

Hey all, sorry this is out later than I expected. Hiryo got it back to me quick, but I lost all of Monday to first editing FILFy and then football. Why I don't know. The Eagles suck. We will continue to suck. It is like a natural law, like gravity. Beyond that, I also added around 7,000 words to the original and edited that original quite a bit.

Anyway, here's the results of the poll, and my thoughts on it.

Louise overhears still more people calling her Zero and goes in search of her prospective familiars (violence, comedy, explosions) brought in 5% of the votes. The tsundere sadist gets no love I swear. But um, she is kind of necessary for the original anime's plot guys. I don't like canon Louise either, but...

In third place, despite for some reason several people commenting on it, was The gardener vows vengeance against 'the pigtailed shadow' for the damage to his garden (Comedy, ecchi comedy, humor) with 11%. But there were also a few people who wanted Ryoga back. That ship sailed guys, he's not appearing in this fic.

33% is the amount of votes the second place Makoto and the others are accosted by Tabitha who doesn't look like she slept. (Makoto-centric, world-building, character interaction) brought in. I can see that people like Tabitha, but I think people wanted to wait a bit longer on her and Makoto.

Obviously this means that Ranma and Henrietta were cuddling as they try to list their priorities for the day (some from the original, world-building, comedy) with 51% of the votes. Are you all just enjoying the romance aspect as much as I am? Cool.

I've also noticed in the past few polls that the choices I've given haven't really been big/long term enough. I am trying to change it with the choices offered here, so tell me what you think.

Once more, thanks go to Kestral and the other original authors of the Addventure thread, and Hiryo for editing. After nearly three days of semi-constant Grammarly hell, I lack the will to even try.

Episode 14: Morning Dawns

As she trooped through the academy's halls, Agnes grumbled to herself, wondering which of her musketeers would have the lucky task of acting as their charge's handmaiden that

day. Constance and the other servants that could be trusted around Henrietta had been left in the castle, Henrietta being very certain that she could rough it with the servants at the Academy for a night if she had to. Agnes hadn't been so certain, but that is been from a simple security standpoint, and after Henrietta had agreed that at least two musketeers would be in the room with her as the maid helped her dress, Agnes hadn't had much to add on that score.

Of course, Agnes wasn't really worried about that. No, she was worried about what had gone on during the night between her princess and the brute with the pigtail. He had struck her as a very rough and tumble sort, and even after Amie told her how he had set up the room, she just didn't think that the brat had it in him to treat Henrietta as a princess should be treated. *I just hope the princess was able to break the potin's hold on her despite Ranma's no-doubt fumbled attempts to get himself off. UGH.*

Agnes stopped outside the special suite assigned to Henrietta, exchanging salutes with the two guards outside of the suite, being let in after a quick password check. Inside, she found two more guards' setup in the sitting room. Both were wide awake, with guns in hand even as they saluted. "Anything to report?"

"No ma'am. The princess raised the suite's security last night, and we haven't heard a peep from inside, nor did the two on duty before us. The princess hasn't appeared yet, um... nor has Ranma," one of the Musketeers, Danielle admitted, looking a little sheepish. "We weren't willing to wake the princess up just to get Ranma moving."

Tsking at that, Agnes shook his head. "Damn it, it's going to be tough to get him out of here without being seen. We'll have to have him go out the window and down to our own room I guess, there are too many students and servants up and about to let him be seen out there." Grumbling, Agnes moved to the inner door, tapping on it. "Your Highness?"

The door to the bedroom opened, and Henrietta smiled at her, looking a little sleep-deprived, but otherwise practically glowing, her smile wide and happy. "Mm, yes? Is it morning already, Agnes? Pity."

Agnes nodded, grimacing a little at Henrietta's appearance, which was quite in disarray. Her hair was tousled, some of it sticking up, the rest stuck to her neck and shoulders. Her lips looked a little bee-kissed and she had the kind of glow around her a woman got after one heck of a night, which was just too much information in Agnes's opinion. "Um, yes Your Highness, it is. I... er, take it that the potion issue has been dealt with?"

"Oh, indeed. Eventually anyway," Henrietta muttered that last bit.

Frowning at that, Agnes was distracted by the sight of the room behind her charge, as to her shock, the room seemed almost pristine. The bed looked like it had been made and cleaned beyond where Henrietta had just roused herself. Her clothing had been neatly hung on one of

the balcony chairs, the troches replaced, although not lit since at the moment being unnecessary.

That was surprising enough. What was even more surprising was that Ranma was nowhere in sight. This surprised the two guards who had been on guard duty as well, and by the twinkle in her their princess's eyes, she knew precisely what her musketeers were thinking. "Yes, was there something Agnes?"

Agnes snorted, then moved past her charge out to the small balcony, pausing to stare at a glass figurine there was made to look like a horse. Amie had told her about them, but that was a very different thing than seeing those softly glowing, perfectly made glass sculptures, the kind that would cost her a month's worth of her pay, if Agnes was so frivolous to be interested in them. "How did he create these things anyway..."

Smiling gently, Henrietta let her fingers caressed down to the back of the horse, watching the blue glow that was only now slowly diminishing within it. *I must get Ranma to renew that for me, I think, in this figurine if none of the others. For some reason I think this one means more to Ranma than the others.* "If you are looking for Ranma, he left earlier, before dawn, in point of fact."

At that Agnes started to splutter. "How?! We had a watch on the window outside, and two women patrolling the outer wall of the academy! He couldn't have just leaped down to the ground."

"I fail to see how that would stop Ranma from doing whatever he wanted to," Henrietta teased, before moving over and placing a gentle hand on Agnes's shoulder. "Calm down my strong shield, he is on our side, you know." **My side, my man, for now if not forever, and I can always hope for that as well.**

Seeing the happy gleam in her charge's eyes, Agnes sighed. "I'll try to get along with him, Your Highness. But Ranma's abilities make him a security concern."

"Perhaps but that is a talk for later. For now, just know that he will be back soon. Until then, I would like to go over with you some of what I want to have happen today. Specifically, we need to look at the information that Samantha and Judge Garibaldi found when they stormed Baron Doucet's estate. By the time we leave for the palace, I want him removed and a crown instead of a tiara on my head. The enemies circling around both the royal family and our fair country require that I take the throne swiftly."

"Certainly Your Majesty," Agnes responded instantly, setting aside her annoyance at Ranma seemingly being able to come and go as he wished, and his closeness with the princess-cum-queen, to concentrate on something far more important. "I have the packet with me, but don't you want to send for a maid to help you get dressed?"

“Not just yet, that is part of why Ranma will be back, he knows I need a maid here and thinks one named Siesta is trustworthy and also brings to the table an interesting ability.” Henrietta smiled thinly, then gestured Agnes to show her the folder from Samantha and Judge Garibaldi as she moved to sit in one of the chairs in the sitting room portion of the suite, thinking about how that topic had come up.

