

SpaceHighway

The Awakened

A22 ~ Bionic Phoenix

Inexpressible pain rushes through my body...

Arrgh... I can't even voice my pain...

Huh?

Where am I? What happened?

I try to open my eyes... my eyelids are heavy...

Just a blur... I can't make anything out...

There! A bluish blur moves in front of me...

That can only be one person...

"Ah...iah..." I am able to utter despite my pain. My voice sounds rasp and is muffled by a transparent oxygen mask

"Kira? Are you awake?"

Her voice gives away her preoccupation, anxiety, and distress.

I try to take a deep breath... such pain!

After a major effort, I am able to open my lips again.

"What... ha—" I utter almost breathless.

"Please, do not try to speak, sir. You are in intensive care. Try to relax as much as possible." A white blur approaches from the left. "Truly impressive that you already have regained consciousness."

Consciousness? Regained? Ah... that's why I'm completely disoriented.

I try to focus the sight in front of me, but I am unable...

After a horrifying and painfully long time, I manage to recover some of my vision.

Aia is sitting at my right. Her face is distorted by her preoccupation, but she seems relieved. Her light makeup is in disarray. Long dark bluish tears are drawn over her cheeks. More tears flow... Even with the hellish pain, I am able to feel her warmth through my right hand.

“What...” I want to ask, but unable to utter more words.

“Shh~” Aia whispers leaning over the bed towards me. “Don’t try to speak. I’ll tell what I know...” she says in sobs. “You had an—Ugh~ accident...” An accident? “I don’t know the details... You were in the wrong place, at the wrong time...” she sighs. “Remember? You were in the Crushmont station, in the Miva system.” True... I remember, I had a haul there.

“Where...” yet again, I am unable to finish my sentence...

“Home,” she says with a gentle smile. “On Gaia. Admitted to the intensive care unit of the UHM of San Francisco, one of the best of the Gaian Sector.” Her face turns to preoccupation again. “You did it all perfectly, as always.” She sighs deeply. “According to the security recordings, you were in the CrushMount, Buz’ cousin’s diner...” She sobs and seemingly tries to find the words. The silence is unbearable. I want to ask, but I am unable to produce a single word. She takes a deep breath. “There... was... an explosion... many explosions...” she says in tears. A vague memory comes back to me. “A terrorist attack... Half Crushmont has disappeared...” she sobs.

“I—I’m... alive... right?” I manage to utter while I try to draw a smile on my face.

A gentle smile appears on Aia’s worried face.

“Indeed,” an unknown voice affirms, and a nurse enters my tunnel vision’s sight. “You survived, miraculously. Without the help of...” she seems to look up something on a gadget, “Bax and Xey, you would not be here...” she says in a gentle yet serene voice.

“They?” I manage to ask.

“They will go through,” she confirms. “Both are admitted to another hospital. They were luckier. Especially Bax, thanks to his implants.”

I sigh relieved, but I am unable to voice it. I lack the strength to utter a ‘Thank goodness.’

The nurse seems to have guessed my intention and feeling, and nods gently.

“You will go through too,” she tells me, but an unbearable silence follows. “You will be in intensive care for at least some months. You will require many more interventions and surgeries. We’ve already done a lot,” she sighs, “but it will take more...” Obviously... surviving something the like... “I am unsure how to break it to you, sir...” she adds.

Aia is still in tears but slowly recovers her calmness. Her warm hand gently caresses mine.

“Tell... me...” I say breathlessly.

“Mister Matsumoto,” the nurse takes a deep breath, “you’ve lost your left arm and your leg just above your right knee...”

Absolute, utter silence reigns in the room... only Aia’s sobs interrupt it from time to time...

Lost? How? What will happen now to me? Will I be able to go back to space? Even have a life? What will happen to Aia? To Enya? To everyone? What can I do now? Will I be a cripple for life now? I...

The pain and the revelation almost knock me out again...

Sudden shouts from the outside break the silence.

“I want to see the Phoenix! He is awake, right? Let me in for hell’s sake! This damn hospital is mine!” The voice of the old Mitsubishi reaches us even through the door...

The door opens, he and Yuuki enter hurriedly and reach my bed.

“*Kamisama arigatou*¹. You are awake...” Yuuki dries some tears.

“How are you, Kira-kun?” my boss asks sitting down on a chair at my left side.

“I—”

“Don’t force yourself,” he says gently but clearly relieved.

¹Japanese: “Thank god,” “thank goodness,”

“Alive...” I manage to utter.

Soft smiles of relief appear on both faces.

“Look, son...” Mitsubishi-san says. It’s the first time he addresses me as *son*... “It truly was the worst of all lucks for you to be there in that fateful moment...” he sighs. “We knew of the unrests of the sector but did not do enough to keep you safe. We will do our utmost to repay you however we can.” He takes a breath while Yuuki nods behind him still drying some tears. “Son, we pulled every string possible for you to be admitted here, in the best bionic and biogenic research hospital of the galaxy.”

“What...mean?” I manage to ask.

“If you agree, we will get you the best bionic implants science can produce. You will get a full bionic arm and leg.” Overwhelmed by his offering, I manage to sigh in relief and to nod slightly. “But not any full bionics, you will get only the best technology in the market—No! Even better! We will only use the best and latest advances in bionic and biogenic!”

I only manage to answer him with an affirmative hum while Aia’s grip on my right hand gently intensifies.

At that moment, I am getting dizzy, and the little vision I had is getting blurry again...

“Kira! Don’t go!” Aia suddenly screams.

“Ah~”

“Don’t leave us!” she pleads. “Stay with me!”

“Ye—yeah...” I manage to utter.

“Don’t worry,” I hear the nurse say. “It’s just the painkillers kicking in.”

“Kira...” I feel Aia’s warmth through our joined hands.

“Ye—yeah?”

“If you sleep... promise me, you’ll wake up again,” she pleads in her caring voice.

“I... will...” I take a painful breath. “I... still... have... to tell you...” my voice trails off.

Slender fingers gently caress my forehead.

“*Hm~* I’ll stay with you...”

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This pain...

I blink and unsteadily search for anyone around. Strange tubes are inserted into my nostrils, more cover my body. I squint downwards and see some tubes pumping a red liquid through it, my blood. Wires are attached to my body all over.

My right hand is warm... My eyes follow unsteadily the arm still attached to my body until I find a bluish hand.

“Aia...” I whisper.

The hand twitches.

“Kira...” she sighs deeply. “Good morning.”

“You look... tired...” I manage to say in a hoarse voice.

“*Hm~* Couldn’t sleep...”

“Thanks...”

“Don’t worry...” She shakes her head. “I’ll stay with you.”

“You can... rest. I won’t go... Much I... still want to do...”

