

inner eye and left a pleasant afterimage. But it gave him an idea of how he could screw Ryuu, Yoshi and, to some extent, Takashi, and get away with it. “Why does it have to be a sleeping pajama boy?” he asked when Iori rattled off the names of the magazines Yoshi’s pajama pictures were in. “Why couldn’t it be, say, a tennis playing pajama boy, or piano playing pajama boy, or dancing or sprinting...running...yes, hell yes! The Running Pajama Boy! Look, Iori, I don’t exactly get the sleeping pajama boy thing myself,” he lied. “But see if your people can find a decent model, one who can work with his eyes open so he can see where he’s running, then set up some shots of him being chased by hordes of, of, of, whatever! Chased by teenage girls, teenage boys, salarymen, punks, thugs, soccer teams, samurai, whatever, you know, like the Beatles or the Monkees used to be chased in public places. Even today, I bet if Paul McCartney or Micky Dolenz put on a pair of pajamas and started running down the streets of wherever they are, hordes of fans would chase them. Don’t you think?”

“That’s brilliant, Daitaro,” Iori said in a stunned voice. “Why are you giving it to me?”

Daitaro resumed his bored and lofty sneer. “We don’t handle pajama ads at Shimada Miyagi.” He hailed the waiter. “Check please.”

“Well, that’s interesting,” Takashi said when Seiji shoved the first Pajama Pursuit ad under his nose.

“They’re stealing Yoshi’s idea!” Seiji was glaring at the glossy two page ad of a cute young man in pajamas being chased by a flock of salarymen with briefcases.

“I think it was Kurogane’s idea, actually,” Takashi said soothingly, hoping Seiji was going to stay calm about it. “And this pajama boy seems to be awake.”

“I hate advertising.” Seiji threw himself onto the couch and patted the cushion next to him.

Observing that Seiji’s rage had derailed or at least swerved onto some emotional siding, Takashi gratefully sat next to his lover and put his arm around him. “These are nice ads,” he said neutrally.

“They should be of Yoshi,” Seiji pouted. His anger dispersed and was replaced with sorrow.

“There, there, Seiji. Maybe these ads will get Yoshi more work,” Takashi soothed. “If he wants it. Last time I talked to Ryuu, he said Yoshi was tired of modeling.”

“When did you talk to Ryuu?” Seiji asked. He hadn’t seen Ryuu or Yoshi in weeks.

“He called about a week ago, asking if I could confirm a rumor

about that rabble-rousing politician he interviewed last year,” Takashi said. “You know, the one that caused the disturbance in Osaka.”

“What rumor?” Seiji asked. He’d read about the disturbance in Osaka, but hadn’t thought any more about it since.

“That the politician was trampled to death by a flock of sheep in Hokkaido,” Takashi said. “I could confirm it, yes, explain it, no.”

“I take it that politician wasn’t a client of Shimada Miyagi,” Seiji ventured.

“No, but his opposition was,” Takashi said darkly.

“The sheep?”

Takashi looked down at Seiji in his arms to confirm the intention of his impish tone. Seiji gazed back at him with love, humor and compassion, all the things Takashi had fought so hard for and he felt peaceful and optimistic again. “No, not the sheep,” he said with a chuckle. “What’s for dinner?”

“Damned if I know.”

Although he never said a word about the other pajama boy ads, Yoshi had to have seen at least one of them on the billboard near Fugiwara’s shop. Coincidentally, this billboard was near the very spot the original pajama boy had transfixed Takashi with his pajama-clad charms. The original pajama boy went about his life as he always had, deeply in love with his boyfriend and exhausted by his demeaning job. Yoshi had shrugged off so much hurt in his short life, what, really, was so horrible about being passed over for a major ad campaign? After all, he hadn’t invented the Pajama Boy, or maybe he had, but he certainly didn’t have a patent on it. Or something.

