

At the end of the day

A Hanbei - Kanbei friendship fic

Von Yaten

I usually don't write stuff like this, but after reading up on Hanbei's life and his relationship with Kanbei and how he died, this idea wouldn't let me go.

At this point I do not know how those two will be portrayed by Koei in Samurai Warriors 3. The personalities in this fic are simply what I think them to be going by their designs and what little I've seen from them so far, so please keep that in mind as they might turn out to be completely OOC after all

It's not overly emotional, but it still might be a tearjerker to some, so you might want keep tissues ready just in case.

Note: The persons in this story actually existed in the sengoku period of japan, thought I'm going by the personalities and portrays Koei has painted of them with the Samurai Warriors series.

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"... I guess that's it for today. Great work everyone! With this plan the enemy won't know what's hit them before it's over.", Hideyoshi proudly called their meeting to an end, causing everyone to bow and start raising, going to leave their leader alone with his thoughts and Nene, who stood calmly beside him, but watched over them with a smile.

The calm and relaxed atmosphere instantly turned tense when just before the door leading out into the hallway out of all people Kanbei Kuroda and Mitsunari Ishida happened to reach it at the same time.

Before they could utter any sound, a young male pushed through them. "Excuse me!", he called out cheerfully over his shoulder, the wooden geta clattering over the floor as he hurried down the corridor.

Hideyoshi let out a chuckle, while Nene's smile brightened, while the two strategists stared after the one that seemed like a young child, yet was in fact older than them. After a moment Mitsunari slipped out of the room, but not without throwing a haughty glance at the other and was quickly followed by Sakon, who gave a quick tilt of head as some sort of bow.

While being annoyed at the simple presence of the red-headed strategist, Kanbei couldn't help but think of the cheerful one with slight worry and choose to go after him instead of returning to his own quarters.

He'd only taken a few steps from the room when he heard lady Nene addressing her husband. "I'm so glad Hanbei is with us. Mitsunari and Kanbei never quarrel as much as they did before."

"Well... That seems to be the case, doesn't it?", came the reply from the so called 'monkey king', making Kanbei shake his head.

Sometimes he wondered just what it was that drew him to his lord when this one made air-headed statements like that. But when the man got serious it was almost like he was an entirely different person.

Kanbei only needed to follow the corridor for a few minutes, when he found the proof that his worry hadn't been for nothing. After all, it was not like Hanbei at all to rush from a room like this - not even in order to break him and that foxy bastard up or stop them from starting anything like he seemed to do today.

Quickly closing the distance between them, he kneeled next to the boy who was kneeling on the floor, one hand over his mouth to muffle the coughs shaking his slender frame.

As he rubbed circles over his back, hoping to help the fits calming down, he also noticed the slightly rosy cheeks and the feverish glimmer in the other's eyes.

It took a few more minutes until Hanbei was freely gasping for air.

Seeing the other being somewhat okay, he picked the smaller strategist up easily and carried him in his arms with the other's head against his shoulders, just like he used to with his son when he was younger.

"My hat...", came the soft whisper that made the christian roll his eyes and quirk a little smile. Trust Hanbei to care for that little hat instead for his health. Still the taller, stoic male obligated the wish and picked the white-golden hat from the floor and put it on top of the others black hair, before walking on.

Takenaka's quarters weren't far off and his brother and sister instantly jumped up when they saw him enter with their weakened brother in his arms.

Kanbei calmly brewed the tea Hanbei liked to drink whenever he got sick, while his siblings took care to get him out of the formal clothes, washed and into casual ones and into bed.

"Overworked yourself again?", the white and black haired man inquired as he sat down next to his best friend and handed over a cup filled with the herb tea. The smell of it was relaxing and soothing and soon filled Hanbei's entire bedroom.

"Seems like it... Guess I'm just not used to 'taking it easy'.", the 'boy' answered with a slight smile, blinking when he realized his siblings had already left the room to give them some privacy.

Kanbei's expression of concern turned into a deep, dark frown. "This is no laughing matter.", he calmly stated, upon which the other's smile dropped and he sighed heavily before starring into his tea.

"I know.", he simply said after a bit, before carefully blowing over the surface to help the tea calm down to a drinkable heat.

"Sometimes I wonder...", came the reply as the strategist rose to his feet. "I'm going to report this to Hideyoshi."

