

The Queen and The King of the SpaceHighways

B11 ~ The Compatibility Results

Nervously, we take a seat in Dr. Igüeni's office. Ehhnah is already looking for her.

"Sorry for making you wait," the doctor says as she enters. "I just wanted to confirm that I've got all the data. Let me read through the latest results."

Dr. Igüeni takes a seat and reads through what seems a lengthy report.

I strengthen my grip on Aia's trembling hand. I can't hide my nervousness either...

The good doctor sighs deeply as she lies her tablet down. She closes her eyes and seems to process all the data.

"The news are good," she says, opening her eyes. "However, there are details still to consider..." She takes a deep breath while Aia and I already look at each other with wide eyes, and happiness starts to draw on our faces. "Congratulations, you are compatible," Dr. Igüeni says with much joy.

"We... we are..." Aia stutters, unable to hold back tears of happiness.

"Yeah... we are..." I stutter too and embrace Aia filled with joy.

We hug while tears flood our faces.

"Congratulations," Ehhnah sings from our right.

Finally calmed down and tears dried, we let doctor Igüeni explain the details. "Is it okay now? Or do you need more time?" she asks. We ask her to go on, and she nods. "Okay... According to the many tests, you are eighty-nine percent compatible. Above seventy-five percent, you're able to have healthy children. Keep in mind that even one-hundred percent does not mean you are guaranteed

to have children. This percentage only accounts the genetic compatibility. A full score does not guarantee that a healthy child would be born on the first try.

“This result only tells us that if everything goes okay and a fetus matures, and survives up to birth, the child will have no genetic defect out of your union.”

“Meaning, if pregnancy goes well, the child will be healthy,” Aia sums up.

“Exactly,” Dr. Igüeni confirms. “Now... there are many other conditions to meet. That, however, is the natural flow, and we can’t alter it. We may aide, but not change it.

“First, the obvious, your reproductive cells have to meet during your fertility window. Then, the DNA of both have to fuse the right way, without damaging itself. The resulting DNA strains have to meet certain conditions to evolve. There are several other criteria the developing fetus has to fulfill.”

“I understand...” Aia sighs. “It’s not like that we might have a child on our first try, isn’t it?”

“Sadly, it is so,” the doctor confirms. “That, however, is also true inside the same species. We can, however, thanks to modern medicine, evaluate if an early fetus will be able to survive or not. It is, sadly, preferable to abort early ill fetuses before they could adversely affect the mother.

“Regarding your question about blood...” the doc sighs. “I omitted the full answer in an attempt to not making you more nervous. There is one possible major issue about blood, the blood type.” Aia looks down, sighs, and looks at the doc again. “We cannot determine your blood type...”

“Huh?” Aia and I jolt, shocked by the statement.

“A simple analysis shows a similar blood type to the human A- group. However, the deep analysis revealed it to be not the slightest similarity... Good thing you never needed a blood transfusion, Aia. It could have killed you.”

“No way...” I gasp while Aia shudders.

“We need to take more blood samples of you, Aia. We absolutely need to synthesize your blood. If you’re in danger, we might need it,” Dr. Igüeni states.

“I understand,” Aia nods and confirms. “Best we’ll do so.”

“Synthesize?” I ask, baffled.

“Yes,” the doc confirms. “We are able to grow blood cells from samples, but we’ll need much of it. It might be too much for the body in case of an emergency.”

“Meaning,” Aia sighs, “this could be a problem with a child having Kira’s B+ blood, right?”

“Yes...” Dr. Igüeni sighs too. “We have no Immune Globulin for you, which could be lethal for either you or your baby.”

“What can be done?” I ask nervously.

“The best outcome would be that the baby has Aia’s blood,” the doctor explains. “In the worst case...” she takes a deep breath and goes on with sorrow, “aborting at the earliest stage possible would be the safest choice...”

“No way...” I sigh.

Aia’s hand grips mine tighter. “What are the chances?” she asks.

“Fifty-fifty...” Dr. Igüeni stats after a long sight. “However, when the time comes that we can determine the fetus’ blood type, we would already know if it would be healthy in genetic terms.”

“Meaning, it would already be advanced...” Aia sighs. “Unless we would find a way to keep both of us out of harm...” she sighs again, way deeper.

“I fear so, I’m sorry...” Igüeni sighs again. “In most cases, we’re able to do something, even altering the DNA to force the baby’s blood to be the mother’s. But being of an unknown species... I’m afraid I can’t offer you any real option other than waiting and hoping for the best...”

“Why?” Aia sighs, “Why am I the way I am?”

“Aia... Don’t... You are all right the way you are,” I say and embrace her. “Don’t blame yourself on something you can’t control, dear. I don’t understand half of it, but I understand that you are the most important person to me. If...” I sigh deeply, “letting the child go saves you, I would prefer it. It would hurt...” I swallow empty. “But there will be more opportunities, isn’t it?”

“Kira...” Aia sighs deeply. “Yes... You’re right...”

“Aia, Kira...” Dr. Igüeni and Ehhanh sigh. The former goes on, “We will assist you in any way possible. If the worst happens, we’re here for you to help you through psychological assistance too.”

“Thanks...” Aia sighs again.

“But doesn’t the good news outweighs the bad ones?” I ask, trying to sound convincing.

“You’re right, love,” Aia says and smiles.

“And, who knows... Maybe we’ll find a way till the moment comes?” I try to reassure both of us.

“Of course!” Ehhanh exclaims. “We surely find a way. That’s our job. We won’t let you down,” she assures. Thank you, Ehhnah. That’s what we need to hear.

“Right,” the doc confirms. “Other than the blood type, there are many other variables.

“We can confirm that Kira’s DNA is on some middle ground, not new nor old. However, it won’t affect a child of yours negatively. Nor does his bionic limbs nor anything related to his hospitalization. We also ruled out any possible problem arising from his cryopreservation,” she adds.