After their third bout of lovemaking, Ranma and Henrietta had discussed her plans for the next day. Ranma had suggested that Siesta could be of use as a translator, and that it might be a good idea to get his fellow Earthers either willing to work for the princess or in some fashion connected to the royal house. “That Kazuma guy had that interesting energy sword technique and the big guy told me he was hit by a truck. That’d be like, well, having a house fall down on you and walking away from it without any injuries beyond light bruising. And Makoto, I bet you could get her to sign up for just about anything if you offered her magic lessons.”

“You have mentioned both Siesta and Makoto several times,” Henrietta mused, her skin still glistening with sweat and their mixed juices after their last bout of lovemaking. She cuddled into Ranma’s side, delighting in his arms as they went around her. “Is there any reason for this?”

“Er, they did help me set up all of this,” Ranma gesturing around with his free hand, wondering again with the heck was up with his other arm, which was wrapped around Henrietta and showed no signs of moving. Was it honestly on strike now? *Am I going to get a list of demands that must be met before it returns to work or something?*

“And I think that Siesta’s ability to speak Japanese is going to be a major help going forward. After all, if you need me to head out and smash armies for you, you’ll still need someone here to help translate if Louise can’t get her translations spell to work.”

“Fair enough, although I think you are underestimating Louise,” Henrietta room remonstrated gently, shaking her head. “I talked about her obliquely with the headmaster, not hinting at her possible Void Mage status, Osmond told me that as I suspected, Louis is easily one of his most intelligent students. With a bit of effort, I am certain she’ll be able to get that spell to work. Regardless, I will need a maid to help me prepare tomorrow morning so at least this Siesta will prove useful in that manner.”

“What, you mean like doing your hair? I suppose I could try to help with that, I’ve seen a lot of different hairstyles over the years,” Ranma said slowly looking at Henrietta thoughtfully.

Henrietta shivered, a spike of pure lust going through her at the very idea of Ranma playing with her hair like that, something she had always felt as an extremely pleasant, sensual act. Wales had done much the same thing to her once when they were courting. “MMM, tempting, very tempting. But some other time perhaps. And I rather doubt that you have ever done makeup or know nothing about perfumes or dresses.”

“Why do you need all that stuff?” Ranma grouched, shaking his head before comically leering down at her, wagging his eyebrows. “You’re gorgeous just the way you are.”

Henrietta giggled at that and Ranma leaned down, kissing her on the lips, then further down before, without any warning, starting to tickle her sides and stomach. Henrietta wasn’t about to allow that to stand, and this started a very rambunctious tickle war, until Ranma allowed Henrietta to pin him. At that point she yawned, visibly wilting above him.

Instantly, Ranma went from trying to fight her off, to holding her, twisting Henrietta around so that she was laid out once more on the bed, his arm draped around her waist, nuzzling into her hair, a whisper of apology for wearing her out on his lips.

After a series of kisses, Henrietta assured Ranma she was fine, and went back to the pre-tickle topic of conversation, explaining why appearance was a necessary weapon in her arsenal. “Part of being a leader is based around two things. How you dress, act, and express yourself, all of these can help in grabbing the attention and command respect. Furthermore, a leader must always project an air of being calm and to be in control, which again clothing and your general appearance is a part of. After my abrupt departure from last night’s dinner, which is most decidedly not in character for me, I must appear even more poised and in control to offset that.”

Ranma frowned at that but then nodded understanding. “Appearing calm and in control is a kind of mind game then, just like it would be for martial arts. You don’t let your opponent know he’s getting to you, you put on a brave front, whatever happens. I normally don’t do that, I prefer to go on the attack, making my opponents’ self-control break but I can understand it.”

“And you won’t be doing that so often when the people your taunting aren’t actually enemies will you?” Henrietta asked tartly, before kissing Ranma languidly on the lips, pressing her chest against his side as she did to take the sting out of her words. When she pulled back, the two of them spent several minutes just looking into one another’s eyes, as Ranma nodded his head slowly, a smile on his face that was matched by the one Henrietta could feel on her own.

However, after a few moments, Henrietta sighed leaning back down and staring at the far wall across Ranma’s stomach, her fingers idly playing up and down the toned taut muscles there without any order from her brain. “But your analogy is accurate. I have four tasks that must be done before we leave this academy. I also have two, perhaps three sets of enemies to deal with.”

Ranma’s eyes narrowed, and Henrietta shivered again, this time from a more cerebral sort of delight as she watched Ranma’s brain come back from the happy state both of their minds had been occupying for a few moments there. When he spoke, again, Henrietta knew without a doubt that she would grow to treasure Ranma not just because of the pleasure his presence gave her heart but because of the brain hidden behind that warrior’s facade of his.

"The third set, that's got to be the other countries. You don't know if they have agents here among the students or servant population? Is there any way to, I don't know, track how they're sending information home, or maybe catch them out doing so? You mentioned once you wanted to use the chief speaker guy to funnel false information. Could you do the same here?"

"I'm practically certain they don't have any actual spies among the servant population, but there are several foreign students here," Henrietta corrected slightly. "We could perhaps be made aware of when the students contact their homes, but to figure out what information they are sending home, we would have to intercept that mail."

Ranma winced, "Let me guess, that would be bad."

"Indeed, very bad. The only exception would be if those students were found acting in such a manner as to be guilty of espionage. We can watch them but not intercept their mail." She frowned, tapping Ranma's chest thoughtfully, feeling the twitch of it under her finger, thinking on Tabitha and what Osmond had very deliberately not told her about the girl the night before when she hinted at being interested in the blue-haired girl. "There could be ways of catching a student acting as a spy out in some fashion. I have my suspicions on a few, but to do so would take too long for the other goals I wish to meet tomorrow. False information... That I will be most certainly do Ranma, thank you for the idea. It will certainly muddy the waters, although what false information I will feed into the rumor mill I will have to think about."

Getting into it now, Ranma likened this kind of planning to preparing for a fight with multiple opponents wielding different kinds of weapons with different weaknesses and strengths. And Henrietta had her own goal, which would disarm at least a few of those enemies. "So you want to use the chief magistrate, as what, an indication of the hard times that your nations in? That you need to have a strong leadership, which can wield powers that the Cardinal Mazarin can't provide?"

"That yes, and the threat from the Reconquista." Henrietta kissed Ranma on his pecs, actually licking at one of his nipples wondering if men were as sensitive there as women. It didn't appear so, although by his face at least Ranma did enjoy it a bit. "Every time you open your mouth, you disprove the idea that you are just a simple martial artist and I love it!"

Ranma shrugged his shoulders sheepishly even as he looked down into her eyes. "Well, in my world there's a phrase that wherever there's a great man, behind him there's a great woman. If you need me to be something other than a martial artist, I, I'll try my best you know?" he ended on a hesitant note, but by the wide smile Henrietta was sending him, Ranma's words evidently had been the right ones and it was her turn to lean up to kiss him.