“I’m here too...” she whispers wearing a gentle smile. “You’re not alone, Kira.”

“Thanks...”

“Nor am I... Look...” she says pointing towards her back.

I squint as much as I can towards the place she points. There is a kind of a bench... someone is lying on it... short reddish-blond hair... feline ears...

“Enya?” I manage to whisper.

The half-Felii’s ears twitch. Her body slowly turns around. Her eyes slowly blink...

“Kira!” She jumps up in a flash. “You’re awake! *Ab’iēj·tāb!*” She sprints to Aia’s side and takes my hand too. A flood of words in Feliiti emerges from her while her tears flow.

“Enya...” I sigh in relief.

Aia smiles gently and begins to caress the kitten’s scalp.

“Kiiiraaa~” Enya sobs. “I—I feared... I won’t see... you again...” she cries.

“All of us...” sighs Aia. “I was afraid too...”

“Me too...” I try to smile.

Aia produces a handkerchief and hands it to Enya. The feline girl begins to dry her tears and blows her nose.

“Kira...” she sighs. “Blessed all ancestors, you are awake...” she repeats.

“Thanks...” I say almost breathless. It’s still hard to breathe. “When?”

“Enya came as soon as she was allowed to,” says Aia with a gentle smile.

“Yeah,” Enya sniffs, “I wasn’t... till Aia got me a pass...”

Aia smiles warmly.

“Being a certified nurse, I was able to get one,” Aia explains.

“I—I can’t be here too much time...” Enya sobs. “Even if I would—I wanted...”

“Thanks, girls...” I say heavily, trying to move my thumb with the intention to caress their hands in mine.

Both shake their heads slowly.

“You are important to us...” Enya says.

“Yes,” adds Aia, “very important.”

A painful sigh of relief flows through my lungs.

“Thanks...” is the only thing I can say right now.

“Don’t worry,” says Enya while she takes a washcloth and gently dries my forehead. I did not notice the sweat forming on it. “We help you get out of here,” she purrs lovely.

“Yes,” confirms Aia tugging the bedsheets up and covering me better. “As much as we’re allowed to.”

“Yeah...” sighs Enya. “I can’t stay much...”

Both look really tired...

“Try... to rest... too...” I tell them breathless.

“Yeah,” Aia giggles softly. “I will when Enya is able to come...”

“I’ll try to come as much as possible,” the Felii adds.

“Tha—thanks... Aaah~”

A sudden unmanageable pain creeps up my left arm... I wince in my pain.

“Kira...” I hear Enya scream.

“Shh~ It will be okay...” Aia tries to calm me while I hear some clicking.

“What’s happening?” Enya asks distressed.

“I’m administering him more painkillers...”

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I blink... the room is slightly dark.

My eyes wander unsteadily from left to right... Something warm lies on my arm, something furry...

Enya is sleeping with her head resting on my arm... I would smile if it wasn’t for my pain. A bit further away, I spot Aia sleeping on the same bench Enya was sleeping the last time I have awoken...

You girls... A painful sigh... A warm feeling flows through me. I need to go through this however possible.

I try to move my right hand and caress Enya’s face. I barely manage it. Enya begins to purr and strokes her face against my palm.

“Kira...” she sighs while a tear rolls down her cheek.

“Enya...” I whisper hoarsely.

“Kira?” Her ears flick. “You awake?”

“Yeah...”

Enya sits up with a sleepy smile.

“Need something?” she asks with a yawn.

“You should sleep...” I manage to utter.

“I will... But, do you need something?”

“I have... you...” I manage to smile.

“Oh, you...” she giggles gently. “Yeah, both of us.”

“Ah~”

“Yeah?”

“My... Falcon?”

“At Kim and Kite’s place,” she assures gently caressing my hand. “Mitsubishi-san moved heaven and earth to bring it home, with you,” she sighs. “Luckily, it was stationed on the opposite where—” she bites her lips. “It’s not too damaged. It’s repairable. They won’t rest till they fixed it.”

I sigh in relief even if it’s painful.

“Yeah,” she nods having figured my sigh. “I can’t imagine another truck for you...”

I try to nod.

“Don’t force yourself, Kira.” She looks back at Aia sleeping on the bench, her ears twitching as if she tries to find some hints of movement. Enya stands up and lies her head on the pillow, at my side. “I love you, Kira,” she whispers. “Whatever happens to you, I’ll love you.”

“Enya...”

“I’ll keep my promise, and won’t meddle with either of you. You are too dear to me.” She kisses my cheek. “I’m still rooting for you two, but—” She lifts her head and looks back at Aia sleeping on the bench. Looking into my eyes, she goes on, “but...” she sighs deeply, “it’s hard... your life hanging by a thread... I love you, I don’t want you to leave...”

“I won’t...” I manage to utter. “You two... are... my strength...”

“Oh, Kira...” she purrs and kisses my cheek again.

My eyelids are heavy again...

“So—sorry...” I whisper drowsy.

“It’s okay, Kira, my love,” she whispers. “We’ll talk when you’re able to.”

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Again, I wake up...

“Morning, Kira~” Aia sings softly.

“Morning...” I am able to say. It seems it will be finally easier to talk.

“How do you feel?”

“Heavy...” I sigh.

“It’s the painkillers...” she explains. “You’re slipping in and out of your coma continuously...” she sighs.

“Coma?”

“Yeah.” She nods. “Your injuries are too much for your nervous system to handle. We can’t give you more painkillers as you already have... It would—” she bites her lips.

“How long?” I manage to ask.

“Almost three weeks...” she sighs. “It’s almost three weeks since that happened. You were hanging by a thread for two weeks... Now it will be better. You awakened four days ago, but slipped in and out of consciousness several times since then...”

“Enya?”

“I’ve sent her home, to sleep,” Aia says with a smile. “And to have a shower.” She giggles. “She hadn’t had one for three days, she was wearing the same clothes since then...”

“Oh...”

“She cares a lot for you. She still loves you.” Aia smiles. “It shows. And I can’t say *no* to her. I rather let her be here all the time.”

“Thanks... I need you... both of you...”

“I know, Kira,” she confirms while cleaning my forehead with a cloth. “We will be here.”

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“Kira...”

I am gently awakened by a caring voice.

“Enya...”

“Yup, it’s me...” she purrs. “How are you?”

“A bit drowsy...”

“The painkillers, I know.” She holds her hand against my forehead. “Your fever has fallen quite a bit. Are you able to have visits?”

“Visits?”

“Yeah, some have come.”

“Yeah...”

“Great!” Enya jumps up with a huge smile. “Just a sec...”

She disappears from my sight, and I hear her open the door.

“Come in... He is awake, but don’t make a ruckus...” I hear her telling someone.

A cowboy hat enters my line of sight...

“Jim...” I say happily but breathless.

