

## MING THE CLAM

by Stanley Lieber

ROLAND NIP, JAPANESE MAN NUMBER TWO stood upon the deck of the USS JACK NIET-SZCHE and wept.

"What am I supposed to do now?" he whined.

Ming the Clam's inscrutable countenance held fast. Silence followed.

"You are going to tradecraft yourself into a God damned corner," said Nip.

Ming's unreadable expression solidified. He stared at a point that seemed to be fixed, some way off in the distance. Nip tried and failed to track the blip. To his mind, nothing was out there. Fog, fog, and more fog. What in the hell was the clam looking at?

Inscrutable.

"Fucking clams," creaked Nip, his voice expiring under the strain of his predicament. He now faced early retirement at the hands of this... fucking clam. And on account of what? Indeed, it made no God damned sense at all.

Ming continued to stare. Was he smiling, now?

Nip fumed inwardly.

"Harrrrrruuuuunnnngggggggggggg..." interrupted Ming, suddenly.

"What?"

Ming rolled, his underbelly seething as his single foot padded the steel deck of the ship. Nip could only observe the ridiculous pantomime as the six-foot clam egressed the general vicinity of his bad mood. Was it something he'd said?

"Aw, come back, I didn't mean it!"

Nip scrambled after the outsized clam, unable to fathom what must be happening, but certain that the consequences of his words would be a disaster to his person.

"Hiiiiiiiiiiiiiggggghhhhhh bbbbbbiiiiiiiiiiiiiddddddd..." stuttered Ming, furiously.

"What?"

Ah. The auction.

"There will be a reckoning," reasoned Nip. "But to be quite honest, I'm not sure if I will participate. In point of fact I'm not sure I understand the situation at all. What do clams even want?"

Ming motored towards the live area. Station joined, he commenced to chatter with his advisors.

Nip could only watch as his hopes and dreams unraveled before him.

Flummoxed.