Their conversation went on for some time as Henrietta outlined the other nobles who might oppose her to Ranma, then about a few of the laws she hoped to enact once she was

crowned. Ranma in turn posed a lot of questions about how the other countries might react, how long they did so, and if the nobles who weren't here in the academy might try open revolt, and if so, what Henrietta would do. But eventually Henrietta really was too tired to continue their discussion and yawning loudly once more she shook her head wearily. "I'm sorry Ranma I..."

Ranma waved that off, then looked a little apologetic. "It's okay, I'm sorry I tired you out so much. In the future we'll just have to work on your endurance, that's all."

"MMm, and I look forward to training that, most certainly," Henrietta replied biting her lip coquettishly before shaking her head.

"But for right now, I think you do need some rest. I'll cuddle with you for a bit until you fall asleep, then I'll sneak out. You don't want anyone to know that we've been sleeping together just yet, right?" Ranma questioned.

Henrietta pouted at that, then nodded slowly, snuggling in deeper, grabbing Ranma's other arm and pulling it over her waist, feeling the hand of the arm that had been around her waist originally moving up to cup her breast lightly, sending another light wave of pleasure through her. "Alas, you are correct, people cannot know about us just yet. Select people can know that we are courting, but the full depth of our relationship should not be known. We have after all only known each other for two days. There is no way that knowing you and I shared a bed could work out positively for either one of us."

"As if I care what anyone says about me," Ranma scoffed, looking as if he would practically spit formerly shaking his head before his tone and expression turned tender once more. "It's you I care about, so if it'll keep people from saying nasty things about you, or even thinking them, I'm fine with sneaking out."

"I wish you wouldn't have to, my love, it makes me think again that I am but using you for my own ends," Henrietta answered, before sighing. "But thank you."

The two of them exchanged several small kisses and light caresses, until Henrietta's eyes slowly started to close and she fell asleep to the beating of Ranma's heart.

When she woke up, she was not surprised to find Ranma no longer there. Although the fact that he had actually somehow pulled the sheets off of the bed without disturbing her, and even cleaned them, was astonishing. *However, did he do that? Was I truly that tired?*

Shaking her head at that minor mystery, Henrietta concentrated on the report in front of her, smiling thinly and asking one of her musketeers to grab a pen and inkwell for her. "Oh yes Agnes," Henrietta practically snarled as she read one portion of that report, the last vestiges of the night before fleeing her mind entirely. "Remind me to reward Samantha and the other

musketeers who were part of the investigation into Doucet's mansion. This is more than I expected and implicates quite a few other nobles. Oh yes, this is most useful..."

Henrietta was interrupted at that point by a knock on the door, the carefully coded message of one of the musketeers telling Agnes and Henrietta there was someone there but who wasn't a threat. Opening the door, Agnes frowned as she stared at the steaming buckets of water held above Ranma's head by two outstretched hands, as well as the timid looking black-haired maid carrying a tray of food to one side of him.

OOOOOOO

At first, Ranma had been content to just cuddle with Henrietta, while he figured out another way to use his ki, looking at Henrietta's own internal life force once more. *Hmm, I can't add my ki to hers, that would probably be either painful or just wrong without her permission. But I wonder... my body knows how to use my ki subconsciously to heal my body. Can I figure out how to do that consciously and to another person instead?*

This took several attempts to get right, but with the ability Ranma had already learned of how to send his ki into Henrietta's body, which he'd done earlier that night in two **very** different ways, Ranma was able to figure out where Henrietta would become sore, or bruised from their night's exertions, healing those bruises away one after another. He knew what her body should be like, and simply returned it to the best shape it could be like Ranma's ki would do for his own body automatically.

In comparison, changing the sheets under Henrietta should have been easy, but there Ranma ran into a problem. *Damn it, left arm, let go! I need to get moving and that means you can't just keep holding onto Henrietta like that!* As he glared down at his own hand, it seemed to squeeze Henrietta's breast as if mocking him. Ranma growled lightly, unwilling to wake Henrietta, and eventually was able to force his hand to let go, after which Ranma slipped out from under Henrietta, quickly replacing his body with a pillow.

Ranma stood by the bed, watching Henrietta shift and start squeezing the pillow, smiling slightly before moving around the bed, untucking the sheets from the mattress. After that, it was simply a matter of strength and speed to pull the sheet out from under Henrietta so fast she didn't even have time to feel it. Cleaning it took a quick trip out and down to the area where Ranma had first met Siesta. There he cleaned the sheets, before quickly returning. Getting the sheet's under Henrietta was not as easy.

Frowning in thought, Ranma stared down at Henrietta for a time before sighing and then gently lifting her into his arms. The feel of the still naked buxom form of the princess Henrietta nearly unmanned Ranma for a moment, but with her in his hands, Ranma's feet were freed to toss the sheet up then fit it to the bed. Putting the princess down, Ranma tucked the sheets in, then tossed the blanket, which had been long kicked to the floor, over the still sleeping princess. *Heh, Martial arts bedmaking for the win!*

Instead of rejoining her in bed for the few hours left before dawn, Ranma left in the same way he had been moving already, out the window and up to the rooftop. Despite not having slept, Ranma still felt energized, the sheer amount of ki in his body kept Ranma from feeling tired. Once on the roof, Ranma turned his time to once more meditating in his own inimitable fashion, flashing through numerous katas as he thought both about Henrietta, what they had been doing and the future.

Henrietta might've been worried about Ranma's memories continuing to come back, forcing Ranma to go back to Earth. Ranma wasn't any longer. *No, whatever might've been waiting for me at home, my future is here, with Henrietta. Who knows, maybe I can make other friends too. Makoto seems nice, and so does Chad, for all that Chad wants to head back to earth. Kazuma, ehh, I'm not so certain about him.*

However Ranma's thoughts soon turned again to Henrietta, specifically thinking about ways to help her. Unfortunately, Ranma had come to the end of the memories dealing with history or anything else that he thought Henrietta could make use of. *No, if I want to help her more, I'm going to need to learn more about this world and that means cracking the books. Darn, books. Still, if it will help me help Henrietta, I'll do it. But, I can also do other things, which are more up my alley, just like I used my ki to help her body heal earlier.*

Even while meditating, Ranma's grin lit up the night, almost as much as his eyes would have if they'd been open as his limbs came to rest and he dropped into a sitting position. *Perfecting my ki abilities! For now, since it's night out and I don't want to wake anyone up practicing ki attacks, let's try sensing stuff. First the trees and those animals, the familiars.*

That was what Ranma did for the rest the night until the sun started to come out. At that point, he paused, listening and using his new ki sense to see where the people were waking up, trying to figure out if he could sense the change. To Ranma's surprise he could, feeling the energy of those awake moving more, more purposefully almost. *Huh, that's really darn cool.*

He couldn't pick out one person from another, his ki senses weren't up to that. But what he did notice was that there was one person moving around already in the student quarters, followed by another one from elsewhere in the academy's dorm area. This one felt different though in comparison to the rest he'd sense waking up. *Stronger, tougher maybe? Now is that because their ki is actually strong, or because the first person was a student and thus weak?* Ranma had yet to change his thoughts on most of the students all being weak that he had developed after fighting Quiche.