“Wassup, Kira?” he says with a slightly hoarse voice.

Two women also enter...

“Kim... Kite...”

“Hey, Kira.” “Hi, Kira.”

A hefty black couple follows...

“Sue... Buz...”

“Hello, Kira.” “Hi, mate.”

Aia follows all of them.

“I thought, you might love to see them...” Aia says with a gentle smile on her lips.

“Tha—Thanks...” I say with a lump in my throat, I’m just too happy they had come.

“How’re ya, Kira?” asks Jim sitting down on the stool at my side.

“Given the circumstances... quite well...” I say.

“Heh! If yer joking, better!” Jim laughs.

“I would have brought you a cake,” says Sue, “but I was told that you can’t eat solid yet...”

“Thanks, Sue, really...” I sigh imagining one of her delicious cakes. “Once I’m out, I’ll come just for one.”

“Oh, you, Kira...” Sue giggles and blushes.

“Yeah,” laughs Buz at her side, “you’re always welcome for a drink when you can.”

“Thanks, Buz.”

“Kira...” Kim says and kneels at Jim’s side, “don’t worry about your Falcon. You first.”

“Yeah.” Kite nods standing behind her. “We take care of your precious ride. Let your beautiful nurse care for you. Right, Aia?” She grins.

“Kite!” Aia jumps up. “Don’t say such—” she interrupts herself and blushes.

I begin to laugh but have to stop because of the pain.

“You are too much... Thanks, friends, for coming.”

“But of course!” Enya shouts. “We can’t let you rot in here!”

“Yeah,” adds Jim. “Eventho yer surrounded by cute nurses, we hafta come an’ molest ya.”

We keep on laughing and chatting for a while, at least until I feel my drowsiness coming back.

“Sorry guys,” says Aia. “It seems Kira needs to sleep more...”

“It’s okay...” says Buz. “It was great to see you again.”

“Yeah... Ah! Buz?”

“Yeah?”

“How’s Bax?”

“Quite better than you, Kira. I visited him two days ago. He asked about you,” the hefty bartender says.

“That’s good... I need to thank him... He saved my life, together with Xey.”

“Both will visit you when they are able.”

“Thanks, Buz... I...” my drowsiness is overcoming me again.

Another long surgery went by...

I am lying alone... nobody seems around after I was brought back to my room.

Just as I feel the loneliness invade my mind, the door opens.

“Hi, hi~” sings Enya carrying a huge bouquet of alien-looking flowers. “How are you, love?” she happily asks while putting the flowers into a vase. It seems that Aia won’t be around for a while for her to use *love* so freely.

“Not alone anymore.” I manage to smile.

“That’s why I’m here~” she sings again.

“From whom—”

“They are from Ahnehi and Gweraz,” she interrupts me. “They sent them with their regards. Both are really concerned about you.”

“Tell them my thanks...” I say, finally with less pain.

“I will,” she says going to the bathroom. “Just a sec, love.”

I hear her washing her hands. After a brief moment, she comes back with some washcloths and a bowl filled with fresh water. She puts the bowl on the bed table on my left, and she sits carefully on the bed.

“You’re sweating a lot, Kira...” she says and begins to clean my forehead. “Don’t worry, I will help you. You have to be fresh...”

“For?” I ask intrigued.

“For saying thanks by yourself...” she giggles.

“Huh?”

“To Ahne and Gweraz, dummy,” she giggles again. “Ahne’s at Gweraz’s place and ready for a video.”

“Thanks,” I tell the cute kitten.

“No need... Oh? Already able to move your arm?”

Even if slowly and with some pain, I manage to move my surviving arm and lay my hand on her shoulder. I reach her neck and slightly pull her towards me.

“Oh, you~” she purrs and lets me guide her to a kiss.

How I missed this horny kitten’s lips...

This might be our most gentle make-out session ever. She kisses me gently, full of care and love while she gently caresses my face and scalp. My hand on her neck caresses her scalp in reach. I want to embrace her so badly! But my body won’t respond...

“I love you, Kira~” Enya purrs as our lips part.

“I—”

“Shh~” She lays her finger on my lips. “No need.” She takes my arm from her shoulder and gently holds my hand. “I know,” she purrs. “Right now, just focus on getting better.” She kisses my hand. “Don’t occupy your mind about us two...”

“I can’t...”

“But Kira—”

“You two are the reason why I can go through this...”

“Oh, Kira~” she purrs again. “Tell that Aia too, will you?”

“Yeah, I will...”

“Oh!” Her ears flick. “Right! We should call Ahne and Gweraz.”

She puts the bowl aside and takes her terminal out. She seems to select Gweraz’s contact.

«Oh, Enya cutie!» I hear his voice. «How’s Kira?»

«Don’t leave me out! Hi! How’s our hunk, Enya sugar?»

“Hi-hi~” Enya sings. “Quite well looked after. Guess who’s wanting to chat with you?”

«Don’t hold it off, cutie...» Ahne moans dejected.

“Here...” Enya giggles, and leans back, laying her head on the pillow, so I also enter into the view of the camera.

«Kira! How’re you, cutie?» Gweraz joyfully asks.

«Handsome! Are you alright?» Ahnehi’s ears flip up in delight.

“Thanks, Ahne, Gweraz. Could be better. Thanks for the flowers and good wishes.”

«Oh, you~» purrs Ahne, «of course we’re worried about you, hunk.»

«Yeah,» Gweraz nods, «we saw it in the news... we... we...» he begins to sob.

«Oh, you, Gweraz...» Ahnehi produces a handkerchief from her visible bra and hands it to him.

«Thanks...» he says and blows his nose.

«We,» she sighs folding her ears down, «we thought we’ve lost a friend...»

“We all were...” adds Enya.

I sigh and smile.

“Thanks, guys,” I say. “It’s nice to see you. How are you two?”

«Distressed...» sobs Gweraz. «You had us worried...»

«Yeah, handsome.» Ahne nods. «So much...»

“Thanks again. I—”

I’m interrupted by the opening door. A nurse is coming in... Enya jumps up and away from the bed.

“Excuse me,” the nurse says, “but mister Matsumoto needs to receive his new medication.”

“Oh, yeah...” Enya says flipping her ears. “Just let us see off our friends on video.”

“Sure.”

“Okay, sorry guys. We have to call this off. Say bye to Kira,” she giggles.

«It’s okay. Bye, Kira~» Ahne sings while waving at me.

«Bye~bye, Kira... Get better...» Gweraz also waves at me.

“Thanks, guys,” I say smiling.

The nurse prepares some fresh IV bags while Enya gets rid of the bowl and the washcloths.

The Felii sits down on the chair at my right and holds my hand firmly.

“How are you feeling, mister Matsumoto?” the nurse asks as he changes several of the IV bags.

