

# The Queen and The King of the SpaceHighways

## B04 ~ A Day on Mars

A faint knocking on wood awakes me...

“Good morning~” Irina sings poking her head through the ajar door.

“Wah—” Aia and I startle, and try to cover ourselves as much as we can, but fail miserably as the bedsheets get tangled...

“Ma~ma~” Irina giggles stepping into Aia’s room. “We already knew this would happen,” she says lying fresh bathrobes over one of the two chairs. She gathers the two bathrobes we wore yesterday and says, “Breakfast will be ready in half an hour. Get freshened up, will ya?” Reaching the door, she adds, “By the way, we’ll hafta oil yer bed, pumpkin. We heard it from downstairs...”

“Mom!” Aia lets the sheet she’s holding fall.

“It’s okay, pumpkin. It’s natural to have a healthy sex-drive,” Irina giggles and closes the door again.

Aia and I look at each other in awe. What the hell did just happen? I sit halfway on the bed while she kneels on it.

“Fuck... Mom...” Aia sighs, then begins to giggle sheepishly. “The first time I bring a guy home, and my mom just walked onto us...”

“Yeah...” I also chuckle.

“Can’t cry over spilled—What analogy should we use?” Aia grins as she brings her hand to her nether lips.

“Oh, Aia, love...” I chuckle and give her a peck. “Good morning.”

“Yeah,” she giggles. “Good morning, darling.”

“Let’s freshen up.”

“Right.”

We stand up and put the fresh bathrobes on.

“Why did your mom bring us fresh bathrobes? We barely use the other ones,” I ask Aia while she brushes her long, beautiful hair.

“That’s Mom for you...” she sighs. “She’s almost a maniac of cleanliness.”

“How does that mix with being a framer? I mean, most work implies to get dirty in a way or another...”

She hands me her brush, and I also untangle my disheveled hair.

“Don’t ask...” Aia giggles as she opens the door of her room. “She always insisted on keeping everything clean. But...” she halts her words while opening the bathroom door, “this was actually unusual... I mean, she always insists on keeping everything clean. But... fresh bathrobes right after having used some for the first time? It’s a first...”

“Perhaps she just wanted to surprise us...” I say closing the bathroom door behind me and laugh.

“Do you think?” Aia asks me while hanging her bathrobe on the designated hanger. I follow suit. “But... how was it even possible to hear us? I don’t get it...”

“Don’t brood over it, darling. What happened, happened. We can’t—”

“Yeah, right,” she giggles. “Wanna shower first?”

“Sure.”

I step into the shower and wash myself. Once finished and opening the glass door, I find Aia puckering her lips. I accept her cute invitation, and we kiss.

“My turn in the shower,” she giggles and swaps with me.

Aia hums a song under the shower while I do the usual stuff...

Sparkling fresh and clothed, we reach the ground floor, where a rich smell of sizzling bacon welcomes us.

“Morning ya two~” sings Irina in an excellent mood while she is preparing the table.

“Good morning, Mom.”

“Good morning, Irina.”

“Jack’s almost finished with his special breakfast. So, take a seat, you two,” Irina invites us.

“Can’t we help?” asks Aia.

“Nope,” Irina giggles. “Everything’s already set,” she adds and dances into the kitchen where Jack is working the bacon.

I look at Aia, who simply shrugs.

“Morning, ya two,” Jack greets us from the kitchen.

“Morning,” we both greet back in unison.

Not letting us help, Irina ushers us to have a seat at the already richly prepared table.

“Aaaand’s done,” laughs Jack bringing a huge platter filled with several types of meat. I can’t find the bacon, as everything looks different from what I am used to.

Irina sits at the table as Jack begins to fill the first plate. First, comes something vaguely looking like scrambled eggs. Then, several pieces of meat, one to two of each kind. And lastly, a heap of what looks similar to beans... Fuck me, is that a huge portion.

“Here, Kira.” Jack smiles broadly and hands me the overfilled plate. “Ya need to recover quite a bit of energy after last night,” he adds laughing.

“Dad!” Aia cries out. “Not you too...”

“Huh?” Jack blinks. “Ah! Right! Ya also need a huge portion. Ya have burnt a lot too,” he adds laughing again.

“Dad...” Aia sighs blushing deeply.

“Why so much blushing, pumpkin?” Irina asks. “It’s only natural, more so just at the beginning of dating.”

“Yup! Yer mom and I didn’t stop for more than a week,” Jack laughs while Irina giggles.

“Dad! Stop it, please,” Aia pleads blushing even deeper.

Her parents just laugh while he hands Aia an equally overladen plate.

“Ah, yeah...” Irina giggles. “Ya don’t know it yet... We moved our bedroom to the room beneath yers...”

“Oh, no!” Aia jumps up and hides her deeply blushing face behind her hands while I am unsure how to react. That means... that our nightly activities were clearly heard by her parents... Fuck...

“Ma~ma~” Irina giggles. “Don’t be ashamed, ya two. We’re happy that ya have a healthy sex drive.”

“Yeah.” Jack chuckles. “Remember, darling, we never have seen ya have any kind of sexual interest in a guy, or girl, for the matter. Now, we’re happy that ya aren’t what so many of yer peers said ya are.”

“Yeah, we—” Irina nods while receiving her plate from Jack, “Thanks, darling. We’re just happy that ya have found someone ya really want to be with.”

“And that this person is Kira. He’s really a nice guy,” adds Jack.

“Yup! Jack already told me about everything ya two were talking yesternight.”

“As much as Irina told me about yer chats with her, Aia.”

“So don’t rack yer brains over it, and enjoy the splendid breakfast yer dad made.”

“Yup! So... enjoy!” Jack laughs sitting down after having filled himself an equally gigantic, overladen plate.

“En—Enjoy...” Aia stutters while I do the same.

