

“Now, Noborto, this is brilliant,” Kurogane said to the enraged shopkeeper. “Didn’t you see that crowd?”

“I’m going to see those pajamas taken out of your next paycheck, Katayama!” Fugiwara yelled. “Believe it!”

“I’ll buy the goddam pajamas he’s wearing,” Takashi said, furious. “How much are they?”

“Oh, I don’t have a flyer,” Yoshi said, somewhat dazed by all the emotion around him. “They’re ten percent off with the flyer.”

“I’ll pay retail,” Takashi said, and handed Yoshi enough cash to cover the purchase and walked briskly away.

“I—” Yoshi began, but Takashi didn’t turn back so he just put the money in the pajama chest pocket.

Another clerk came up and gave Yoshi more flyers and Kurogane winked at him as he led the still fuming Fugiwara away.

“Don’t worry,” the clerk said. “He blows up like that when he doesn’t know what to think.”

“Oh yeah?” Yoshi handed a flyer to a couple of kids.

“Yeah, he’ll be fine when he cools off,” the clerk said, handing out a few more flyers. Yoshi was attracting another crowd, so there really was no better place to be handing out flyers at the moment. “But you’ll still have to buy those you’re wearing.”

“Oh, I guess,” Yoshi sighed. “I have gotten them kind of sweaty.”

When they ran out of flyers they went back to the shop where there was a smallish pajama-buying riot in progress. Yoshi didn’t even have time to change back into his street clothes.

Things had subsided to the normal shop chaos by the time Shimada showed up to walk Yoshi home. “And why are you dressed like that?” he asked.

“Only to sell a lot of pajamas,” Mr. Kurogane said behind them. He waved a stack of photographs at Mr. Fugiwara, who came down from his aerie to join them. “This is the best one,” Kurogane went on, handing a photo to Yoshi. “But these three will be in tomorrow’s throw-away paper.”

“What?” Yoshi asked.

“May I see those?” Shimada asked and Kurogane graciously spread the dozen prints out on the counter for his perusal.

“When we got back, there was a reporter here looking for Noborto to ask about Yoshi,” Kurogane said proudly. “So I rushed to my studio and printed up the best of the lot.”

“Isn’t this Takashi?” Shimada asked, tapping a glossy print. Yoshi nodded.

Mr. Kurogane went on. “Was his name Takashi? He seemed like a

nice young man. That one and the two next to it will be in the paper and these others will be in ads and posters and—”

“And did you sign a release and get paid for all this, Yoshi?” Shimada asked bluntly. When Yoshi said, “No,” Shimada turned to stare hard at the photographer and shop owner.

“He owes me for those pajamas he’s wearing,” Fugiwara said sourly. “That can be his fee.”

“Oh, come now,” Shimada said. “You both know you can’t do any ads without his agreement. I suggest—”

“I suggest we talk about this in my office,” Fugiwara said. Ushering Shimada and Kurogane up to the mezzanine, he yelled at the clerks to close up and go home and for Yoshi to put some damn clothes on.

It wasn’t a long wait for Yoshi, but a nervous one. However, Kurogane and Shimada came down stairs smiling, so he relaxed a little. He tucked his sweaty pajamas under his arm and walked out with Shimada and Kurogane.

“You drive a hard bargain, Shimada-kun,” Kurogane said when they were in the street.

“I think Fugiwara-san was tired and willing to negotiate, Kurogane-san,” Shimada said with a polite bow.

“And you had us over a barrel,” Kurogane laughed. “Thank you for being so kind to two careless old men.”

“They’re good pictures,” Shimada said, sounding tired. “I hope they bring lots of business to the store. And you,” he said, turning to Yoshi, “are to stay out of pajamas during business hours.”

“Yes sir,” Yoshi said sheepishly.

“Fugiwara sold a lot of pajamas today,” Kurogane said, smiling. “So I’m pretty sure the flyer promotion is over. He’ll let the press and the ads do the rest.”

They said good evening and Kurogane left them at the first big intersection.

“He’s a funny old guy,” Shimada said when Kurogane was out of sight.

“He’s nice, he sent me to apply for a job there,” Yoshi said.

“He got some nice shots of you,” Shimada said, drawing the one of Yoshi and Takashi out of his pocket. “Even Takashi looks nice. What was he doing there anyway?”

“Getting lunch I guess,” Yoshi said innocently. “His office isn’t that far, sometimes he comes down and has lunch with me.”

“Well, that’s interesting,” Shimada said. “And how often does that happen?”

“It’s only happened three times.”

“And why didn’t you tell me?” Shimada asked.

Yoshi shrugged. “I never thought of it when I saw you,” he said simply. “But I’ll try to remember next time.” He looked up at Shimada, who narrowed his eyes but didn’t say anything. “Did you make a deal with Mr. Fugiwara and Mr. Kurogane?” Yoshi asked when the conversation didn’t pick up again.

“Oh, yes, actually I did.” Shimada handed him some bills and explained that the ads could only run for a week for that amount and he’d get the same if they ran again. “No more promotional pictures without a deal, Yoshi, just say no. Oh, and by the way, you get to keep those pajamas.”

“Ah,” Yoshi said, as he put the new cash in his pocket next to Takashi’s cash. And then thought better of it. “Takashi gave me some money for the pajamas.”

“What?” Shimada asked, and listened patiently to the scene in the shopping district. “Um...”

“I can give it back,” Yoshi offered. “Or you can give it back.”

“Oh, keep it, Yoshi, or give it back,” Shimada said wearily. “Or you can buy him lunch next time. Be sure to tell him about tonight. Being in advertising, he’ll enjoy it.”