Aia and I sigh in relief.

“We found something interesting, though...” Dr. Igüeni states. Aia and I blink and stare at the doctor. “His high resistance to pain might have come from the drugs he was injected with for his cryo. We found some faint traces of nervous damages which cannot be explained otherwise.”

“For real?” I ask, baffled.

“Indeed...” the doc nods. “Combining the data we gathered and the ones we have from your hospitalization, reveals that it is the only possibility. However, we are not one hundred percent sure. We reached a similar conclusion in regards to your higher than usual stamina...”

“But wouldn’t that be contradictory?” Aia asks. “If nerves are damaged... wouldn’t that mean he would have a lower stimulus for pleasure too?”

“That’s the interesting part,” Dr. Igüeni states. “We should investigate it further with various tests, if you want to find out. We can only assure that it won’t have a negative impact on a child of yours.”

“As long as neither our children, Aia, nor I, are negatively affected by it, I can live with not knowing the reason,” I say.

“You’re right, darling,” Aia agrees. “If you want, at some point, find out more, I’m with you.”

“Thanks, Aia, love.”

“That’s okay, you two. I’m simply stating all the results we have found,” the doc explains. “In the case of Aia, we found many things, but most are still a mystery for us...”

Aia and I look at each other and nod.

Noticing her cue, Igüeni goes on, “We need much more data, but most will likely have to come from test, experiments, and research...” she sighs. “What we have now are only indicators and not clear confirmations. I understand that you want to know it anyways, I am right?”

“Yes, doc,” Aia confirms firmly. “Please, tell us what you know, even if they are hypotheses.”

“Very well,” the good doctor confirms. “Our preliminary results hint towards the possibility that Aia is a mestizo...”

“No way...” Aia sighs.

“However, we are unable to match your DNA to any known species...” Dr. Igüeni laments. “Either nobody has made contact with any of your ancestors, or...” she halts her words and sighs deeply, “their species do not exist anymore...”

“No way!” I exclaim. “How could that be?”

“That, I don’t know...” Dr. Igüeni sighs. “You are a foundling, Aia. Has it ever been determined from where your capsule came from?”

“No...” Aia sighs. “That’s not known...”

“This is a speculative hypothesis of my own fabrication...” Igüeni says. “Your capsule might have traveled for a long time...”

“You... you mean... I was cryopreserved too? Not just put into suspended animation?” Aia gasps.

“We can’t rule it out...” the doctor sighs. “However, we’re unable to determine any traces of any known drug or their effect on you from a possible cryo.”

“Because you don’t know my species...” Aia says and sighs.

“I’m afraid so...” the doc confirms.

“What else?” Aia urges for more data.

“Yes... This is also quite intriguing...” Igüeni confirms. “The ova samples we took, indicate us that you are fertile for at most two Gaian-years...”

“Huh?” Aia blinks. “What do you mean? I’ve got the period since fourteen...”

“In some species, it does not indicate fertility... in most, it does. It seems you are one of these exceptions...” Dr. Igüeni explains. “It is rare in mammals as the menstruation’s function is, among others, to clear out the unfertilized ova. In the exceptions, it has more functions.

“The Reaf are an interesting exception,” the doc explains. “All their genders have fertility periods. Males, for example, only have around six days of fertile spermatozoa in a period of twenty days. The females, have a similar timing.

“Now, these periods are flexible, so to speak, and mates usually end up synching their fertility periods over time...”

“Wow!” I exclaim, surprised that something the like even exists.

“Yes...” Dr. Igüeni nods to my surprise. “It’s really complex. But what I want to explain is that they also have early discharges, albeit not being fertile yet. That happens to any of their genders. It is thought that the sync might happen even before fertility is confirmed. It might be similar to what happened to Aia...”

“Meaning,” Aia sighs, “I had no interest in procreating until I was fertile?”

“That is a possibility,” Igüeni assesses. “You expressed having an interest in sex, but you never felt really compelled to it...”

“Yeah... Self-pleasure was way more... pleasuring,” Aia confirms. “Until I met Kira, I never enjoyed what others did to me...”

“Perhaps, your interaction with him had awakened your fertility, or... it is just because you met him shortly after...” the doctor speculates. “As I said, we don’t have proof of it. It’s just that the data hints towards it.”

“But would make sense...” Aia says. “In the last two years, I wasn’t with any other man than Kira... My insecurities didn’t let me... But I still don’t get the time disparity between my first menses and my fertility...”

“That, I cannot explain...” Dr. Igüeni sighs.

“Anyways...” Aia sighs too. “Is there more stuff you found out?”

“Yes,” the doc confirms. “In physical aspects, you are almost a human.”

“What do you mean?” Aia asks, baffled.

“Your organs, your body, is almost identical... However, your chemical composition is slightly different. You are still a carbon-based being, and a mammal. But many details are more extraordinary...”

“What do you mean?” I ask, repeating Aia’s question.

“It’s hard to tell,” Dr. Igüeni sighs. “Aia’s DNA has the same basic building blocks. That’s why you are compatible. Your skin, for example, is slightly more elastic. Not as much as the Reaf’s skin. Its composition is slightly different, but still compatible with the humans. Your digestive system also works slightly differently. You surely have noticed that you have a shorter digestive tract...”

“Yeah,” Aia confirms. “I always thought that it might be because of a more aggressive digestive fluids in my stomach.”

“Exactly,” the doc confirms. “But that also means, that your stomach has a different composition. What’s your average secretion of solids?”

“Huh?” Aia blinks and seems to go through her mind. “Fuck... At most, once every four days, or so...”

“Similar to us İiha...” Igüeni confirms. “That means, you digest more efficiently than the average human, despite a shorter tract...”

“But... could all this affect our offspring,” I ask, nervously.

“No...” the doc negates to my relief. “At least, not negatively. In interspecies’ mestizos, the children would inherit most aspects of one parent, and a few from the other.

