

“I’m not going to drink that.”

“But Marry...”

“There is alcohol in it.”

“But we’re on vacation!”

“But there is alcohol in it. You know I don’t drink...”

“Okay, okay, fine,” Atyiru huffed. The Miraluka leaned over the tiki bar and pointed a finger at the liquor shelf. “You, bartender! Make him a “virgin” Pantoran Coolatta. He’s being a downer.”

Marick blinked once, and then exhaled slowly through his nose in what could have almost counted as a sigh. He placed his hands on Atyiru’s shoulders and shifted her body so that she was actually facing the bartender, and not the cash register.

His fingers stayed on her shoulders, gently admiring the way her muscles moved lithely beneath her skin. The tanned woman was slender, but her body had been honed from years of training. She was a woman grown, and the plethora of scars patterning all the way down her back were smooth as his fingers played over them. She wore her long hair back into a single braid. A simple, gray wrap covered her vestigial eye sockets. It was the most cloth her body had, he realized. The bathing suit she had put on was thin as strings, and left very little the imagination.

The Hapan wanted to say that he minded. But that would not be the truth. As if sensing his thoughts, she wiggled her hips back against his groin in a very subtle, yet distracting manner. Marick leaned forward and kissed the back of her ear. He could feel her body shiver slightly in enjoyment.

Despite the comfort of her company, Marick felt exposed without any of his robes or weapons. Atyiru had insisted he leave them behind, though. The beach they had chosen had been “booked” for a private event by some venture capitalist firm. The bartender and owner of the beach and bar did not seem to mind that the company only had two employees. He was a stout Human with thick hair and kind eyes.

So Marick wore only a pair of lightweight shorts and sandals. His bare torso showed the lean ropes of muscle he had earned over the course of his years of training, and carried the scars and markings to go with them. He took the drink the bartender slid him and sniffed it to make sure there wasn’t any alcohol in it. He took a sip, and enjoyed the hints of pineapple in the crushed ice. It was a simple thing, but Marick rarely took time to enjoy the simple things in life like a Pantoran Coolatta.

Before he could finish even the first few sips, Atyiru started to bounce up and down and turned to face him. She grinned in a I-just-had-the-best-idea-ever fashion she somehow managed to pull off.

“Let’s go fishing!” she exclaimed.

“Fishing?”

“Yes, fishing. I want fish.”

‘Atyiru, have you ever actually fished?’

“Nope!” she said with an infectious, childish grin.

Marick sighed.

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Marick and Atyiru had found a spot at the end of the pier. The beach had been deserted, and the sun was beginning its final decent, casting an ochre glow over the docks. Marick had thrown out a line into the water and was holding the fishing rod in front of Atyiru, who had positioned herself in front of him with her back pressed against his chest. She did not like the idea of being out of his reach. He pretended to mind by attempting to get her to focus on the task. Suddenly, the line became taught. Something had snagged the bait. The Hapan’s muscles tensed as he tried to reel the rod backward.

“No, you see, you need to keep a firm grip, while maintaining your stance...”

“Heh, firm,” Atyiru giggled as she reached one hand behind her back and grabbed a hold of his ass. Marick jumped in place, and nearly fumbled the fishing rod. Years of training and instinctive reflex allowed him to recover. He kept his handhold, but realized that the pull was gone. He sighed and stuck the rod back into the makeshift holder.

“Aw, Marry...” Atyiru purred as she turned around and pressed her body against his, her hands wrapping easily around his neck. “Thank you for trying.”

The Hapan looked down into her face and took in the angular line of her jaw. He took in the shape of her lips, and realized that there was, in fact, nothing else he would rather do than be pressing his against hers.

The rod started to jerk. Marick didn’t bother to check though. He did not care about anything, really. Just her.

Their lips touched, soft and simple. They molded together as if they had always been meant to. He held her close, and simply took in the feeling of being able to express himself freely without the eyes of others or the weight of his responsibilities. In that moment, nothing else mattered. He lost track of time.

He smiled.

It was not until the sun had set fully that two left each others embrace. They left the pier and returned to their room, where they embraced again, and then more.