

The Pampered Programmer

DATE: December 13, 1998

TIME: 11:00 PM

LOCATION: Rin's Living Quarters, HMS Masamune

On board the HMS Masamune, each living space is set up like a cylindrical penthouse on its own dedicated floor, with more accommodations than one can shake a stick at, everything including minibars, king-size beds, high-end entertainment centers, fancy ceiling fans, and one-way windows. As with a skyscraper, these windows are designed to allow the occupants to view space in a full 360° panorama from the inside, and protect the occupants' privacy from the outside.

In the shower, Rin was cooling down from his 21st birthday, and was ready to call it a night. As he reached for his towel outside the stall, he noticed a trail of white rose petals leading out of the bathroom. Once his fur was dry and his yukata was on, he had no other choice but follow the petals.

The trail led right up to the coffee table, where seven different sized boxes were wrapped, stacked and awaiting Rin, with the largest at the bottom and the smallest at the top. To the left of the gifts was a note in Zarana's handwriting:

"Hey love,

Please bring your gifts to the bedroom when you're ready. We have a very special surprise for you.

- Boshi, Alisha, Zarana and Elisabeth"

Rin knew that his girlfriends and four-legged companions were up to something. Taking a deep breath, he tightened the drawstrings of his yukata, placed his gifts into his office chair, and carted the chair to the bedroom. Rin opened the door, to find Elly and Zarana on the bed, with Elly wearing a white kimono with luxurious white fur trim around the collar, the bottom, and the sleeve cuffs. The flannel bed sheets and pillowcases had been replaced by white faux fur bedding of luxuriously high pile. Wearing the bed sheet like a dress, Zarana was covered from her collarbone all the way to the foot of the bed, and Elly reclined against the opposing pillow on top of the bed sheet. Though it wasn't apparent from the surface, Zarana was indeed wearing only her white lace undergarments. To make matters fluffier, Ninetales Alisha and Boshi laid upright at Zarana's and Elly's feet, their tails curled toward the middle of the bed as if to invite Rin to lay between all four females.

Rin: *smugly* Well, I think I like where this is heading. I ain't lying to you; there's nothing else I need but a couple of beautiful girls.

Zarana: Sit yourself on down, handsome.

Elly: And let us help you remove that yukata.

Elly sits up on the edge of the bed and invites Rin to come to her. Once he is at her side, she slowly unties the drawstrings as he grins and runs the back of his hand against the fur collar on her kimono.

Rin: Where did you get your kimono?

Elly: Would you believe that it belongs to your mother? Actually, she dropped it off while you were in the shower. I was actually surprised that Lara and I have exact clothing sizes in common.

Rin: I thought it looked familiar. If memory serves, Lara wore the kimono when Michelle and I were newborns, and seeing it on your body is something very special.

Elly: That's what she told me. Now, come spend the last hour of your 21st birthday in bed with us.

Rin: As you wish... ladies.

Elly and Zarana gently glide the yukata off of Rin's body as he climbs into bed. Before long, Rin is seen only in black boxer shorts, which is only as far as the ladies cared to go with undressing him. Rin laid between Zarana and Elly, who turned toward him and began slowly and lovingly caressing his chest. Zarana pulls out a white fur stole from under the covers, and wraps it around Rin's upper chest. For extra blanketing, Alisha and Boshi draped their tails over Rin and his two lovers, covering all three of them almost completely. Elly directed Rin's muzzle towards hers and kissed him passionately, while Zarana rubbed Rin's shoulders from underneath the stole.

Zarana: Happy birthday, love.

Elly: Hope you had a wonderful day, Mr. Elyran... Though I've said it before, it's worth repeating: we love you more than anything else in the universe.

Zarana: You couldn't have said it better, Elisabeth.

Rin: Thanks, ladies.

Elly: Rin, can I ask you a question?

Rin: Sure, what's up?

Elly: Have you ever thought about... marriage?

Rin: Not recently... why do you ask?

Elly: Because we want to take our friendship one step further. You don't have to answer right away, of course; I was just curious if you had ever considered marrying Zarana and I.

