

An Affair of the Heart and Soul
By Meriko

Chapter 44: Current Events

"Nanaki!" Reeve hauled back on the reins and guided his chocobo over to where the group from Cosmo Canyon had stopped to rest. His mount warked nervously at first, but seeing that there were other chocobos mingling safely with the unfamiliar beasts, calmed down after a few moments.

"Reeve," acknowledged his friend. "Are you on the Welcoming Committee?" Laughing lightheartedly, Reeve jumped from his saddle and began mingling. "No, Nanaki, nothing like that. I volunteered to take the chocobos out for exercise on the days we don't use them. You just caught me on one of my rounds." His tawny friend then introduced him anew to several of the Cosmo Canyon elders, and Reeve exchanged pleasantries and memories with them and all of the Island Clan.

After about an hour of rest and conversation, Ineki got up from the comfortable crouch he had been in, and all of his clan members immediately rose with him as if at an invisible signal. Noticing their companions rise, the Elders also got to their feet, and the most venerable of them all approached Ineki. "Shall we go, then, my friend?" he asked the newly appointed leader of the Cosmo Clan. The sleekly maned head nodded once, and Ineki replied, "We've rested enough, and I would like my first glimpse of this rocket before the sun sets."

As grazing chocobos were caught and re-saddled, Reeve tossed a politely curious expression towards Nanaki, who guessed the question and explained quietly. "I thought it best that Ineki, with his years of experience and wisdom, should continue to lead his people. In time, he will pass on the leadership to me, when I am older and more capable."

Reeve considered and nodded, and then turned to a more current topic. "I can't wait for you all to see the rocket. It's absolutely beautiful...it makes the Shinra-26 look like a muddy child's toy."

"What's this new rocket called? Certainly not the Shinra-27..."

"Oh, no...it's called StarChaser-I."

Nanaki raised an eyebrow at the romantic name. "I would have thought that Cid might name it the Highwind Victory, or something along those lines."

"Nope...surprise number two," laughed Reeve, "he let Shera name it."

A blank stare greeted this statement, and doubt of Reeve's lucidity could be plainly seen in Nanaki's eyes.

Shaking his head, Reeve smiled down at his dubious friend and said, "A lot has happened since the wedding, Nanaki. A gas tank exploded, Shera died, Marion brought her back to life, and now Marion's hair is pure silver." Eyebrows were raised all around, as several other from Cosmo Canyon had gathered around to get an update. "But the most amazing things?" Reeve continued, "Cid actually expressed some tender emotions, Shera actually expressed some harsh emotions, and they're both going to fly in the StarChaser-I."

"I believe that a briefing might not come amiss, Reeve," commented Ineki quietly. And so Reeve laughed and sat back down on a nearby rock, for the telling would surely consume the entire afternoon and evening.