

muscle in close enough to determine this. TV crews and newspaper photographers were about their usual deadly serious business of anesthetizing the event, purging it of any significance, rendering and blendering it into 'filler.' A week later, back home in Kyoto, I picked up the local newspaper to find, on the front page, among the silhouettes of humans surrounding an egg-laying turtle in a photograph ... myself. Yes, it was me, it really was ... thoroughly cooked into the meatloaf of the topical. If things keep up like this, if the world keeps shrinking ... pretty soon we will be able to strap the entire planet on a turtle's back. And I think it's at exactly that point that the turtle's going to make her break for the open water.

SOME PEOPLE: Part I

Once upon a time, a bomb created a vacuum in a city named Hiroshima, which the gangsters of Japan (Yakuza) rushed in to fill; and before long, even as the Occupation force was disarming the country at large, yakuza mutants were constructing their own gun factories. What that's come to mean is that the streets of Japan are generally safe; the gangsters tend to follow their self-imposed code to use guns only against each other; but the guns exist.

During the Seventies, I was soaping up at a public bath in Kyoto when a yakuza, his torso one continuous tattoo, ambled over and flopped down at the spigot next to mine. I confess I find it tough to ignore people with gaudy skin, especially when they start to regale fellow patrons with a running monologue on my bodily proportions

Un-American as it may seem, I could feel my proportions folding up like an accordion ... but by God my dander was up. "Omae no mono, sore hodo taishita mono ka ne?" (Is yours really all that huge, fella?) I demanded. There was a flurry in the room, during which I girded myself for the most squalid of deaths; but our friend the yakuza seemed not to have heard me. A pimp would never learn English, after all ... so why expect the hairy foreigner to give him tit for tat in Japanese? That was unimaginable, so ... he stayed in his bubble, I stayed in mine, and here I still am, telling the tale.