“In your case, a child would inherit either’s body composition. Meaning, they would be mostly human, or mostly Aia’s species. It would never have mixed organ types, as it would not be advantageous for evolution.

“Keep in mind that we still have to follow the rules of evolution,” Igüeni asserts. “DNA isn’t intelligent, nor perfect, it’s aleatory. However, it won’t match

incompatible features. If it does, the cells simply won't form nor grow into a fetus. Only when the right combination occurs, it evolves."

"Meaning, a kid of ours could have a human body with my aesthetics," Aia recaps.

"Exactly," Igüeni confirms. "Either Aia's or Kira's body structure. The looks are mostly a mixture of both. That's why, for example, smaller built Knoreliaz with Felii features exist." Waqniz's mate comes to my mind. "They would have a Knoreliaz body. Their insides, so to speak, would be fully Knoreliaz. The rest of their appearance would be a mixture, as it would happen with any child inside the same species."

"Wow..." I sigh. Is that complex... I just want to have a healthy child with Aia...

"Taking into consideration that we know very little about your species, Aia, I suggest that you'd have, at least, a monthly check-up with us. At least, for the time you are trying to have a child and during your pregnancy," Dr. Igüeni suggests.

"That would be the best," Aia accepts, and I confirm.

"Then... Correct me, if I'm wrong..." I say after a long sigh. "The best outcome would be that our child would have Aia's body, right?"

"Indeed," the doc confirms. "In the case of inheriting Aia's body, the chances they have to have her blood type is about four out of five. In case the blood type does not match, it won't survive.

"In most known mammal species, we have medical aides which can prevent harm to both child and mother. But in Aia's case, we have no way to help in such case.

"For example, if a Felii mother has twins with a Human partner, she could have twins, one of each species' body type. We have the medical know-how to assure the three's survival and health."

"That wouldn't be an option for us," Aia sighs. "All our children would have to be of my species..."

"Exactly," Igüeni sighs too. "Suspecting you are a mestizo, finding a medical solution is essentially naught..." She sighs again. "Without a full report of your birth parents' medical details, we can't even start..."

“That would be too costly...” Aia sighs again. “The only thing we can do is to hope for the best...”

“And the best will happen,” I assure, trying to convince myself.

“Right,” Aia giggles. “With our love that strong, we surely will succeed.” She smiles brightly. Yes, we will.

“There are other interesting details about Aia’s body,” the doc says. “But most of them won’t affect your compatibility nor your offspring.

“As I mentioned, your body is similar but at the same time different to the Human species’. I would recommend you do a full medical study on you, just to be safe.”

“What would that include? And how much would it cost?” Aia asks.

“I can’t figure the costs right now,” Dr. Igüeni sighs. “It won’t be cheap, even if we manage to get you a significant discount. And such study won’t be accepted by any insurance, as it wouldn’t be deemed as essential.”

“I don’t care about the costs,” I say while the three women look at me. Aia smiles broadly. “We’ll manage. It’s more important that we find out things which could keep Aia out of harm.”

“Kira~” Aia sighs happily.

“If Aia can’t go to a doctor without being sure that the drugs they prescribe are harmful to her or not, it’s not safe for her. Who knows what could have happened...” I state. “Don’t you have some analyses from when you were a child, dear?”

“I don’t have access to ’em...” Aia sighs.

“Why?” I ask, surprised.

“When I was found by my parents, I was subjected to many medical tests. My parents didn’t want me to be a guinea pig for the scientific community and went to court. They managed to win full custody and formally adopted me.

“However, they would lose all access to the data gathered. Mom and dad preferred to raise me as a normal child without that data than abandoning me to live in a lab...” Aia sighs again.

“The doctors didn’t hand over your data to your parents?” Dr. Igüeni exclaims, shocked. Aia shakes her head. “That’s horrible...”

“Just that I passed all the obligatory health and pathogens checks,” Aia says after a long sigh. “All the other data was buried, to my knowledge. The only data I could gather was from my own studies, and from some doctors’ reports. All that data is in my health report you have access to. I really want to know more about myself.”

“And we’ll find out,” I say, strengthening my grip on her hand.

“*Hm~*” Aia confirms with a hum and beautiful smile.

“What tests would you recommend?” I ask Dr. Igüeni.

“We already gathered some important data today,” she says. “But we would need to gather hormone samples in your different states, mostly during your period. This data could be useful not only for your quest for a child, but for other medical reasons.

“Some experiments would be useful to figure if you have some sorts of allergies which were never documented.

“A brain scan in different scenarios would also be beneficial as we don’t know your brain patterns. I mean, we don’t know how some drugs could affect you—”

“Ah!” Aia interrupts the doctor with a sudden outcry. “My depression... I was diagnosed with deep depression some years ago and prescribed several drugs... None really helped. Some even worsened my overall health...”

“That’s unfortunate...” Igüeni sighs deeply. “Let me check the drugs...” She goes through Aia’s clinical reports until she sighs again. “These drugs are meant for several different species... It seems that those doctors just threw anything at you without knowing how you’d react...”

“No way...” Aia sighs.

“From the diagnostics, I understand that you went through is a depressive episode. It truly looks that way. However, the prescriptions make no sense, given your species. At first, you were given different drugs meant for Humans. As they did not work, you were prescribed with those of other species... None worked... More likely, they intensified your depressive state...” the doc sighs yet again.

“Yeah... It was not until I ditched all the drugs and went on working at the cryogenic lab where I met Kira later on,” Aia explains.

“I’m no specialist on psychology,” Dr. Igüeni says. “But I can guess from your data, that caring for others might have lifted your spirit. Ditching the wrongly described drugs surely helped too.”

“I’m sure that Kira helped the most,” Aia giggles and returns my caresses on my hand. “Right now, I’m completely the opposite, almost euphoric.”