Rin: Well, I don't see why I shouldn't... I mean, you're both beautiful and all, and I don't really see myself loving anyone other than the both of you. In fact... yes. I do want to marry you guys, though the wedding would have to be after the mission, of course.

Elly: Of course. I'm not in any rush, really.

Zarana: Me either.

Elly: Just out of curiosity, if you could pick any day of the year on which to get married, what would it be?

Rin: February the 14th, I suppose. It'd be great if it fell on a Sunday.

Elly: Valentine's Day? I will admit that I like that idea... Now, what do you say we see what's under all that gift wrap?

Rin: I thought you'd never ask.

Rin used his telekinetic abilities to bring the office chair closer to the bed, and Elly began stacking the gifts on Rin's lap. The ladies continued to pamper Rin as he unwrapped his gifts. The first gift, given by his brother Zevarius, is a refurbished Seiko UC-2000 memo watch set, complete with the UC-2100 standalone keyboard unit, and the UC-2200 keyboard/printer unit, all in black. The second gift, given by Rin's parents Kevin and Lara, is a fully-upgraded 3Com Palm Pilot Professional, with a 56k modem and a detachable keyboard to go with it. Inside the Palm Pilot package included all of the necessary hardware and software needed manage data on the handheld.

The third gift, given by Rin's twin sister Michelle, is an IBM ThinkPad 380XD laptop computer, with Windows 98 First Edition installed and configured by Michelle herself. The fourth gift, given by Seiji and Eboshii, is a Sony Mavica MVC-FD5 digital camera, which stores digital photos on floppy disk. Also included are several packs of unopened floppy packs for digital photo storage and other uses. The fifth gift, given by Hayao and Akemi, is a refurbished Hewlett-Packard HP-95LX, a pocket computer that runs MS-DOS 3.22. Incidentally, Rin's brother Zevarius also has an HP-95LX, though he bought his when it was new in 1991.

The sixth gift, given by Ian, is a set of hacking devices built for the HP-95LX by Ian himself. The seventh and final boxed gift, given by Arceus, is a Sharp PC-1600, a pocket computer from 1986, complete with all of the available expansions. Rin's original PC-1600 had long since malfunctioned with no way to repair it, so to him it felt good to have another fully-working unit. Until now, he never officially owned any of the expansions, though he would rent them on an as-needed basis from the school bookstore back in the 1980s.

Rin: Looks like I've got a lot of technology to set up in the morning... But before the morning comes, I have to be honest with you guys.

Zarana: Hm?

Elly: Yes?

Rin: I know it might sound corny, but just between the five of us... as much as I love all this computerized gadgetry, the amount of love I have for you counts higher than all the electronic components in the world. Even the most complicated computer program with its 10,000+ lines of C++ code would fall short of my love for you. All of that, coming from an autistic programmer's point of view.

Zarana: Rin, that wasn't corny... not at all. In fact, I loved it.

Elly: I agree. Being a fellow nerd, I personally thought it was a cute way of putting it. Regardless, I'm glad you feel that way about us. Truly, I am. I always knew you were a little different – just a little, mind you – but that's what attracts me to you, and as such, I'm willing to continue advocating for you.

Zarana: Same.

Alisha: Ditto.

Boshi: Agreed.

Rin: Thanks again, ladies. You all mean the world to me.

Alisha: The pleasure is ours.

By 12:00 AM, the entire flat was dark except for the gentle red glow of digital clocks and the standby indicators on the stereo components. In the bedroom, Zarana and Elly slept peacefully within Rin's gentle embrace, their heads resting on Alisha's and Boshi's stomachs as if they were pillows. Alisha and Boshi were curled in, their heads resting on Elly's and Zarana's sides, and their tails still being used like soft, plush blankets. And thus, Rin's 21st birthday concluded on a warm and cozy note. With a handful of electronic devices, three portable computers, a host of great friends, and four beautiful vixens to love and to rest with, there was nothing more that a lucky fox like Rinzler Elyran could ask for.