

At the Movies with Ayt Madashi

A Green Bone Saga slice-of-life scene in support of *Locus Magazine*

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Author's note: takes place between Chapters 50 and 51 in *Jade Legacy*

Mr. Oyin, the manager of the historic Sogen Cinema, was preparing for what would possibly be the biggest opening weekend of his long career in the movie theater business when he received a surprising phone call from someone claiming to be from the Weather Man's office of the Mountain clan.

"Ayt Madashi would like to come to the first evening showing on Fifthday," said the clan representative.

Mr. Oyin was flabbergasted. "Is...she sure about that?" he asked, trying not to let his reluctance and skepticism seem too apparent. "It's going to be *very* crowded here on Fifthday night." That was understating things. Mr. Oyin fully expected to sell out all the showings that week and to have to turn people away. Some moviegoers were planning to bring chairs and blankets and camp on the sidewalk on Fourthday night in order to be first in line when the theater opened on release day. Oyin had his entire staff scheduled to come in to work and had roped in friends and family members to help man the ticketing and concessions. The last thing he needed was for a celebrity clan leader to show up and create an extra stir and additional logistical challenges. "Wouldn't the Pillar be much more comfortable with a private showing at some other time?" he asked hopefully.

“Ayt-jen was very clear,” the secretary replied. “She wants to see the movie at the same time as everyone else.”

So it was that Oyin found himself escorting Ayt Madashi through the staff entranceway in the back of the building to a section of reserved seats in the middle of the theater. Ayt had brought two companions with her—a Green Bone that Oyin suspected was the Weather Man, and a woman who might’ve been the Weather Man’s wife—along with three bodyguards, one of whom sat behind the clan leaders and two others who stood at either end of the row. Oyin had been instructed to keep the seats directly around the group empty, and it galled him greatly to think of the lost ticket sales. “Ayt-jen, would you like anything from the concession?” he queried.

“A large popcorn, and chilled anise tea.” Uncharacteristically, the sixtysomething Pillar was wearing a long-sleeved white blouse that covered her jade-adorned arms, along with chunky sunglasses and a black ball cap, all in an apparent attempt to remain incognito that Oyin thought was unlikely to be successful, as all it would take was one or two additional Green Bones in the audience to Perceive she was there, even if the special treatment and presence of the bodyguards didn’t give her away.

“Would you like regular salted, or the special black-and-green popcorn? It’s black sesame and matcha flavor.”

Ayt looked intrigued. “I’ll try the special flavor, then.”

Once the doors opened to the general public, there was a storm of activity as customers poured into the aisles and hurried to claim seats. Fortunately, most people were so caught up in the excitement of the moment that they didn’t notice the Pillar of the Mountain until close to show time, when she took off her hat and sunglasses and a few observant clan members began

pointing and whispering. A couple of people with cameras tried to approach, but Ayt's bodyguards shook their heads and waved them away. Once the lights went down, however, the crowd settled with an anticipatory hush. Having already seen the movie at an advance screening, Oyin stood at the back of the theater and watched the crowd, and in particular, Ayt Madashi. She seemed to having a good time, laughing at the funny parts and gasping during the thrilling action sequences along with the rest of the audience. By the time the lights came back on, Oyin knew the movie would be an unprecedented hit. If even the famously discerning Pillar of the Mountain clan could be won over, who couldn't?

"Suen-jen would've enjoyed it," Ayt remarked wistfully to her companions as they left the theater. "He always did love the movies."

"Thank you for supporting our humble cinema, Ayt-jen," Oyin said, saluting the Pillar at the door. "I hope you enjoyed yourself this evening?"

"I did." The Pillar sounded sincere, but the smile slid off her face and her expression shifted into one of troubled disappointment. "How much money do you think *Black & Green* will make on opening weekend?"

"With a simultaneous summer release in Espenia? A lot," Oyin said. "A hundred million thalirs, I would guess." Over seven hundred million dien—record-shattering.

"And how much of that does the studio take?" Ayt asked, frowning now.

Oyin pursed his lips. "It depends, but around fifty to sixty percent."

"The movie was a co-production with Lyon Films in Espenia," Ayt's Weather Man reminded her. "So Cinema Shore wouldn't get all of that. Half, maybe."

"Still. A lot of money into No Peak coffers," Ayt grumbled. Grudgingly, as she stepped out into the street, "It *was* a good movie, though."