“That could be related to your species’ inherent mindset,” the doctor speculates. “I—Oh!” She interrupts herself while scanning over Aia’s medical report. “Your depression was diagnosed around the time we infer you started to ovulate...”

“Really?” Aia and I cry out.

“This is, again, just a hypothesis and requires further studies,” Igüeni says as she brushes through her dark silvery hair. “You might have gotten depressed because you’re supposed to have a soulmate by the moment you become fertile.

“I can’t give you an example, as I haven’t heard of another species to react that way. That could explain why your interaction as a nurse with patients, which is similar to a mother’s care, could have helped you. It also would explain your full recovery at Kira’s side, who is your soulmate.”

“But how is that possible?” I ask.

“Again, I am not a psychologist nor a brain specialist,” Dr. Igüeni says. “I can only postulate hypotheses that require further analyses. I can only think of an interrelation between the physical needs to procreate and the mental state of being with one’s soulmate. In some species, the start of the females’ fertility also activates a need to find a suitable soulmate. It’s a complex correlation which involves physical and mental needs, and hormones.”

“That could make some sense...” Aia assesses.

“But doesn’t that mean that her soulmate has to be a man?” I ask with suspicion. “I can’t believe that it has to be tied with procreation.”

“You’re right, Kira,” the doctor says and nods. “I might be completely wrong in that aspect. However, the evolutionary nature of any species is to leave offspring. This is hardwired. But even if that is the case, our brains have evolved to the

point that emotional bonding has become more important than reproduction. However, both work together as for readiness...”

“That means, the moment we are ready for commitment, we are bound to be fertile? And vice versa?” Aia ponders aloud.

“At least on basic levels,” Dr. Igüeni says. “If your mental health and maturity aren’t interfering, that is.

“In your case, your mental insecurities might have affected your overall maturity...” she sighs. “That, again, is just a hypothesis.

“However, as Kira mentioned, your soulmate does not have to be a male. They can be of any gender you feel attracted to. Your fertility is not related in any way to your sexual orientation. It is only the physical sign that you might be ready for a relationship.”

I sigh and close my eyes. My mind wanders through my life. Damn... Sounds right. And from what happened to Aia since the day we’ve met, she... Wait...

“Aia?”

“*Hm?*” She looks at me with interest.

“Have you ever noticed how others were affected by your hormones before we met?” I ask her.

“Yeah... A lot over the last two...” her voice trails off. “Wait! You’re right, love! It intensified a lot about two years ago. Before, I just got horny... And now, it’s like being in heat... Like a force pushing me to mate...”

“Interesting...” Dr. Igüeni nods. “Kira’s hunch might be right. It would make much sense as hormones are related to your body.”

“Has ever a woman mentioned your smell in that period?” I ask Aia.

“Enya...” Aia sighs while I blink. “When I told her about what happened to us in the Thunderbird that time, she said that would explain my smell on certain days every seventy to eighty days...”

“Dunno if she just smells it or it affects her too...” Aia shrugs and sighs. “She just told me that she noticed it.”

“Have you ever noticed her to change behavior in that period?” Dr. Igüeni asks Aia.

“Now that you mention it...” Aia sighs deeply. “She kinda flirted with me, every time. But it rather confused me...”

“This might mean that not only males notice it,” the doctor concludes. “Ehhanh? Better you explain it...”

“Yeah...” the nurse giggles. “We Felii are bisexual or omnisexual and polyamorous by default. We usually don’t care about gender. Our sense of smell is also quite acute. I might smell Aia’s hormones too, if I happen to be near.

“Smelling other’s hormones usually indicates a certain compatibility between possible partners.”

“Even if they are of the same gender?” I ask stupefied.

“Yes,” Ehhnah confirms. “This is not just about the ability to procreate. It’s something deeper. However, more things have to line up. Your gender preferences, your mental state, your partners’ looks and feelings, your own feelings towards them... It’s just a part of it.

“In my case, Carlos has no hormones in this sense, but he is my soulmate. I am bisexual, but monogamous, as long as I am with Carlos. I don’t feel the need to seek other partners other than him. It’s... *Hmm...* Just my feeling that he is the only partner for me. When I look at others, of any gender, I can appreciate their looks and hormones, but neither of them affects me nor changes my mind. I only need Carlos and Reki.”

“Ehhnah...” Aia sighs.

“What I mean to say is that hormones are just one part of everything,” the nurse says and smiles heartily. “True it is that hormones play a big role in relationships. However, the smell of them isn’t the biggest role. Of course, it gives you many hints. More so on how your partner might be depending on their reactions to them.”

“Ehhnah...” Aia sighs again. “That makes sense...” she giggles. “Kira was able to resist ’em thanks to his own will despite I almost lost control of myself..”

“That means, he is a keeper,” Ehhnah says, wearing a warm smile. “For us Felii, a partner who can resist this kind of temptation means a world for us. However,

that does not mean that they are our ideal mates or soulmates. That indicates that they are the best friends you could have. Being a best friend is just the first stage of becoming a true mate or even a soulmate, if both want it and are ready for it. This resistance shows how much they really care about you.”

“Wow...” I sigh too.

“That’s beautiful...” Aia charms. “Now I understand...” she giggles, “why I was so moved when you stopped me...” She hugs me tightly and kisses me on my right cheek. “I had a crush on you for the longest time. Later, I knew I fell in love with you. But after that moment...” she sighs happily, “I knew you were my soulmate, my love...”

“Aia... Yeah... That moment defined our true feelings,” I say and kiss her back.

“That’s beautiful,” Dr. Igüeni giggles. “Have you smelled others’ hormones too, Aia?”

“*Hmmm...* I’m not sure...” Aia stops to think. “Perhaps... But in any case, it was really subtle.”

“I mistook Enya’s smell with a perfume,” I remember.

“That could be...” Aia confirms. “But... Dunno...” she shrugs. “However, I somehow only got pleasant body smells from a very few guys. Kira, of course, is one of them. But from women... many...”