“Quite better.”

“I see,” he smiles, “having so many good friends visiting you, even on video. Plus, having such gorgeous girlfriends helps a lot.”

“Ye—yeah...” I say a bit overwhelmed while Enya gently caresses my hand.

“Yeah~” purrs Enya happily.

“By the way, Enya. Where’s Aia?”

“Oh... She’ll be back in an hour or so. She went home to have a shower and fetch a fresh change of clothes. So don’t worry,” she smirks, “your angel’s coming back soon.”

“Enya...”

“Excellent...” my doctor says looking at my data. “You are finally in a stable condition to proceed with the surgeries for your implants. Your internal injuries are recovering at an incredible speed.”

I look at Aia and Enya sitting at my side. Both are holding my hand and are beaming in happiness but are unable to hide their drowsiness. They never really left my side till now...

“Great!” I exclaim. “Finally, I want to leave as fast as possible.”

“Not so fast, mister Matsumoto,” the doctor says sternly. “The procedure is slow and painful.”

“Painful?”

“Indeed...” The doc nods. “We have to connect live nerves to artificial ones after all, a very delicate procedure. We cannot induce you into a coma nor administer too much sedatives. The nervous response has to be active, or the surgeon cannot identify the right ones...”

“Understood,” I sigh. “Don’t worry, I won’t run away... not with just one leg.” I shrug.

Aia and Enya explode in laughter. The doctor and the nurse follow suit.

“Kira...” giggles Enya.

“You’re truly unique, Kira,” laughs Aia. “Nobody in their right mind would joke about this.”

“Well,” I shrug again, “I’m the Phoenix after all. I’ll revive as many times as needed.”

“True...” laughs Enya.

“Yeah,” giggles Aia. Turning to the doctor, she says, “I’ll take care of him. He won’t do anything reckless.”

“Very well.” The doc nods.

“I’ll be with him during those surgeries and assist,” she declares.

Wow! Both Enya and I look at her. Aia seems determined to go through it.

“I’m sorry, ma’am...” the doctor says, “I cannot let you in. We already bent the rules a lot in letting you two stay so much. I know that you have some experience in nursing—”

“I am a doctor, ma’am,” declares Aia standing up. “Specialized in Human medicine, and got my Ph.D. *cum laude* from the Mars University.” She shows the stunned doctor her terminal, surely showing her title to her. “I am qualified to, at least, assist. And I absolutely *have* to be there.”

“Oh...” The good doctor blinks a few times, then she nods. “Okay... If mister Matsumoto allows it...” she says looking at me.

“Let her,” I tell the doc. “I need her at my side.”

I see Aia’s face blooming at my decision. It was the right one. It’s the least I can do for her right now.

“Very well, then let me inform the rest of the team. I will hand you, doctor Asdiekx, the implant forms later today.”

“Thanks.” Aia nods. “We will have all the details ready the moment we enter the implant-phase.”

The doctor nods and takes some notes.

“We are entering the analytic phase to check everything the implant surgeons need,” the doc informs me. “We will do some deep analysis of your DNA, among others. Full-bionics need to be tuned to the very detail so your body won’t reject them.”

“I understand.” I nod. “Whenever you want. I’m sorry to say that I’m not too keen to stay here for a long time. I don’t like hospitals...”

The doctor begins to laugh.

“Don’t worry, most don’t like to be locked up in here,” she giggles. “But remember, it will be some months until you have gone through the whole process, and you can be discharged.”

“What’s the process?” asks Enya who stayed silent but with a grin on her face while Aia insisted on being at my side even during future interventions.

“Ah, yes...” the doc answers and begins her explanation, “First, a deep analysis. With this data and your instructions on the form I will hand doctor Asdiekx, we will work with our bionic design team to create your new limbs.

“The implant procedure will be from inside out. First, a new skeleton based on three-dimensional printing and nano-carbon fiber alloy tubes will be fixed to your own bones. This is already partially done while we treated your amputation. Meaning, the new skeleton will be attached to these special connection stubs.

“After your new artificial bones are implanted, a basic bionic muscle and tendon system is added together with its basic nervous system which will govern your new muscles.

“Next, secondary muscles and nervous systems will be implanted until reaching to the skin.

“Meanwhile, biogenic blood vessels will be connected to your biological ones. The bloodstream will power the most basic functions of your new limbs.

“The skin will be last, together with the superficial nervous system, if you want to include it. The latter is optional as it is still in end-of-research phase.

“Anyway, that is the basic outline. We will start with your arm as it will have a longer adaption time, and you will need more rehab for it than your leg.”

“Why?” asks Enya faster than I could.

“A full-bionic arm has more mobile parts than a leg. You also have to get used to the new strength of your bionic hand, for example. It is more complex. Indeed, the leg and foot also need quite an adaption time, but a bit less than the arm.”

“I got it...” I sigh. “When will all this begin?”

“Today, we are starting with the deep analysis. Don’t worry, we already have all the samples we need.”

“Great!” I laugh.

“Okay, Kira, this is the form you need to fill out. Want to do it alone?” asks Aia.

“No... I want you to be here,” I say looking at both Enya and her.

Both girls smile heartily.

Slowly, we go through the whole form while Aia explains each and every possible option in simple, non-medical terms. Good thing I insisted on her staying.

“Wow...” Enya’s eyes sparkle. “This means, Kira will sense touch again?”

“Yes.” Aia nods. “Caresses, everything. You won’t notice a difference in touch.”

“Are you sure, Kira?” asks Enya. “To include even experimental features?”

“If I get my life back as it was, yeah,” I tell the kitten.

“It will, Kira, it will,” says Aia with a smile.

While Aia is able to get permission to be twenty-four hours a day at my side, Enya is not so lucky. Aia’s medical Ph.D. opened her all the doors to do as she pleases inside the hospital.

I’ve never seen Aia being so sweet... so caring...

This gives me the strength to go through all of this. You were right, Uordah. Yes, indeed, I have to support her to the max and pave the way to the future, our future.

Enya’s support is also strong, stronger than ever. She looks after me when giving Aia a break to sleep and recover. The Felii shows her most amorous and caring side while we are alone.

Having both women care for me isn’t easy for me... It only makes me doubt about what to do when I’m out of here...

Enya insists that I have to, at least, have a date, a full date, with Aia. Then I will see how it will ride out.

I agree to a certain extent. But both’s care only makes me fall for them harder...

Yes, I have to admit it. I love both of them, deeply. Now it’s clear.

But... having this love clear, only makes me doubt again...

I know Enya is polyamorous, while Aia is clearly monogamous. And I... I don’t know... I was always the monogamous type when it came to love. Yeah, sure, I fucked around. Having several lovers or *playmates* at once isn’t anything new for me. But not much love was involved. I never really loved more than one girl.

