

“Was it yesterday?”

“No.”

“Is it today?”

“No.”

“Is it the day after tomorrow?”

“No.”

“...is it *not* the day after tomorrow?”

“No.”

The Proconsul of Clan Arcona kept his eyes on his datapad as he made his way down the Citadel corridor. Trailing at his heels, the new Aedile for House Galeres continued her relentless interrogation.

“Stupidly-Stubborn-Bumblefluff-Says-No,” Atyiru Aarave said quickly, hoping to catch the Consul off guard.

Marick Arconae cast a sidelong glance at the Miraluka, but said nothing. While his expression was blank as a stone statue, Atyiru could *feel* the Hapan’s glare through the Force. He turned back to his datapad and continued walking. Atyiru huffed.

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“So, I checked all of the records we had in the Med Ward and there are three different documented dates of birth!” Atyiru jabbed a single finger into the table, a few bold strands of her hair shifted and draped rudely over the front of her face as a result of the exertion. She puffed and blew at the hair to move it aside, but it didn’t seem to want to cooperate.

“Did you ever think he simply doesn’t want you to know when his Birthday is?” Legorii Entar asked.

“Maybe If I--wait, what do you mean?” Atyiru tilted her head as if she had just been told that you could eat rocks. Last she checked, she couldn’t.

“Did you ever stop to think that there is a reason he’s not telling you?” Strategos Entar Arconae added, swirling around the drink in his glass. He frowned as he realized the contents had sunk to dangerous levels and made quick work of remedying the problem by refilling it.

“What? Well I...of course I thought...” Atyiru stammered.

“Let’s take a second and think on it then,” Legorii added. “What do you know of Marick’s past?”

“Well, he...” Atyiru thought for a moment and realized she did not know anything about his.

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“Mind if I sit next to you?” the Miraluka asked shyly as she flashed her most winsome smile.

Marick shrugged but made no sign of protest. He didn’t move away either when she placed her tray down and slid into the seat. The Proconsul had a datapad in one hand and a nutrient bar in the other. A mug of steaming tea sat on his otherwise empty tray.

Atyiru leaned over and sniffed at his mug. “That smells lovely! What is it?”

“It’s tea,” Marick explained flatly, never looking away from his datapad.

“Oh! That’s the hot leaf juice stuff, isn’t it?” she asked excitedly.

Marick turned away from his datapad and frowned at her. Actually frowned. She could not see it of course, but she sensed it in her bones. It carried a hint of disappointment that was further accentuated by the shaking of his head.

Atyiru started to say something, but then thought better of it and closed her mouth. She turned her attention towards her plate and started to eat her food instead, happy for the distraction from her failed attempt at conversation.

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“Marry. Marry. Marry. Hey. Listen,” Atyiru repeatedly poked her finger into the Hapan’s arm as she hovered at the side of the Proconsul’s desk chair.

“What, Atyiru?” he asked with a resound sigh as he looked away from his terminal to address her. His face was impassive as a stone statue, but his eyes settled on her and she could sense his attention.

“Could I asked you a question, Marry?”

“I doubt any force in the known Galaxy could stop you,” the Hapan murmured.

“Oh. Um,” she did her best to hide a slight flush. “I was wondering what you’re doing here.”

“What do you mean?” he replied.

“Here. In Arcona. You never really told me how you got here or where you came from. I’ve been feeling a bit lost myself,” she admitted as she looked down at her feet and folded her arms behind her back so he couldn’t see her fidgeting with her hands. “Maybe knowing more about you would help...?”

Marick mulled the question over for half a minute, but it felt like an eternity. Finally, he nodded once and then offered her a seat.

“There isn’t much to say. Growing up was not a pleasant experience. Needless to say, the events all helped shaped me into what I would need to become. A series of events drew me here, and you can check the records to see my rise through Arcona and my list of deeds. All I knew at the time, however was that I had to leave, and never looked back. In truth, I don’t know what I’m doing here, Atyiru.”

The Hapan looked around and seemed to notice that they were alone in the office. “I guess I’m just making things up as I go,” he admitted.

“Well. I don’t know where I’m going either,” she said with a hope filled smile. “But do you have room for one more, troubled soul?”

Marick blinked once, and she could feel his steely aura waiver slightly. It was a small thing, but she had spent enough time around the man to know. She felt her heart step sideways in her chest.

“I don’t mind the company,” he said calmly, his lilted voice smooth as warm honey. “I’m glad you found us, Atyiru. We have a long way to go.”

“I’ll be here,” she said cheerfully, placing a hand gently on his shoulder. “Always.”

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“...Bad enough he was a male child growing up in a matriarchal society, he was also a bastard at that. If I know anything about Hapan culture, he must have had it rough.”

“Nasty lot,” Strategos added with a sagely nod as he sipped from his glass.

“Needless to say, Marick doesn’t write home or talk about going back to Hapes,” Legorii continued.

“Some things are better left alone, Atyiru,” Strategos nodded.

“Agreed,” Legorii echoed.

“I guess you guys are right...” she sighed, her lips turning into a very rare frown that looked out of place on her otherwise sunny visage.

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“Do you trust me?” Atyiru asked seriously.

A pause.

“Yes,” Marick said simply as he blindly followed. The Hapan wore a blindfold around his eyes and was being lead by the hand by the Miraluka. The irony was not lost on the few who passed them in the hallways.

“Heh, now you kind of get how I feel all the time!” she said with a giggle.

Marick didn’t say anything, stretching his senses out for danger. He found none, and knew that Captain Bly or one of the other guard were nearby just in case.

“Okay,” she said as she stopped at a door. “Listen to me three times, Marick Arconae,” Atyiru said as she turned to face him as she took both his hands in hers.

“I know that you have a troubled past. I know that it’s not happy for you to remember things that happened in it. I know that the day you were born doesn’t seem important to you, but it is to me. Because I care about you. And so do others. You work hard day and night for us, and so we wanted to show you our appreciation.” Atyiru rambled as she waved her hand and opened the door to the lounge.

She reached over and pulled the blindfold away. Marick blinked a few times as his eyes adjusted, and his hands instinctively went to the lightsaber on his belt when he heard the shouts from the Arconans gathered.

“Happy Birthday!” they yelled.

Marick smoothly let his hands fall back to his sides, taking in everyone gathered before turning towards Atyiru and lifting an eyebrow at her.

“Since you refuse to tell me your birthday, I decided we’d just make you a new one. So, I picked the day you enlisted in the Shadow Academy and joined Clan Arcona. We felt it was appropriate.” She bit her lip nervously, desperately attempting to gauge his reaction and hoping he wouldn’t be mad.

Marick was quiet, but she could *almost* sense his thought process. He was pensive, his clockwork mind cross referencing with long-repressed emotions to determine the appropriate reaction. He nodded, once, and then squeezed Atyiru's hand.

"Thank you," he said simply. He didn't smile, and she could tell his face was in its typical resting mask of neutrality. She could sense just the edge of happiness. She could feel the warmth of his hand like it was the sun itself.

And that, to her, meant more than anything. She smiled, wide and true. A new memory, yes...