

It had all gone so wrong, so quickly. It was a simple, low-level mission to sneak through a mountainous territory and deliver a package to a clan leader in another region. Apparently, Kada frequently did this one himself as one of his starter missions. He seemingly made a lot of new characters to test various builds and stuff, whatever those were. I gathered they were specific character archetypes? But he said we could shave a whole two days off the journey by taking the high pass and ridge instead of using the road. We just had one *tiny* little spot where we had to sneak at because we'd be skirting the edge of a Vol'krum stronghold. They were tiny little blue and green, fur-less things. They were even smaller than we were, and we'd been killing them left and right as 'fleshy little experience sacks', as Kada called them. Nobody really saw the problem with this venture...

Until a random snowstorm hit while we were on the ridge, and suddenly, nobody could see anything. We decided to just wait it out when instead, Yimir stepped into an ankle grip trap. Given she was in heavy armor and wielding a giant hammer, that was a lot of weight penalty for the trap, and surprise! Broken ankle. Then the alarm went off...

Now Exia was helping her hobble along as fast as they could as we rushed across a frozen bridge heading for one of their watchtowers hanging way off the cliff! I took point, sprinting ahead of everyone as Kada slid to the side behind me, drawing his bow. Magic flowed into me as I pulled my staff out, and the first Vol'krum that made it out the door got blasted off the side of the cliff with a fire blast. An arrow hit the second, and I slid up to the doorway and cast Frost Glaze right up the stairs.

It was just a matter of stepping out of the way after that. I heard yelps, panicked screams, and loud smashes from inside as the flood of little creatures heading for the exit to flank us suddenly turned into a slide. Kada grinned as almost two dozen flew out the door to the tower, and right off the cliff next to it.

"No, drop me at the door!" Yimir growled. She pushed herself free of Exia and turned, facing the whole horde of Vol'krum as they rushed down the narrow bridge and came right for us. "Choke point!"

"Tch... guys, get to the top! We'll block the door!" Exia gave a nod to us, and Kada nodded back before leaping through the door. He kicked off the wall, avoiding my ice sheet before firing a grapple straight up the stairwell on the inside and throwing the rope anchor down the stairs to me.

It was a long climb up the five stories to the top of the watchtower. We heard shouts from below, and clashing of metal by the time we got to the top. A loud impact hit, and Yimir's hammer knocked about five of the bastards off the side of the cliff, even as Exia flipped and cut and stabbed to the side of her with twin daggers. "I miss Flickerpaw!"

"It's not programmed into the game!" Kada hissed. He slid to the edge of the watchtower, taking aim with his bow and starting to cover the girls' flanks as I scampered up next to him.

He kept shooting, and I raised my paws to the storm and started to gather magic. I had to dodge an arrow a second later, and he growled, dropping his bow and surprising me by pulling out his shortsword. What was he...? He hopped in front of me afterwards and just started swinging, timing each attack as arrows came in. There were sparks of metal on metal, and he knocked them aside faster and faster! Whoa! The animation was a little choppy, but that was amazing!

It was a full sixty second charge up. The girls had been backed up inside the tower by then, with Yimir just slamming the outer door shut and using her hammer to wedge it as they started sieging their own watchtower. More and more arrows came in faster and faster, but it was too late. I swung my paws downwards, and the clouds above us pulsed with blue energy. For almost a kilometer...

The snow turned to hail, which turned to blades of ice a moment later. The Vol'krum started to scream as bursts of blood shot up from their entire army. For a moment, we were almost blinded by the sheer amounts of numbers rising up over the massive crowds. And then the giant ball of ice descended... They screamed in retreat, trying to get off the bridge as the ice ball impacted the center of it and exploded. Vol'krum flew every which way, limply flying through the air as the bridge collapsed under the huge blast of magic, caving in all the way to the base of the watchtower.

Everything went quiet as Kada and I slid back down to the ground floor of the tower, meeting the girls again. Holy fuck! "Hah! We're alive!" Yimir did a little dance, until her character winced and fell over sideways again. "Oh, right, my leg's broken..."