A moment later, Ranma opened his eyes feeling the stronger person coming outside. To his surprise, it was Makoto, who was no longer dressed in the clothing she had arrived in. Instead, she was dressed in what looked like exercise pants and shirt. As Ranma watched, she went through a few stretches on the lawn for a moment, before racing off along the outer edge. Ranma watched her run for a moment his eyes trailing to her rear for just a second

before he realized what he was doing and looked away. *Yeah, I think that was just because she's in better shape than whoever else was awake in the student area. I know that there's a connection between ki and physical fitness so that makes sense. But that has some cool implications for the future.*

With that mystery solved, Ranma was about to close his eyes again when he heard a shrill scream from nearby. Looking in that direction, Ranma was surprised to see it wasn't coming from a girl, but rather an old man, dressed like one of the professors. He was standing in the middle of... Ranma paled, seeing the old man was standing in the middle of the flower garden, as he screamed, "What in the hell happened here?!"

Surreptitiously moving in that direction, Ranma watched a servant come out asking the man what was wrong in a slightly scared tone of voice, his voice barely audible to Ranma despite his somewhat enhanced senses. The older man pointed down angrily. "What's wrong, what's wrong!? I've had it, that's what's wrong! Taking one flower or two a knight is fine. But this, taking every single flower in my garden in a single night, that's several hundred paces too far! I don't care what their rank is, the would-be swains among the students need to start to grow their own damn flowers!"

At that Ranma choked back a laugh, hoping to not draw attention to himself. However, Makoto, who had just raced along the outer wall as she had the night before, spotted Ranma sitting on the edge of the main keep's roof and ran in that direction, waving her arms. "Ranma! You're up early."

Ranma quickly looked down at the two men, who didn't seem to have noticed them just yet Makoto's shout not having reached them. To keep it that way, Ranma leaped down, alighting on the parapet in front of Makoto. "I could say the same to you."

"I always get up early, it's great to run around when nobody's up yet." Makoto enthused, a bubbly grin on her face. Her expression then turned sly and she reached out, poking Ranma in the shoulder. "So, did you have a good night's... rest?"

She gave the word to rest an odd connotation, but Ranma didn't catch it. While he had been trying to get a handle on his ki senses, his ability to read other people's tone of voice wasn't as good even as that, let alone his ability to read someone's body language in a combat situation.

Ranma kept the blush off his face with difficulty, looking away for a brief moment back to the two men, who were now making their way back to the main academy building, coming towards him and Makoto on the wall. "Yeah you could say that," he mumbled, doing his best not to add the words 'a night to remember.' Even if it was. A night he would treasure forever.

"Heh, I'm sure," Makoto chuckled, but it seemed to Ranma as if she was trying to imply something. But he couldn't understand what and she went on after a second. "Anyway, I

wanted to ask you about martial arts training. I mean, I know I'm decent at judo, so where would you suggest I start?"

"Well we'd have to spar for me to know where you are, but if you've only practiced one martial art, where you start is to learn more," Ranma replied bluntly, his mind going instantly into martial arts mode. "You seem kind of light on your feet, you do what, track and field stuff? Your long-limbed, so judo's obviously a decent starting point, but you might want to look into more European and American martial arts styles, things that can take advantage of your bigger build."

"You know, normally when a guy says bigger build, they mean the girl they're talking to is fat, right? Most of the time. When it's me they are just making fun of my freakish height," Makoto scowled.

"That's dumb, I told you that last night," Ranma brushed her words away. "Anyway, to offset learning those hard styles, European styles specialize in strikes, like boxing, you should probably learn at least one soft style. Do you do anything else besides track and field?"

Makoto shrugged feeling shy all of a sudden. "I do a bit of dance, it helps with my legs and coordination." *If you can call dancing to videos and practicing moves you see on TV a bit of dance anyway.* She would never admit to dancing around her apartment every morning or evening to American music videos. **NEVER.**

"That's great!" Ranma enthused. "You can join the Princess wants to learn Silat Tari. That'll be good to get you both up to speed on endurance and general body control and limberness."

"Oh, is limberness a requirement to...learn... from you?" Makoto hinted, trying her darndest not to blush. That was a bit too forward, I think.

"Well yeah, that kind of thing is useful for any kind of martial arts style," Ranma answered.

It was to Makoto's relief that she saw her tone had gone right over his head. *Oh thank goodness! Next time think before opening your mouth, girl!*

Their conversation cut off as Ranma turned away, watching as another man came out to talk to the previous two. He was also an elderly man who, like the gardener, looked like an employee of the academy rather than a servant, wearing the colors of the faculty but in a more outdoorsy kind of outfit. This was coupled with a large tool belt around his waist and a wand in one hand.

"I'm missing some of the spare glass panes too! But I talked to Thomas, my assistant," that man announced as Ranma turned his attention that way. "And you know how much

trouble he has sleeping? Well, he swears he saw a shadow of someone coming out of my hut. A pigtailed shadow. But by the time he got down here the thief was gone.”

“A pigtail? Thank you. I’ll be on the lookout for a pigtail, and let me tell you if I find out who did this, I will tan his hide! Look what he’s done to my flower bed! Months it’s taken me to get those flowers right and in one night it’s ruined! I don’t care if he’s a student, I will have justice!”

Realizing that Ranma might have had something to do with the deforestation job done to the flower garden she had passed on her run, Makoto began to giggle, causing Ranma to turn, hastily shushing her. He didn’t want to fight the old guy, that would be just wrong in a lot of ways. *Best to just get out of here before they notice me.*

“Anyway,” he declared, leading the way down the parapet away from the mad gardener. “I can show you some katas, but then I want to find Siesta. I figure we can talk to Siesta about getting her some extra pay for doing the translation if necessary and to help the princess this morning. The princess mentioned something about needing a maid.”

Makoto nodded eagerly, her humor at what was going on below them dissipating, as she followed Ranma around the outer wall of the academy to another section of the grounds. This was the same area where Ranma had previously fought Quiche, the Vestri Court.

There, Ranma moved through several low-level katas, slowly in order to show Makoto while talking about other exercises she should do to keep her body supple and mobile. Soon though the Academy started to wake up all around them and Ranma called a halt. They went inside, where the two of them sat down with Chad at the breakfast table. There Ranma requested that a passing maid prepare a meal for the Princess. “She will be coming out of her room today, she has some kind of message that came in and she wanted to go over it this morning,” Ranma explained.

The maid he addressed bobbed her head quickly, then raced off just as more of the students arrived for breakfast. One of them was a blue-haired girl, Ranma thought was either Tabitha. Beside her, the taller darker-skinned girl strode, smiling at both Ranma and Chad, as Tabitha led the way over to the Earther’s table. “Hello boys,” she said, leaning over the table. “And how are you two doing this fine morning.”

Even though he didn’t know what the redhead was saying, Chad still blushed and looked away while Ranma absently translated, most of his concentration on Tabitha and what she was holding. “Is that the computer that came through the portal?”