“You wrote that you are heterosexual,” the doctor points out.

“I’m unsure, actually...” Aia drops her head. “It’s not that I didn’t notice women and other genders other than guys... It’s just... I dunno...” she sighs. “I don’t even know if I’m monogamous... I only know that Kira is my soulmate and that I want to be with him till my end.”

“Aia...” I hug her tightly. “We’ll see when the moment is right. I told you, I’m with you. And if you need to experiment on your feelings, I’ll be supporting you.”

“Kira~”

“Don’t worry, everything comes at the right moment,” Dr. Igüeni assures. “As a teen, I thought I might be just a lesbian, with no interest in men. Then I met Grhiedak before his transitioning. We fell in love when he still was a woman. I

was with him and supported him through the whole transition. I love him as my soulmate, no matter what. Thanks to him, I found that gender doesn't matter in love. It's the person behind and beyond the gender that matters.

"You don't have to conform to any label, Aia. You'll find your way, I'm sure about it. Labels are just categories which give us some hold in these confusing aspects of our life. They are just an abstract to avoid deeper and longer explanations.

"For example, for Ehhnah, it's easier to say she's hetero and monogamous than explaining that she is bisexual with a male partner. The follow-up questions and answers would be long and convoluted, without a satisfying end."

"Right, that's what I do," the nurse confirms.

"That applies to my species too..." Aia sighs deeply. "If I simply could say the given name... I wouldn't have to explain continuously that I'm a foundling and that I don't know my own species..."

"Yeah..." I sigh too. "The Awakened label is easy to explain. A few inquire about my reasons to be cryopreserved. Most, are simply surprised, but keep on with the conversation."

"Yeah..." Aia sighs again but smiles warmly. "I know that I don't have to comply with any given label, but it's not easy when you don't know what label to use..."

"It is..." Dr. Igüeni nods. "But remember, labels can be switched, at any time. I labeled myself as a lesbian. Now, I label myself as a bisexual, even if I'm in a relationship with two men. I could label myself as heterosexual or straight, but I don't feel comfortable with that label."

"Thanks," Aia says and smiles. "I'll figure out what I am, together with Kira. Right, darling?" She hugs me again.

"Of course, love," I confirm and return the hug.

"Back to your noticing the hormones of other women, Aia," Dr. Igüeni presses on. "It does not mean that you're sexually interested in them. As Ehhnah explained before, she might notice yours and be not interested in you, at least, not this way."

"Exactly," the Felii nurse confirms. "For us Felii, it's a possible indicator of our sexual orientation, but it isn't for other species such as the Wigmez. For them,

it's normal to notice others' hormones or pheromones. It's just that their sense of smell is really sharp."

"We don't know if my species' either..." Aia sums up.

"Right..." the doc confirms. "Anyway, for now, just take in the best of our analyses..." she adds with a broad smile.

"True..." Aia giggles, and I chuckle.

"We're compatible, Aia," I say and kiss her. She reciprocates, and we kiss while tears of happiness flow down her cheeks.

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"Come to the waiting room," Ehhnah instructs us after we finished the lengthy talk about our test results.

We're surprised by many people, including staff and patients awaiting us.

"Congratulations!" they shout.

"Wow!" Aia and I look at each other and smile.

Dr. Igüeni, together with doctors Grhiedak and Cehreh shake our hands and present us with a paper certificate.

"Congratulations on your compatibility," Dr. Cehreh says, clearly moved.

"Say *compatible*," Ehhanh giggles, pointing a camera at us.

"Compatible!" Aia and I shout while the Felii nurse takes several pics.

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"Your photos are great," Aia giggles while inspecting them. "Can we share 'em?"

"Of course," Dr. Igüeni confirms while Dr. Cehreh and Dr. Grhiedak nod.

"Tomorrow, we have an interview with Nehriah," I explain. "We could share these with her."

"Beautiful idea," Aia confirms.

"Nehriah?" Ehhanah charms. "The famous Interspecies' journalist?" Her ears twitch, and her tail moves in excitement. "I wanna meet her..."

Everyone giggles and chuckles at her excitement.

“Dunno if it might help, but we’ll hand her your clinic’s business card,” Aia offers. “She’s in an interspecies relationship, as she told. We’ll try to recommend you to ’em. But that’s not a guarantee—”

“Yay!” Ehhnah exclaims and hugs us. “That would be great!”

This time, everyone burst into laughter.

After more congratulations from the staff and the patients, and paying the fee, we leave the IGC Clinic.

Hand in hand, we walk through the park nearby. Our emotions are stirred with happiness. Silently, we walk without a destination until we find an ice-cream stall.

I look at Aia. She smiles beautifully. I nod, and we step towards the stall. I buy two cones of each’s favorite flavors, and we keep on walking hand in hand.

“Do you believe it now?” I ask Aia after finishing our ice-creams.

“Yeah...” Aia giggles. “So wonderful...” She sighs happily. “I’m so happy that everything’s working out so nicely for us.”

“Yeah,” I confirm. “We should call your parents. We promised it, didn’t we?”

“Right,” Aia giggles again. “Let’s call ’em from there...” She points at some terminal privacy booths. They are similar to the old-fashioned phone booths but without a proper phone. These contraptions are sound-proof and destined for making private calls without fear of being listened in. Such a great idea.

We step into the nearest booth after pre-paying the minimum fee.

Aia lies her terminal on the destined terminal stand and selects her parents’ contact.

«Aia, pumpkin! Kira, son!» Irina cries out happily. It seems that we caught her at home. She clearly stands in front of the main video-wall of their living room. «Jack, darling! Aia and Kira, on video!» she shouts.

«Coming, coming!» we hear him shouting and huffing. Still outside of the camera’s angle, we hear him drop several things, then him stumbling.

“Don’t rush, dad!” Aia exclaims. “Don’t get hurt!”