We enjoy the delicious breakfast almost in silence. While Aia and I are clearly embarrassed, Irina and Jack are in an excellent mood.

“What ya wanna do today?” Irina asks over the finished breakfast table. “Wanna visit the center of Mars City a bit, together as a family?”

“Or perhaps ya wanna be alone?” asks Jack.

“I—” Aia stutters and looks at me.

“I’d love to see a bit more about the places you grew up, darling,” I tell her while her face blooms into a beautiful smile. “I mean, we’ll be together for a good while.” I smirk. “You won’t be able to see your parents much, right?”

“I love you, Kira~” she purrs. “Thank you~”

“Then’s set,” Irina giggles. “We just hafta give some instructions to the workers, and we can go.”

“Yup,” Jack laughs. “We’ll have a nice day out.”

“Then—”

“We’ll fix the kitchen meanwhile,” I interrupt Aia, who giggles and nods.

“Yeah, we will,” she adds giggling.

“Okay, today we’ll let you,” Jack laughs while standing up.

“Thank you, kids,” Irina also laughs.

“Thanks, darling,” Aia says again and sighs happily.

“Huh? What for?” I ask her while carrying several plates into the kitchen.

“Just for being you, dear,” she giggles. “For wanting to come and visit my parents, for—” she interrupts herself and giggles, “for being simply you.”

She embraces me from behind once I put the plates down on the kitchen counter.

“I love you so much, Kira~” she purrs and kisses my cheek.

“I love you too, Aia,” I say and turn around.

We kiss and make out for a brief moment before returning to our task of cleaning up.

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“Ready?” Irina asks as she steps into the living room from the side door.

“Yeah,” Aia confirms, and I nod.

“Perfect. Jack’s already starting the car. We can leave on the spot,” Irina informs us.

Flitting towards Mars City, the four of us are sitting in the Nigare family car, Jack at the controls, Irina in the copilot seat, and Aia and I on the rear seat. We are enjoying one of these Martian cigarillos Jack handed out just before leaving their farm.

While Irina comments from time to time on what happened years ago to Aia at some specific points seeable from the road, Aia holds my hand quite happily. Irina's stories cover simple to hilarious stuff that happened to Aia. Like the day she climbed that tree over there but couldn't get down, or the day she fell into a puddle of mud right next to that field..

During a moment of silence, Aia shudders.

"Is something wrong, darling?" I ask her.

"Ah, yeah..." she sighs. "It's just that some of these stories evoked some bad memories from my past..."

"Aia... Tell me if you need, okay? I'll be at your side to help you go through it if you need," I tell her trying to assure her while slightly strengthening my grip on her hand.

"Thanks, love," Aia sighs happily. "I've told you that I've had a great childhood thanks to my parents, but others..." she sighs downcast.

"I know, darling. I'm here when you need me."

"Yeah, thanks. Me too," she adds with a smile.

Slowly yet steadily, the landscape alongside the road changes. From long fields, to sparse houses, and finally, to buildings which grow in height until we reach Mars City.

"We'll park in the main square's parking," informs us Irina. "From there, we'll have easy access to the main attractions."

"Great," I say while Aia giggles and snuggles at my side.

After parking in the deep underground parking facilities, we step into the main square. It is littered with hundreds of stalls...

“Oh! A flea market?” I ask.

“No! A real market!” laughs Jack and begins to walk at a steady pace towards it. “Surely we’ll get a steal!”

“Meetcha in three hours under the peace statue!” shouts Irina as she matches Jack’s steady advance into the alleys of stalls.

“There they go...” Aia sighs. “They always do that when there’s market day... And here I thought we would have a nice family day...”

“Then,” I say laughing while hugging her with my right arm and pulling her towards me, “let’s form a family, together.”

“Oh, you, Kira~” Aia giggles and gives me a kiss. “You always know how to cheer me up.”

“Let’s have a look too?”

“Sure. Perhaps we’ll find something for our home, or bedroom...” she giggles.

“Our bedroom?” I ask wearing a smirk.

“Our bed,” she adds with a coquettish giggle. “I won’t let you sleep on the couch anymore.”

“Oh? Then for what do we need the couch then?” I joke.

“Huh? For watching TV, fuc—Oh! You!” she giggles. “Stop joking around~”

“What did you mean?” I keep on. “The word you didn’t finish?” I ask her with my arm around her waist.

“Oh, you, Kira~” she giggles again. “You know, the thing I do only with you... fucking...” she adds sultry and pinching me.

“Ouch!” I exclaim exaggeratedly. “Oh~ *That* thing... Right. Then we absolutely need to keep it.”

We keep laughing while we also enter the busy alleys filled with stalls.

Strolling around, we look at the many stalls' offerings, but we don't seem to find anything great so far...

Suddenly, Aia stops, bringing me out of balance...

We stand in front of a clothing stall. The stall is quite huge. We could even enter the stall and find more stuff.. At first sight, only women's clothing is on display.

The piece Aia's eyes have caught, is, obviously, blue. But it's different from what she usually wears. It has a slightly higher neckline and is a bit shorter on the lower end than the one she wears now. The color is a dark to light blue gradient similar to her hair. The color plays nicely with the pleats of the fabric. It's truly a unique and beautiful summer dress.

"Looks nice..." I say at Aia's side.

She already takes it down to have a closer look.

"*Hm~* Looks like it's my size... But there's no label... Do you think they would let me try it on?"

"I'll look for the seller."

"Thanks, darling~"

I look around the big stall until I find a red-haired woman working with fabric. Wait... It's not just her hair that is red... even her skin es reddish. Not even the terribly wrong depiction of Native Americans in comics did represent their skin so red. Well, if there are blue aliens, there surely are red ones, right?

"Excuse me, my fiancé wants to try on a dress. Is it possible?" I ask de reddish woman.

"Oh, sure. Just a moment..." she says with a strange, weary, and wavering tone.