Tabitha’s eyes widened, and she placed the device down on the table, gesturing to it. “Do you know what it is?”

"It's a computer, er... a kind of book, but one that has a lot of different kinds of books and stuff and others things you can do with it," Ranma tried to explain, having gotten used to the fact that the translation spell wouldn't work on words that didn't have real analogies in the local language.

"Confusing," Tabitha remarked, tapping the thing on the top. "It had words on the inner facing when it arrived."

After Ranma once more translated this, Makoto pulled the thing to her, opening it up, and frowning as she hit what looked like the power button. The laptop was tiny, only about eight inches across, and most of the top flap was screen with nothing on either edge. The keyboard too was weird, with many of the keys looking like they were made of clear plastic and others with a more normal look to them. "Good grief, this thing's got to be a costume build. The keyboard doesn't match any I've seen and some of its buttons also look strange."

"You're saying words that only vaguely makes sense when I cannot understand the context," Tabitha practically growled as soon as Ranma attempted to translate this. She had been up several hours past her normal bedtime attempting to do something with this computer rather than read her normal books and that made Tabitha very annoyed.

Makoto shook her head though, closing the laptop's lid when nothing happened and addressing Ranma instead of the annoyed girl with the glasses. "Well, whatever this computer came from, it doesn't have any power now."

That at least the two mages understood when it was translated, and Kirche decided to change the avenue of inquiry. She too had been kept up for a bit by her friend's new interest, but she had gone to bed after the thing stopped responding.

"Could you tell us what it was saying at least? I thought to write out the images that thing displayed. They don't mean anything to me obviously, just squiggles and dots. Does your world really quite like that?" With that, Kirche pulled out a piece of paper from neither chest.

This caused Chad's eyes to widen slightly before he looked away. But to Kirche's surprise, Ranma ignored it entirely, taking the paper and placing it on the table. When he did, Chad looked at it thankful to have a distraction. "Our home country has a notoriously difficult writing system to learn," he explained. "That was good thinking," he added, looking up at Kirche, while Ranma dutifully translated once more.

Kirche smiled at that, and Chad looked down at the paper quickly. Kirche smile turned a bit salaciously at that. *It looks as if the biggest of the dimensional travelers is also an innocent. That is fun, although I haven't seen as much to interest me from him as I have Ranma.* Ranma hadn't even looked at her twice, which was a little bit annoying, but Kirche figured she would have time to work with him once Tabitha's interest in the box was assuaged. Kirche was not about to let the girl drive herself spare with this odd new interest.

For his part, Ranma understood that Kirche was good-looking. She was also a little too open about it. The idea of being the only one to see something made that view all the more precious to him.

Reading off the paper, Chad read aloud while Ranma translated, "Unauthorized user access. You do not have authorization to use this. Computer will now lock for twenty-four hours. It says that several times." He frowned thinking. "I don't think even specially made laptops last that long. But it is saying it like it will."

Shrugging, Makoto looked at the computer again, turning this way and that. "Weird, I don't see any ports either, or anywhere to get at the battery."

"What does a harbor and an artillery piece have to do with this?" Kirche scrunched her face up quizzically while Tabitha's eyes had narrowed at Ranma's translation.

While what Makoto had tried to explain was confusing, what the one called Chad had read out was...thought provoking. *If it has an authorized user and will not let anyone else use it, it must have secrets on it. Secrets mean important information and information is power.*

"The words are the same as those, but their meaning is different," Ranma explained. "This thing is supposed to run on an, an exterior source of magic, I suppose as well as an internal one that can be charged."

"Don't dumb it down like that, Ranma," Makoto admonished. "Tell them it's electricity at least."

"Lightning? Electricity," Tabitha nodded at Ranma's next words. "Several wards run on electricity, the creation of which is a triangle-wind type spell. Are you saying we should try a spell on it?"

"I would wait 24 hours," Ranma answered. "Until those twenty-four hours are over, this computer is locked. And if you're not careful you could destroy the information within."

While Tabitha pouted and Kirche patted her head in commiseration Makoto picked up the laptop, shaking it lightly. "I'll hold onto it for now. Didn't the Princess say something about being interested in it?"

"Yea, I'll ask the Princess if she wants to do something with it," So saying, Ranma stood up. "And with that, I better go and see if she wants anything this morning."

"Hot water and a bath," Makoto supplied instantly, hopping to her own feet. "That's what I want right now, anyway."

When this was translated, Kirche laughed, and smiled at Chad. "What about you big~ boy~? Do you want a **bath** too?" Beyond wanting to see if Chad possessed some of Ranma's abilities, she was also interested in seeing if he was proportionate below the belt. *If I can't flirt with Ranma just now, I might as well flirt with the one who is reacting to me already.*

The look in her eyes, and the way she trailed her finger down her chest gave the words deeper meaning even if Chad hadn't actually understood the meaning of the first place. He blushed rosily, looked away and stood up abruptly. "I'll be outside."

"Nah, hold on. Hey Quiche!" Ranma shouted, seeing the young man enter the cafeteria.

"That is Guiche you peasant!" the man shouted even as he turned towards them, before flinching at Ranma, seeing who had the gall to get his name wrong. But since Ranma had given him such a drubbing, and could easily have killed him, he decided to be on his best behavior, despite the sight of Kirche snickering at the derogatory name. "What do you want?"

"Chad here should probably have a bath, he didn't get one last night, so ya wouldn't mind showing him where the baths are, would ya?" Ranma tapped Quiche on the shoulder, with enough force to nearly sent him to his knees. "I've got to get going, but after I introduce the Princess to Siesta, and she helps the Princess get changed and everything that maids are supposed to do, I'll sent her to find you and the others, okay Makoto?"

Makoto nodded, and Ranma indicated that the two girls should show her to the bath as well. Kirche agreed to that readily, smiling at the other girl, while Tabitha scowled but nodded. There was no way she was going to let that 'laptop' out of her sight for long.

Finding Siesta was easy. She had helped the maid Ranma had talked to when he entered the dining hall to put together a meal for the Princess, genuinely proud of the opportunity to serve the Princess like this. But when told that the princess might also want a bath, she frowned, and was about to look around for one of the male servants to help them carry the water up when Ranma volunteered. All of the other servants nearby stared and unabashed astonishment as Ranma hefted two large basins of water one in each hand, smirking at Siesta. "Lead the way."

OOOOOOO

"You do know that I can create as much water as I could want, don't you Ranma? I am primarily a water mage," Henrietta rolled her eyes, as she admonished her secret lover, although the tender smile she had on her face as she looked at him spoiled it a bit.

"Meh, ya also told me you weren't so good at fire spells, and hot baths are always better, Your Highness," Ranma shrugged unrepentantly.

"And couldn't use your own odd magics to heat the water?" Again Henrietta rolled her eyes, before smiling politely at the maid. "And you are Siesta? I understand you helped out my friend here when he first arrived in our world. Thank you for that."