"Wah?!"

"You heard me. If you can't take better care of yourself and won't allow them to help you, then I'll make certain lady Nene has a watchful eye on you again."

"Nooooooooooooo.", moaned Hanbei in partly despair. "If lady Nene is around I never get things done. She treats me like a little kid and makes me take NAPS during the day! Last time even on her lap! You were there! You saw how pissed off lord Hideyoshi was at first."

At that particular memory the usually serious and stoic christian broke into a broad smile, showing off his white teeth. "Well... if you ask me you DID look pretty comfortable... And Hideyoshi was only mad because he was jealous of how lady Kai was bent over you, plucking cherry blossoms from your head."

"Maybe... But that's not the point...."

"Well, then let this be you a lection not to overwork yourself next time."

"You are evil."

"So I've been told... Now drink up that tea and lay down. Just look how your eyelids are dropping... Your body is obviously exhausted and you should listen to it and have a nice long sleep. I'll check in tomorrow before the battle, so make sure to get some good rest."

"Bully.", came the muttered reply, but the young looking one did follow the instructions and was asleep the moment his head touched the pillow, making Kanbei shake his head. "Just whom are you trying to convince that you are 'fine' anyway?", he wondered to himself, before leaving and returning where he came from.

The next day was a rather chilly one, signaling that fall was indeed at it's peak and nearing it's end, coldness taking over and soon going to wrap the whole land in a layer of white, cold, frozen water. Kanbei merely put an additional layer of clothing on before throwing his coat on and leaving his quarters, startling the servants for being up THIS early.

It wasn't that he was one of those that got up as late as possible, but he also was not an early riser.

Today thought they were going to go out for battle and he did have a certain patient to check up before doing so.

As expected Hanbei's brother was awake. When their sibling got sick like this they switched watching over him, so if things should get worse they could instantly get some aid.

Nodding his thanks to him, he entered and waited for the other to lead him to the room, as it had become a habit when he was up for visits like those.

The door was slid open to reveal a deeply asleep strategist, who's eyebrows were slightly drawn together in a small frown and his hair seemed to stick to his skin. His fever must have gotten worse, if the flushed face was any indicator.

Kneeling down next to the other one, Kanbei put one hand on the sleeping one's forehead and the other on his own, comparing the temperatures.

"He woke up once, about two hours ago, when the fever was at it's peak, but it has been getting better since then.", came the soft spoken information from the younger boy... that still looked older in physical appearance. Nodding his thanks about the information Kanbei withdrew his hand and was slightly startled to see Hanbei turning to continue pressing his face against it.

His expression went even darker, knowing that the other was most likely enjoying the cold sensation against his heated skin. If that little fool didn't always disregard his health when he was getting into working out plans, he wouldn't look so pathetic when falling sick. Well, he probably wouldn't get this sick in the first place.

"Lady Nene has agreed to look after him. Seeing his condition it is out of question for him to join us at the battlefield.", the christian mentioned calmly to the other male, while getting to his feet and heading for the exit.

Lately Hanbei had been getting sick a lot quicker. His health did not only worry his friends, but also almost everyone he had gotten known to. Hanbei was different from all other generals and just had a charm one felt drawn to.

Even he himself had been surprised how easily he got along with the young-looking strategist, that was in fact older than himself. He wondered if perhaps his frail health was the reason as to why he didn't grew out to be a man. But then again, he should be aging in facial terms at least, shouldn't he?

Kanbei shook his head at himself.

This wasn't the first time his thoughts had wrapped themselves around the matter of his best friend's youthful appearance and side-tracking him.

Hideyoshi was already up when he entered the great hall, as were a few others. Right then Nene was just pouring him some tea, while Kai was kneeling next to him, setting down a tray with breakfast.

Hiding a yawn behind his fan Mitsunari entered the room from the other side, the Saika at his side as usual. One of these days he might actually feel like interpreting more into their relationship, but right now he had more difficult matters to take care off.

Neatly he folded his legs under him as he took his usual spot.

As expected Lady Nene took notice of him a few moments later, a look of concern on her usually happy face. "How's Hanbei doing?", she inquired, instantly drawing the attention of everyone to the stoic strategist.

Setting down the chopsticks he'd been about to use, he turned fully to his leader and his wife to show his respect. "According to his brother the fever is getting better while we are speaking, but it's out of question to bring him to the battlefield."