Once I fell in love, truly in love, I was faithful to her, leaving the other girls... Fucking heartbreaker, I was... And that's what I wanted to change in me...

No, no... Stop comparing yourself with your past self. 'Before any lover might accept you, you have to make peace with your feelings from your past...' that's what the old Uordah told me. He's right! Stop it! Right now, I have to go through this for my future. For the future I want to share with my friends, with Aia and Enya, however that future will be.

My head doctor called both Aia and Enya in. I am a bit restless. This might change everything... at least, I have the feeling it will...

"Okay..." the doctor says, "the first batch of analyses is in. We have to make some special adjustments and further tests. Your genes, your DNA is a bit special..."

Aia reacts faster than Enya or me...

"What do you mean, doc?" she asks.

"Ah, nothing to be concerned about," the doctor reassures. "Some parameters of mister Matsumoto's DNA are a bit different from what we are used to. It might be his origin and his cryopreservation... The Human's DNA has slightly evolved during his cryopreservation. This is not noticeable without a deep analysis. And is, certainly not, vital for any standard surgery, but vital for full bionic implants."

A sudden memory comes to my mind...

"Ah, doc..."

"Yes, mister Matsumoto?"

"I don't know if it might be important or not... I'm not even sure if this could have affected me somehow..."

"I just remembered something my grandfather told... He might have been exposed to some nuclear radiation... in Nagasaki... before he moved to the south..."

Everyone in the room opens their eyes and mouths wide.

"For real, Kira?" asks Enya stupefied.

“Yeah...” I nod. “I’m unsure about the radiation... He only told me when I was a kid that he was a survivor of the atomic bomb... Surely, he wouldn’t have known if he was irritated or not, as he never developed clear symptoms. Even though, he died quite young... compared to his friends.”

“Wooow...”

“Thank you for remembering such an important detail, mister Matsumoto,” the doctor says and takes notes. “This might have some repercussions. We cannot rule anything out. We will have to make some more analyses.” The doc turns to her assistants who nod and also take notes.

The following day, the doc returns after having called, again, both Aia and Enya.

“We have the final results,” the doc says. Aia, Enya, and I are really intrigued. “To begin with, there won’t be problems in relation to your bionic implants nor your health.

“It has been truly an interesting study. You have, indeed, a slight mutation, compared to the few DNA samples we still have from your times. Your DNA is neither what we would expect from a nowadays’ perspective nor from what you should have. But, we cannot determine its origins. It does not seem that the possible irradiation of your grandfather is the cause, nor is it explicable by your cryopreservation alone. Perhaps, it is a combination...”

“How does it affect him?” asks Aia nervously.

“For starters, it won’t affect his health directly, nor his possible descendants.

“There are several deviations from the norm, but we cannot affirm they are malign. The most noticeable effect is your pain tolerance.”

“Huh?” I blink and look at Aia. She also looks at me baffled while Enya can’t relate.

“We think,” the doc goes on, “that your threshold of pain tolerance is quite higher than the norm. For the good and the worse...” Aia blinks, she surely remembers that we were talking about it during our first haul together. “For the worse, I mean that he won’t know when the body’s critical point has been reached.”

“You mean,” Enya asks, “he won’t notice his skin’s burning as it doesn’t hurt?”

“Something the like, but that would be too extreme... on a smaller scale, it would be that way.”

“Wow! That’s why your bruises didn’t hurt you that much...” Aia tells me.

“Yeah...” I nod. She had the same thought as me...

“On a positive note,” the doc goes on, “your actual case... This strange threshold might have saved your life, mister Matsumoto. Without it, it is most likely that you wouldn’t have survived due to a nervous shock from your extreme injuries.”

“Wow...” I sigh and look at the flabbergasted women. “Then... this *mutation*, whatever it is, is a blessing... Without it, I wouldn’t have this conversation right now...”

“Yeah, exactly!” Enya jumps up in joy.

“You always see things on the positive side,” giggles Aia wearing a charming smile.

No Aia... not till recently...

Finally... The bionic surgery begins...

And I thought I have seen hell... If hell exists, it would be this...

Excruciating pain, a myriad of people surrounding me, bright light blinding me, sweating from the pain, the sound of machines and the voices of nurses and surgeons deafening me, and this fucking pain!

But a steady, warm, calming light stands by me... Calming my pain, drying my sweat, whispering gentle words of encouragement, taking my hand every so often and gently holding it... A bluish angel is guarding me... Aia.

The bluish alien is the only comforting painkiller for me.

I squint down and see the surgeon concentrated and working carefully. A myriad of thin threads come out of my arm just beneath my shoulder and are waved around the already *installed* nano-carbon tube alloy based bone.

Several assistants monitor multiple sensors and brain patterns and relay to the surgeon which nerve she is touching. At every touch, I moan in pain. They told me it would be painful... but this is hell!

Hours of hellish pain go by... They won't let me slip out of consciousness, or they cannot go on...

Finally... the surgeon sighs in relief and exhaustion. She just finished the last connection of the first batch of primary muscles.

“Your first surgery has been a success, mister Matsumoto. Thank you for being able to keep your arm still despite the pain,” she tells me. “The following interventions on your arm will not be painful anymore, as we are able to deactivate the affected nerves. The pain will be reduced to the moment we reconnect the nerves again, but will be short.

“For now, you have the underlying muscles. Once we add the rest of the muscles and finish implanting the blood vessels, that will be by tomorrow, you may begin your rehab, even before we implant your new skin. Having all the muscles, you should start to train them as soon as possible.

“On the count of three, I will activate the nervous-biogenic flux and the blood circulation to your bionic muscles. This will hurt...”

On the count of three, I scream almost bursting my lungs...

“Shh~ I'm here...” Aia calms me.

When the pain finally leaves my body, the head doctor steps forward. The surgeon sat down and is assisted by some nurses, she really looks exhausted.

“Try to move your hand, mister Matsumoto,” the doc instructs. “Do just as you always did, without thinking...”

I try... and lo and behold! My hand moves! Crudely, but it moves. Even my fingers!

“That is an excellent sign, mister Matsumoto,” the doc says in relief. “This means, your body is accepting your new implant without problems. Your bloodstream is already powering up your bionic muscles.”

Aia strengthens her grip on my *natural* hand even more. I look over at her, she gleams in happiness.

“I—I’m filing dizzy...” I say.

“Don’t worry... you need some recovering sleep,” says Aia. “Have a good sleep, Kira, lo—”

Huh? What is she saying? I don’t get it... I’m losing my faculties...

⋮

I blink... It’s dark already. I feel someone lying at my side... In my right arm...

My hand tries to identify the mysterious person. An asscheek... a sturdy one... a tail... a gentle purr... Enya.

Her ears twitch.