Seeing Ranma and Siesta side by side like this, a rapid evaluation followed. Judging by his body language, Ranma showed not even a hint of attraction to the maid, as she would easily recognize by now. Indeed, his whole attention was on the princess even as he moved into the bathroom with his burden, his neck turning to let his eyes remain on Henrietta.

In turn, the servant herself was directing the exact same look of awe and admiration toward the martial artist as she was to Henrietta. *Good.*

"O, Oh, it was no trouble Your Highness, really!" Siesta stammered, setting down the food and curtsying quickly.

Smiling slightly, Henrietta shook her head. "Please rise. And while it might not seem much to you, you still reached out to Ranma and helped him for kindness sake, something I greatly value at any rate. Ranma vouches for your character, and as such, I will request that you be assigned to my party as long as we are here, and, perhaps, will ask you be transferred to the palace. I understand you can speak Japanese?"

Siesta nodded quickly, her hands flying to her mouth. "Yes, Your Highness! Thank you, Your Highness, I, I won't let you down!" the pretty maid stammered, curtsying once more.

"In that case, I rather think that I would like to take a bath and get changed before sitting down to eat. Unless there is aught there that will not keep?"

"Oh, um, no miss. There is a spell on the plates to keep the omelet warm." With that, Siesta seemed to calm down. "Um, if you do not have hair products with you your Majesty, I can request some from the academies stores in your name. I know the suite has some soap but not shampoo."

Pouting a bit, Henrietta nodded, then smirked over at Ranma. "In that case, I will eat first then. This one will just have to heat up my water for me afterward. Agnes, if you could send one of the girls for that? And could you prepare some tea, Siesta? And tell me more about how you learned to speak Japanese."

Siesta instantly complied, explaining how her grandfather had apparently come from Japan in a flying construct. This interested Ranma and soon Ranma had drawn out a lot of information about it. When Siesta said that her family still had the flying ship her grandfather had arrived in, Ranma's wide eyes caused Henrietta to speak up firmly. "When you join us at the palace Siesta, your first job will be to take a troop of trusted men and women to examine this 'plane'." She sipped at her tea, smiling slightly.

Elegantly taking a sip, emulated by Ranma, Henrietta asserted, "This is excellent tea, Siesta, thank you."

"You are too kind, Your Highness," Siesta curtsied with a bright smile of gratitude and joy at her sudden elevation. Working at the palace for the princess was a dream come true for her, a far cry from working at the academy or worse, for one of the male nobles whose attention her body had begun to attract of late.

As Henrietta ate, she asked Siesta a few probing questions now, and decided that yes, for now she would be a treasure. Apparently Siesta could already translate writing either direction, which Ranma's translation spell did not allow. He had tested this in the library at the palace and he hadn't been able to read the covers of the books there. Siesta was also bright, quite smart, outgoing and more than willing to learn.

"For now, we will have you help Miss Makoto when I do not require you. I imagine Mister Chad and Kazuma will stay near her, united in being strangers in this land of ours," Henrietta mused, then smiled. "At present though, I require a bath."

She looked at Ranma who hopped to his feet and moved into the bathroom. A second later, steam wafted out and he bowed grandly to the princess. "Your bath awaits you, Your Highness."

Chuckling, Henrietta led Siesta into the bath where the black-haired maid had already laid out one of the dresses Henrietta had brought along as a matter of course. Looking at it, Henrietta smiled. "Excellent choice." The dress was semi-formal but allowed for more ease of movement than most of her dresses, with little in the way of a neckline and short sleeves. It was also white, with a dash of the royal purple on the sleeves, which Henrietta always thought her own purple hair set off quite well.

Once more Siesta curtsied, then helped Henrietta out of her nightclothes, smiling as she did so.

Waiting for the princess was a bit uncomfortable for Ranma. Agnes was no longer glaring at him, simply looking at him as if she had a question she wanted to ask but wasn't about to actually voice it. The other Musketeers too seemed to be feeling a little awkward uncertain how to deal with Ranma seemingly becoming a permanent fixture in their duties. Well, all save Amie who looked as if she too was bursting with questions, but was womanfully holding them in. Regardless, Ranma wasn't willing to start anything with her in turn, so once more started to move through a kata, this time balancing on the back of one of the chairs. This caused Agnes and the other Musketeers to go goggle-eyed, and one of them who Ranma hadn't been introduced to exclaimed incredulously, "How the heck are you doing that?"

"You've seen me bend metal, bound across rooftops and leap more than six stories at a jump, and this is the thing that bothers you?" Ranma quipped, still balancing there as he moved

through a kata from Silat Tari. They wouldn't start on teaching Henrietta and Makoto today, the princess was going to be too busy and they needed to talk to Makoto later. But even so, going through the katas he knew from that style was probably a good idea.

At that, the Musketeer had no reply, and Agnes grumbled, again reminded of the fact that this man was a security risk like she had never seen.

This was the sight Henrietta came out of the bathroom too, fully dressed and with her hair done perfectly once more. She turned from thanking Siesta to pause, staring at her new friend's activities. Then giggled. "Oh my, is this what you do when you're bored Ranma, finding new ways to break my Musketeers concept of what is and isn't possible?"

Ranma turned, and as he looked at the princess lost his balance, staring at her. The look in his eyes left nothing to the imagination at that point and Henrietta's breath caught in her throat before she burst out into giggles as Ranma sprawled on the ground to one side of the chair he had been balancing on. "Ah, I see that eventually gravity's bill comes due even for you."

Pouting Ranma tore his gaze away from Henrietta. Yeah, white is definitely Henrietta's color. "That isn't nice, Your Highness."

"Yes well, one is supposed to sit in a chair, not balance on its back Ranma," still chuckling, Henrietta turned back to Siesta, and dismissed her for now, instructing her to put herself at Makoto's service, which Siesta nodded quickly at.

Once the maid had left, Henrietta drew her scepter to verify the counter-divination portions of the wards were still at full functionality, while she had turned off the sound barrier earlier. Once that was confirmed, she firmly set her scepter on the table, and plopped herself in Ranma's lap, kissing him soundly something Ranma returned eagerly, his arms going around her.

Breaking away, it was Henrietta's turn to pout. "'Your Highness,'? My dear Ranma, you called me something else last night, didn't you?"

"Amazing?" Ranma tried to sacrifice a portion of his dignity, or rather, another portion of his dignity to get out of using the super-embarrassing name he'd given Henrietta the evening before. "Er, gorgeous, adorable..."

Blushing Henrietta chuckled, kissing Ranma to stop him from talking while her Musketeers, even Agnes snickered. When she pulled back Henrietta leaned her forehead against Ranma's, her chest heaving as she breathed in. "You called me something else. Something I want to hear again."

Ranma flicked his eyes toward their audience, determined to hold firm. Under Henrietta's soulful gaze, this determination lasted for all of two seconds before Ranma caved like a wet tissue. "My Princess Love," he admitted, face lighting up in a blush.