The young-looking woman stands up after finishing a cut on the fabric she was trimming.

"Do you make the clothes yourself?" I ask her.

"Ye—yes," she stammers while her already reddish face turns even redder.

She doesn't seem too comfortable around people. Or, perhaps, around men. Most likely the latter, as every piece in the stall is oriented to women.

The reddish woman follows me meekly... Poor girl, what might have happened to you?

Just as we step out of the stall, I hear some deeper male voices... The reddish woman jolts and hides behind me...

"Oh! Hey! Lookie's here! The Smurfette in the flesh! Long time no see! How have ya been, Aiette? Whaaat? Another blue dress?" I find Aia with two bulky guys. One of them stands right in front of her. Aia is clearly uncomfortable by their presence. The brutish guy tears an exquisitely tailored black lingerie set from the hanger. "This' what ya should wear!" he laughs and tries to push it against Aia's chest.

I am faster than him and grab his wrist tightly.

"Sorry, but the lady is with me," I tell him harshly while I push his hand away.

"Huh? Who's this niggie-clown?" the guy screams and begins to hurl one racial slur after another at me.

"I'm also delighted to meet you, Carles," Aia says coldly while her hand searches for mine. Her hand trembles... These guys must be some of the bullies she mentioned yesterday. I take her hand firmly and try to infuse her confidence. I will let her confront them, but will interfere if needed. "Hi, Frigg," she goes on addressing the other guy, "still the lap-doggie of this guy?"

"You!" the latter shouts making a fist, but is interrupted by this Carles.

"Who's this guy? Explain!" Carles shouts with a stern, angry voice.

"Why should I explain anything to you?" Aia asks coldly. She still shivers, but only I can discern it. "But I'll calm your curiosity. This is Kira, my fiancé."

"Fi-fiancé?" Carles shouts even angrier while his blood shoots into his head. "How?" he howls while he throws the lingerie set to the ground and stamps on it. "Yer mine! Ya just disappeared without telling me! I own ya, ya slutty cheater!"

What the hell is this guy babbling? I don't get him. What I am sure of, is that I'm getting angrier by the minute this guy is uttering nonsense.

“What the fuck, Carles?” Aia counters. “When did such a thing even happen? You, owning me?” she laughs sarcastically. “Not in my lifetime! You are an idiot for even thinking you could—”

“Yer mine!” he screams interrupting her. “I told ya yer mine, and that’s it! Ya can’t stop me!”

“Not me, perhaps...” Aia retorts coolly, “then Kira will.” Ouch... I follow her game and let my anger surface.

My angry face must be intimidating, as both guys take a step back.

“He?” Carles laughs while Frigg imitates him. “This wimp? Aiette, aren’t ya a bit deluded? This guy is not even worthy of looking at ya!”

“And you are?” I grunt.

“Hah!” Carles laughs again. “I’m the great Carles! Everyone follows me! What I say, is law! Aia’s mine, and ya can’t do a thing bout it!”

“That’s enough!” I shout angrily. Aia strengthens her grip on my hand before letting go. “You’re just trash!” I growl at him while I step towards him. “How can you even live with yourself?”

“Hah!” Carles laughs yet again. “Ya? Ya weakling? Tryna hit me...” he provokes.

“Fine...” I grunt. “Here and now?”

“Sure!” he laughs. “The winner keeps Aiette.”

“She is no good!” I shout and push him back towards the open space.

“Whaaat?” he screams. “How dare ya pushing ma? Aiette is ma good!”

“Shut the fuck up!” I shout and punch him in his stomach making him step back.

“Ugh... hah! Ain’t not hurt! Yer weak...” he clearly huffs but plays it down.

“Yeah, I know. That’s my weak, right arm,” I laugh sarcastically.

“Keep on playing!” he shouts. “And I’ll kill ya!”

I make space backtracking a bit and stand relaxed some meters from him. A wide circle of onlookers formed around us. Many look like they want to interfere, but stay back. This Carles must be known for his shenanigans.

Meanwhile, Aia regained her coolness and stands confidently at the side wearing an impish smirk. The reddish woman, however, is hiding in her stall, only peeking her head out.

Frigg, on the other hand, shouts pleasantries towards Carles and hurls any imaginable insults at me.

“Huh? Not even taking me serious?” Carles screams.

“Nope,” I retort coolly. “You don’t deserve to be taken seriously.”

“You!” he bellows and takes a run-up readying his fist. Moron... if you stretch your arm out so soon, you’ve already lost your momentum...

I opt to receive his fist with mine from my left, bionic arm. He’ll be in for a surprise...

*Crock...*

“Ouuuuu!” Carles screams holding his fist.

I laugh wickedly while everyone around us looks at me bewildered. They can’t believe what just happened.

In a fraction of a second, I disconnected the nervous system of my artificial arm while I prepared both arm and leg to fully absorb the impact. These additions really came handy. Obviously, my artificial skeleton in my arm was robust enough to hurt Carles quite a lot. He must have felt as if hitting a piece of wood...

I notice Aia’s parents in the masses. Both are clearly rooting for me and shouting words of encouragement.

“What was that?” he screams.

“What? My fist?” I ask him grinning. “I can’t even fist-bump you without you whining? So much for the *ob-so-great* Carles...” I laugh.

“You! Son of a bitch! I’ll kill ya now!” he howls.

“Nope!” Aia laughs. “Time for you to fly...”

“Ya bitch!” Carles screams at her. “I’ll kill him and rape ya afterwards!”

“You dare to say that in my presence?” I grunt even angrier.

“What? Bout killing ya?”

“You are the biggest asshole of this universe...” I sigh and change my stance.

“Oh! Finally!” I laughs. “Yer getting serious!”

I kick the ground and reach Carles in less than a second. His face first distorts into surprise, then into pain while I drive my left fist into his stomach.