Shimada was less sanguine, but kept his opinion of the new pajama boy to himself lest he rub any more salt into Yoshi’s wounds, even if Yoshi wasn’t acknowledging those wounds. Covering the opening of a new megahotel on Maui when the Pajama Pursuit ads first came out, Shimada heard about the ads before he saw them. He got an earful on the subject from Seiji, but what could anyone do about them? Shimada finally had enough, “Seiji, you’re running up my cell bill over nothing,” he said. “Bitch at Takashi about it, but get off my phone.” He knew he’d have to apologize for that later, but he wanted to run up some charges by calling Yoshi, who cheerfully said he missed him, to come home soon, and that he had to get back to work. Deciding to take a page out of Yoshi’s book, Shimada cheerfully got back to work and finished his story in time to catch an earlier flight. At Tokyo airport, he bought one of the magazines Seiji had been raving about and there, lo and behold, was a slick, fucking brilliant two-page ad of a cute boy in pajamas being chased by a pack of crazed salarymen. Being a

journalist, and unlike most consumers who would merely feel strangely compelled to buy a pair of these pajamas, Shimada didn't shy away from the logical next question this photo scenario posed: What if they caught him? What would this pack of men do with the scantily clad cute boy they were chasing if they caught him? "Whoa, that art director should get some counseling," he muttered, and threw the magazine away before he got home to Yoshi, who was continuing to behave as if he'd never heard of the new pajama boy, or pajamas or advertising or running or anything connected with the subject.

"You want me to do what?" Shimada asked the skinny editor standing in front of him a few days after he'd gotten back. He'd just finished a stupid story about a new line of sneakers for a cheap weekly teenybopper magazine with high circulation that paid obscenely well and he was eating a bowl of noodles to celebrate, or mourn, the brain cells such a story had cost him and the big check he could look forward to for it. And now this. "You want me to interview the Pajama Boy?"

"Yup, and layout needs the art and story by dawn for the next edition. I'll pay you double the usual rate." The skinny editor was such a kid, his voice broke on the last word. But he was a kid with money, so his voice could do whatever it wanted as far as Shimada was concerned. "Here's the rundown and where you can find him tonight," the editor went on, handing Shimada a folder. "It's a shoot, so you'll have to get him on breaks, but you're good at that. I've read your political stuff. You get people to say weird stuff by catching them off guard. We want the raw pajama boy for the next issue."

"The raw pajama boy," Shimada murmured, opening the file. "I hope I'm up to it." He skimmed the first page. "And by dawn...I can do this. Especially for double pay."

The editor smiled smugly and sauntered off in the direction of another victim, i.e., another decent, overworked, but well-paid journalist who needed the money.

Shimada finished his noodles and headed for a cybercafe far enough from the magazine offices that he wouldn't run into anyone he knew there. He emailed Seiji to scan half a dozen of the best of Yoshi's pajama boy pictures and email them to him. Then he set a mouth-watering scene of a midnight meeting with the original Pajama Boy, Yoshi Katayama, in a luxurious suite at the five star Hotel Sylvania, which Shimada had recently reviewed for an American travel magazine, completely paid for by the magazine. He'd had a suite, high definition TV, room service, a well-stocked mini-bar, whirlpool bath, a sauna, and Yoshi for an entire weekend. Just remembering it made him tingle all over again. But he was merely setting a scene for a heartfelt profile and

an imaginary interview with the only Pajama Boy that mattered to him.

Ever a trouper, Seiji emailed six high-resolution tiff files of Yoshi's best Sleepy Pajama Boy shots to go with the interview, and a question: "And what are you up to, Ryuu?"

So engrossed in his beautiful fiction, Shimada didn't answer until after he'd delivered his story to the layout department in the wee hours of the morning and stayed, drinking coffee and shooting the breeze with the high-strung, over-caffeinated insomniacs who worked in production, until the issue was beyond recall, and then he replied to good old Seiji with two words: "You'll see."

