshi, he might as well take Ikoma up on his offer to lend him a laptop and do some writing while he was waiting for the kid. Or surf the web for news stories and porn while he was waiting. As he was mulling this over, Yoshi let himself in and flung himself into Shimada's arms.

"Mmmmm...hi," Shimada said after a fierce kiss. "How was work?"

"Mmmm...fine, my uncle wants to know why I'm so happy."

"Oh my God, please tell me you didn't tell him," Shimada rasped out.

"Nah, he's smart, I think he knows." Yoshi rubbed noses with him. "I'm dead. I just want to take a bath and go to bed...with you." He backed out of Shimada's arms and went into the bedroom. He emerged a few minutes later in the yukata Shimada had worn before.

"That's too big on you," Shimada observed.

"I know," Yoshi said, gathering up the excess material. "But I won't be wearing it long." And he went into the bathroom.

Shimada wondered if that was an innocent remark or a sexy remark. He settled on it being an innocently sexy remark. Having had his bath earlier, Shimada settled into bed with a mug of green tea and a magazine Ikoma's cousin edited in Tokyo. It was new and low budget, almost a zine, but the writing and somewhat limited production values were first-rate. Shimada thought it had promise if it could get enough funding to survive and print on better paper. The news and culture

writing had a nice edgy almost-fuck-you quality to it. Just the sort of thing Shimada liked to read and, even better, write. But not lately; his life was mundane news stories and whatever was going to happen with Yoshi.

Right on cue, Yoshi strolled into the bedroom, flung off the yukata and pounced on Shimada. Whatever else, the kid was direct.

“I liked what we did last night,” he panted between kisses.

“We could do it again,” Shimada suggested.

“I want more,” Yoshi said, sitting up. “I...I want you to be inside me.”

The kid was very direct. Shimada pulled him back into his arms. “I have to do a little shopping first.”

“For what?” Yoshi dodged a kiss.

“Condoms and lube.”

“...Oh...”

“And we don’t have to rush into anything.” Shimada nuzzled his neck.

“But I want to have real sex!”

“Yoshi, it’s all real sex,” Shimada said, rolling the kid on top of him. “It’s all in how you do it.”

“Huh?”

“Okay,” Shimada said, stroking Yoshi’s nipples. “You want me to be in you, let’s start with oral sex.” He watched Yoshi’s big eyes get bigger and laughed as he rolled the astonished kid onto his back. “I’ll go first,” Shimada said softly into Yoshi’s ear, and mentally added, “Because this is as much of you as will ever be inside of me.” He chuckled softly against Yoshi’s thigh, but Yoshi was too distracted to notice, let alone ask what was so funny.

Shimada liked oral sex and thought he was pretty good at it. He liked discovering Yoshi’s taste, texture, sensitive spots, their responsiveness, and the response he could elicit. Yoshi’s enthusiastic response merely confirmed that Shimada was doing it right. In truth, Shimada was simply taking the time to learn his partner. Unlike Shimada’s adolescent sexual rush, this was a more studied approach for him. Although he realized he had a lot to learn about Yoshi, when running his tongue under the head of Yoshi’s cock caused the kid to ejaculate immediately, Shimada, as he swallowed and ran his tongue over his teeth, felt they were off to a good start. He nipped softly at Yoshi’s inner thigh before sliding beside him, hugging him and soothing his post-climax shudders. When the kid was calmer, Shimada drank a little more of his green tea, now cold, and asked, a little too casually, what Yoshi thought. He got a big, wet kiss for an answer.

“Hmmm, is that how I taste?” Yoshi asked, licking his lips.

“Like green tea?”

“No...you know.” Yoshi hesitantly slid his hand down to stroke Shimada’s rapidly hardening cock. “I could...”

“Could what?”

“You know.” Yoshi snuggled closer, stroked a little harder.

“If you want,” Shimada said. He was breathing a little harder. “I like what you’re doing.”

Yoshi thought about this for a moment and then eased himself between Shimada’s legs. Being very new at this, Yoshi spent some time just licking the head and sides, which nearly drove Shimada wild with pleasure. After such an auspicious start, Yoshi moved on to what he thought was the next level of taking it in his mouth. He could get much of Shimada’s member into his mouth, but none of it into his throat. It was a blessing, to Shimada, that Yoshi’s gag reflex didn’t include snapping his jaws shut.

“That’s pretty advanced stuff, Yoshi,” Shimada said, gently massaging the gagging kid’s head. “How about you wrap your hand around the base...yeah, like that...and then kind of pulse your hand...oh, yes...and suck or lick or both the parts above...yeah...oh my God, uhmmmmmmmm...” He moved his hands to Yoshi’s shoulders to resist the urge to press his head onto his cock. “Yoshi...I’m about to—”

In response, Yoshi sucked in as much as he could and tried to do the same thing with his tongue as Shimada had done to him. Appreciatively, Shimada came, and came hard. He barely registered Yoshi’s muted squeak of surprise and convulsive swallow. “Let it rest for a minute,” Shimada panted when Yoshi grasped his limp cock. “It’s too sensitive right after.”

“Sorry.” Yoshi snuggled beside him, licking his lips. “Can I have some of your tea?”

Shimada nodded. “You didn’t have to swallow.”

“It was okay,” he said vaguely.

“Just okay? I liked it a lot.” He couldn’t see Yoshi against his chest, but he could feel him smile.

“I liked it, too,” Yoshi said softly, and a little more softly. “I liked making you squirm.”

“Yoshi, honey, you can make me squirm anytime,” Shimada said, and then had to restrain him when he started to move. “But not tonight.”

“Was I too rough?”

“No, no, you were perfect,” Shimada said, soothing him. “But it’s oversensitized now and, um, hard to explain...especially when you’re