"Mmmmm, that was it," she crooned, before diving in for a longer, deeper kiss. Once more Ranma replied ardently holding Henrietta against him as his tongue flicked out, seeking entry to her mouth, which Henrietta allowed instantly, moaning in delight.

Agnes put up with this remarkable patience for a couple of minutes, then glanced at the wall clock and prompted, "Ahem... Your Highness...? Your Highness, we do have several things to do today and you told Siesta to pass the word that..."

Waiting a bit more through stifled moans and signs of bliss, Agnes grit her teeth, then barked out. "Your Highness! We have plans to make, and your paramour may need to have his thoughts somewhere other than leaking out his ears!"

At last, Henrietta pulled away with a chuckle and moaned in delight as Ranma went to work with his lips on her neck, pulling away a bit of her dress to lick at the skin underneath before moving up to nibble on her ear. "MM, I rather think my own cognition is in equal peril." Henrietta scrunched up her face and sighed. But I take your point." Instead of moving away however, Henrietta shimmied a little to cuddle into Ranma's embrace, leaning her head on his shoulder, "Let us carry on, then. Were there any significant problems due to my sudden departure?"

"Well, we managed to pass off the Montmorency's need to leave as a family emergency, and I hinted that you had realized something regarding that and provided assistance, although the servants might be suspicious. Still, the idiot girl is already well on her way home, I assigned two of my Musketeers to that duty. I realize that you wanted a full team to guard the chit Your Highness, but until Samantha and the others return, I am shorthanded to ensure your safety as it it."

Henrietta very carefully did not snort at that, while Ranma's arms tightened around her waist and she felt the effort it took Ranma to stop from scoffing. *Ranma would be able to see to my safety perfectly well thank you.* But not only would saying that or letting Ranma say something be confrontational, it would also be disrespectful to Agnes, who had done such a magnificent job protecting Henrietta over the years. "I trust your judgement Agnes," she murmured instead.

Agnes bowed her head at that, and with a sigh, Henrietta began to give orders. "I want a message sent to Louise, a discreet one. I want to meet with her and her family, tonight. We need to speak about her abilities. Second, I want to speak Louise, the Earthers and the staff once we are all done talking here. They are not here by our choice, they deserve our aid if we can get them home, if they so wish. I also want to take the measure of the staff here. I have to

say I am not pleased by Osmond or Colbert handled even Ranma's arrival, let alone Makoto, Chad and Kazuma's."

Ranma made to speak up then, but Henrietta shook her head, indicating she was on a roll. "Fourth, I want a message sent to Lady Karin, warning her of our plans, I want it in her hands before we meet with the Headmaster and the rest of the staff. Agnes, you will carry that one personally. We will meet with her, Largo, Cotre, Doucet, and the others at lunch in the cafeteria. This is going to be extremely important ladies and will require careful preparation. First, I want some rumors to spread as to the reason I want to speak to them. Then I want the seating arranged thusly..."

From there Henrietta outlined her plan to basically ambush the nobles who had been here to celebrate their students performing the familiar ceremony. She would smack them upside the head with her knowledge of the Reconquista and of the Judge Magistrate's crimes. Together, she would use those points as threats to browbeat the anti-royal faction into seeing reason and allowing her to push forward with being crowned. She would hammer that point home as hard as she could. The objective was to convince the gathered nobles to back her push to gain the crown now, and to put them all on the backfoot beyond her staunch allies. It was going to take some fast talking but, it was possible.

How she wanted that meeting set up took a while, with Ranma contributing what he knew about mind games to the effort. He suggested they mix up the nobles from various districts and political parties and make certain that they had all had heard about Ranma's strength and some of his abilities. Most probably would have from their children already but it was best to be clear. "That, and the fact that I've given my loyalty to you Henrietta. You might not want them to know the full extent of our relationship, but the nobles need to know that if they try anything physical, I will bring the pain!"

While Agnes smirked at that, Henrietta leaned in for a kiss whispering a thank you as she did.

Sensing the need to lighten the mood, Amie spoke up, finally giving voice to the question she had been dying to ask since this began. "Heh... judging by how you two are all over one another, can we assume that your night together went well beyond just the need to break the potion's enchantment on you, Your Highness?" Internally the oldest Musketeer knew that was the case and was extremely happy for her younger charge. The way they both clung to one another was sweet and spoke of how lonely both the princess and Ranma had been before becoming friends and lovers.

Ranma glared at Amie over Henrietta's shoulder. "That's private."

But Henrietta giggled. "Oh, my dear Ranma, you are a good man. And as a good man, I thank you for keeping the intimate particulars of our love-making to yourself." The princess then smirked impishly, kissing him again before twisting around once more to look at her

musketeers. "I, however, am a woman, so it is my prerogative to indulge in girl-talk... and bragging. Quite a bit of bragging!"

"How exactly is that fair!?" Ranma grumped.

"It is based on how men and women talk about such things. I certainly am not going to go into detail Ranma, just describing the scene and the afterglow," Henrietta explained. "When men speak of their conquests they speak far more crudely, doing a, a play-by-play as it were."

Ranma still wasn't happy about this, but he realized that Henrietta was practically bubbling with the need to talk about their night together with someone. *That must be some weird woman thing. And really what's the harm?* "Fine I guess. I still don't think it's fair though." He then smiled, his arms tightening around her waist one hand moving to touch her dress clad rear. "You're gonna have to make it up to me."

"Mmm, you can look forward to it." Henrietta positively purred under his touch, before turning back to Amie, Agnes and her other Musketeers. "First, as Amie must have told you, Ranma set up a remarkably romantic setting, then greeted me with this impromptu dance. Ranma then allowed me to touch his ki once more and those of you who were here yesterday evening know what he explained about that ability!"

More than one of the Musketeers blushed, having heard Ranma explain that ki was like a shadow of the soul.

Henrietta nodded at them all, leaning back in Ranma's arms now sitting sidesaddle on his lap. "Exactly! Is it any wonder I quite forgot to cast the counter-spell the first time we joined? I dispelled the potion the second time." Then she smiled, leaning over to nibble at Ranma's ear. "Even if some naughty young man gave me a most pleasant surprise in an effort to distract me again."

"I regret nothing!" Ranma kissed her neck then started to rub his cheek against hers.

"MMM nor do I, My Dear One. Indeed, it was a phenomenal evening, one I will treasure forever," Henrietta declared as press her cheek back against his, her eyes closing as she reveled in his closeness.

Rolling her eyes a bit at the lovey-dovey behavior and unable to deal with this further, Agnes decided to try to shock her princess out of her all-too saccharine frame of mind. "Well, it sounds like your wonder man there was able to get you off once or twice, good for him I guess. Still I..."

Agnes was interrupted by Henrietta chuckling. Her eyes were still closed as she laughed, "'Once... or twice...?'" Her laughter, more of a cackle really continued until all the Musketeers were looking at one another, thinking that maybe their charge had cracked.