Thanks to the lower gravity and the bionic strength of my arm and leg, Carles is lifted into the air for several inches. I twirl around and use my right leg to kick him several meters away onto the ground, barely avoiding a stall.

Despite being stunned, Carles tries to stand up. I’m faster and knock him unconscious.

A scream comes from Aia’s side, but not hers... Frigg lies on the ground. Aia tries to lift him up, but he is too bulky...

“Need some help?” I laugh.

“Would be nice, darling,” she giggles.

I step towards the frightened guy and lift him up by his collar.

Aia looks at me with an impish smirk and nods. We both punch him and make him fly towards Carles’ side.

The masses around us are stunned by what they have witnessed. They slowly regain their faculties and are babbling about “Have you seen that?” “They downed Carles and Frigg so easily...” “Are they from the secret police?” and other nonsense...

“Are you okay, darling?” I ask Aia while hugging her.

“Yeah-” she giggles. “Was just that asshole of Frigg... He tried to take me as a hostage when he saw you were beating Carles to pulp.”

“Ouch... Not the brightest idea...” I laugh.

“Yeah,” she giggles.

“What the hell’s going on here?” a sudden yell makes us look back. “Carles, Carles!” A fat man runs as good as he can towards Carles and tries to reanimate him, by slapping his face! “Who did that?”

“I did!” I raise my voice.

“You almost killed my son!” he shrieks.

“Oh? Your son? You must have failed to bind his leash and muzzle. Such wild animals shouldn’t wander around without them...” I say coldly.

“Whaaat? How dare you?” the fat man screams. “Do you know who I am? I’m the governor of Mars!”

“More reasons to keep such an animal at bay,” I retort.

“Police! Police!” he shouts. “Detain this murderer! And that skanky blue whore of an alien!” He points at Aia. “I should have finished you the moment Carles put his eyes on you, you filthy alien!”

“Shut the fuck off!” I shout back at him. “If not, you’ll end like that disgrace of a human.” I point at the still unconscious Carles.

Shit... an antiriot squad is arriving...

“Finally! Detain these criminals! These two shall be executed for their crimes!” the governor shouts.

“What crimes?” asks Aia angrily. “This was self-defense!”

“How can this be self-defense?” the fat man screams.

“Well...” I shrug, “if I can’t defend myself from a guy attacking my fiancé and me after I stopped him for sexually harassing her, then this planet is doomed...”

“What? That’s a premeditated aggression against Carles! Officer! Detain them at once! Throw them into the deepest cell possible and let them rot there! My sentence is firm!”

“No!” the leading officer of the squad says firmly.

“Huh?”

“That’s enough!” the officer says sternly. “Everyone here is testifying that Carles indeed attacked these people.”

“Whaaat? Are you nuts? Listening to the plebs? What’s next? An uprising?” the *governor* laughs sarcastically.

Suddenly, all the people uproar around us and begin to hurl anything possible against the governor. Many objects are thrown at him, accompanied by revolutionary chants and shouts.

“You can’t do this! This planet is mine! I own you!” the governor keeps shouting while trying to protect himself from the impacting objects.

The officer makes some hand gestures, and the squad surrounds the governor.

“That’s it! You protect me! That’s your job! The rabble can’t harm me!” he shouts and laughs wickedly. “What? Hey! What are you doing? Stop it!”

“Hereby, you are detained, governor Lackester,” the officer says calmly. “Your actions against the people of Mars have ended here.”

“You can’t do this! I am god here!” the governor keeps raging while the squad moves him and the knocked down Carles and Frigg away.

Many onlookers follow them shouting and chanting freedom slogans. “Out with him!” “Real elections, now!” “Down with the despot!” “Free Mars!” “No more corruption!” “¡Viva la revolución!”

Only a few still stand with us, including the officer. He takes his helmet off.

“Mark?” Aia suddenly asks. “Mark from district nine?”

“The same,” the Human-İiha mestizo laughs. “Nice to meet you again, Aia. And you must be Kira Matsumoto, right?” he asks me and offers me his hand.

“I am,” I say and shake his hand.

“Nice to meet you,” he says wearing a smile. “I’m sorry that you had to encounter this...” he sighs. “We were after him for the longest time... We just gathered the evidence needed to oust him and his family. Embezzlement, bribes, physical and sexual harassment and intimidations, money laundering, radical xenophobia against other species... you name it...” he sighs. “But you just brought out his worst right in front of a lot of people...” he adds grinning. “That was the last straw that broke the camel’s back. I have to thank you.”

“But...” I say stunned.

“No, no...” Mark shakes his head. “You did right, Kira. He usually keeps calm in public, so no one can see this face of him. Beating up his beloved son, who also

is one of his henchmen, made him lose his calm and lash out against you. And a lot of people witnessed it... So thanks again.”

“It’s okay,” giggles Aia. “By the way, Mark. I thought you wanted to be a rugby player and disliked the police...”

“You remember?” he laughs. “Yeah, as a teen... Things changed a lot since then.” He laughs again. “You too, Aia. You also changed a lot. From wanting to be a doctor to become one of the best truckers...”

“True...” Aia giggles.

“Anyway, was nice to meet you again, Aia. A pleasure to meet you, Phoenix. But I have to proceed with the detainment of the ex-governor and oversee a peaceful transition. And thanks again.”

Mark bids us goodbye and follows the roaring masses already on the streets near the square. I see Irina and Jack following them. They briefly look back, thumb up, and keep on shouting with the masses.

Aia sighs deeply and almost slumps down.

“Shit! Aia! Are you okay?” I scream.

“Yeah... just... I just need to sit down...”

The reddish woman comes out of her stall with a folding chair and offers it to Aia.

“Thanks...” Aia says in a long sigh while sitting down.

“Are you okay? Need something?” I ask her preoccupied.

“No, no... It’s just... It was too much for me...”

“But you confronted your past straight heads on,” I say laying my hand on her shoulder. “That makes you even stronger.”