Kada snickered, then gestured to me, instead. "Right. Exes took extra points into medicine. He should be able to mend it. Uh, also we're kinda stuck here now. Once the storm stops, we could probably grapple down the cliff the tower's on..." Oh, right.

I started tending to Yimir's leg, even as Exia giggled. "We could *totally* try out the romance features while we wait! Did you see those huge morale bonuses they give?! Plus, that whole 'Lover's Snuggle' when you rest!" Heh. Is that what they were calling it?

Kada's eyes shot open wide at that, and I didn't have to see him in real life to know he was blushing outside the game. "I... I've never tried... I mean... uh... H-How would that even..."

Exia looked to Yimir at that, who looked back. Then they *looked* at each other. It was hard to pin that particular look down. A slight dip of eyelids, and it felt like they shared a thousand words between each other, quietly, at once. I could only assume that *look* was just some sort of secret signal they set up ahead of time. Both of them grinned.

"Well, that *is* right. We're both with Exes so obviously one of us being with you would be bad..." Uh... Yimir nodded after saying it, and Exia nodded along. I searched my own feelings there and found it a bit befuddled. I mean... it was just a game. And I'm sure it's more adorable than sexy. If we were just roleplaying...

Exia smirked. "But Yimir and I have totally been with each other too. So, the easiest solution to get around that is... to just be with each other in the game, and have you with Exes instead!" Eh?! Kada froze, just staring at my sister with wide eyes again, and I lifted my eyebrow to her, too.

"Exia... I know that *statistically*, most people in Aion like both genders, but... you really shouldn't just *assume* that from someone." She huffed after my warning and crossed her arms.

Yimir nodded at that, surprisingly agreeing with *me* instead. "He's right. Not including species tendencies or those disinterested in sex in general, on average, only eighty-one-point-four percent of males like both genders. An additional twelve-point-two like only females, and six point four like only males. That means there's only an eighty-seven-point-eight percent chance of him being interested in Exes, sexually." All three of us stared blankly at her by then, and she coughed, shrinking a little bit.

Huffing after, Exia shook her head. "Ignoring the fact that you've memorized those numbers, that's still a really, really high chance that he does though! So, I'm sorry if you don't like boys, Kada. I didn't mean to assume..." I slapped my forehead.

"It's not about being wrong in your assumption! It's about not assuming at all!" She stuck her tongue out at me however, and I just groaned and rolled my eyes. She was impossible sometimes.

A knock came at the door, and all four of us panicked, grabbing our weapons and taking aim at the sturdy wood. We paused... then I sighed. That came from outside the game... Right, our food! "Uh, I think that's food, guys."

"O-Oh! Uh, here, I'll pause..." Kada reached up into seemingly the air, and brought a menu down before pausing the game for us all.

I tapped the button on the side of my helmet, dismissing the field of light and blinking a couple times to adjust my eyes to the much brighter room. Kada turned his off too, still flushed bright red, and Exia burst off over to the door in a flicker of golden energy, unsurprisingly. Ever since her Flickerpaw was no longer a 'secret' from us, she started using it pretty much all the time. Well, it *was* good training, according to Mom.

"Sorry about that, Kada..." I reached forward and rubbed his shoulder, causing him to give a start and squeak.

I winced and pulled my paw back, but he held his up and quickly shook his head. "N-No! It's... It's fine. I should have guessed you guys would want to, um, t-test out the romance system. I mean, you guys c-can do it as three. They allow for group romances. Kinda have to, to account for real life." Right...

Yimir tilted her head at that. "Couldn't we just do four then and all get the buffs?" She held a bit of a grin however, and I raised an eyebrow to her. Okay, something was definitely up.

Kada jerked at that, the light pink going red again. He'd almost gotten rid of it this time, too. "N-No, it's okay! I mean... It's not..." His ears lowered and he looked to the side, wiggling his paws together in front of himself. Ugh, he was so adorable sometimes. I just wanted to squeeze him. Did he like hugs...?

"Hmm? It's fine, Kada. Don't you wanna join us? I mean, it's just roleplay, right?" She shot him a wink at that, and he shrank a little. I frowned, then swallowed. Okay, that one... I looked to Yimir, but she snickered again, still focusing her attention on Kada. "You don't have to be embarrassed. I mean, I really hope we're all friends at this point."