As it turned out, the Pajama Boy story was picked up by the larger Tokyo papers and ran for three days instead of the one Kurogane had predicted. Fugiwara and the photographer were euphoric, and remained euphoric even when Shimada twisted a little more money for Yoshi out of them. At least Fugiwara had good reason to be happy: between the press and some judicious advertising, the pajamas were selling like hotcakes. It was not lost on anyone that some customers came to the store to get a look at the famous Pajama Boy, but few recognized Yoshi in street clothes. He became the Mysterious Pajama Boy, and this brought even more people to the store. There was no consensus among the overworked clerks on whether Yoshi was a hero for helping sell the damn pajamas or a villain for bringing so many more people to the shop to buy the damn pajamas. But whatever the case, Fugiwara was easier to work for when stock was moving and the store was busy, so at least the cute clerks didn’t have to hand out flyers anymore. It was agreed that the cute clerks were lucky the pajamas were selling because it was not impossible that Fugiwara would have forced them into pajamas to hand out flyers, and this was fortunately avoided.

The press and ads had a different effect on Daitaro. An avid headline skimmer and caption reader, he saw the photo of the Pajama Boy and some unnamed guy in a nice suit in his newspaper of choice

the second day of its run. He clipped the photo with its lurid caption—”Locus of the Pajama Boy riots earlier this week”—and called Takashi into his office. “If you’re going to get your picture in the paper, you might as well get your name there as well,” he drawled at the thunderstruck ad man sinking into an expensive desk chair before him. “And, Takashi, if you’re going to sneak around with my brother’s boyfriend—”

“Sneak around? What paper was this in?” Takashi asked in a hollow voice.

“—I think you should do so when there are no photographers to document it,” Daitaro finished sourly because Takashi ruined his punch line. “It was in the paper.”

“Oh.” Takashi fingered the clipping. “Can I have this?” he asked.

“No, I’m starting a scrap book,” Daitaro said, taking the clipping back. “It’s today’s paper, I’m sure—” he broke off to see if Takashi was going to take the call on his cell phone; he didn’t, so it probably wasn’t a client. “I’m sure you can get one downstairs at the newsstand. In fact, I’ll get you one.” And he promptly sent his secretary to get three copies of the paper. “How could you not know you were being photographed?”

“You had to be there, Daitaro, but that line about the riot isn’t far wrong,” Takashi said in a firmer voice. “It didn’t get ugly, but it could have.”

“Ryuu’s boyfriend—”

“His name is Yoshi.”

“Yeah, Ryuu’s boyfriend Yoshi is so cute people riot over him? Excuse me, Takashi, but what the fuck is that about?” Daitaro asked.

Takashi laughed and then suppressed a yawn; Seiji had been amorous the night before and Takashi made the most of it far into the night. “Oh, I don’t know, Daitaro, you had to be there. There was something in the air, it was exciting and outrageous for a cute young guy to be roaming around in public in the middle of the day in pajamas. It was like a...a spontaneous flash mob or something. I’m glad it was documented; it’s an ad man’s dream,” he said. “Yes,” he continued to himself. “I’m glad and will be glad until I have to explain to Seiji and Ryuu why I’m standing there looking like a hare in the headlights with Yoshi looking incredibly cute...in pajamas.”

“Just a dream or just a wet dream?” Daitaro asked, puncturing Takashi’s reverie.

“Just an ad man’s dream, Daitaro,” Takashi said, warming to the subject. “Think about it for a moment: a loosely related group of consumers spontaneously becomes focused on one thing—cheap

pajamas—they become obsessed with it, not because it’s a desirable item—the fabric is vile—but because they feel they are part of a mob surge. Our clients spend millions trying to manufacture that kind of natural event. Yoshi-kun triggered one just being in public in pajamas.”

“A riot?” Daitaro asked dryly.

“A consumer riot,” Takashi shot back pleasantly.

“You do realize that this is why I pay you so much to think these things up?” Daitaro waited until Takashi finished laughing. “I wonder if he could do it twice.”

“I couldn’t say,” Takashi said blandly. “He didn’t know what he was doing, the circumstances were not optimal, and the mob build never quite got legs under it.”

“Huh.” Daitaro suddenly seemed bored by the subject. “Who called?”

“Seiji.” Takashi rose, nodded pleasantly and left the room. He picked up a copy of the paper from Daitaro’s secretary and called Seiji back. Seiji had not seen the paper, but was calling to remind Takashi that they were going out to dinner that night. “I’d rather stay home with you and turn in early,” Takashi said in a sultry undertone.

“Okay, let’s do that instead,” Seiji said cheerfully. “I can’t stand those people anyway.”

Takashi spent the next part of his morning tactfully extricating himself and Seiji from the dinner party at his second cousin’s home. They’d only been invited as a courtesy, so no hearts were broken because they couldn’t attend. Takashi used the usual excuse to wriggle out of it: Seiji wasn’t feeling up to it. If anyone ever added up all of Takashi’s excuses, Seiji would appear as glamorous an invalid as Elizabeth Barrett.

The pajama ads were slightly less successful, mainly due to the candid shot nature of the photos. Consumers were accustomed to slicker, cooler photography for their fashion products. Because only a little over half of the massive pajama stock was sold, Mr. Fugiwara decided to part with a little more money and have Kurogane do some real pictures for a new set of ads. This was a sensible decision because if people came in for pajamas, they might also buy other things. Fugiwara was also big and generous in letting Yoshi do the photography session on company time. Shimada was extremely annoyed that Yoshi was not only being taken advantage of like this, but was allowing himself to be taken advantage of like this, and that there was nothing Shimada could do about it at that time.

“I don’t know what pajama models make, Yoshi, but I’m very sure