“You noticed...” Aia sighs wearing a smile. “Yeah... These two were some of *them*. But today, it was worse than ever...”

“Would you like some juice?” The reddish woman offers Aia a bottle filled with a greenish juice.

“Thanks a lot,” Aia sighs and accepts the bottle. She takes a long sip from it. “Aah~ That hit the spot. Thanks—Ah...”

“Jani... Jani is my name,” the reddish girl says shyly.

“Are you—”

“I am a biogynoid class zero, type zero,” Jani says wavering. “As you might know we have the same rights as—”

“Oh, no, no...” Aia hastily negates interrupting Jani. “It wasn’t meant as demeaning... I was just pointing it out... Shit... That doesn’t sound better, right?” Aia sighs.

“Yes, we’re sorry if we sounded like that, Jani,” I say. “It’s just that you look a bit special, like my fiancé Aia.”

Jani sighs deeply in relief while Aia nods.

“By the way,” Aia giggles, “we are Aia and Kira, nice to meet you.”

“Ah... Ye—yeah... Na—Nice to meet you too...” Jani stutters. “Thank you, a lot. You—you see... these two, Carles and Frigg... they extorted me for money. If I didn’t pay, they would trash my stall... As you might know, we bioandroids need food to survive. That requires money... And I...” she sighs and slumps her shoulders down. “I’m not human enough, they say...”

“You are as much human as Aia or I,” I say. “You are a strong woman. And you have a big heart.”

“B—but... I have no heart...”

“You have,” I confirm and, without thinking it through, I lay my palm on her heart, or where it usually beats. Jani jolts, her face first turns roseate then deep red, and her whole body stiffens. “It’s not an organ. You don’t need a physical heart to be human, Jani. Your heart is strong. That’s why you are able to stand up again and again when you fall...”

“It’s okay,” Aia says lying her hand gently on mine. “Don’t worry, Kira isn’t molesting you.” Although it would exactly look as such... “Can you feel him? His warmth? His pulse?”

Jani sighs deeply and closes her eyes.

“Yeah...” she sighs relaxed. “So warm... I feel his pulse and... Huh?” Her eyes open wide. “Bionic impulses? How?”

“Kira lost his left arm and right leg in an accident and has now bionic substitutes. However, he is still the same man I fell for. He hasn’t lost his gentle touch, nor his caresses. Having artificial limbs hasn’t changed what I feel for him, nor has he changed his affections,” Aia says in a gentle, warm tone. “It doesn’t matter how or what a person is, they have the same right to love and to be loved.”

“Yes,” I confirm. “It obviously has affected us. But we don’t brood over it. Having recovered my faculties only has strengthened my resolution to live. It doesn’t matter what you are, how you were born, your gender, nor your sexual orientation, you are alive, Jani. Beautifully alive. I don’t know your past, but it seems that you just haven’t found the people you can rely upon.”

“*Hm~*” Aia hums in affirmation and nods. “Being able to rely on others is not a weakness but a strength. I’m sure you will become even stronger if you find such people.”

We take our hands from her heart, and Jani lies her hands on it and closes her eyes. It looks as if she is trying to keep the sensations we have transmitted in her heart.

She sighs deeply and blushes deep red as she folds her hands.

“Ah... Aia... Kira...” she stutters. “Ugh... Would—Would you—Ugh—Want to be—” she she takes a deep breath, “want to be my friends?” she finally asks.

“Sure,” both Aia and I answer smiling.

“Re—really?” Jani asks joyfully. “Like, *real* friends?”

“Of course,” Aia says giggling. She steps forward to hug the reddish biogynoid. Jani shivers filled with emotions. “You are a beautiful person.”

“Yes, Jani,” I also confirm and gently lay my hand on her shoulder. I have the feeling that if I embrace her, she would freak out... “You can count on us in needs. And if such idiots molest you again, just call us, we come and beat them to pulp.”

“Aia... Kira...” Jani stutters and begins to cry. “I’m so happy,” she declares between sobs. “The first time I make friends...”

We let her express her emotions while Aia gently hugs her, and I stroke through her short, red hair.

Finally calmed down, Jani steps back, irradiating happiness. Has she changed in less than a half an hour... From meek to really excited.

I am unsure why we, Aia and I, orbited towards her, but I have the feeling that Jani is way more than she looks. Even if it is the strangest encounter I'd have yet in meeting a possible friend, she seems to be a keeper. I just hope she will be able to open up to me enough to be able to have a conversation. Now I truly want to help her. Aia seems to have a similar feeling.

"Tha—Thanks again," Jani says emotionally. "Ah! Yes!" she jumps up. "A gift! A friendship gift!" she shouts.

"No need, Jani," Aia says giggling.

"No! I wanna!" Jani says overly emotional. "Ah, yes! The dress you were looking at. That one. I want to gift it to you. Please, take it. It's your size."

"Then I can't say *no*," Aia giggles.

"I have a changing room back inside," Jani says pointing into her stall.

"Then I'll wear it," Aia giggles and goes into the stall with the dress.

"Ugh~" Jani looks at me awkwardly.

"I don't need anything, Jani," I say wearing a smile. "Your friendship is enough for me."

"Ugh~ But... I... Ugh~"

"You don't feel at ease around me?" I ask her in a warm, gentle tone.

She shakes her head slowly.

"Then don't force yourself, Jani. I don't know what could have happened to you, but rest assured that I won't force you to anything you wouldn't want to."

"Tha—thanks..."

"Take your time, Jani. If you want, I'll help you to overcome whatever trauma you have regarding men."

“You—You noticed...” she sighs. I nod. “I’m really bad with guys...” she stutters. “B—But I want to be friends we—with you.”

“We already are friends, Jani,” I assert in a warm tone. I refrain from touching her. She seems to have a deep distrust in men.