"Eh? Well, I mean, of course! Your taste in literature is amazing!" He nodded twice to that, and she smirked, then snickered.

Exia nodded as she came back at a much slower pace, rolling an entire tray of food. "Of course we're friends! And we totally wouldn't mind if you joined us, Kada." She gave an assuring nod to him, then set her own paw on his shoulder, giving him a little wink herself. He just shrank down a little and squirmed though, and I had a bit of a sinking sensation, eyes narrowing to my sister. What were they doing...? They'd been acting... weird all night, and now overly flirty with Kada. The fuck...?

I must have had my own look, because Exia glanced to me after, then froze instead, quickly snapping her paw off his shoulder. Well, that wasn't suspicious as fuck. Twinges of paranoia suddenly shot through

me, and I glanced to Yimir instead, who was looking to Exia, uncertain. Now I knew I wasn't imagining it. *Something* was going on... Kada frowned, looking between us with a bit of concern now, before I sighed and just shook my head.

"Actually, could you give us a moment?" I stood as I requested it, and he quickly nodded.

"Uh, of course! Um... c-could I try some of the pasta in the meantime?"

I nodded to him, then walked past the girls and gestured into the bathroom instead. They both lowered their ears a bit, but hurried after me as they did. Once both were inside, I moved my paws together and dropped a sound ward over the entire room. "S-Sorry, bro!" Exia hastily apologized, shrinking a little, even as I shot her a skeptical stare.

"Sorry for *what*? What exactly is going on? You two have acted weird all night, and now you're *flirting* with Kada. Or am I interpreting that wrong...?" I gestured to my left into the main room again, and they both winced at that.

Yimir rubbed at her arm, then sighed. "Well, I mean... yeah, we kind of were..." I stared blankly at her. What...?

Exia shot her a glare, then held both paws up towards me instead. "N-Not like that! Look, it's... the job of the females that are currently in the pack to... advertise for the pack. To attract new members. Sometimes that's with enticing, sometimes it's with being friendly, sometimes it's by noticing interest in the Alpha from the other person..."

My right eye twitched. "You want Kada in the *pack*?! You want to recruit another male?" And suddenly I wasn't hungry anymore.

Yimir's turn to slap her forehead, then glare at Exia instead. "N-No! I mean... What she's talking about is recruiting him as a beta or gamma! Not obviously replacing you!"

I exhaled softly, then rubbed at my temples. "Replace or not, you're still wanting another male in the pack. I... tch. No, it... Doesn't matter. The only thing that's important is that you haven't actually even asked him if he's interested. Just... don't manipulate him. He doesn't deserve it." I glared at them both again, causing another double wince, before shaking my head and dismissing the field; heading back out into the main room after.

...only to find Kada with almost half of a bread roll in his muzzle, apparently having gotten the end of it stuck to his two larger front teeth. He wiggled his cheeks around trying to bite through the tip without much luck. Uh... I coughed lightly, trying not to suddenly burst into laughter, and he perked, turning a little pink as he whipped around and noticed me standing there again. Oh Kada...

His eyes widened as instead, I reached out and pushed the other end of the bread into his muzzle, helping him work it past his teeth. For a moment, it popped inwards, and he got my three main fingers as well as the bread and flushed, looking down at them in his mouth, before I withdrew them and chuckled, drying them off on one of the napkins. "You know you can cut those before eating them, right?"

He averted his eyes, still red, and huffed. "Ihh wath hunhry!"

Heh. I let the silliness calm me a bit again from feeling like there was a knot in my stomach. Kada. Both girls were obviously interested in him. I mean, obviously he was absolutely adorable so I didn't *really* blame them. But... did I really want to share them with him? He made several exaggerated chewing motions as he managed to crush up and actually swallow the entire roll at once, then give me a sheepish grin. "Eh heh... Uh, sorry. I'll calm down."

"Heh, you're fine, Kada." He nodded to that, then perked and glanced back to the bathroom, seemingly noticing that neither female came out yet.