Hideyoshi nodded, for once also being serious. "I feared so. Nene, dear, please be so good as to watch over him while we are gone. And should he awake, tell him that we'll definitely going to win using the plan we formulated with his help."

"Of course!", the woman chirped. "Oh, and Lady Kai has already agreed to help out as well. There is nothing to worry about! Together we'll have him healthy and running around like usual in no time!"

Everyone chuckled at that while Hideyoshi whined a bit that Hanbei was getting way to much attention from his lovely ones, before he was promptly scolded at being jealous of a sick one by Nene.

Kanbei hid the grown smile by digging into the food.

Lady Nene was a good woman, even though he did find her a bit weird at times, when she acted as the mother of grown men that were occasionally even way older than her.

On the other hand, this was a certain charm of her own. Many soldiers that didn't have any family or loved one left, looked forward to return to where she 'mothered' over them and expressed her concern at wounds and relief for their return.

It was very soothing to some anguished souls.

Once more he found himself thinking of his sleeping friend. When Hideyoshi had brought Hanbei to the castle everyone had been stunned at seeing a 'mere boy' standing by their lord's side. Even more surprising had been to find out his real age.

He did have a way to make everyone feel comfortable around and didn't mind being treated at times like a boy, though he did blush a little bit when Nene and Kai felt like 'mothering' him. Especially when they decided to team up like this time.

Sipping his tea Kanbei vowed to go save his friend once they were back and he had taken a shower.

Hanbei didn't like the smell of blood at all.

When he had once asked, the other had replied that it smelled too much of death to him and he wasn't exactly fond of being reminded that they had to take lives.

It was a weird thing to say for someone participating also as a warrior on the field and having such a unique weapon developed for him to wield, but it did fit well with what he knew about the other's personality.

He was most sure, if there was a way to win this war without killing anyone, Hanbei would have found it and already made Hideyoshi go through with it.

As it was, it couldn't be avoided.

Finishing up, Kanbei set down his things neatly at the table and then watched and listened to the other one's talk, before excusing himself to prepare for battle.

As he did the last check-ups on his preparations he also tried to clear his mind from anything aside the battle plans, yet he couldn't help the strange feeling in his stomach as he pulled himself onto his horse.

With thundering hooves Kanbei entered the castle and brought his horse to a stop.

Despite the full success of their surprise attacks and carefully set ambushes he felt uneasy and just couldn't settle down. Already he felt as if he knew the cause and jumped off easily of the mare.

Another pair of horses came to a halt next to him, though certainly not as in haste as he had been. Unsurprisingly it was Mitsunari who had placed his horse just in his path, while Sakon actually looked apologetic.

"What got you so worked up? You left the battlefield like the devil was after you.", Mitsunari drawled, obviously exaggerating just to get a rise out of him, making Kanbei roll his eyes and walk around the two riders. "None of your business, Ishida. But if you actually used your brain before opening your mouth to sprout nonsense as usual you might figure it out... Unless you leave thinking up to your partner too."

Whatever the other replied was lost to the Christian, as he'd already entered the

castle and was quickly working over the wooden floor.

Nene looked up quite startled when he opened the door to Hanbei's sleeping quarters, before scowling and putting a finger to her lips, signaling him to be quiet. As it seemed Hanbei was still - or most likely again - sleeping, though he seemed to have an easier rest and his face was no longer red.

"I made him his tea just a bit ago and he went instantly back to sleep.", she whispered to him. "The fever is entirely gone now. All that's left for him is to rest well, then he should be fine."

Kanbei felt relieved. In fact it felt as if someone had taken a stone out of his stomach.

"Go see your husband then. He should arrive any moment now.", he lightly smiled at her, watching her face lit up with joy, before hesitantly glancing down at the youth.

"I'll stay here. Now go already."

Nodding happily and patting him on the head she quickly scampered of, still being careful not to make too much noise.

It was getting late and Kanbei had just lit a candle in the room when the sleeping figure stirred. Raising a hand he rubbed sleepily over his eyes, before the brown orbs looked around in slight confusion until they settled on him.

With a small smile Hanbei rolled to his side. "Everything went fine?", he inquired his voice slightly hoarse.

Kanbei nodded. "We won with only little casualties and no one's life lost."