“Ye—yeah...” she giggles shyly. “But... I... Don’t know how to make clothes for... men...”

“Don’t worry,” I say reassuringly. “Do you make clothes on order?”

“Ye—yeah... but only for women...” she stutters bashfully.

“That’s great,” I reassure her. “Then I’d like some things for Aia.” Jani’s face brightens. “I see that you also make lingerie...”

“Ooh!” Jani’s face brightens even more. “Wa—want something sexy?”

“So we enjoy both,” I say with a smirk.

Jani finally giggles and smirks back.

“The—then... Something like this?”

Jani begins to show me some absolutely exquisite lingerie sets. Damn! I can’t even choose one... They are too sexy...

“Then...” I say after considering for a while, “I’d like this one, this one, and this one, for now.”

“Cool...” Jani’s eyes sparkle. It seems I finally got a bit through.

“What’s so cool?” Aia asks stepping out of the changing booth.

“Wow! This dress is absolutely gorgeous,” I asses.

“Yeah!” Jani claims happily. She clearly has no problem talking to Aia. “As if I designed this dress with you in mind,” she declares cheerfully.

Aia twirls around to show off her new dress. It’s spectacular. The upper cut of the dress hugs Aia’s body gently, there is no excessive nor too little fabric. The skirt falls beautifully, and the colors play lovely with Aia’s skin color. It’s a masterpiece. No doubt that Jani is a master seamstress. A shame that she does not make stuff for guys. I would order all my clothes from her. Perhaps, over

time, I may help her with her fear of men and convince her of making something for me.

“What were you talking about?” Aia asks after having received Jani and my praises.

“It’s~ a~ secret~” Jani giggles then shyly looks at me but produces a cute smirk. I smirk back.

“Uh-oh~” Aia giggles, “by your smirks, it’s something *really* special.”

“Ye—yeah,” Jani giggles after stuttering a bit. “Ki—Kira made a special order...”

“That’s really nice~” Aia purrs. “Need to measure me?”

“Ah, no... No need. I just measured you while spinning around...”

“Really?”

“Ye—yeah... It’s my gift, it seems. I can measure, at least women, just by looking at them...” Jani says sheepishly.

“Such a great gift for a seamstress,” I confirm.

“True...” Aia nods. “Then’s set. I’ll look around a bit and let you discuss whatever you need.” Giggling, she turns around and leaves the stall.

“How much will it be?” I ask Jani.

“Ah... no... no... It’s a gift...” Jani stutters again.

“Let me at least pay the fabrics...” I insist.

“Oh—Okay...” she finally accepts.

“Just one thing,” I say, “even if sexy, I want Aia to feel comfortable. I know most of this stuff is everything but that...”

“No—no worries...” Jani stutters. “I—I always design we—with comfort in mind.”

“That’s marvelous, Jani. When would you have them finished?”

“Uh... About three days... I—I’ve got business on Gaia on Saturday... I—I could bring it...”

“That would be absolutely fabulous. Where? We can meet anywhere.”

“Ugh... New Angeles...” she stutters a bit overwhelmed, surely by my enthusiasm.

“Even better,” I laugh, “we live there. We should swap contacts, so you can text me where and when. Is it okay for you?”

“Ye—yeah...” she stutters and blushes deeply. Her face turns as red as a tomato...

We swap our contacts while she keeps blushing.

Aia glances into the stall and sees us performing the swapping ritual.

“Oh? Finished? Right,” Aia giggles, “I wanna have your contact too, Jani. Huh? Why are you blushing?” she asks.

“It—it’s the first time... I’ve got a contact... from a guy...” Jani stutters emotionally.

“That’s great,” Aia giggles. “Now you need mine too, right?”

“Sh—sure!” Jani jumps up and rushes towards Aia.

I have to smile at Jani’s enthusiasm to get Aia’s contact. What happened to you, Jani? To be so fearful and uncomfortable around men... The more I observe her, the more I want to help her, if she lets me.

Aia hugs Jani goodbye while Jani awkwardly stretches her hand out to me. I take her shivering hand and shake it softly.

“It was really nice to meet you, Jani,” I say reassuringly. “I am eager to see what you can make for us.”

“Tha—thanks...” Jani stutters but draws a smile on her face. “Thanks again...”

“Don’t mention it, of course we help you out. We are friends after all.”

“Ye—yeah...” Jani’s smile becomes genuinely radiant.

After leaving Jani’s stall behind, Aia strengthens her grip on my hand. In my other hand, I carry a large bag with Aia’s other dress.

“Isn’t she wonderful?” Aia sighs.

“Yeah, a wonderful person,” I confirm.

“But it’s sad to see her so distraught and uneasy around you...”

“Yeah, I want to help her...” I sigh.

“Me too...” She also sighs. “I have this feeling... that she will be an excellent friend.”

“Yeah, me too, Aia.”

“Oh, you...” Aia giggles. “I took extra long while changing in hope she would talk to you a bit...”

“So much thought...” I chuckle. “I noticed. But it’s not easy for her to open up.”

“I figured...” she sighs. “She’s kinda like us, right?”

“True... Unique and lost...” I sigh. “But we aren’t so much lost anymore, right?”

“Yeah~” Aia giggles and wraps her arm around my hip. I do the same. “But... I can’t really describe it... I really want to help her and become good friends with her.”

“Yeah, I can relate. It’s possible that we are kind of attracted to such people, more now that we are together...”

“Could be...” Aia giggles. “I don’t mind. She is nice after all. And quite cute...”

“Yeah... But you are cuter...” I smirk and pull her to a kiss.

“Oh, you!” Aia giggles and accepts my lips.

“Let’s wander around a bit more? Mom just texted that they will be a bit late...”

“Sure...”

We stroll around the nearly empty market. Most people followed the detained ex-governor in masses. Only the stall owners and sellers, and just a few buyers are staying. It may be a good day for Mars, but a bad day for sales...