"Uh, is... everything okay?" He looked back to me after, and I sighed and nodded.

"Yeah, it's fine. Just a small disagreement. Anyway, thanks for showing us this game! It's a lot of fun..." He relaxed at that, then grinned.

Giving two nods, he grabbed a plate from under the tray and started to load up on some shell noodles and cheese sauce. "If you like the game, you'll probably like the books too! They focus on the romance of course too, but I mean, you don't seem to mind that..." Heh.

"Well, I have a lot on my plate right now, but I'll definitely look into it!" It was a pity I couldn't shake the irritation. But then I started second guessing myself at the same time. I mean, I had two females. Did I really have a right to complain if they wanted two males...?

My ears lowered a little, and I bit back the sigh as I got myself a plate. They both finally came out with a double flush of the toilets, but they kept their eyes down, very much not looking at me. Ugh. Maybe I should have not said anything and just let them continue. I moved out of the way to give them room to load up their own plates, before digging into my own pasta.

For a long moment, it was dead silent except for just the clinks of plates and people gathering up food. Kada lowered his ears and looked between the two of them before his whiskers wiggled and he glanced to me again. I just absently shrugged though, and he shrank a little more. Well, this was swell.

It was a long, and very agonizing meal, with all four of us just awkwardly eating in the relative silence of the apartment. It was hard to keep my appetite up, and I only finished about three fourths of my plate, just not feeling very hungry. It was... weird feeling just a general state of disgust, and not knowing if I should be aiming it at myself or someone else. It's not like there was an expert yet on abnormal Inaga emotions and instincts. Saying they were 'like Vulkus' was sort of a shot in the dark.

Of course, I had to use the bathroom myself after the meal. Distracted as I was, I think it took me twice as long as usually before I pushed the paddle to flush the toilet, and slid my shorts back up again. Turning though, I paused, noting both females blocking the doorway, looking slightly downwards towards my paws. Uh... I cast the silence ward again, and shot them a questioning look.

"Do you two need something?"

"Um, we just wanted to talk. We're sorry, Exes." Yimir finally looked up to me at that, and I slowly tilted my head. Exia nodded in agreement a second later, though.

"We are. We... should have communicated with you first and found out if you even wanted us to *try* to get Kada into the pack. That was... We should have assumed because you two were hitting it off so well that, well..." Sis gave a little whine after, and I sighed.

I shook my head. "We're just guessing at how this all works. I mean, it's only fair that you two have access to two males too, if I have access to--"

"No!" Yimir quickly shook her head, then slid forward again, pushing into my right arm. "Exes, we really were... We thought that was what you wanted and we didn't... stop to ask you. We don't want any other males in the pack for us, specifically..."

Sis nodded rapidly in agreement. "Yeah! If you don't want any males other than you in the pack, that's perfectly fine. Its... accurate to say that you *are* like a Vulkus male though." My ears lowered a bit at that and I tilted my head to her, even as she slid up and joined Yimir, but on my other arm.

"You're obviously possessive of us already. That's a good thing, Exes! We want you to be our alpha." I looked back and forth between them, a little uncertain. My natural tendency to not believe them was strong, and second guess what they wanted, but... they'd spent the last three weeks trying to get me to do exactly that.

Sis gave me a low, lowered eyelid look before nuzzling gently along my cheek, and I huffed. She was... Yimir nuzzled my other side though, and I rolled my eyes. "I... alright. I'll believe you for now." Exia grinned, but Yimir nodded rapidly.

"I'm glad. We'll make sure we communicate better with you in the future." That was a sentiment I could agree with no matter what, at least, and nodded back to her.

Kada was watching us as we exited again. I knew he was a mage too, hoping to eventually get into mechanical alchemy. But that meant he could probably sense when I threw up the silence ward. He perked, but I held a paw up to him before he could say anything. "Sorry for acting weird, Kada. We just had something we needed to talk through is all. Everything should be fine now..."

Both females smiled and nodded to him before flopping back onto the bed, and he relaxed and finally gave a hesitant smile back. "I'm glad. I mean, every relationship has snags that need to be worked through and stuff. Um, just... so long as it wasn't me, right? I didn't mean to..."

