

“Hooray for Yoshi,” Ikoma said, seeing him out. “My cousin and I salute him.”

“Yeah.” Shimada headed home feeling better than he’d felt that day.

At home he found Yoshi making dinner. “Are you packed for tomorrow?”

“No, but it’s only two days,” he said after a warm, but not too warm kiss, because he still had to pack. “I can just toss a few things in the backpack later.”

Shimada grunted and got a beer from the fridge. He sat down at the laptop to write his minimal story. Another reporter would have to finish up when there were new leads or the cops actually caught the burglar or burglars. Based on what he’d pieced together, it sounded like more than one perpetrator, but he really didn’t have enough to go on so his story was going to be very short.

Opening the laptop he saw that Yoshi was in the middle of an email. “Okay, who’s Hiro?” he asked.

“Friend from school.” Yoshi looked in from the kitchen. “Oh, the email...”

“And why are you telling him about my brother’s visit?”

“Hiro knows about us,” Yoshi said, slightly defensively. “He reads your stories in the paper. He wants to be a reporter, like you. He knows who your brother is, too, somehow.”

“Wow! Your bf’s brother is THAT Shimada of Shimada Miyagi!!!!!!” Shimada read from the previous email. “I can see that he knows, or thinks he knows.”

Wiping his hands on a towel, Yoshi sat down next to him and saved his email in the Drafts folder. “Is your brother a big deal?” he asked.

“In certain circles, yes, I guess,” Shimada said, sulkily. “He fancies himself a political/cultural influence peddler when he’s not selling soap and tampons to bored teens with too much money.” He looked at Yoshi’s confused face, which confirmed his suspicion that he wasn’t making much sense. “My brother is in advertising. He took over my uncle’s interest in Shimada Miyagi when my uncle died five years ago. SM was a good, solid agency with boring accounts in groceries, hardware, insurance, stuff like that. My brother has moved it into more exciting things like high fashion, perfume, cosmetics, cars, and lately, into finance and politics. Those intimidating bank ads on billboards are his kind of advertising. ‘Buy this or your life means N O T H I N G.’ Daitaro occasionally gets mentioned in the gossip pages—he and his wife like to swan around with pop stars and actors—that’s probably why your pal Hiro knows his name. I met Hiro once, didn’t I?”

“Uh huh. He brought me his notes when I had a cold and couldn’t go to school,” Yoshi said.

“Ah, now that’s a friend,” Shimada said, remembering a bulky nervous youth. “I didn’t realize he was my fan.”

“Sort of,” Yoshi laughed. “He’s more impressed about your brother, though.”

“Great, just great,” Shimada sighed. “That’s my whole life right there, you know.”

Yoshi hugged him. “I wasn’t impressed with your brother,” he said. “He’s like those pushy jerks at the café that drive me crazy when I have to wait on them.” Shimada hugged him back, but they were interrupted by the kitchen timer. “Hey, write your story so we can have dinner,” Yoshi said disentangling himself and going into the kitchen.

As Yoshi rattled plates, Shimada skimmed through his notes and cranked out a draft of his story before dinner was on the zataku. “Was I a jerk at the café?” he asked, settling in front of white rice and steamed fish and vegetables. Yoshi didn’t have a huge range to his cooking, but it was always fresh and he leaned toward simple, clean foods that were not noodles.

They were silent for a few moments giving thanks for the food, before Yoshi answered. “I only saw you there once or twice, and you ran away the first time.” He smiled warmly at his lover digging into his cooking. “Why are you so nice and your brother’s such a jerk?”

“I don’t know, Yoshi,” Shimada said, between bites of surprisingly spicy fish with cabbage and carrots, cooling it off with rice. “He’s the guy who’s always right about everything and no one has ever told him he’s wrong. And he’s wrong about a lot of things.”

“But you did, didn’t you? Told him he’s wrong, I mean.”

“Kind of, mostly I just ran away from the situation,” Shimada said, impressed that it really didn’t hurt much to talk about it...nearly two years later. “It’s like this: my brother was right that I shouldn’t be with Seiji because he was able to break us up.”

“That’s stupid!” Shimada laughed, but Yoshi went on, “And you were just being a good son and bowing to your mother’s wishes that you break up with Seiji.”

“That’s true, I was going to get back together with him when she was well again,” Shimada said, dishing up more fish, vegetables and rice. “But good old Takashi grabbed him while I was being a good son.”

“That sucks.”

“Not for Takashi, he’d had his eye on Seiji since he met him at Tokyo U,” Shimada said. He smiled at Yoshi’s honest, open, fearless

face and big brown eyes, and remembered that as much as Seiji loved him, he'd never seen as much confidence in Seiji's face as he was seeing in Yoshi's. But his future with Seiji in Tokyo had been a minefield compared to the simple joys of Nagasaki. Which reminded him... "We're leaving for the hotel very early--"

"I'll pack, I'll pack," Yoshi chanted as he cleared the table. He brought Shimada a fresh beer and settled down beside him with a cup of tea while the reporter edited his story and sent it off. "Can I finish my email?" he asked and Shimada handed him the laptop.

"Say good stuff about me," Shimada said, and went off to pack for himself.

There were a few more trips before the summer ended, but end it did and Yoshi went back to school. Shimada had been busy over the summer, but with Yoshi busy with school and work, he took even more writing jobs. Especially from Perspectocity, which was asking him for more and more editorial direction, which was something he was reluctant to give.

Ikoma even asked him about it. "My cousin--"

"Your cousin needs to hire an editor that thinks like me," Shimada growled.

