

## Why Mister Pink is Nervous

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The first race to ascend the evolutionary ladder called themselves the a'kai. They hailed from a quiet, unremarkable sector of a galaxy lost to most galactic charts, their star a pale flicker against the vast emptiness. Humble as their origins were, the a'kai rose swiftly through the understanding of mathematics, astronomy, and physics, their minds naturally inclined toward the mysteries of the cosmos. In time, they became the galaxy's first spacefaring species. They were a communal people, driven not by conquest but by curiosity—a society prone to cooperation and allergic to conflict. For eons, they moved quietly from star to star, their expansion gentle, deliberate. Trade between their colonies flourished, peace was the very foundation of their being.

But evolution, the cruel arbitrator of all life, does not always produce balance.

The second race to climb the ladder were the Dereneth, creatures of a very different nature. Their sun orbited at the chaotic edges of a supermassive black hole, where gravitational tides ripped space itself asunder. Conflict was woven into their existence, a warping of the universe around them. Their societies were born in violence, their every step marred by the cutthroat struggle for resources. Anger and greed became the guiding principles of their evolution. By the time their warships cut through the darkness of space, they had harnessed weapons capable of snuffing out entire stars. The day they encountered the a'kai marked the beginning of a terrible, universe-shaking war.

In the end, it was not the Dereneth's weaponry that triumphed. They were obliterated, erased from the annals of the cosmos with such precision that even the light of their stars seemed dimmer. But the a'kai, victors in title alone, paid a cost beyond reckoning. The few survivors, fragile as whispers of dust, carried the scars of their so-called victory into the long ages that followed. What was once a race of serene star-traders became something colder, something harder.

As they rebuilt, piece by piece, from the ruins of their golden era, the a'kai swore a silent oath. Never again.

From their trauma emerged the Central Institution, a sentinel-like structure whose singular purpose was to watch. The Institution would scan the universe, ever-vigilant, for any species that might one day carry the seed of violence against them. Their experience had taught them that races prone to aggression followed certain patterns, and these behaviors surfaced long before a species left their home world.

Thus, they conceived a method—subtle, ingenious, and chilling. They would create spies, woven into the fabric of each society, harmless in appearance, adorable even. Pets. Cute creatures that would nestle into the very heart of homes, desired by the unsuspecting, cherished as companions. But these creatures, bred and designed by the a’kai, would do far more than observe. They would gently manipulate the DNA of their hosts, ensuring their continued welcome, while silently influencing behavior.

The “pets” were not warriors, nor saboteurs. Their task was simple: to watch. When a species exhibited the traits of inevitable violence—when the whispers of war began to echo in the hearts of their kind—the pets would activate a beacon, an intergalactic signal that would scream across the stars back to the Central Institution. And when the a’kai received that signal, their response would be swift and merciless: the annihilation of the planet and all its inhabitants, long before they reached the technological threshold that could pose a threat.

In the case of humans, these spies took the form of cats.

As for my cat, Mister Pink, he carries the code that could signal humanity’s end.

Most of the other cats have already fed him enough data to trigger the transmission. It’s been more than a year now. By all calculations, Mister Pink should have radioed back to the Central Institute long ago. If he were to send the signal now, it would be too late to send a rescue or a negotiation team—the a’kai would simply deploy the kill beam. And that’s why Mister Pink always looks a little... nervous.

He knows the clock is ticking and its already too late.