I couldn't help myself but give his back a little rub. He paused, relaxing into the touch for a moment before turning pink and smiling to me instead. I gave him a softer smile back but shook my head. "You didn't do anything wrong, Kada. Don't worry. Did you still feel up for more gaming?"

His ears perked up at that, and he grinned, tail raising up again. "Um, yeah! If you guys are okay for it!"

I snickered, then nodded. "Sure. And we can all just join up in the romantic system as a group for now. Then we can *all* get the buffs. It's roleplaying, right?" His eyes widened a little, and he searched my expression for a moment before slowly nodding, pink shifting to red now. The girls looked surprised at that, but Exia recovered quickly by giving him a smile and nod. Might as well smooth things over...

Of course, the silly hug and smooch animations for the characters were something for us to laugh at instead. Obviously, this was a new system. I think they needed to sync up the characters a bit better in the future. I'm pretty sure when I moved in to smooch Kada, I missed and got him in the eye instead. Then we remembered we were still trapped and just rested for the night... as I grabbed some more food from the tray. Hunger, returned!

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Not going to lie. The 'Lovers Snuggle' experience boost was significant. We were three levels higher alone by the time we got to the next major city and delivered the package. ...which turned out to be a bomb or something and we were framed for killing the clan leader. Kada of *course* knew this would happen but insisted that he not give out 'spoilers' for the plot.

By the time we fled the city, after almost being executed for treason and surviving a huge Vol'krum attack that conveniently hit at the moment we were about to be tossed off the cliff and into the ocean, it was getting quite late at night. Kada paused and saved us just outside the sewers we'd fled through, giggling the whole time.

"You really could have warned us about the bomb! We totally could have taken all those guards if we'd had our gear!" Exia huffed, still irked over it all.

"It's part of the storyline, Exia! Plus, we got all our gear back!" He nodded twice, and I frowned at that.

That *was* a good point. "Why were they storing all our gear at the end of the sewer escape tunnel? That seemed kind of convenient..."

Kada froze at that, then slowly averted his eyes before coughing lightly. "Uh, maybe they were planning on tossing it into the ocean too? At least we got our stuff back!"

Snickering, Yimir nodded. "Of course! But now we have to make sure you come back and play with us again so we can continue our grand adventure!"

He grinned back to her and nodded, seemingly happy. Ah, right, it *was* late. Really late, actually. "Wow, it's one, ten. I didn't realize it had gotten so late!"

The Illan's ears lowered a little, and he coughed. "Ah, right. I mean, when you're having fun, right? I should probably get going though. The academy dorms are a ways away, and the automatic tram slows down at night."

Yimir and Exia looked to me, and I pondered for a moment before inwardly sighing and shrugging. No harm in it, really. "Actually, I think I'd feel better knowing you were safe, instead of walking home at this hour. Why don't you stay here tonight?" I gave him a softer smile, even as his eyes widened, snapping to me instantly as the pink returned to his cheeks.

"Eh?! You mean... s-stay here with you? And Yimir and Exia...?" He hesitantly looked to both sides of me, but they both nodded as well, causing him to flinch.

I nodded yet again, though. "Only if you want to, of course. It won't bother me. The bed's large enough for like, twelve of us as you can see, and we'll leave the ventilation running for you."

Yimir snickered and nodded. "Don't want to hotbox him with our heat scents."

He wiggled at that, then slowly, hesitantly nodded. "Um, I mean, i-if it's okay with you guys. I didn't really... I mean... I don't... really like the dark much. Walking home alone is, well..." He kept pointedly staring at the covers of the bed, but I relaxed a little, then smiled towards him.

"It's okay, Kada. Just stay here then. You're more than welcome." I gave my best reassuring tone, while I leaned over and rubbed the small of his back again. He glanced up to me, face still flushed, then smiled and nodded too, a bit more slowly.

Speaking of scents, however... I relaxed after, then stretched next to him on the bed. "Though we should all probably take a bath before bed. I'll go poke the comm and see if any staff is still awake and can get Kada some pajamas to wear..." That was such a fun word. I was confused as fuck the first time I heard it though. Clothes you wear just for sleeping? Such a weird concept...