The smile broadened, before it was broken by another yawn. "That's great... Ne... Kanbei? Could you make me another cup of that tea? I'm feeling really thirsty..."

Again the Christian found himself nodding, before raising and setting up water over the fire.

The tea was done a few minutes later and Kanbei found himself helping Hanbei sitting up and supporting his back while this one carefully sipped the hot liquid. "Thanks a lot."

Hanbei was brushing a hair out of his face as he laid once more in the pillows, before yawning again.

"If you want to go back to sleep, it's fine.", the pale man reassured the smaller one, who gave him a dazzling, grateful smile, before holding out a hand.

After a moment of hesitation Kanbei took it in his way larger one and noticed how cold it was.

"Hm... As I thought. You one's are way warmer.", the black haired one grinned, as his eyes fluttered, thought his hold onto the larger one didn't. A few moments later his breath relaxed and evened out, signaling that he was once more slumbering.

Kanbei continued watching as the face further relaxed into a small smile, while rubbing his thumb over the small hand, trying to stimulate the blood circulation to get it warm on its own.

He wasn't sure how much time passed, but suddenly he blinked, looked and blinked again, before his eyes widened slightly.

With a slightly shaking hand he held it before the other's lips, before lightly pressing against his chest. No pulse.

The revelation hit him like a harsh blow in the stomach.

He found himself gasping for breath and actually blinking some moisture away from

his eyes, before covering his face with his free hand and forcing himself to concentrate simply on breathing in and out.

It took him a few more minutes to regain his composure in some way, before gently setting the small hand down, next to the other's body and then folding both of them over the other's chest.

His gaze lingered on the peaceful expression and the smile a bit longer, before he managed to take his gaze off it.

Hanbei had died a peaceful and painless death. It might not be the death of a warrior, but then again, that wasn't what he'd really been to begin with. He was a genius that sought to create a world where everyone could live in peace. Just like their lord.

Taking one final breath he mentally said his goodbye to Hanbei, before stepping out of the room and closing the door behind him.

Breaking the news when everyone was happily celebrating their victory was a hard thing to do, even for someone said to be 'lacking emotions', but he didn't really get a choice to begin with.

The moment he entered the hall, everyone's eyes were on him and Nene's happy exclaimed question if Hanbei was up and well enough to join them actually hurt him at least as much as the fact that his best friend had passed on.

At his calmly stated news, a heavy silence settled over them and Hideyoshi's expression was so full of disbelief, his mouth opening and closing like a fish out of the water, that Kanbei couldn't bear to look at him, instead closing his eyes and once more covering his face with a hand, before turning as if to leave.

To his surprise Hanbei's sister and brother stood in the doorway, looking at him.

He hadn't noticed them arriving, but the sober expression of the male sibling made him draw the conclusion that Hanbei's health had been far worse than any of them had known.

With a soft sob the girl fell to her knees, face hidden behind hands as she sobbed about the gone live, with her brother kneeling next to her, doing his best to comfort her silently.

Suddenly he looked up at Kanbei with sad eyes. "He knew... He knew that he didn't have much time left.", he slowly whispered, apparently also fighting with the urge to cry, but that wasn't something a warrior did. At least not in public.

"The tea he liked to drink so much... It wasn't so much medicine as pain relief. It numbed him down enough to be able to walk around with a smile on his lips... Thanks for being with him in his last moments. I'm sure this is just the way he would have wished for it to happen."

The knot that built up at those words was almost too much for Kanbei, yet he somehow managed to keep up his stoic mask. "Hanbei was a great man. A peaceful death like this does fit him way more than a warrior's death would have. Remember him and do your best to follow in his footsteps in helping our lord fulfil both their dreams."

With those words he passed the siblings and went to wander the halls.

This was a habit he had picked up from their smallest strategist in fact. Whenever he had been at a point where he didn't know what to do or what decision to make he'd just wandered around endlessly until an idea or thought came up or until it got to

late.

Right now Kanbei definitely felt like wandering, pulling up memory after memory at almost each corridor and room he by-passed that he'd shared with the other one.

Hanbei might be gone, but his ways and his spirit would hopefully always live on in the hearts of those that had the pleasure to meet him.

With a glance up to the starry sky Kanbei couldn't help but wish from the bottom of his heart, that his friend had found his well-deserved peace and vowed to make sure that Hideyoshi would indeed rule the land.

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End