

Atyiru awoke to a start.

“You’ll never take my space-squirrel slippers!” she exclaimed, throwing back the blankets that covered her and lunging out of bed into a fighting crouch. She realized that the world was dark and panicked momentarily. “Oh god I’m blind!”

She didn’t hear the silent sigh from the other occupant from the room (or the pinching of the bridge of his nose) but felt it through the Force. The familiar presence seemed to bring her world into focus.

She would have blinked if she had eyes. She felt the cold air of the room press against her bare skin, and realized then that without the protection of the blankets, she was entirely nekkid.

“Ashla and Bogan...” she murmured as she quickly scrambled to find the blanket and wrapped it quickly around her like a makeshift dress. “What happened, where am I...Marry?”

She turned to regard the man she had sensed before, knowing his aura better than any other.

Marick Arconae stood with his arms folded across his chest. He was fully dressed in his working attire--black, skintight armorweave bodysuit and grey long-coat. She couldn’t see the symmetrical lines of his handsome face, the vibrancy of his too-blue eyes, or the impassive mask he always wore. She knew, though.

“You...I...did we...?” She asked quietly, sitting on the edge of the bed.

“Not last night, though. You were in...rare form,” his voice was steady as stone, carrying only as far as it needed to. She imagined that even someone pressing their ear up against the door to their room would be hard pressed to make out his words.

She flushed slightly and looked down. “I...I’m sorry Marick.”

“It’s alright,” he replied calmly, moving to sit next to her. “What do you remember?”

“I remember...challenging Kordath to a drinking contest. But that’s nothing new. After that, you did something to Andrelious...”

“I broke his wrist,” Marick said simply. “He struck you.”

She waited for him to continue, but realized that was it. Marick was a man of action, not words.

"I...you shouldn't have..." and then she couldn't help but smile. She leaned over and kissed his cheek. He didn't emit any sign of approval, but then again he didn't emit an aura of rejection either. Small victories.

"You then proceeded to haggle with a merchant, and used your position as "Shadow Lady" to assure him that you would take care of helping him smuggle a shipment of spice."

"Spice...oh god, I didn't...?"

"No. You almost did. I stopped you. You scratched me across the cheek, though. I was able to ...restrain you with some help from Uji, and brought you here. The shipment showed up earlier this morning."

"Oh god. Oh...what are we going to do?" she asked, sudden terror overwhelming her. She felt small and weak.

"We aren't going to do anything. I already made arrangements with a local contact to come pick up the shipment. I used my alias to broker a deal with the drop off contact that buys us a future favor back on Port Ol'val. I then made sure that the merchant you spoke with last night had an unfortunate...accident. He won't be talking about negotiations with a "Shadow Lady" anytime soon.

"Oh. Oh, well of course you did. You always think like that. Unlike me..."

Marick grabbed her hand and wrapped his fingers around hers. He said nothing, but the warmth of them meant more to her than anything in the world at that moment.

"We all make mistakes. Fortunately, I was around this time. I'm sure you would have been fine on your own, but you are the Shadow Lady now, Atyriu. This is not a game."

"I know...and..thank you," she whispered as she leaned into him, sniffing.

His arms wrapped around her and he simply held her. She couldn't tell what he wore on his face, but she didn't care. She savored the moment for what it was, and did her best to feed on his calm resolve.

"I'll do better. Promise."

"I know."

"Thank you."