He squeaked, even as I stood up again off the bed. "B-Bath...? Like... w-with you guys...?" His eyes locked with mine as he shifted from pink to red yet again. I wondered idly if there were any studies done on the health consequences of blushing too much.

I nodded, however. "I mean, yeah? In the tribe, we'd wash together all the time. It didn't really matter what gender everyone was. Though we had limited pools to use so I guess that was partly out of necessity too... We'll have towels right there for you to hide yourself with though if you're uncomfortable." He hesitated, watching me for a moment before Exia grinned and nodded.

"Of course! I'll go get some towels then..." Yimir stood with a smile, then headed towards the pool herself, and I turned to head to the comms.

The palace really did have staff awake at every given hour, it seemed. They had a clean set of short sleeved pajamas for Kada here in under three minutes. I waited at the door, thanking them for the fast delivery before taking the folded set back over to our pool. Yimir had already ran water in it, and Exia had a whole stack of towels there, ready and waiting. Kada of course was bright red, sitting on the edge of the pool and looking pointedly right at the water, rigid. Heh.

"Relax, Kada. It's just us... Nobody's going to make fun of you or anything." I tried to sound assuring for him, even as Exia and Yimir quickly got undressed, minimizing the amount of time nude in front of him. I slid my own shorts off, then stretched after sitting down on the edge of the tub, feeling my lower back crack. I moved my legs out a bit too, with special focus on the left one as I tried to get the stiffness out of it. One downside of sitting there in one spot gaming for hours at a time, I realized.

Yimir slid quickly into the water, while Exia sat down on the edge, the same as me, and grabbed the towels, sorting them into four piles before passing one double-set to me. Of course, I suppose I could also be guilty of the exact same thing that I'd accused Exia of earlier...

I'd assumed I'd be 'safer' for Kada, and took the other set of towels, delivering them to him across the pool, while Exia gave the last set to Yimir. I paused, raising an eyebrow to Kada, promptly noticing him practically in shock, eyes as big as they could get as he stared right at my groin. Eh?! Upon double checking some mutant bug hadn't infested me, and nothing had fallen off, I looked back up to him, just in time to notice his entire face shift red... then I started to see pink swell up under the water, in his lap. Oh! Oh...

Exia scrunched her muzzle, staring at him for a long, pointed moment before actually huffing. "Okay, what are we? Ugly or something...?" I coughed at that, if only to hide my snort of amusement at her sudden indignance.

Kada gave a jerk, snapping out of it and looking confused for a moment as he looked over at Exia. I watched him with interest, noticing he just... locked right onto her face immediately. "Huh? W-Wait, why would you be... ugly...?"



Yimir gave a giggle. "Um, well your uh... reaction, looking at Exes? I mean, it's completely natural of course, and not really something to-" He squealed loud enough to halt her, covering his muzzle with both paws as he stared in shock up at me, then somehow turned even more red as he looked down into his lap. His legs crushed together, and he gave a low whimper, sinking deeper into the water until just his head was above it. I sighed, then set his towels down next to him before lowering into the water myself, right in front of him.

He froze, staring in shock at me, but I just smiled and shook my head to him. "Kada, relax. It's a completely normal reaction and nobody's thinking less of you for it, okay?" He searched my expression for a long moment, still beet red, but Yimir and Exia nodded to our left at that.

"Yup! I used to make a game out of making big brother hard. It was fun! Though, now it's more fun! Mmm..." I rolled my eyes at that, but Kada didn't seem particularly bothered, instead absently nodding while not looking away from me.

Yimir snickered, watching us for a moment before nodding to herself. "There's nothing wrong with liking other boys, Kada. Is that all you like?" Well, that was blunt. It got his attention though, as he looked over to her, hesitantly.

Another wiggle, and his ears wobbled back and forth, swishing the water around. "I... I um... y-yeah. I like boys. Uh... o-only boys, I think. You two are both p-pretty, don't get me wrong! I just..." Oh. Huh. Well now I felt a little silly being upset with them for flirting earlier. Well, no, the communication issue was still something we needed to talk about regardless.