Of course the kid editor hit the ceiling when he saw the article, but had to back down when it became that week's sensational fashion story. Who was this mysterious sleepy, dreamy cutie who claimed to be the original Pajama Boy and had such a condescending, but sweet, attitude toward the Johnny-come-lately hyperactive Pajama Boy? "I hope the poor thing doesn't wear himself out running all over Tokyo," was one much quoted line, and the other famous line, the one that elicited barks of laughter from readers was, "I sure hope they don't catch him."

This must have been galling to the Pajama Pursuit account manager due to the fact that the profile hit the streets the same time the ad with the other Pajama Boy being chased by mini-skirted school girls rolled out. The ads became a joke, but the word on the street was that Pajama Pursuit sleepware sales were steady.

Seiji and Takashi were elated. Shimada was as happy as his busy schedule would allow him to be. Yoshi was somewhat dubious about the whole deal.

"I don't remember giving this interview," he said, one morning when Shimada had been out all night on a story. Yoshi shook the dog-eared, week-old magazine a co-worker had given him at the exhausted reporter. His co-worker had been surprised Yoshi hadn't seen it. Poor Yoshi had had to pretend he'd forgotten about the interview because Fugiwara was working them all to death in the shop. So, on top of being overworked, never seeing his boyfriend, who was interviewing him in absentia, and this stupid subterfuge was making Yoshi a very cranky Pajama Boy.

"Honey, if you let me get some sleep, I'll have a nice explanation for you when you get home," Shimada said, falling on the futon.

"We're meeting Seiji and Takashi for dinner," Yoshi said, picking up his shoulder bag.

"I know, I know, I was planning to explain it before we got to the restaurant where they're celebrating it with us," Shimada said, fighting to keep his eyes open.

“I hope they’re treating.”

The bitterness in Yoshi’s voice could have corroded iron and was not lost on Shimada. “Yoshi, cheer the fuck up!” he yelled. “Your sweet little face and pajama-wearing ass just kicked the shit out of a major ad campaign.”

“You mean you did!” Yoshi yelled back.

“Yes! Yes! Yes! I did! And I loved every second of it! Thank you for being the one, true Pajama Boy so I could skull-fuck the ad industry with their own ego-sticks!”

“Wha-ha-ah-at?” Yoshi could barely get the word out for laughing.

“I don– oh fuck, I don’t know.” Shimada curled into fetal position. “Go to work, Yoshi, let me sleep before my guts implode. Or something.”

Smiling, because he was unable to be angry with the man he loved, Yoshi leaned over Shimada and kissed his temple. “You crazy man, I love you,” he sighed.

“...mmmm...alovyutoo...”

The silly argument had made Yoshi late, so he let the call on his cell phone go to voice mail. He’d check it on his break.

Shimada got to the restaurant on time, but Yoshi was late. “I don’t know, maybe old Fugiwara made him work late,” Shimada said, getting his cell phone out.

“Oh, there he is,” Seiji said, returning Yoshi’s wave.

“Sorry, sorry, I missed my train,” Yoshi panted, leaning affectionately into Shimada’s arm.

Takashi assured him everything was all right and the waitress led them into a private room, which impressed Yoshi very much. “We just want to celebrate you and Ryuu putting that upstart pajama boy in his well deserved place,” he said, urbanely, and ordered lots of sake.

“Seiji helped,” Ryuu said after the first toast to the one, true Pajama Boy. “He picked the best pictures for the inter–” Yoshi’s huge eye-roll cut him off “–ah, for the profile.”

“What?” Seiji asked, digging into an appetizer.

“Oh nothing,” Yoshi said, sipping green tea and letting his sake cup go cold. He shot Shimada a wry look. “That interview was just so over the top. I sound so bitchy. But the pictures were great,” he added hastily when Seiji’s smile faltered.

“I didn’t think it was bitchy,” Seiji said quickly. “It was just, um, assured and, ah, actually, now that I think about it, it sounded more like Ryuu than you.”

Shimada choked on his sake and Takashi began to laugh helplessly. “But the pictures were very nice,” he managed to say between laughs.