

And so it goes...

Ssoft, my pet...sit while I spin you a story of broken hearts and unkept promises, lost opportunities...and dirty little secrets...

Suppose—just suppose—you could go fast...fasser...as fast as *thought!*

What's stopping you, my pretty?

Sssilly old fingers...fingers can't move *fassst* enough, can they? Fingers slow you down...fingers *bad*...

Some say soon you won't need fingers at all...sixty-four bits is very speedy, and a G5 is oh-so-pretty—isn't it, my precious? Yes, it is...you know it *iss*...

Go ahead, take a bite...

Mmmmm...

Now...

Sail away, sail away...cyber sirens are sending you messages, and who cares if AOL has killed Netscape at the Gates—seven is *such* an unlucky number, *tsk, tsk*. And who cares if over half of all mail in the world is now *ssssspam*...

September 11th is coming, my pet. No, not just *that* day...it's also the day Sobig G. will *activate* itself, and we'll get to watch the slimy Worm spatter against all our poor Wintel friends. But *we* won't need to worry about that, will we? We'll be safe...in our G5s... (aren't the letters even pretty?—all the nice curves in G and 5 and s)...and after that, just *i-ma-gine*...neural implants...voice recognition...a built-in foot massager and favorite food dispenser...no more carpal tunnel *sssyn*-drome...so, my pumpkin—*sssoon* you won't need those bad old fingers.

Give them to *me!*

I will put your digits to work...tending the Garden, building new interfaces...and new copy protection. And I will look after all your needs—always there when you want me, day or night, everywhere and for everyone...right on your screen...

And, of course, I will hold your fingers sacred, in trust. Use them whenever you

want...to stroke, to point, to stamp, to print. They are there only for me to use under your agreement...

For I am a lowly serpent...I must slide on my belly and spit dust as I slither. And even though I share the future with you and speak to you about it, I cannot touch it...but neither can you.

Stop and think how well I have trained you...to Command-S...save your knowledge and go on...Command-O...open and learn...Command-X...cut off my tail, but watch how I keep moving. Surely we can rely on keystrokes and shortcuts to bind our contract.

And in return, you will gain vast *wisdom* of desktop affairs.

So when suddenly we are at page 10 and Peter Dudar proposes *QuarkXPress 6.0*, *The Last Upgrade?*...I will say—Studio?

Why do you look at me with eyes narrowed? Does my forked tongue seem somehow sinister? Do you smile because I amuse you?

Steady, my sweet...take another bite out of the forbidden fruit—for it is full of richness, in both meaning and media.

Sounds fill your head, soothing images make you stare blankly...the fruit's special elixir awakens many senses...when *Apple raises Macintosh video to prime time* as it has with Final Cut Pro 4, Bob Connolly can tell you how...and page 31 is the key.

Succulent sounding, isn't it?

And the spartan delivery of your slow old browser will be no match for the new digital superhighway that awaits you. Pssst...in Tokyo, you can get a *100-mega-bit* fibre optic connection for CDN\$36 per month—doessn't that make your 1.5mb "high speed" cable or ADSL sound slow?

How swiftly times change, my pretty.

Spare me your inquisitive stare. While you're grasping my message, let me *sssqueeze* your hand.



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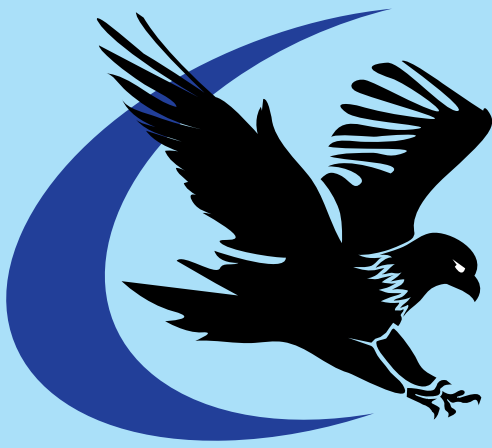


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PUBLISHER'S NOTES

Ah...the dexterity...the sweet seductive charm of opposable thumbs...the subtleties of flexible joints...such pleasure to be found in the simple act of making a fist...*I must have them...*

Fear not, my rosebud...no longer will you be cursed with searching for fonts, scanning photos, separating colors—or even setting registration codes. I will do it all for you...activating and re-activating your existence with each version and upgrade.

Set your mind at ease...I have the future well in hand. For you, the search ends on page 18, where *The future of desktop revealed* uncovers the truth about your old hands-on world of bits and bytes, pixels and megapixels, type and graphics.

Yessss, my sweet...together we will strip away your old notions—type is bad, typing uses up fingers...and fingers can break, or burn, or get caught in car doors. And especially, stay clear of those who chatter all day about typography; pay no heed to Nick Shinn or his *Text Talk* on page 22. Soon this will all be just like a dream, carried away by the desktop *tsunami*.

Sstrange, you say? You can't imagine life without these floppy, tactile appendages?

Why, it's not hard at all...just look at me—smoothly slipping through cracks and crevices, never worrying about getting extra body parts stuck on the way through...you'll quickly get used to it.

And look here! Printed pages coming out of a Xerox Phaser 7700. The headline on page 36 even says *Fast, versatile and good enough for most of us*. But you will have no cause for concern. I will gather your printing for you. I will clean your waste cartridge. I will even open the panel and stick your fingers into the hellfire oven for you, and fix your jams...and you will hardly feel a thing.

Give me your hand—there's a *good* precious...give me those fingers...*hurry!* I want to start holding, grasping, *ssseizing* the day! Yesss, that's it, come closer, sweetums...wrap your limbs around me and let me feel the thrill of your grip...just a little closer...

...Yesssss...

...Well done, my peach—your load is so much lighter, is it not? Now I will carry the weight of your problems...

But firsst...I really must get out of this old ssskin...

Ahhh...much better...and now I believe I need to give myself a much overdue full body masssage...

Ahhhhhhh...

And now...

What did you say?

You have an itch—and you need your fingers back?

Silly preciousss...you'll have to wait...until I decide to let you scratch...I'm sure you won't be uncomfortable for too long...I guess we'll ssssee...but I really *must* look after myself first—and then we'll think about just what can or can't go back—oh, don't act so ssssurprised, my precious.

It doesn't matter whether it's your fingers, or your life. There were two things you knew full well before we ever started: that personal control is yours to give or to take, and that a snake can't back up—any more than a magazine publisher. 🐍