Suddenly, we reach a kind of a dead-end alley.

“That’s strange...” Aia says. “There is only a huge black tent at the end...”

“Yeah... Let’s have a look?”

“Why not?” Aia giggles.

We enter the strange tent and begin to giggle and chuckle.

“It’s a sex-shop,” I laugh. “Who has thought...”

“Let’s have a look?” Aia says wearing a sultry smirk.

“Sure,” I chuckle.

How is it even possible to have a sex shop in the midst of a market? Nowadays’ conceptions around sex are clearly way more open.

We follow the narrow aisle and inspect the exposed ware...

“The Man with a Thousand Dicks?” Aia giggles. “Such an absurd name for a porn flick...”

“Yeah,” I also laugh as we look over the VCs, the VideoChips. “Ouch... *The Man Devourer*... Sounds so wrong...”

“Look, they have an exclusive section for interspecies porn...”

We read over some of the strange synopses of the interspecies porn flicks.

“This one sounds great... *Summer Love: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love all Species*,” Aia assesses. “It’s a romantic porn comedy.”

“Romantic porn comedy?” I ask surprised.

“Yeah, it’s like a romantic comedy, but with explicit sex scenes. Well, lots of ’em,” Aia explains giggling. “Wanna watch it together?”

“Why not,” I confirm smirking.

Aia grabs a shopping basket and tosses the VC into it. It seems she wants to buy more stuff. I surely want something for us too.

“Woow... So realistic...” Aia inspects astonished the six exhibited sex dolls.

“Truly...” I am also quite impressed.

“Even the guys...” Aia giggles, “are so real. But... Kira, do you know why someone wants a sex doll nowadays? It’s really easy to get laid...”

“Who knows...” I shrug. “Perhaps it’s a fantasy...”

“To fuck a lifeless doll?” Aia blinks. “That’s quite a strange fetish...”

“There are so many fetishes... so why not a doll?”

“Yeah... but... I’ve never thought of trying one, even if I was unable to get emotionally attached to a guy...”

“Perhaps, it’s to make some extreme fetishes true...” I shrug again.

“Ah... That makes sense... Like extreme sadism?”

“Maybe... At least, I don’t see them inside a healthy relationship...”

“True... Me neither. Even so, they are so real... Even their penises are able to shrink and get erect... So much technology for a fetish...”

“Yeah...” I chuckle as I browse the catalog filled with sex dolls of any possible species. “Hmm... Perhaps they are used by exoticism fetishists...”

“What’s that?”

“Ah, yeah... There is, or was at least, a theory about the charm of the unfamiliar. I’m not so sure about it... I’ve read a book about the Other once...”

“The other?”

“Yeah, about how a culture sees another culture. Obviously, in my times, it was about the white men versus the rest of the world. White men assigned themselves to be superior while the rest its inferior...”

“No way... And the women?”

“They were thrown into the same sack. But not so deep... Other *races* were called inferior. However, there was some kind of fetishization of this otherness. It’s the attraction, the sexual attraction, towards the other races despite their *inferiority*. Obviously, at that time, this attraction would only be allowed to be heterosexual...” I sigh.

“Such bullshit...” Aia sighs.

“Yeah...”

“Then you mean that some people use these dolls to satisfy a fetish of having sex with species they won’t be able to meet for real?”

“The like. At least, that is my reasoning...”

“Could be. Sounds plausible. Anyways... these dolls are a bit depressing...”

“Yeah, let’s find something happier,” I laugh.

“Oh, you~” Aia giggles. “Sure. Oh! Pussies?” She giggles.

“Pocket pussies...” I chuckle.

“I’ve never seen a real one... They never looked good on the netpages I’ve visited...” Aia blurts out. She notices my smirk and pouts. “Yeah, I searched for sex toys online. Doesn’t everyone do it?”

“Sure. Anyway, these look really realistic. Not like the ones we had in my times...” I take one on display and draw a finger over it. “Even the touch... Impressive...”

“Truly...” Aia does the same. “This one even gets wet...”

“Really?”

“Yeah...” Aia giggles. “But... we surely don’t need one of these, right?”

“No way...” I laugh.

“Mine is way better, isn’t it?” she asks wearing an impish smirk.

“I don’t even have to try one of these to confirm it.”

“Kira~” Aia giggles sultry. “Let’s see what else they have.”

“Right. Oh, dildos. Need one?” I ask Aia while wearing a smirk.

“Hmm... Nope...” she giggles lusciously. “I already have two...”

“Two?” I ask impishly.

“Yeah, a blue one...” she purrs and grasps my package in my pants, “and a black one...”

“Oh... Then they should be enough...” I laugh while holding a moan back.

“Yup!” she giggles sensually. “Oh! I haven’t tried these ones... Ugh... How would you use these... eggs?” Aia asks me with interest.

“Oh... The eggs... Well, there are so many possibilities... You can use the vibrating ones externally as small vibrators or internally...”

“Do they feel good?”

“I don’t have personal experiences with them...” I laugh.

“Dummy... I mean with girls you’ve met...”

“Ah, yeah... Most found them fun to play with. Mostly these wireless ones...”

“Like this one? What game would you play? As a couple?”

“Yeah... The most exciting play I’ve played is where the girl put the vibrator inside her and gave me the remote...”

“Ooh~ Sounds interesting. You would turn it on and off when she doesn’t expect it? Even in daytime?”

“Yeah, while strolling through the city...”

Aia takes a blue one from the shelf and inspects it.

“The battery holds for a whole day... Hmm... Yup! Seems fun,” she giggles and drops the wireless vibrating egg into the basket. I look at her while she smirks. “Now that I’ve finally found how fun sex with a partner is, I want to experiment...” she adds wearing a sexy smile.

“I’m up to experimenting, you know it,” I say embracing her from behind. “As long both of us are comfortable with it. Stop me if I go overboard, will you?”

