

“So?”

Shimada smiled at his determined face and said they'd have to see how things went that night.

As far as Shimada was concerned, events later in bed went quite well, but Yoshi thought differently. “Why are you stopping?” he asked as Shimada was wiping lube off his fingers.

“You're too tight to keep going.” Yoshi's groan of frustration was almost heart-rending. “Look, Yoshi, if you thought one finger was uncomfortable—”

“I didn't!”

“Uh, well, you weren't exactly relaxed, kid, and I'm in charge of fucking you,” Shimada said, too tired to argue nicely. “Why are you in such a big damn hurry?” he asked.

“I just...I worry that it won't happen,” Yoshi mumbled. “You'll slip away from me somehow...”

Shimada remembered how Yoshi had lost his family and felt like a huge jerk. He gently pulled the kid into his arms and held him close. “I'm not slipping away from you,” he said softly. “We'll do it tomorrow night, when we can stay up late and sleep in in the morning. Okay?” He felt Yoshi nod against his shoulder. Shimada slid his hand down the boy's back to cup his cheek and felt him tense. And then relax. “I guess that's progress,” Shimada thought. Feeling Yoshi dozing off, Shimada mulled over the possibility that once they'd actually had sex, and the unknown aspect was behind them, Yoshi would be more confident and relaxed. This had been the case for Shimada; once he'd made love to Seiji, he'd felt a tremendous sense of accomplishment. It was only later that he realized what a lousy, self-centered lay he'd been. This was hammered home by Seiji's angry recital of his flaws versus his new lover's graces.

Shimada smiled against Yoshi's hair. He must be happy because recalling that horrible scene, which had oddly enough ended in one last episode in bed with Seiji before he left Tokyo, Shimada didn't feel especially horrible. “Maybe I've grown up a little over this year,” he thought as he fell asleep. “Or maybe I just don't give a damn about moody, thin-skinned, passive-aggressive Seiji anymore. He's Takashi's problem now, and he's more than welcome to him.”

Saturday dragged for both of them; Yoshi in school and at the café, Shimada interviewing a woman whose cat led the neighborhood to a little girl stuck in a tree.

“Slow news day, eh, Ryou?” Ikoma asked as the furious reporter was flailing away at the keyboard.

“Fuck you, Jun.”

This made Ikoma laugh. “Hey, at least we pay you badly to write this weirdness up,” he said and didn’t even try to interpret the guttural noise that came from his friend.

Shimada flung his chair back from the computer desk. “Here, do you want to fix this or just run it the way it is?” he asked, tilting his chair back.

Ikoma rolled another chair over and sat down. He read for a while, fixed a few typos, and sent it down to production. “Only you could make a silly neighborhood story read like a spy thriller and not make fun of those silly people,” he said.

“Everyone’s life is important to them,” Shimada said. “It doesn’t take much to see that if you look for it.”

“I knew you were the right man for the job,” Ikoma said, and nodded at Shimada’s thanks. “We still meeting for dinner tomorrow? For me to meet the boyfriend?”

“Yup,” Shimada said, and reconfirmed the time and restaurant. “I’ll have to write up the kendo match after dinner to make the morning paper.”

“It’s the area finals or I wouldn’t be sending a reporter at all,” Ikoma said. “I could send someone else.”

“Nah, Yoshi likes kendo, he wants to go,” Shimada said. “Tell you what, lend me a laptop and I’ll give it back at dinner.”

“Sounds like a plan.” Ikoma went off to find one of their lightest weight machines.

As much as Shimada liked his job, and he was liking it more and more lately, he was glad to leave the cares of the office behind. With the mundanities of making of a living out of the way, Shimada could relax until Yoshi got home. He had a sleek laptop in his shoulder bag and a pleasant evening ahead of him.

At home, he was pleasantly surprised to discover a wireless connection strong enough to do a little internet research on the next day’s kendo tournament. Depending on which site he read, there was a fierce or lukewarm rivalry between the schools, who had either great or pathetic teams. After digging up the schedule and some reliable-looking statistics, Shimada read some news and checked his email. He didn’t get much email anymore, unless it was junk or a news alert. The email on his business card went to Ikoma’s mailbox, which was what Shimada had requested.

“I’m home!”

Shimada was washing up his dinner dishes when Yoshi bounced in and flung himself on him. “Welcome home,” he said after a big wet

kiss. “How was school? How was work?”

“Boring and busy in that order,” Yoshi said disgustedly. “What reporter thing did you do today?” Shimada told him. “You’re kidding?” Shimada said he was not kidding. “But that’s, so, um, so...”

“Stupid?”

“Um, no, not exactly, it’s kind of, of...”

“Stupid?” Shimada was enjoying this.

“No, no, it’s just, uh—”

“Stu—”

“Wait, it’s weird! That’s it, it’s weird and odd that the paper would—”

“Waste time and money on a stupid story like this?”

Yoshi frowned so hard, Shimada could almost see the shockwave. “No! I mean that they’d send a great writer like you on such a story,” he said firmly. “I’ve read your stories. They’re great.”

Shimada leaned forward until their lips were touching. “Thank you for liking my writing,” he said against Yoshi’s lips, and deepened the kiss.

Later in the dim bedside lamp light, Shimada spooned up behind Yoshi and eased the head of his latex sheathed, heavily lubed erection into the kid. There was a little resistance, but Shimada was gently persistent until the head slipped in. He stopped at Yoshi’s gasp. As they were laying on their left sides, he took Yoshi’s right hand and placed it on his right hip. “Push my hip when you’re ready for more,” he murmured against the kid’s ear. “And relax, okay?”