Exia relaxed at that, then grinned and shook her head. "No, it's fine, Kada. Like we said, there's nothing wrong with you liking boys. And my brother is very handsome and sexy, so I can't blame you there at all!"

I gave her a pointed glare, but Kada relaxed a little and snickered... then nodded! "Um, y-yeah. He is..." And now it was my turn to blush, as I huffed and looked away from them all. That only encouraged Yimir however, who grinned.

"We tell him that all the time but he just denies it and blushes. Though actually, I don't think I actually know if Exes likes boys..." Oh, right. It had never really come up. Kada perked, focusing his attention back to me, but I nodded before he could add anything.

"Yeah, I like both. I'm pretty sure a lot of the tribe, well, at least the males, did. Helped add to the relaxed atmosphere of the all-male hang out spots, anyway..." Exia smiled to that and gave an assured nod, but Yimir perked, looking... avidly interested suddenly. Uh...

"Oh! So actually, you're totally fine then with Kada's reaction to you...?" He squeaked at that, looking towards her in shock, but I just nodded, then shrugged.

"Why would I have a problem with it?"

Exia seemingly caught her train of thought and grinned. "Well, remember what we talked about earlier in the bathroom? It doesn't have to be for *us*." Eh?! ...oh.

Looking flustered and confused, Kada looked back and forth between Exia and I, until I chuckled, then sank backwards into the water. It didn't take much effort to drift back to resting against the edge before shaking my head. "We can talk about that later, you two."

"I'm so confused..." Kada lowered his ears at that, then huffed, blowing bubbles under the water with his muzzle. Everything he did was adorable... Was it just an Illan thing?

I gave a little sigh, relaxing into the water again. "It's just more on the issue from earlier, Kada. We just need a little while to talk later about things is all." All the truth. I'd not considered the concept even of adding any other people to the pack, regardless of gender.

He bobbed there for a moment, looking to me, before smiling a little again and nodding. Thankfully, we were able to shift the topic after, and he and Yimir started discussing the differences between the game and book series. It was admittedly interesting to listen to now that we'd tried the game, even as Exia slid over and snuggled into my side while relaxing.

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Something had definitely changed, regardless of promising to talk about things later. With him admitting he had zero interest in Exia and Yimir, my instincts just... turned off there. I guess they were right in that I was possessive of them, and at the slightest hint of potentially another male moving in, I'd started to get hostile. It was kind of scary, really.

But it also made me proactive. I figured the better way to deal with this was to get informed, and see if the library had any books on Vulkus behavior and instincts. Maybe that would give me some insights as to my own inner self? It was worth a shot, anyway, between studying True Alchemy. I could only manage two to three words of that at a time anyway, before it started feeling like my head was splitting open.

I noticed it had changed for others too. Exia and Yimir were no longer even slightly concerned with their own nudity. They still switched back to simple loincloths, which seemed to be enough to get Kada to relax, but otherwise, the three of us were topless. Kada himself also relaxed, thankfully, and just wore his loincloth himself. Guess we didn't need the pajamas after all.

With the lights off and soft hum of the ventilation system resounding from above, we were all tucked into bed and snuggling peacefully. While I noticed Exia at least getting a little antsy, the two girls managed to rest without needing any further relief tonight, mercifully. Here's hoping that lasts through the whole night, anyway. They were off to my right, and Kada flopped to my left, snoring almost immediately. I smiled softly and yawned myself, overall happy with how the day had gone. I think I had a new hobby now, anyway...

By morning, it was definitely noted that Illan move around a *lot* in their sleep. I didn't know how he managed in his tiny academy apartment, that was for sure. Strapping himself into bed, maybe? Regardless, he not only *somehow* managed to get on the other side of me without waking me up, but he'd rotated away from me again and snuggled right up against my front. I knew from personal experience that Inaga, when cuddled together at night, *do* have a tendency to subconsciously gravitate closer together with each other for warmth and feelings of safety. Maybe this was the same?