«Here I am!» Jack huffs. He enters the picture barefoot and wearing something similar to a raincoat. «Was comin’ back from the pigsty...» he still huffs.

«Now we’re both here,» Irina giggles.

«How’s it?» Jack asks, clearly intrigued.

Aia and I look at each other, nod, smile, take our hands, and show them to her parents. “Compatible!” we shout in unison.

«Yahoo!» Jack and Irina jump up and hug each other. «Congratulations, ya two!» both shout.

“Thanks,” Aia giggles.

«Come by whenever ya wanna,» Jack offers, irradiating happiness.

«Yeah,» Irina confirms. «We hafta celebrate.»

«Perhaps, on yer birthday, Aia,» Jack suggests.

«But ya might wanna be alone, together,» Irina interjects.

«Right...» Jack sighs. «Or have a big party...»

“Dunno,” Aia giggles. “But we’ll come to visit you again soon.”

“Yeah, we will,” I confirm too. I really like them.

“We’ll inform you whenever we have more news,” Aia tells her parents. “Next Sunday, the Interspecies magazine will publish an interview with us.”

«We’ll buy it,» Jack states while he hugs Irina.

«Yah,» Irina laughs. «Be happy, ya’ll surely wanna celebrate now, am I right?» she adds and giggles.

“Yeah,” I chuckle.

«Then see ya,» Jack also chuckles and waves at us.

«Talk ya later,» Irina laughs and also waves at us.

“Bye~” Aia sings as we both wave back.

.

“Call Kim and Kite,” Aia instructs her terminal.

Some ring tones later, «Aia! Kira! Long time, no see,» Kite laughs.

“Long time, no see,” Aia giggles. “Is Kim around too?”

«Kim! Aia and Kira on terminal!» Kite shouts to her left.

«Coming, coming!» Kim shouts back. «Out with it!» she exclaims as she enters the picture.

“Compatible!” we shout back as we laugh.

«Congratulations!» they shout excitedly.

«We have to celebrate!» Kite exclaims.

“We will,” Aia giggles.

«In one hour in the MaryQueens?» Kim suggests.

“Better in two,” I assess. “We still want to make some calls more and have to go home first.”

“Good call,” Aia confirms.

«Right, we’ll be there!» Kite also confirms.

«See you in two hours,» Kim giggles.

«Aia, Kira!» Enya exclaims happily while her ears twitch. «And? Good news?»

“Speed to the MaryQueens, we’re celebrating in two hours,” I say and laugh.

«No way! Congratulations! I’m so happy for you two. I’ll be there!» Enya shouts excitedly and would have jumped up if she weren’t strapped down by her seatbelts. «I’ll make it on time!»

“After all, you’re called the SpeedKitty,” I joke, and Aia laughs.

«Yup! You haven’t seen it all yet,» Enya giggles. «See you soon.»

“Byebye~” Aia sings, happily.

»The client you are trying to reach is outside of coverage. Please, leave a message,«
the automated response tells us.

“Jim! Motherfucker! Be in the MaryQueens in less than two hours, or you’re
dead!” I shout into Aia’s terminal.

“Kira~” Aia giggles. “Jimmy! We won’t forgive you if you don’t make it!” she also
shouts into her terminal. “Don’t miss our compatibility party!”

«MaryQueens—Oh! Aia, Kira! How do you do?» Buz greets us happily.

«Is it them?» Sue’s voice comes from afar, and she enters the picture shortly after.
«Good news?» she asks, clasping her hands, hoping for a positive answer.

Aia lies her index finger on her lips, indicating they should not let their patrons
know. Sue and Buz’s faces brighten, and they smile broadly as we nod and smile.
We see them hugging while Sue dries up a tear of happiness.

“We’re coming in less than two hours. We invited some friends,” I simply state.

«Ya’ll be welcome,» Sue giggles.

«Yeah, we’ll prepare a fine dinner for ya’ll,» Buz laughs.

“See ya till then,” Aia giggles too.

“Bye...”

“Call Mitsubishi-san, private,” Aia instructs. What? She has the private contact of
our boss?

«Moshi, moshi? Oh! Aia-chan, Kira-kun! Such a wonderful surprise!» he jumps
up. Wow! Is that his home? A huge space opens up at his back. Expensive-
looking furniture and art pieces fill the room behind the luxurious sofa he’s
sitting on. «Good news, I hope,» he says, clearly anticipating a positive answer.

Aia and I just smile and show our boss our taken hands.

«*Omedetō gozaimasu!* Such wonderful news!» he exclaims. «We have to celebrate!»

“We will, in bout two hours, in the MaryQueens,” Aia states happily.

«Yuuki!» the old man shouts over his shoulder. «Aia-chan and Kira-kun are compatible!»

«*Omedetō gozaimasu!*» Yuuki enters the picture in a hurry, wearing just a bathrobe. «Congratulations!» she giggles.

«Get ready, Yuuki,» Mitsubishi-san instructs her. «We will party at the MaryQueens.»

«*Wakarimashita*, otousama,» she says, filled with happiness while bowing slightly to him. I twitch at her words while my eyes widen. «Congratulations, again, you two,» she says and turns around.

«We will see you soon,» the old man laughs.

“See you~” Aia giggles.

“*Matane,*” I say pensively.

“Wow...” Aia sighs after closing the call. “Yuuki seems to be really comfortable around the old man. We suspected that she lives with him. Now it’s confirmed. What do you think, darling? She said something you reacted to, isn’t it?”

“Yeah...” I sigh too and lean against the booth’s glass wall. “She called Mitsubishi-san *otousama*. That’s the honorific form of father.”

“Really?” Aia exclaims, flabbergasted. “In what context would you use it?”

“*Hmm...* In rich and noble families, it’s the way to address the head of the family. His children and in-laws would use it. Rarely, wives and lovers would use it. Under informal circumstances, it would be *otousan*, or *papa*. But the honorific suffix *sama* indicates that the first option is more likely.”