He felt Yoshi relax fractionally, urge Shimada a little deeper and then tense. Shimada was enjoying holding him and not being in charge while still being in charge. When he was all the way in, he reached down to stroke Yoshi back to full hardness before he started gently fucking him. He hit Yoshi’s sweet spot and pumped harder into the undulating young man in his arms. If this wasn’t Yoshi’s first time, Shimada would have rolled him onto his stomach and fucked the living daylight out of him. But, as it was Yoshi’s first time, Shimada controlled himself and stayed in the less gravity-intense spoons position they were in.

Yoshi could hardly resist the overwhelming combination of Shimada inside and outside him and howled into his climax, back arched, shaking and clinging to Shimada’s arm around him, which tightened as Shimada thrust into him a few times and came with a guttural moan. “Oh wow...” Yoshi sighed when he was a little more composed.

Shimada chuckled against his neck. “Yeah, wow.”

“Um, what now?” Yoshi asked tentatively.

“Well, we live happily ever after and eventually your ass will let go of my dick and I can get rid of this condom,” Shimada recited blandly. Yoshi shifted a little next to him. “Relax, take your time...ah, yeah...” Carefully disengaging, Shimada went into the bathroom and got rid of the condom. He brought a warm, damp towel back to bed. “How do you feel?” he asked, gently wiping Yoshi’s chest, soft dick, and, after a minor struggle, ass.

“I feel great! Hey, what are you doing?” he asked when Shimada turned on a brighter light.

“Checking for damage.”

“Oh,” Yoshi said, squirming a little under Shimada’s fingers. “You don’t have to.”

“Oh, but I do,” Shimada said huskily because Yoshi’s squirming turned him on. “I want to do this again, but need to know if you tore a little. You did, but we can go again—”

“Now?”

“Tomorrow night, if you feel like it,” Shimada said. “I’m ready to sleep, are you, baby? You should be very ready to sleep.”

“Yeah, I guess,” Yoshi said and yawned.

Shimada put out the lights and took Yoshi in his arms. He cradled his lover and felt him fall asleep. A few seconds later, he felt the cat curling up next to him. Happier than he’d been in years, Shimada slipped into a sweet, dreamless sleep.

The rain woke him. “Ah, nothing like listening to the rain, being warm and cozy in bed with your boyfriend,” Shimada thought as he lay wrapped around Yoshi with Flounder sprawled across them. “Yes, your boyfriend and your cat. Mmmm, maybe they’ll cancel the kendo finals and we can stay in bed all day long.” Then he remembered the event was being held indoors, so there went that. But if it was far too comfortable for humans to be stirring, this was not true of the feline population.

“N’kay, Flounder, I’m awake,” Yoshi mumbled and dug deeper under the covers by Shimada’s side to get away from the cat batting at his head. “Mmm, morning,” he cooed as he came up for a kiss, trying to ignore Flounder meowing at them.

“He wants breakfast,” Shimada said, sitting up.

“It’s too early.” Yoshi’s voice was muffled by the covers.

“He’s on Flounder-time.” Shimada was improvising. His bladder wanted relief almost as much as the cat wanted food. “How do you feel?” he asked when both pressing issues were taken care of (he’d left Flounder mulling over whether he was going to eat his half-can or not) and slid back into bed next to Yoshi.

“I feel okay,” Yoshi said softly. “I feel different...”

“Sore?”

“A little,” he admitted. “But that’s not what I mean. I don’t know what I feel, I just like being here with you.”

“I like being with you, too, Yoshi,” Shimada said, feeling more but not wanting to spook the kid with the words. Dare he say it? Love? Adore? Cherish? Delight in? Not delight in, that was too creepy, but the others were the feelings he thought he could never feel again. He put gratitude on the list as well. “And we get to watch kendo today,” he said dryly.

“I love kendo,” Yoshi said snoozily. “And dinner with your friend, too.”

“Ah, yes, I’d nearly forgotten,” Shimada said, drifting in to a peaceful doze.

As he’d half predicted, Shimada wrote up half the kendo during the match, including some mini-profiles of the teenage kendoka. He found them an intense, but cheerful, bunch and got some good quotes on sportsmanship and what they planned to do in the future, all responses included plans to continue to practice kendo at university. As usual, Shimada hid his boredom because the paper’s readers would eat this stuff up with a shovel. And Yoshi was enjoying it so much, Shimada was almost having a good time just from that. On the other hand, Yoshi was getting some appreciative looks from the kendo studs, and that pleased and bothered Shimada in equal measures.

The restaurant was fairly crowded, but Ikoma had a booth in the back. After introductions and drink orders, Shimada finished up his story while Ikoma charmed the events of the kendo match out of Yoshi. Having never seen him in a social situation, Shimada hadn’t realized how shy Yoshi was. Luckily, Ikoma could talk to anyone and very soon Yoshi was telling him all about the important moments in the matches. None of these moments were in Shimada’s story, but as a cultural reporter, Shimada had a different perspective (and couldn’t care less about, let alone even see, the heroic moments of high school kendo). By the time the first course arrived, Shimada was ready to hand the laptop over to Ikoma.

“I see you and Yoshi went to different events,” Ikoma said dryly after skimming through the story. He gently pushed Yoshi away from the screen. “Not to worry, Yoshi-kun, I’ll put some of your observations in. They’re all fresh in my mind,” he said, eating with one hand and typing with the other.

Yoshi looked a question at Shimada. “We’re trying to make a deadline, Yoshi,” Shimada said. “Eat your dinner.”