“Kira~” she purrs.

“Enya?”

“Shh~ Don’t awake Aia...” she whispers.

“Aia?” I whisper back.

“She’s sleeping on the couch... She let me sleep with you.”

“She did?”

“Yeah~” she purrs sultry. “We talked a lot while you were out. She knows well our *superficial* skinship.”

I jerk.

“She knows?” Right... I’ve told her...

“The basic stuff, dummy...” she giggles softly. “She knows that we slept together a lot. She thought that you are missing me sleeping with you...”

“Really?”

“Yeah~ We can’t do anything sexy, though... but... hmmm~” she softly moans while I massage her ass. “That’s what I need...”

A sudden rustling from the couch made us stop. My hand floats down onto the bed.

“Kira? You awake?” Aia’s sleepy voice comes from where she lies.

“Ye—yeah...” I answer. Dumbass! I shouldn’t have!

Enya just curls up and pretends to be asleep while Aia stands up.

“Oh, Enya~” Aia giggles softly in an attempt to not wake her up. Aia sits on the chair and covers the feline girl with a blanket. “She needs you...” Aia tells me.

“Aia...”

She stands up and nears my face.

“As I need you...” she whispers and gives me a peck.

Dumbfounded, I look at her as she sits back on the chair.

“You see...” she continues, taking my hand, “I’m thinking a lot... You already have a lot of friends here. But only two of us insist on being with you, Enya and me. Of course, they come to visit you at least once a week. But Enya wants to be here all the time, whenever she’s allowed to.

“She loves you, we know. But... that means...” she sighs and seems to look around, “that means, I also love you, Kira.”

“Aia—”

“I know I love you, Kira,” she interrupts me. “Just the thought of losing you... it rips me apart. I’m sure, Enya feels the same. I... I cannot...” she wavers again. Fuck! Aia...

I take her hand with my biological one.

“Don’t force yourself, Aia. I know it too.”

“Kira?”

“I know how we all must feel. But—”

“This is not the right place...” she interrupts me again with a long sigh.

“Yeah. Let me heal first, Aia. I won’t run away, and less from you. I also need to clear things up. But this first.”

“Yeah...”

“I know we have come down a long path, and I finally come to terms with the things I have to change in me. And I want to change these first. I want to have gone through this first, before anything.”

“You’re great, Kira.”

“Huh?”

“You at least are telling me what goes through your mind, and you don’t pressure me, that’s why I’m falling for you, hard.”

“And you, Aia, you do it too. You’re telling what you are able to. Take your time.”

“Oh, Kira~”

Enya suddenly sighs in her *sleep*. Aia jolts but recomposes herself immediately while I chuckle.

“Enya~” Aia giggles and begins to pet the Felii’s scalp. “I’m sorry, Enya...” I feel the feline girl’s soft jolt. “I love Kira... Can you forgive me?” she whispers. It seems Aia wanted to go on but stopped as Enya began to purr from her caresses. Finally, she whispers, “Thanks, Enya.”

“What is it?” I ask.

“Just some stuff we talked about. Don’t worry, Kira dea—” she stops in mid-sentence. “I’m sleepy, sorry Kira...”

“It’s okay, I’m staying...”

“Oh, you~” she giggles. “Good night.”

She stands up and gives me another peck.

“Night...”

Enya doesn’t say anything after Aia went back to sleep, she only curled up, holding me firmly.

Roughly a day later, I lie again in the surgery theater.

Before starting, the surgeon explained to me that today they will finish the muscles, the blood vessels, and the nervous system.

At least it is true, it's not so painful anymore...

Hours slowly go by until...

"We are finished with the basics," the doctor informs. "Tomorrow, we will install the extras left, and the new skin which was cultivated from your own skin cells, after we implant your new chip—"

I explode in laughter.

"What? Did I say something funny?" the perplexed doctor asks.

"No, no..." I gasp for air. "It wasn't you. I just remembered what I said the first time I got a chip..."

Aia also begins to laugh.

"*Fufu*~ True, how was it? 'If you lose your left arm, you'll also lose your money,' and you answered..."

"Ehh~ Thanks... I haven't planned to get rid of it on the long run..."

Now everyone in the surgery theater begins to laugh despite their visible exhaustion.

"That's a good sight," says the doctor laughing, "you have lost an arm and a leg, but not your humor."

Between surgeries, I received several more visits from the boss and Yuuki. Jim also came by, accompanied by his uncle Nik. As did Kim, Kite, Sue, and Buz.

We always have lengthy chats until a nurse ushers them out for being noisy...

More video calls with Ahnehi and Gweraz followed.

My surprise visitor, albeit via video, was V. She was worried to death, she told. She couldn't get in touch with me because I still have no terminal. When she finally found a way to call the hospital, she was always turned down until I got well enough to officially receive calls.

Aia was there and gave V her own contact, so she is able to call me via Aia's terminal.

Having such good friends is helping me more than they think.

Bax and Xey also visited me, where I thanked them over and over again for saving my life on Crushmont. They are too humble to let me call them heroes. But they are, I'm alive thanks to them.

After roughly a week of surgeries, I finally started my rehab on my arm as my leg is already under *construction*.

I sit in the bed looking at my *new* hand while I open and close the fist.

"Truly impressive..." I say.

"What?" asks Aia while she's handing me a plate of apple slices.

"Thanks, Aia. I mean nowadays' technology... If this would have happened in my times, if I survived, I would be bound to a wheelchair for life. If I'd got an orthopedic leg, it would look like shit, if ever really functional." I look down at my *nude* leg which already has the skeleton and the essential muscles in place and wiggle my artificial toes.

I try to take a slice of apple with two of my *new* fingers. The first slice is smashed to puree...

"Don't push yourself, Kira," Aia says gently while cleaning the mushy mess. "Your new arm, and hand, is almost fifty times as strong as your natural one. It's a hurdle to overcome of every bionic implant."

The fourth slice finally reaches my mouth.

"Well, I have time..." I sigh. "I even need to relearn how to eat properly..."

"Don't say that, you're doing great," giggles Aia.

"I'm worried about Aia..." I tell Enya after the bluish alien left us alone to freshen up.

"How so?" the Felii asks taking my *new* hand.

"She's always at my side, never really taking time for sleep. She's always on her toes. The moment I awake, she's here. It hurts me to see her exhausted face. And every time I tell her, she brushes it away. She behaves like..." I sigh.

“Your girlfriend, even wife...” Enya finishes my sentence. “I’ve noticed it too. It’s obvious.”

“Yeah.”

“But Kira, it’s not the time. You know it.”

“Yeah. Nor is it the right place,” I sigh.

“But both of you are on the right track, Kira.”

“What do you mean, Enya?”

“We talk when you sleep. She’s quite aware that I love you, I confessed it.”