“That means, Yuuki is either his daughter or his daughter-in-law...” Aia ponders aloud. I nod in affirmation. “But it would be strange to hang around your father-in-law in a bathrobe. Would a daughter do that?”

“I don’t know...” I sigh. “Would you?”

“Well... Yeah...” Aia giggles. “I did, and still do that at my parents’ home. Would a lover say it that way?”

“Rarely...” I shrug.

“A sugar-daddy?”

“Would be *papa*...”

“So... the best guess would be that she’s his daughter?”

“Yeah... Now that I think of... There were times she corrected herself when she was emotional and referred to Mitsubishi-san...” I say.

“Right... Sometimes, I had the feeling like she was trying to say *father* or *dad*... isn’t it?” Aia affirms.

“Yeah...” I sigh. “The only thing that is clear, is that they keep whatever their real relationship is, secret.”

“Then we should ignore our suspicions,” Aia suggests.

“Right. It’s not ours to decide what’s right for them. They surely have their reasons for hiding it,” I say.

“Exactly,” Aia confirms. “If they feel like it, they’ll surely tell us.”

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Leaving Gaia behind us after returning home in a taxi, we already are in the Alpha’s navigation control area. We’re directed to a parking space by a new controller who can’t hide his nervousness.

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“Congratulations, Aia, Kira,” Brown says, bowing to us in his metallic body as we step through the parking pod’s airlock. “I’ll be your bodyguard again. We hope we can keep you out of the journalists’ sight.”

“Brown...” I say awestruck.

“Thank you~” Aia sings, happily.

Reaching the MaryQueens, we find it closed. A crudely written sign taped on the door states that the diner is closed for a private party. Really? Did Sue and Buz really close their place just for us?

“Congratulations!” Sue, Enya, Kim, Kite, Yuuki, Buz, and Mitsubishi-san shout. Only Jim is missing.

“No probs with booze, right?” Buz asks us, wearing a grin.

“Bring it on,” Aia laughs. “Kira pilots.”

“Ouch...” Kim laughs.

“You’re in trouble, Kira,” Kite giggles.

“Just kidding,” Aia laughs. “I won’t have that much. Tomorrow we have an interview with Nehriah from the Interspecies magazine. Wanna be sober and without a hangover for that.”

“Cool!” Enya giggles. “But we have the full afternoon to party. Let’s get drunk!”

“Congratulations!” everyone shouts again as we lift our cups and jugs.

“Wonderful~” Yuuki sighs after her first sip of champagne. “One best piece of news after another, this week...”

“It truly is,” Mitsubishi-san confirms and nods. “This week is truly exceptional.”

“A week of many parties,” Sue giggles.

“Then wait till Aia’s birthday party!” Enya laughs loudly.

“Oh! Right! Aia’s birthday is next Wednesday!” Kite exclaims. “This will be a big one!”

“Most likely, a wild, two people’s party,” Kim giggles.

“Oh, you...” Aia also giggles and blushes deeply.

“Congratulations!” a huffing shout reaches us from the door. Jim holds himself up against the door’s frame.

“Finally!” I shout back at him.

“You’re late!” Enya also shouts and laughs.

“Fuck ya! Ya called me in the only dead zone o’ da Sol System,” Jim huffs. “Had to take da express Jumps. Damn! Why ya only gotta good news when I hafta work?”

“Shut up and have a draft,” Buz laughs and hands him a big jug.

Thirsty, Jim grabs the jug and gulps the beer down. “Phew! Dat hit well!” he exclaims with the empty jug in his hand.

“Thanks for coming,” Aia giggles.

“Heh! Told ya I woulda rush for ya two,” Jim proudly says. “Yer two o’ ma best friends.”

I lay my hand on his shoulder. “Thanks, Jim,” I say. “It means a lot to us.”

“Heh! Heheh...” he starts to laugh happily.

“Early dinner’s ready!” Sue shouts, carrying a huge platter. One of the two servers carries an identical one, while the other one brings a big cauldron.

“C’mon! Have a seat!” a young, slightly plump, black woman shouts too. Who’s that? She looks familiar, but I can’t figure it out.

“Ah! This missy’s Taisha, Buz’s first cousin once removed,” Sue introduces the young adult.

“That means...” Enya thinks aloud, “Buz’s cousin’s daughter?”

“Liz’s daughter?” Aia asks. Ah! That’s why! She really looks like her mother.

“Righto,” Sue giggles.

“Na—Nice to meetcha...” Taisha stutters.

Each of us introduces themselves to Taisha. Shyly, she greets everyone.

“She’s studying on Gaia and is part-timing with us,” Buz explains.

“Yah,” Sue confirms. “Studying restaurant management and public relations, isn’t it, missy?”

“Ye—yeah,” the shy woman stutters. “Wanna manage a restaurant, but imma too shy... That’s why I asked auntie and uncle to part-time here...”

“Nothin’ better than real-life experience, right?” Jim laughs.

Taisha only nods bashfully at Jim’s remark.

While sitting down, Aia asks Sue and Buz, “But your place is quite small. Can you hire that many servers?”

“Ah! That’s right,” Sue laughs.

“We’re moving in two months!” Buz exclaims, wearing a bright smile.

“Moving?” everyone at the table asks, surprised.

“Yah,” Sue confirms. “We already found a new place. A better place.”

“Yeah, right next to the main port facilities with views over part of it,” Buz proudly announces.

“Wow...” Aia sighs emotionally. “That’s cool.”

“Yeah,” Sue confirms again. “Even the special airlocks are in view, yours...” she giggles.

“The Aces’ ports?” Yuuki asks.

“Yup! And many more!” Buz confirms ecstatically. “We’ve already signed the papers. The premises will be empty by the end of next month. Then we’ll have a month to renovate the place to our liking.”

“Cool!” Jim jumps up. “We’ll help wherever possible, innit?” He looks at each of us.