It didn't really bother me either way. I was fine with snuggles, and just slid my arm around his waist and went back to sleep for a bit. I must have managed, as by the time I'd opened my eyes again, it was nine twenty in the morning. Kada had stayed in place and was snug against my chest with his back, a little smile on his face. Yimir had turned around and now rested against his front, with Exia spooning her. I gave a little yawn, hugging him closer, which caused him to stir.

His eyes slowly opened, and he stared blankly at Yimir for a moment before realization kicked in and they widened. He slowly looked behind him afterwards, and I gave him a softer smile, then squeezed his waist. "Morning, Kada. Did you rest well?" Pink tinted his cheeks, but he paused, seemingly considering what I actually said for a second before slowly nodding.

A softer exhale, and he sagged a little, then just rested back against my chest again, apparently deciding this wasn't absolutely horrible. "I... yeah, I did. A lot better than I do at my room at the academy. I usually wake up on the floor..." Well, that explained that mystery.

I gave a little snicker at that, then rested my head on top of his. "Well, you're welcome to stay here whenever you wish. Though I can't always promise we'll be able to avoid sex..." He went red at that, then shivered against me, and I paused. Uh... "Er, I meant between the girls and I, obviously. Not that... you'd have any reason to think otherwise... and my paw's now in my muzzle..."

He relaxed again and gave a snicker before shaking his head. "No, it's... heh, I understand. I... well no, I don't think I'd really mind. Worth it even for the better sleep, but I don't want to impose..."

It was out before I could stop it. "You're too adorable to impose... Er..." I coughed awkwardly, but his reaction wasn't as anticipated. He looked up at me, upside down and with a light pink flush still.

"You... think I'm adorable...?"

There was a light snort at that, and we both gave a little start. "Pretty sure anyone would think you're adorable, Kada..." Exia corrected. She gave a smile after, opening her eyes before nuzzling into the top of Yimir's head and licking her right ear.

"Mmmph... five more minutes...?" Heh.

"You're missing the boys snuggling..." Uh...

Yimir's eyes shot open instantly, locking onto us, and I'm pretty sure both Kada and I flushed this time. Her ears perked up, and she grinned a split second later. "Mmm, okay, yeah, definitely adorable."

Exia nodded in agreement above her. "Very. Kada of course. Exes is handsome and powerful."

For a second, Kada's whiskers moved *furiously* at that. "Hey! I can be powerful too!" He gave an indignant squeak afterwards, causing both of them to grin, but I nodded rapidly against the top of his head.

"He speaks the truth. He tore the entire end of the couch off using me as a projectile. Serious power to those legs!" And more flailing against me.

"Aaahhh! I said I was sorry!" And two sets of snickering giggles.

Chuckling, I gave him a squeeze, wrapping my loose arm around him too and effectively hugging him from behind. "Relax, Kada. I'm just teasing you. I feel pretty much entirely recovered now..." He really did relax and smiled again, resting back against me before nodding.

"Just... not used to this. Um, t-thank you, guys. Last night was amazing. I normally don't have people to game with." Idly, I wondered why. He was dangerously adorable and really kind. Plus, gaming seemed popular.

Exia grinned. "No need to thank us. We had a lot of fun too. You'd better make sure to visit lots so we can keep gaming though. I'm sure if it came down to it, Exes could pull some strings and have us abduct you out of the academy if you stay away too long." He snorted, and I rolled my eyes.

"Exia, you'd probably do that without me pulling strings..." She gave an impish grin to that, and Yimir giggled.

"Regardless, I'm glad to have a new friend. We should all exchange comm numbers with Kada." Ah, right!

We made sure he didn't leave without breakfast too, of course. Overall, it was an amazing time, even with the hiccups in communication the night before. I felt better going forward, at least. Now to just introduce him to Exir, who was missing in action at the moment. Well, not missing. Niva was obviously in heat too, and I'd heard the twins had pounced him after all. Given Yimir and Exia pounced *me* immediately after Kada left, I can only imagine how difficult it was to manage three heightened libidos. But I was in no rush. It felt like things were slowly starting to look up. Of course, I probably doomed myself there. Ah well...