

Somewhat awkwardly, because they seldom did it in this position, Yoshi removed himself from Shimada, then he removed the condom and went into the bathroom to dispose of it. He came back with a warm damp towel and cleaned his come off Shimada's chest. "Thanks," he said, curling into Shimada's arm.

"Oh, no, Yoshi," Shimada said over a yawn. "Thank you! That was most impressive."

"I had a week of missing you," Yoshi said, and cuddled closer.

"And I you, baby," Shimada smiled into his soft brown hair and sniffed. "Is this a new shampoo?" he asked.

"No, the stylist used some gloop on my hair for the shoot," Yoshi said sleepily. "I'm doing more ads with Kurogane-san."

"That's good," Shimada said, feeling his second wind, and rolling on top of Yoshi for a nice long kiss that segued into other things.

"A stylist?" Shimada asked over breakfast. "Fugiwara sprang for a stylist?"

"It's a different company," Yoshi said. He was hurrying through dressing and breakfast because, although his libido loved it, sex that morning had thrown his schedule off.

"Which one?" Shimada was still in his yukata and very mellow from sex that morning.

"Nagato Fashions," Yoshi said, collecting his keys and rifling through his shoulder bag.

"Never heard of them," Shimada said, frowning slightly that Yoshi got a new modeling job while he was away. He wasn't sure why it bothered him, but it did. "Who are—?"

"Here's a copy of the contract," Yoshi said, fishing it out of his bag and kissing him firmly. "I'll be home by six!" And ran out the door.

Shimada ran after him. "Who negotiated this!?" he yelled down the stairwell.

"Takashi!" Yoshi yelled back.

"Well, this gets more interesting by the second," Shimada thought as he poured another cup of coffee and settled down to read the Takashi-negotiated contract with Nagato Fashions.

It was, unsurprisingly, a simple and well-written contract and brief enough to read while waiting for the train to his next assignment. Yoshi would be available for five hours over three consecutive days of shooting in Tokyo. He would be paid what Shimada thought was a modest, but reasonable amount. Nagato would be allowed to choose ten to fifteen shots for advertising and catalogue purposes. Yoshi would receive a flat sum for the catalogue photos and a small recurring

sum for each advertisement use of his images for one year, which was fair because it was unusual for companies to reuse fashion adverts from last year's styles.

In spite of himself, Shimada was impressed with the contract and that Yoshi was smart enough to ask Takashi to negotiate it. He was further impressed that Takashi, who negotiated deals for gigantic national advertising campaigns, had been kind enough to take the time to help Yoshi. This bothered him slightly, in the same way Takashi taking Yoshi out to lunch behind his back, bothered him. "Well, not behind my back," Shimada admitted to himself while taking notes at a boring press conference. "I just wasn't around enough for Yoshi to run out of enough conversation or sex to be bothered to tell me. Yeah." He listened to a PR flak try to make a new building project sound more exciting than it was. "And I wasn't around when he needed help with the modeling contract, was I?" he asked himself. "I really shouldn't be suspicious of Takashi," Shimada went on, bored with the press conference but taking notes on autopilot. "He's already stolen one boyfriend from me, what would he do with another one?" The press conference broke up and Shimada found a quiet wireless spot to write up and send his story into his editor. Since he had a little time to kill before his next assignment, Shimada put on a happy face and called Takashi's cell phone. "I just wanted to thank you for helping Yoshi out," he said.

"Hey, you're welcome, but Yoshi already thanked me," Takashi said cheerfully.

"How did he thank you?" Shimada snarled into the phone in spite of his best intentions.

"Oh, relax, Ryuu," Takashi said pleasantly. "He thanked me and Seiji by inviting us over for dinner one night."

"Why is he thanking Seiji?" Shimada asked, surprised.

"Because there's no way he'd just ask me to dinner alone in your apartment and there's no way I'd have dinner with him alone in your apartment."

Takashi sounded a little too blasé to Shimada, who could not resist asking, "And why is that?"

There was a long sigh at the other end of the line. "Because I don't want to be your enemy anymore, Ryuu," Takashi said. "I know you're jea-protective of Yoshi and I really want to help if I can and not piss you off." There was a small pause in which Shimada allowed himself to feel guilty for thinking negative thoughts. "And you know there's only one thing I wanted more than to be friends with you at university."

"And what was that?" Shimada asked.

“Seiji.” Takashi had to repeat the next bit because Shimada was laughing so hard. “And now that I’ve got him, and you’re happy with Yoshi, can’t we all just get along?”

“Yeah, I guess,” Shimada was still chuckling. “But seriously, thanks for making my boyfriend a good deal with...with...”

“Nagato Fashions.”

“Yeah, them,” Shimada said, looking at his watch. If he hurried he could grab some lunch. “He could have gotten really scr— a bad deal.”

It was Takashi’s turn to laugh. “Yeah, well, I’m glad he called me for that very reason. Furthermore, I’m glad he had the smarts to call me. He’s bright, Ryuu, too bright for what he’s doing.”

“I know, I know, as soon as I’m on my feet, he’s going to school,” Shimada said, following his nose to a food vendor. “That was Plan A, move here, Yoshi goes to school, I work for Perspectocity, and you know how that ended up.”

“I know,” Takashi said. “He loves you very much, Ryuu.”

“I know, I’m doing the best I can,” Ryuu said, paying for a sandwich. “So is he, and that extra money for the modeling is gravy, so just accept my thanks for the deal! Okay?”

“Okay! You’re welcome!”

They hung up on a laugh and Shimada ate his sandwich on his way to interview an actress who was the new spokesmodel for a mid-priced line of perfume and cosmetics. This was an easy interview, one he could do in his sleep. It wasn’t that Shimada was uniquely qualified to interview this woman about perfume and cosmetics, it was just that shallow people seemed to like to pour their hearts out to him and this got his employers some astonishingly good copy to sell ads on.