“Darling~” Aia sighs happily. “Thanks. I will. But, somehow, I like it when you get a bit hands-on in public.”

“Really?” I ask her while playfully cupping her left tit.

“Yeah~” she sighs. “At least when no-one is looking...”

“That’s just for us,” I confirm letting her free.

“Kira~” she giggles lusciously. “Yeah, exactly.”

She turns around and gives me a peck.

“Oh... And these are...” Aia looks at another dildo-shaped toy.

“Anal dildos...” I confirm.

“Not for me...” Aia sighs and lets her head drop.

“Huh? What do you mean? It’s normal that you don’t like it.”

“Ugh... It’s not that I don’t like anal...” Aia sighs deeply. “I don’t feel the slightest from it... I feel like broken back there...”

“No, Aia.” I embrace her from behind again, this time, I wrap my arms around her stomach. “I don’t care about such things. If you don’t feel it, I don’t want it.”

“Kira~” she sighs relieved.

“Aia, the most pleasing thing for me, is to pleasure you. If you don’t feel it, I’m not interested. And you are not broken for not feeling it. I have never met someone not feeling it, but I met many who disliked, even hated it. Please, don’t brood over it. I love you how you are.”

“Love~ Thank you,” Aia says and sighs.

She turns around and kisses me gently. I accept her kiss and embrace her.

“I felt a bit bad not telling you till now...” Aia sighs. “Not feeling it up my ass became a bit of an obsession. What would happen if you wanted it?”

“Not much, Aia,” I reassure her. “I would be surprised, but nevertheless accept it.”

“But I don’t get it...” she sighs again. “Some of my friends told me how good it feels...”

“Perhaps your species simply does not see the ass as a sexual organ. So don’t worry. I only want to do things we both enjoy.”

“Thanks, Kira~” she purrs. We end our hug, and Aia smiles at me heartily. Then she looks around again. “There are so many interesting toys... But...” she sighs.

“Let’s go with this for now. We can buy more sexy stuff whenever we are up to it,” I say.

“Yeah... And...” she giggles, “it’s still just the third day we’re dating...”

“We have enough time to experiment,” I confirm.

“Exactly,” she giggles happily.

Near the checkout, we find a big rack of miscellaneous stuff.

“Oh, massage oils...” I find a great variety of them. “Want some?” I ask Aia who stands at my side.

“Sure. You are good at giving massages, now I want a full-body one,” she giggles.

“Then, which ones? There are so many...”

“Hmm...” Aia takes a sniff from each of the samples and decides, “This one smells wonderful, don’t you think?” I confirm. “And this one... hmm... it smells great, but I’m more interested in its properties...”

“Properties?”

“Yeah... it’s made to be used anywhere on the body, even doubles as lube. But I’m obviously more interested in the *everywhere*,” she giggles.

“Then let’s buy it too. Anything else?”

“If my intuition is right, I won’t need more lingerie...” Aia giggles again.

“Right...”

“Then it’s all for now.”

We step to the cashier, who wears a skimpy sheer bustier. Something similar would look great on Aia. I take a mental note to order something the like from Jani in the near future.

“Nice toy,” the sexy cashier muses. “And a great movie. Good oils. Anything else?”

“Huh? Ah, yeah...” Aia looks around again. “Anything you would recommend for a new couple?”

“Oh? Started dating recently?” the cashier asks happily.

“Yeah, for two days...” Aia confirms.

“Oh, nice~ Not too much right now, then. But if you are up to it, we have cock rings on sale today. Like these ones, which include clitoral vibrators.”

“Ohh~ I’ve never seen one...” Aia inspects the exhibited rings with interests.

“Then, this part vibrates?” she asks the vendor.

“Indeed. And is quite pleasurable for both of you.”

“Kira? Wanna try it?”

“Sure, love. Could be fun,” I confirm. Yeah, they can be really fun. Although, I don’t think we really need one. Aia is way too luscious. Well... Perhaps, I need it... They should help to last longer, it’s said...

“Neat,” the sexy cashier giggles. “You can charge the batteries with any wireless charger you already have at home. They are already charged to use.”

“Cool! Thanks,” Aia giggles and pays.

Just as we step out of the sex shop tent, Aia stops.

“Wait a second, darling... Hmm... I’ll ask them if they have a bathroom...” she says and goes back in.

I don’t think they have one...

Anyway, I light a fag and wait for her. Wait a second... she didn’t hand me the shopping bag...

A brief time later, Aia steps out while blushing.

She stretches her hand out. I figure she wants to hold mine. But to my surprise, she lets a small, oval gadget drop into my hand.

“Don’t say...” I’m baffled. The remote of the vibrator... “Are you sure?”

“It turned me on thinking of it...” she says wearing an impish smirk but still blushing.

I turn the gadget on to the lowest level...

“Oh-hmm~” Aia gasps and swallows a soft moan. “Meanie~” she giggles coyly.

“Aren’t you a bold one...” I smirk but turn it off again.

“Just don’t use it in front of my parents...” she adds sultry. “Wait! My parents! What time is it?”

“Just past noon...” I confirm after checking my vintage wristwatch.

“That won’t work... We have a different time here,” she giggles and produces her terminal from her purse. “Shit! Mom already texted me that they are waiting for us! We have to hurry!”

“Wait... The vibrator... Don’t want to take it out?”

“No time...” She grabs my hand and starts walking at a fast pace. But... “Fuck... I can’t run with this... thing inside me...”

“Then...”

She smirks at me.

“It’s kinky... I love it. But I can’t go fast...”

“Pervy...” I chuckle.

“Yup! Just don’t use it—”

“I know, darling,” I confirm. “It’s just a game for us two.”

“Yeah, thanks. But we still must hurry...”

**SI**

To be continued in:

SpaceHighway: *The Queen and the King* ~ B05 ~ Home Sweet Home

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