“Yeah,” Enya also jumps up. “What style are you thinking of?”

“Trucking, obviously,” Sue laughs. “But way bigger than this place.”

“It’s getting way too small, and we can’t cope with that many patrons,” Buz explains, starting to serve Aia a full plate of ribs and potatoes while Sue serves mine. “It will be huge with many facilities.”

“Will it be profitable to expand that much?” Kim asks, clearly worried. “It took us ten years to really be recognized and known. Only from then on we could expand and hire more workers.”

“True,” Sue says and nods while filling Kim’s plate. “But right now, we’re already overwhelmed. We can’t keep on in this small place. You have seen it, haven’t you?”

“Yeah, lately, this place is full...” Enya sighs. “Even when we aren’t partying...”

“True,” I confirm. “Many times, we were glad you keep us a table reserved for us.”

“It’s actually thanks to you four, Aces of Aces,” Buz proclaims. Everyone looks at him surprised. “Many come here, hoping they may meet you here.”

“Really? Heh!” Jim laughs.

“Yah,” Sue confirms. “Even if just seeing any of you. We’re becoming famous because you are regulars. You always stop here before and after a haul.”

“Rumors run that any trucker meeting any of you here will have a good haul after,” Buz laughs.

“No way...” Enya giggles. “Now we’re lucky charms?”

“Seems so,” Sue giggles as she serves Enya. “Haven’t you noticed that when you come in that, suddenly, more patrons arrive?”

“Now that you mention it, yeah,” I confirm and nod. “But I thought that’s just a coincidence.”

“Naw,” Sue shakes her head. “There’s an unofficial group chat that notifies when any Ace is spotted in the Alpha.”

“Really?” Kite asks, stupefied.

“Yup,” Buz laughs. “Other Aces started to become regulars too. They really like Sue’s food.”

“No wonder... These chops smell delicious,” I assess.

“That means that the merit is yours, not ours,” Aia says and smiles broadly.

Everyone at the big table confirms while Sue and Buz try to give us more credit than to their own accomplishment.

“Yummy!” Enya laughs childishly after her first bite. “No way we’re the culprits of your rise to fame! These are the best ribs ever!”

We all confirm Enya’s outcry. Sue’s food is absolutely delicious.

.

Taisha and the two servers make coffee for everyone after they cleaned the tables. Sue and Buz went into the kitchen for the dessert.

“Cake time!” Sue laughs as she and Buz bring two huge cakes to the tables.

We're enjoying the delicious cakes and the coffees in excitement.

"Aia, what did you find out, beyond being compatible?" Kite asks with evident curiosity.

"Many things..." Aia sighs. "It looks like that I'm a mestizo..."

"Really?" everyone cries out in surprise.

"Yeah," Aia nods, "even if not proven, the results hint towards it."

"Wow... That makes it even more difficult to find your origins..." Kim sighs too.

"Yeah... But right now, that's not the most important thing..." Aia declares and smiles.

"Right," Enya giggles. "What else?"

Aia goes on and sums up briefly what we found out this morning.

"Amazing..." Mitsubishi-san murmurs. "Then, your depression was misdiagnosed and mishandled... Damn..." When was it the last time I heard Mitsubishi-san swear?

"Yeah..." Aia sighs. "I should have gone earlier to an expert to find more about my body and mind..."

"But dat means dat yer really strong," Jim assesses. "Even without knowin' whatcha are, yer still da Queen. Da only illness ya had was dis depression... An' ya canna blame yerself fo' that. Not da slightest."

"Jimmy..." Aia giggles while the rest of us chuckle. "Sometimes, you can really say sweet things."

"Jus sometimes? Heh!" Jim laughs.

I look over at Enya. She suddenly became pensive. "Enya? Is something?"

"Yeah... sorry... Aia, you just said that your period started just a few years back, isn't it?"

"Yeah..." Aia sighs yet again and lies her hand on mine.

"That's why I suddenly noticed this smell of yours from then on, and not before..." Enya states. "Every six, seven weeks... isn't it?"

“Yeah, Aia had that strange regularity of her period even at the uni...” Kite confirms.

“Ewww! Stop it!” Jim exclaims. “Donna talk bout that stuff over da table!”

“Your reaction is why you’re still single,” I laugh.

“Shuddup, man! How can ya stay calm?”

“Because it’s natural, Jim. Be more open-minded, then you’ll see it differently.”

“Shuddup...” the cowboy murmurs under his breath and reaches for his pint.

“Then, you’re not sure when your fertility window is?” Kim asks Aia.

Aia just negates, shaking her head.

“No big deal!” Kite laughs. “Just do it every day! One surely hits the target!”

Everyone, including Mitsubishi-san and Yuuki, roars in laughter.

Enya, Sue, and Buz roll several Īhāl joints and pass them to everyone. For the first time, I see both the old Mitsubishi and Yuuki accept a joint.

After her first drag, Yuuki starts to giggle. “Sorry, sorry... I just imagined Aia-chan sitting here with us with a huge belly...”

“That would be marvelous...” Aia sighs while she lies her hand on her abdomen.

I lay my hand on hers. “Yeah...” I add and smile.

After a long day, we reach our home.

Aia turns around after we cross the door and embraces me. “I wanna you...” she purrs seductively.

“Me too...” I say as I take her into my arms.

We kiss passionately while we undress each other.

“But a quick shower first, right?” Aia giggles sultry, takes my hand, and drags me into the bathroom while I just smirk.

Getting frisky while washing each other, Aia suggests that she wants to try the penis ring we bought on Mars. Of course, I accept.

⋮

“That was...” Aia still gasps for air, “incredible...”

“Yeah,” I also gasp for air. “I love you, Aia.”

“Love you too,” she purrs. “More?” she adds in her sultry voice.

“Yeah...”

SI

To be continued in:

SpaceHighway: *The Queen and the King* ~ B12 ~ The Interspecies' Interview

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SI

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