Yoshi’s Nagato Fashions ads of the Pajama Boy in their pajama line ran in mid-size fashion and leisure magazines aimed at middle-class women. Takashi took pains to remind Yoshi to get tear sheets from Nagato’s art department. Even so, Takashi and Seiji collected two copies of each publication they could find and tore the ad pages out for Yoshi. It wasn’t that Yoshi was lazy or stupid; he was simply clueless and way too busy. He also had no reason to be building a portfolio since he didn’t think modeling was going to be much of a career for him.

At that time Yoshi was still working for Mr. Fugiwara and taking little modeling jobs here and there. A quick study, he’d learned enough from Takashi to haggle on a small scale, which was the kind of thing he and Kurogane were able to get. Mostly it was pajamas, but occasionally it was kimonos, casual wear or overcoats once. He took part of his fee as new overcoats for himself and Shimada.

“Well, no matter how threadbare we get,” Shimada said, knotting the belt on his London Fog knock-off. “At least we’ll look spiffy when it rains.”

This remark made Yoshi smile, but Shimada could not fail to notice that it was an awfully tired smile. “Honey, why don’t you cut back your hours at Fugiwara’s shop when you have modeling jobs?” Shimada asked. “I mean, you made almost as much in a few days modeling as you did in a week at the shop.”

“I would, but I’m scared he’d fire me,” Yoshi said. “Or just not give me many hours so I have to get another job. We need the money and, well, I don’t know if there’ll be much more modeling. I’m not very good at it and the pajama thing was a fad and it’s over. I think.”

“Eh, maybe it was a fad,” Shimada agreed. “But you were getting better at it.”

“Really?” Yoshi brightened a little.

“Really.” Not that he wanted to say it out loud, but Shimada was glad Yoshi’s modeling career was winding down. His sweet, adorable Yoshi was becoming a better model: somehow he had learned or discovered in himself the ability to seduce the camera. Although most of the pajama ads had Yoshi feigning sleep so his eyes were closed, Shimada had begun to notice something highly disturbing to him: whether Yoshi’s big brown eyes set in his pointed little face were gazing at the camera or closed with his jet eyelashes brushing his cheek, hit the viewer in the gut and made them want to buy whatever was for sale. Yoshi was vibrant and luminous even with, or in spite of Kurogane’s mediocre photography. As much as Shimada loved and trusted him, he really didn’t want Yoshi to become an object of some anonymous consumer audience’s voyeuristic desire. Shimada had worked for too long with too many empty shells who took great pictures onto which equally empty shells could project their psyches and buy shit. This was the great horror of advertising as practiced by modern media and popular culture. The art of the sell had very little art or heart in it. And this was the last thing Shimada wanted to happen to Yoshi. “You’ll get more rest if you don’t model so much,” he said vaguely.

“Yeah, I didn’t know it takes a lot of energy to model. The money’s good though,” Yoshi said and then yawned. “And I was feeling more confident in front of the camera.”

“Yeah...” Shimada’s agreement was tepid, but he heated up when Yoshi suggested they go to bed early.

Daitaro had no friends, but he did have people who were useful to him

and to whom he was, when he was so inclined, useful as well. That day he was having lunch with Iori Shirane, the president of a smaller ad agency, Shirane Normura, to whom Daitaro had jettisoned Shimada Miyagi's less desirable clients—soap peddlers, feminine hygiene purveyors, bottom-end upscale casual wear, suchlike—on SM's rise to being the premiere influence-peddling mind-fucker in the advertising jungle. Daitaro believed in watching his back, so he made a point of having lunch with old Iori now and then, just to see who was competing with SN and might be coming up on SM's ass. After all, SM was once as pathetic as SN, and had taken out the former premier influence-peddling mind-fucking ad agency just above them to get where they were now. And should some young hotshot ad man or woman end up at SN, Daitaro would want to know such a thing so he could steal him or her for SM. Advertising was a jungle, and Daitaro intended to stay at the top of the food chain. And if this meant a boring lunch with old Iori in a good French restaurant a few times a year, it was a price that must be paid.

According to Iori's droning on and on, there was no new talent at SN worth stealing. Daitaro listened with half his mind on whether he should have dessert after lunch and later tonight demand anal sex from his wife. She hated it, but could be bribed. This led to Daitaro mulling what kind of expensive trinket he could barter with when the words "pajama boy," coming out of Iori's mouth got his full attention.

"This damn client wants those kind of sleepy Pajama Boy ads and I just don't get it," Iori was whining. "I mean, what's the selling point in that?"

"It's the idea of taking those pajamas off the boy, you senile idiot," Daitaro thought, but continued to look like he was listening sympathetically.

"How the hell can you sell clothes someone is sleeping in?" Iori went on. "What the hell are these people thinking?"

"Who are they?" Daitaro asked oh-so-casually and wasn't surprised Iori acted like he hadn't heard him. Never give your client's names away if you want to keep them. He tried a safer question, "Where did they see those ads?" Daitaro had seen them, but he'd sought them and the others out. He'd assigned a secretary to use a fake name and call Kurogane's studio for a list of new ads every week to keep an eye on Yoshi's minuscule and diminishing career. There had only been a few new ads recently and only one was for pajamas. Yoshi was becoming a better model, but he'd be eaten alive in the Tokyo modeling scene if he tried to stay in it. He'd have been thrashed already if Takashi and Ryuu weren't protecting him. The vision of Yoshi, abandoned by his husband and his knight, being sodomized by a tattooed yakuza boss flitted across his