Undaunted, Ikoma tried again. "Know anyone?"

Shimada sat heavily in one of the side chairs. "No, alas."

"You know Perspectocity is becoming one of the hottest monthlies in the region," Ikoma said slowly. "It's probably not your fault you're lucky and talented and that rubs off on the places you work." He paused to acknowledge Shimada's sneer. "Maybe it has nothing to do with you, but this paper's circulation is higher than it's ever been and we've doubled our ad revenue."

"Jun, I'm not the only good reporter here," Shimada said, defending his fellow journalists.

"Don't tell them I said this, but they got better when they had to compete with you," Ikoma said. "Hell, Ryuu, you got better when you started competing with yourself."

"That only sort of makes sense, Jun."

"I know, I know." Ikoma waved it away. "Look, I'm a desperate man, I'm about to screw my own paper, but here goes: my cousin and his magazine need you."

"They need me?"

"They've got a syndicate of investors now," Ikoma continued. "This is a once in a lifetime shot for my cousin to make it as a big time publisher. He says your articles set the standard for each issue. He thinks you can work editorial magic for him. He's willing to pay real

money for it, too.” Ikoma named a figure that would keep Shimada and Yoshi in comfort, if not style in Tokyo.

“How much editorial control?”

“Masao says complete control.”

“Can I do it from here?” Shimada asked.

“Would you want to try?” Ikoma asked back.

Shimada sighed; a Tokyo magazine had to be edited from Tokyo for the feel of the city. He knew this; it was inescapable. Though he didn’t want to go back there, this was incredibly tempting. Neither he nor Yoshi had deep roots in Nagasaki, and though they both had painful pasts in Tokyo, deep down they missed the city they grew up in. “Let me talk to Yoshi,” he finally said. “I’m not going anywhere without him.”

Ikoma merely nodded, and they discussed more local issues. But he rose and bowed to Shimada when they parted.

“Move back to Tokyo?” Yoshi lifted his head from Shimada’s chest to look at him in the dim bedside light. “I thought...you didn’t want to go back there,” he said quietly.

“Nothing is settled, Yoshi, but this is one helluva opportunity,” Shimada said, brushing the hair out of his lover’s eyes and stroking his cheek. “I’d like to try for it, and I think I could face anything with you beside me.”

“That’s how I feel, Ryuu.” Yoshi nuzzled the hand on his cheek. “I love my aunt and uncle and cousins, but, I, you know, I never really felt like this was home until I met you. So, I guess, um, that where you are is home for me and that can be in Tokyo.”

Shimada held him close and kissed him for a long time. The next day he made arrangements to go to Tokyo to discuss editing *Perspectocity* with its owner, Masao Naganuma.

Thereafter Shimada spent more and more time in Tokyo and eventually decided he and Yoshi should live there. It would be socially complicated for Shimada, who’d have to at least visit his parents, but less complicated than trying to live in two places at the same time. Yoshi could study graphic design in Tokyo as well as Nagasaki and probably be happier in Tokyo, too. He was already frowning over the amount of time Shimada was away from home. But as autumn turned into winter, Shimada was still shuttling back and forth, staying with Masao or friends from university and avoiding his family, Seiji and Takashi. It was easy, too easy; Shimada began to believe they were avoiding him. This caused him to have mixed emotions, part relief and part disappointment. He decided that it must be that Seiji and the others were as over him as he was over them, and all this elicited in him was an emotional shrug. More focused on finding an apartment

and the future than he was on the past, Shimada simply didn't see Seiji in the lobby of the Perspectocity office that afternoon. "Oh..."

"Oh'? That's it after two years?" Seiji asked, smiling uncertainly, just like he always did.

"Oh, hi, I, ah, almost didn't recognize you." Shimada fumbled around, looking at his watch. "I have a plane to catch, so..."

"I know, I'll go to the airport with you," Seiji said, sounding more composed and confident as he opened the door for them. He had a taxi waiting for them.

"How'd you know I'd be here, Seiji?" Shimada asked when they were underway.

"Subterfuge," he said. "I called to make an appointment to interview you and then cancelled it. But not before I knew your entire schedule."

"Clever, but unnecessary."

"Would you have seen me if I'd just called you up?" Seiji asked, the old endearing uncertainty creeping into his voice.

"No, I wouldn't, but you could have spared us both this surprise attack." Shimada said, surprised at how annoyed he suddenly was.

"Ryuu! I thought you were over it, I—"

"Me!?! Over it?" Shimada stared hard at him and almost felt bad at how miserable Seiji looked. Adorable, yes, but also very miserable.

"Please don't kill me, but Daitaro said you'd found someone new," Seiji said, cowering a little. "He said Yoshi looked like me in High School, even showed me a picture of—" He broke off with a small squeak when Shimada's hand landed gently on his shoulder.

"Daitaro has a picture of Yoshi," Shimada said, mostly to himself, but did notice Seiji, wide-eyed and trembling slightly, nodding. "So, what did you think? Of Yoshi's picture, I mean."

"He...he's cute," Seiji said hesitantly. "I don't think I was that cute in High School."

"No, you weren't," Shimada said, trying to remember what it was in Seiji that attracted him.

"Gee, thanks," Seiji said, pouting.

Shimada patted his shoulder. It couldn't have been easy for Seiji to face him after everything that happened, and, if he was honest, Shimada's own gutlessness had caused Seiji a lot of suffering that should have been avoided. But the past was past and nothing could be done. "Are you still with Takashi?" he asked.

"Of course!"

"Well, how would I know?" Shimada asked, sourly. "Why track me down then?"