“You did?”

“Yeah. Before you freak out, she pointed it out. And I had no reason to lie to her. I also confessed that we’re a bit frisky from time to—”

“Enya—” I interrupt her.

“No Kira,” she interrupts me in return. “I haven’t told her that we have a deep skinship, by no means. But I confessed that I love to sleep with you, that’s why she let me sleep sometimes with you.”

“But—”

“Here’s what she told me: ‘I won’t be jealous, Enya. Just don’t take him away from me, will you?’ Her words. I vowed to honor them. I will not take you away from her. I will not seduce you, at least not until she has everything clear.”

I sigh in relief.

“Tomorrow you’ll begin your walking rehab, right?” Enya asks.

“Yeah, why?”

“Then you already have a full leg down there, right?” She smirks sultry.

“Yeah?”

“Lemme see...” she giggles and lifts the blanket.

“Wa—wait!”

“Hmm~ no pants? Sexy~” she purrs seductively. “Didn’t the rehab specialist say you should bend your knees to start getting the feeling to it?” she asks coyly. “Here, I’ll help...” Enya crawls under the sheets and moves my legs into position, creating “Such a comfortable tent,” giggles Enya.

“Enya~” I moan.

It has been too long since I’ve received caresses between my legs...

This is heaven! All my suppressed sexual urges come back in an instant.

“Yummy~” giggles Enya licking her lips as she emerges from the tent and lies on my chest finally void of attached sensors. “I missed that~” she purrs.

“Me too, me too, Enya...” I sigh. “Come, I want to do something for you too...”

“No need, Kira... We could get caught.”

“But...”

“I came just from blowing you.” She grins.

Despite she said *no*, my right hand reaches her ass. She wears no panties...

“Really?” I smirk.

Enya answers with a moan.

I pull her to a kiss as her moans intensify by the minute. She happily obliges, and we begin to make out, for real this time.

Still not really trusting my new hand for delicate actions, I limit my amorous caresses to my trusty right one.

Enya moans into our shared kiss

She sighs as our kiss breaks, and she lies still shuddering onto my chest.

“My first orgasm in a month,” she sighs happily.

“Really?” I ask hugging her.

“Yeah... I wasn’t in the mood for a fuck... not while you’re strapped to a bed.”

“Enya...” I sigh deeply and embrace her stronger with my right arm. “I lo—”

She doesn’t let me finish and gives me a peck.

“Don’t say it until you’re out of here,” she purrs.

“Yeah...” I sigh.

Today, I finally begin the rehab for my right leg. Even if I don’t trust my new arm yet, I have made a steady progress in controlling it.

The rehab supervisors are pleased with my positive evolution. They tell me that I’m improving faster than predicted. Is it because of my strange DNA? My resolution to leave the past behind? My worries about Aia’s health? Enya’s affections? Aia’s care? Who knows... But one thing is sure. I want to leave this place.

A rehab nurse explains how I have to walk while steadying myself holding onto a horizontal bar.

My personal nurse, also known as Aia Asdiekx, holds me just in case.

Another nurse tells me that, if I do the rehab exercises calmly, without rushing, I might be discharged in less than a month. That’s almost crazy... walking out of the hospital after just two months and a half is close to a miracle. In my times, this would have lasted for at least some years, and I wouldn’t walk away...

“Careful!”

“Shiiit!”

My thoughts distracted me...

I’m falling... I only see something blueish... I land softly...

“What?” I try to lift myself... Two blueish moons... “Shit! Sorry, Aia!”

This time I push myself up in a hurry, but my new arm and leg betray me, and I fall again, this time onto the padded floor.

“Kira! Are you alright?” Aia shouts worried.

“Ye—yeah... you?”

“Ah~ Oh—okay...” she says blushing deeply while she fixes her clothes.

Did I really fall face-forward into her cleavage? Didn't such thing only happen in anime?

“I'm so sorry,” I tell her.

“Don't worry, nothing happened...” She smiles still blushing.

The nurses murmur and hold back their giggles. We must have looked like teenagers...

“Kira?” Aia asks.

“Yeah?”

I look up from my lunch in the hospital's dining room. Both Aia and Enya sit in front of me, enjoying the food together. At least, the hospital food is quite good, unlike in my old times. That's progress, my friends.

“I really hope we're able to go back to space...” We? Right, she's also here...

“Yeah, you're right. I want to leave right now. By the wa—”

“Hey!” Enya interrupts us. “Look who's visiting us!”

I turn around and find Kim and Kite at a few meters behind me.

“Hi, Kim. Hi, Kite. How are you?” I ask them.

“Great~” “Cool~” both laugh. “You?”

“Quite well...”

“No surprise,” giggles Kim.

“Yeah, having two cute private nurses,” adds Kite giggling.

“Kim! Kite!” Aia shouts at them blushing.

“Huh? Why are you miffed?” asks Enya. “It's true... after all we—”

“Okay, okay...” sighs Aia. “We're Kira's private nurses. Is that what you came for?”

“Oh, no, no...” Kite laughs.

“Yeah, we came to give Kira some special news,” says Kim.

“Yup! Your Falcon’s fixed!” Kite laughs again.

“Wonderful!” exclaims Aia.

“Cool!” also exclaims Enya.

“The best news yet, you two. Thank you so much. Seems my Falcon was less broken than me,” I laugh.

“No way, Kira,” laughs Kite. “Let me have a look...” She takes my arm and inspects it carefully. “Incredible, dude. Today’s medical treatments are impressive. I can’t find the stitches...”

“You’re recovering better than your Falcon, mate. I can’t avoid leaving a mark on the fuselage, no matter how hard I try,” adds Kim.

“Girls... lower your voices,” Aia hushes them. “We’re getting the attention of everyone...”

She’s right, everyone is looking at us, and not too happily.

“Ups~ Sorry, sorry...” giggles Kim. “Well, now you know that your Falcon is awaiting you. Your baby is ready for take-off.”

“Thanks, girls. I’m ecstatic to be able to take control of my ride—”

“That will be after your rehab is finished, mister Matsumoto,” interrupts me one of the rehab nurses. She’s surely here to fetch me...

Kim and Kite hastily say goodbye and leave while the nurse pushes us to finish our meals.

“Careful!”

“Ugh~”

Again I lost my balance, and I fell on Aia...

So—sorry...”

“Don’t overdo yourself, Kira,” she says. “Take your time. But could you...”

She looks downwards. Shit! Hastily, I jerk my bionic hand from her tit.

“Sorry!”

“Don’t worry.” She smiles blushing. “I too want you out of here as soon as possible. But don’t wear yourself out.”

A rehab nurse helps me up.

“Your private nurse’s right,” she tells me. “If you overdo yourself, you might push the boundaries of your bionic connections to your body.”

