

The Grand Hall wasn't really meant for extravagant events. Old as the ancient walls of the Citadel itself, the wide, expansive chamber had been used to host political meetings and discussions over the years. Countless honored guests had sat at the long tables, signing all manners of important documents and treaties.

Atyiru sat on the vibrantly decorated "throne" at the back center wall of the hall where she could "see" everyone all at once. The irony was not lost on anyone. The Shadow Lady wore a long, flowing red dress that perfectly accented her lithe form. The edges of the v-shaped neckline had white, fluffy faux-fur that matched the trimmings at the bottom of the dress where it trailed off just before her high-heeled stiletto boots (that she was totally pulling off, she assumed based on the amount of "looks" she could sense). Her feet hurt, but that was the price of fashion and civilization.

She wore a matching red eye-wrap and her lips were painted similarly. Somehow, however, the lipstick looked natural on her, and not garish like most women who used makeup to hide their true faces. No, Atyiru was simply stunning in a completely natural way.

Something was off, though. Her smile was a facade, and internally, she felt her heart sinking. Everything had gone perfectly. While stressful, she had finished all of her work so that she would better be able to enjoy the evening's festivities. Despite a near incident with Zakath accidentally knocking over the punch-bowl and appetizer table with his tail, and one or two things catching on fire for one reason or another, things had gone relatively smoothly.

The Summit Guard made their patrols, a mixture of matte-black armor and cloaks among the pageantry. Everyone gathered had worn formal attire of some sort, making the whole affair seem terribly civil for a Clan of Dark and Gray Jedi alike. And non force users as well, of course. Weapons had been left elsewhere, but plenty held some kind of concealed weapon, and Lightsabers had been permitted, as per tradition and safety. In all honesty, Atyiru thought that Marick and Bly's preparations had been too extravagant,

Zakath danced with Nath. The two made an odd couple, Iridonian and Barabel, but there was something sweet about the awkward shuffle the two made across the floor. Atyiru felt her chest ache, and she struggled with everything she had to keep a grip on her visage. The Shadow Lady would not be seen "crying" at her own party, even if she were entitled to do so if she wanted to.

"Atyiru," a voice said at her side, nearly causing her to jump out of her chair. She turned, and realized that Marick had somehow appeared beside her makeshift throne. While she couldn't make out the finer details, she could see that he was not dressed in his typical robes. He wore a pressed suit with...were those *buttons*? Straitly pressed plants with pointed, perfect pleats. He looked like a prince out of one of the story books her father had read to her as a child. He had shaved his face completely, no more stubble or beard.

“Marry!” she exclaimed, but quickly caught herself and curbed her enthusiasm. “I mean, Marick. Hello.” She dipped into a curtsey. Marick returned the bow and extended his arm towards her.

“May I have this dance?” he asked.

“I...uh. What?” Atyiru stammered. She was literally at a loss for actual words. This had to be some trick. A trap. But she could see Marick’s aura clear as day. It was him. His arm remained.

Atyiru recovered and nodded once, slipping her hand under his. Once there, it almost felt as if it belonged. Proper. She moved with him until they stood on the dance floor. The music changed to a slower melody. One hand went to her slender waist, the other to her hand, letting their fingers mix as he started to lead her through a slow waltz. When their faces got close together she whispered.

“What are you doing here?”

“Seeing you,” he replied easily, but his attention seemed to be shifting around the room. She couldn’t track his eyes, but she could tell.

“Liar,” she said somewhat seriously, searching his face and keeping pace with his movements. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing is wrong, Atyiru,” he replied simply. His head tilted slightly.

“There is an assassin here, isn’t there. You’re dancing with me to make sure that if he tries to make a move, you could stop him.” Atyiru explained.

“No...”

“There is a bomb in the lasagna--”

“No...i just--”

“Space bees got into the air vents again--”

“Atyiru.” Marick said with firm finality as he stepped close to her, his face hovering just in front of hers as his one hand moved to her shoulder blades and he slowly turned in place with her to the slower song that had come on.

Close enough to kiss, but of course that could not happen. He moved to her ear, his cheek instead pressing against hers. “Everything is alright, I promise,” the Hapan said softly.

“Seven words...” she murmured. Reaching out, she expected to find Marick’s walls fully in place. To her surprise, they were open slightly. Enough that she could slip in. She could feel the warmth of his confidence, and the safe space he provided for her heart.

And so they danced. Atyiru forgot whatever it was that had been bothering her earlier. At that moment, she was happy, and she could not care less what else happened.