Then with an abruptness that caused more than one of the Musketeers to flinch, Henrietta's eyes snapped open and she leaned forward, almost glaring at Agnes. "'Once or twice'? Do you know what this man did for me? I have never heard, read or even dreamed of the things Ranma can do with his Ki! I have read every tawdry romance novels that Constance has ever brought into the castle, and in none of them did the man caress his lover inside and out with warm, tingling energy made in the image of his very soul! For all that nonsense most went on about souls touching those books never described the man's soul actually becoming a glowing mass to aid in pleasuring his partner! 'Once or twice'!? I had four climaxes the first time. After dispelling the potion's enchantment it had seven, one after another! The third time, I lost count! And don't get me started on the fourth time, when I was so tired Ranma had to do nearly all the work!"

Henrietta finished a little breathlessly, trembling and flushing while her astonished audience squirmed a little in their seats at the impassioned description and Ranma just smiled, holding his princess tighter. But Agnes had an image to maintain, and frankly there seemed to be a problem with Henrietta's story. "Well I can only say then that it's a good thing you can heal yourself with water magic, otherwise you wouldn't be walking around this morning, or all day. And then where would all your plans be?"

Blinking at that, Henrietta paused in thought. "Actually, I did not heal myself. You're right, I should be immobile right now, but not only am I not in discomfort, I feel positively full of energy and vigor! Indeed, I should have had more than a few marks on me from our passions, but I didn't see a one." Twisting back around she looked up at her lover. "Ranma?"

"That was me," Ranma admitted. "I told you I knew how to heal myself with my ki, and after I was able to help you meditate the other evening it was easy to use my ki to push into your body. The fun part I used last night is normally a side effect. So after you fell asleep, I used my ki to help your body heal. You're in about as good a shape as you could be now, although obviously I can't make your muscles tougher or stronger or anything like that. You'll still have to put in the work there."

That finally caused Agnes to shake her head in shock, yet she still endeavored to make a joke out of it. "Your Royal Highness, I am your loyal and devoted shield who supports you in any way I can... but, this needs to be said: you lucky, lucky bitch."

Henrietta chuckled at that, feeling very lucky indeed right now, while the rest of her Musketeers began to giggle, looking at one another and blushing. "Why, Agnes, my dear, faithful vassal, I don't see why you should think that? Just because I have experienced the absolute pinnacle of sexual bliss is no reason to..." Henrietta paused as Ranma very deliberately looked away, a slight smirk on his as he started to whistle tunelessly, "...Ranma?"

"Hmmm? Oh, nothing! Just sitting here, you lot keep having your girl talk, just forget I'm here," Ranma claimed, still looking away, his smirk only widening.

"You're fooling no one dear and you know it. Now give," Henrietta insisted teasingly, moving her rear this way and that on his lap.

Grunting, Ranma growled at her, holding her still as he answered, staring at Henrietta with such passion she could feel her body respond. "Er, to use your word, that wasn't the 'pinnacle,' of what's possible. This time I had to do all the work in terms of ki. But if you had more Ki of your own, we could do more. And even getting to that point will have a lot of benefits. I mean, ki lets you break through what most people think of as normal physical limitations. Things like, um, needing rest, or food, or water, or avoiding too much sensation so you don't pass out. So eventually, once you have ki to spare, we could keep going farther and farther, non-stop, for hours or even days."

After a long, frozen moment, Gertrude fell out of her chair, breaking the tableau and Henrietta leaned back, breaking the spell Ranma's glowing eyes had cast on her. Turning around deliberately so as to both look away from those eyes and grind her rear down on Ranma's lap in appreciation, Henrietta, her Royal, Most Fortunate Highness clapped her hands together as she looked at her Musketeers. "Ah, well! It would seem that I was wrong Agnes. I am indeed a lucky, lucky bitch." She tilted her head musingly, "And I rather like it, I would say."

Her Musketeers burst out into laughter as Ranma rolled his eyes. Five minutes passed until Henrietta regained control of herself, and after kissing Ranma on the cheek, she clapped her hands twice more, this time not signaling a joke but a change of the atmosphere. "But enough. We cannot spend all morning simply talking like this, as much as I would like us to. It is time us be about it. Ladies? Sir Ranma?"

When the Musketeers stood and grabbed up their muskets Henrietta turned her head to look at Ranma had not let go of her just yet. "Sir Ranma?"

"Hmmm?" Ranma murmured, staring down at her waist.

"You, ah, you will need to let me go, I am afraid to say." And she really was sad about it too. *What is this man doing to me!* Henrietta gasped.

Ranma looked down at his sweetly feminine armful, "Er, I know, but um.... How to put this... my arm's not obeying me."

"What?" Henrietta bit her lip to keep from giggling. "W, weren't you the one who told me you had perfect control of your body?"

"Yeah, normally I do, or else your little rump rubbing would have caused issues." Henrietta blushed at that and smacked Ranma on the chest and he smiled but continued. "It um, it's kind of been doing this since last night, it er, it just won't obey any order that will force it away from you, Henrietta."

Laughing at that, Henrietta leaned in for what should have been a short kiss, but Ranma responded so ardently that the kiss quickly deepened as Henrietta moaned, her dress-clad breasts pressing into Ranma's chest. After a moment, she pulled back, her voice throaty with desire as she said, "Hmm, dear Ranma, it seems to me as if another of your counties is in revolt at present..."

"AHEM!" Agnes growled, smacking her pistol's grip down on the table. "Your Highness, please!"

Sighing, Henrietta nodded, reaching behind her and, with a bit of difficulty, pulled Ranma arm way from where it had wrapped around her waist. She then stood up quickly, as Ranma closed his eyes, getting himself under control with a speed that was amazing before standing up as she smoothed out her dress, and picked up her scepter with a jaunty twirl, now eager to get on with her day.

She then led her entourage out with a serene smile and a spring in her step before

Henrietta holds meetings as Louise bump into Kazuma... uh oh. (comedy, action, a bit of drama, more from the original)

The academy's gardener attacks Ranma the instant he sees Ranma's pigtail. (comedy, chase scene, ecchi humor before seriousness)

Judge Magistrate is punished, and Henrietta is crowned without issue... yeah right. (drama, Henrietta-centric, Ranma breaking people)

Makoto bonds with the others, but a perverted lord ruins things, followed by a surprise reveal. (ecchi humor, comedy, Makoto centric action)

End Episode 14

So yeah, here I tried to show a bit of all the previous choices while also concentrating on the choice which won. Going forward though that is not going to happen, and this choice is an important one

Essentially this choice is going to determine what direction I take this story for a bit. 2 is more random madness while Ranma just sort of helps Henrietta on the side for a while, stomping almost accidentally over several of her more irritating nobles. 1 is the original, a mix of Sailor Moon stuff and Louise-and-Kazuma-driven amusement. 2 moves the plot I created forward. 4 brings Makoto further into the limelight and sort of shortcuts the plot I created.

Now, this one doesn't have a precise due date. It really will depend on how long the HP/WoW crossover takes, or one of the other stories. If I finish it before the first December poll

ends, I'll come back to it then. If not, I'll work on it before starting work on **Semblance of Hope** at the end of the month.