“Ugh~ Thanks...” I say while Aia blushes again.

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The days trickle by while rehab is dictating my routine.

The only things interrupting this routine are those involving Aia en Enya. Mostly Enya and her sexy touch from time to time.

While I do rehab for my bionic arm in the specialized gym, Aia always does exercise too. If Enya’s here, she exercises too.

Aia’s health seems to come back as I’m getting better, mostly thanks to Enya, who pushes her to take more breaks and to sleep more.

My resolution is quite clear by now. I have had enough time to think everything through. Chatting with both Aia and Enya also helped me. Without knowing, both of them are excellent therapists for me.

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I blink... The sun’s light is entering the window. Seems it will be a placid day. I have no rehab today, it’s a holiday or the like.

But... where’s everybody?

No Aia... No Enya... It’s the first time that neither of them is awake or lying at my side on the bed.

I hope they are taking a good rest or, at least, have a stroll.

“Happy Birthday!”

I jolt up in surprise as I’m showered with confetti, and my friends appear from everywhere. They must have hidden themselves.

“Aia, Enya, Jim, Mitsubishi-san, Yuuki-chan, Kim, Kite, Sue, Buz...”

Everyone congratulates me heartily while I’m awe.

I look up at the clock on the wall, which also marks the date.

“Oh, right! It’s my birthday!” I laugh.

Everyone begins to laugh.

“But Kira, how can you forget your own birthday?” asks Enya giggling.

“Heh! Whatcha expect? With that many beautiful nurses ’round...” laughs Jim.

“Jim!” Aia exclaims.

“Careful Jim, don’t mess with his beautiful private nurse.”

“Kite!” Aia shouts again blushing.

“The same applies to you, Kite, honey,” giggles Kim.

I can’t stop laughing, this is too much...

“You’re great, friends!” I keep laughing.

“There’s more,” giggles Aia.

“More?”

“*Hm~* Come...”

They help me into the wheelchair, and Aia pushes me down to the park behind the hospital.

“Happy birthday, Phoenix!” sings a choir. The small park is filled with people I know, and all are singing happy birthday... Even Marta, Frank, Marisa and Avasava have come...

I’m moved by the many congratulations and gifts. A new terminal from Mitsubishi-san, a drifting course coupon from Yuuki, new stunguns from Jim, a life jacket and life raft from a group of joking truckers, a *brand-new* retro colt from Nik, a coupon for a whole keg of beer from Buz, a huge cake from Sue, sunglasses, cigars, and fags... I lost the count...

Once the flood of congrats and happy wishes ends, I stand up with the help of a crutch. Of course, Aia feels the need to help me too.

“Thanks, friends!” I shout. “Having you all here is the best birthday present ever, no doubt!”

We party on. Even if I still can't drink alcohol, I have a lot of fun.

Sadly, the party comes to an end as the hospital gave us only a few hours to not disrupt even more its peace.

While Aia goes home to fetch her present she forgot to bring, Enya gives me her own gift hidden under the sheets... Actually, this is the best birthday gift today!

At night, both Aia and Enya crawl into my bed to sleep together. Just sleeping but a nice, calming gift.

Calming my ass... I can't sleep with the raging boner for having both beautiful girls sleeping at my sides.

I didn't sleep well the night of my birthday. Luckily, Enya was able to defuse my *problem* in stealth this morning, just before Aia and my head doctor enter the room.

“Your rehabilitation is going extremely well, mister Matsumoto,” the doctor declares. “If we find no anomaly, you will be discharged on Tuesday.”

“Really?” I ask overjoyed.

“Yes, indeed.” The doc nods. “Your progress has been remarkably fast. Perhaps, it is thanks to your two private nurses, here,” she laughs while Aia blushes and Enya giggles. “Even if one of them was mostly illegally on the premises.” The doc looks at Enya with a smirk.

“Uh-oh...” Enya giggles. “Who might that be?”

“I don't know,” laughs the doc. “The important thing is that you are well enough to go home, mister Matsumoto. Given that your nurse here,” she points at Aia, “is also one of your girlfriends, she will supervise the rest of the rehab for us.”

Aia's face turns deep purple.

Just when I want to say that we're not dating (yet), Enya intervenes.

“In that case... I have to go back to my hauls,” she says. “I have neglected some during these last two months.”

“Right...” sighs Aia. “I was on leave for the whole time too. You at least did some.”

“Yeah,” confirms Enya.

The doctor interrupts the girls.

“Tomorrow, the rehab specialist will hand you a strict routine you have to follow, mister Matsumoto,” she says,

“And I will take care he will do them,” asserts Aia.

“That’s great. Could you come with me for a moment, doctor Asdiekx?”

“Sure. I’ll be back in a minute,” says Aia and waves at me.

“Yeah...”

“So...” Enya looks at me with a gentle smile, “this has finally ended... and I’m going back to my work...”

“Enya...” I sigh. “Come here...” I tell her with a smirk.

“Oh, you~” she giggles and almost sprints to the bed and jumps into my open arms. “My love~” she purrs before she kisses me.

We make out for some minutes until our lips part.

“Call me, when you’re free, will you?” she asks me coyly.

“I will, Enya, no doubt,” I say and give her a peck. “I want a private party with you...” I smirk.

“Oh, you~” she purrs sensually. “And what a party we’ll have...”

We kiss again but have to break our kiss as the door opens.

“Oh, already saying goodbye?” asks Aia since Enya is sitting on the bed.

“Yeah...” Enya sighs. “Just about giving him a goodbye peck...”

“Oh, then go on,” giggles Aia.

Enya gives me the *promised* peck and gets on her feet.

“By, Kira~” she sings. “See you back on the space-highways~”

“Yeah... Thanks for everything, Enya,” I say with a smile.

“*Hm*~ Thanks for your help, Enya,” says Aia.

“No need, I did it because I wanted to. And Aia?”

“Yes?”

Enya signals Aia to bend down a bit and also gives Aia a peck.

“Bye~ And good luck~” Enya chants as she sprints through the door.

“What was that for?” asks Aia brushing her fingers over her lips.

“Her way of saying goodbye?” I laugh.

“Yeah~” Aia also laughs.

Finally! It's *the* day! I'm discharged!

I have to use a crutch for a while. It's just to be sure, in case I lose my balance.

It seems I won't be at the helm of Falcon for a while... I sigh deeply.

“Don't sulk over it. Meanwhile, you can come with me on my hauls,” Aia says with a bright smile.

Despite her evident exhaustion, Aia is in an excellent mood while she drives us back to her, *our* home.

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To be continued in:

SpaceHighway: The Awakened ~ A23 ~ Return to the Space-Highways

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TL;DR:

The author does not identify himself with any character.
Any resemblance with reality is purely coincidence.

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