

New shoes, check. New dress, check. New lekbraids, check. Mostly new jewelry, check. Perfume, check. Makeup, check. Contraceptives... wait, what was she even thinking? It was just a friendly get together between two people, not a date-date that could end up... carnal. Or was it? She wasn't quite sure. Koliss had been so darn charming though when he'd done his whole thing of first asking if it was ok for him to ask her to dinner on Valentine's. He assured her it was nothing serious and if things didn't pan out, it wouldn't affect their working relationship. But then again, saying that things might not pan out held the implicit assumption that they *would* pan out...

She was starting to give herself a headache. Was this really what this whole 'dating' thing was like? Of course, she was happy and more than flattered to have been asked out, on Valentine's no less, but it still left her a bit unsure. The whole week she'd been assaulted by the lovey-dovey sentimentality of her patrons at *Your Lekku and You* and though she liked romance as much as the next lek-head, it had seriously gotten out of hand. Still, business had been good and when Koliss had offered to take her out to Selen for a day off and a nice meal, well, who could say no to not being alone on Valentine's? Especially when he looked so adorable with the flower and the card and the slight blush on his cheeks.

Snapping back from her reverie, the Twi'lek shook her head and sighed, checking the time and turning back to the mirror. Good, she still had five minutes to put in the finishing touches. A few more dabs of makeup to enhance her features and one more check that her lekku were looking suitably presentable later, she felt ready.

Standing in front of the mirror in a black-and-blue dress of silken cloth, the cut flattering her naturally lean and supple form, she ran her hands along its soft smooth surface and couldn't help but feel a slight tingle in her lekku. Without a conscious thought, her hands moved up to her neckline as she pulled it down to expose just a bit more cleavage. No! This was a date between friends. A dinner between friends! Not a date. Or maybe...?

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Tali arrived at the spaceport three minutes late, muttering to herself at her own indecisiveness. How others bothered to go through this much stress and fuss for a simple night out with someone she might never understand. Still, worth a shot and if it didn't pan out, at least she'd tried it, right?

The human was waiting for him with a rose in hand, his practical attire replaced by a sharpish dress with clear hints of military origin. Clean simple lines enhancing his build flowed in fabric of a deep blue, accents of silver mirroring those of gold in her own attire. Standing there as he was, waiting for his 'date', she had to admit the human did strike a fairly pleasant sight and the way he kept fidgeting with his polished shoes, tapping this way and that, had a certain adorable quality to it that she couldn't quite place.

"Sorry I'm late, Koliss. I... got distracted." She greeted him, offering a cowed smile.

"Ah, barely even noticed! And may I say you look absolutely outstanding, Tali." He greeted in kind, offering a court bow and extending the rose for her. "Our ship's leaving soon, so if you'll follow me?" Koliss stated, offering his arm and gesturing towards the waiting civilian shuttle idling at one of the landing pads, ready to take them and a host of others to Selen.

A faint blush graced her cheeks as she accepted the flower, dismissing his praise with a simple gesture. "Oh, you don't brush up too bad yourself. Much easier on the eyes than the bloodt stains..." She chuckled softly as she accepted his gesture, sliding her hand around his and letting him walk her

over to the shuttle. Though she really did not feel it was needed, she had to admit there was a certain charm to the way he, somewhat stiffly, tried to play the part of a traditional gentleman.

Taking their seats in the shuttle, the pair shared an awkward smile and a cough before doing their best to relax. "Vell, I guess this is it, then?" Tali muttered with a hint of nervousness just as a flight attendant came up to them with a tray holding two fluted glasses of sparkling light yellowish liquid.

"For your journey." She stated simply with a courteous smile, offering the plate to them.

Slightly baffled, Tali accepted the glass, smelling fruit and meadow flowers. Koliss took his own glass and turned to face her as the attendant left them alone, offering her an awkward smile. "Well, uh, here's to us?"

For a fleeting moment, she hesitated, not quite sure how to respond to the expectant human before her expression melted into a soft, almost affectionate smile. "To an amazing evening, Valentine." She replied softly with a coy smile, tapping the brim of her glass against his as the ship slowly floated off its landing pad and headed for their destination.

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The shuttle landed softly on a landing pad just beyond the shoreline near Selen's equator. As the passengers filed out to enjoy the breeze of ocean air, Koliss guided Tali towards another transport dock at the pad's base. Though the Twi'lek seemed dismayed to be denied the golden shores and bright sunlight, she tried her best to keep an open mind as she followed her Valentine to a submarine pen.

"Where are we going, Koliss? I thought we were heading to Estle City?" She asked as Koliss boarded the elegant blue-hulled submersible and held out a hand to help her step onto the gently bobbing watercraft.

"Oh, we're not going to Estle. Trust me, Tali, you'll love it all the same." He replied with a kind and expectant smile that she didn't have the heart to say no to.

As the craft slipped beneath the waves of Selen's equatorial ocean, Tali felt a hint of trepidation with only a glittering force field keeping the crushing pressure of water away from them and pressed closer to Koliss, her hands instinctively wrapping around his arm and even her lekku seeking his proximity. Giving an encouraging smile, he gave her hand a reaffirming squeeze while holding her close, the scent of her perfume drifting into his nose in a very agreeable fashion. The gentle warmth of the Twi'lek and the soft caress of her lekku against his shoulder were far from unpleasant and he felt that familiar tingle in his gut that had preceded so many of his past romantic forays.

The craft descending ever deeper into the azure ocean, a pale-yellow light soon became visible beyond a submerged mountain range, glittering like shifting flakes of gold against a backdrop of ocean teal. Clearing the rise, the ship turned to give them an unobscured view of the underwater city of Celeste, the white marble buildings, wide pristine plazas and expansive oceanic gardens displayed to them in all their glory as their ride made a full circle around the city's perimeter before sliding into a docking port.

Protected by a shimmering hydrostatic membrane that kept the crushing water and marine life outside, the city was like a collection of deepwater pearls nestled in the bosom of a protective clam, the underwater mountain range providing a natural barrier as well as more interesting views than the flat ocean floor. The Twi'lek's eyes grew wide with amazement, her grip on Koliss' arm loosening as she

shifted closer to the shimmering force field to take it all in at once, her yellow eyes darting from sight to sight in gawking awe.

When they finally emerged inside a lock at the city docks and disembarked, Tali could not stop herself from slowly spinning around with her neck craned back, trying to take in the amazing sights of being inside an underwater city. Elegant buildings surrounded them in all directions, the white and teal interlaced with gold and mother-of-pearl, with airy pendants gently fluttering in the artificial breeze that carried the powerful scent of the ocean and nearby parks. Compared to the cramped, crowded and aggressively brown-grey corridors of Ol'Val, Celeste could as well have been heaven as far as she was concerned.

"Do you like it?" Koliss asked, breaking her reverie as he stepped up by her side and offered his arm for a stroll.

"Like it?" She asked, perplexed as she wrapped her hand around his arm. "I love it! I hadn't even known this sort of place existed!" She sighed, eyes shining as bright as the gilded spires around them. "Thank you, Koliss." She smiled with genuine affection, giving his hand a firm squeeze.

The city was abuzz with activity, coral pink banners and heart-shaped decor adorning the clean and pristine avenues as they strolled deeper into the city, Tali's hand held softly beneath his arm. Though her attention was mostly drawn to the wondrous sights laid out before her, she had to admit his presence was not unwelcome and there was something oddly soothing in the fact she was for once not alone.

The trip to Selen had been uneventful and the two had spent most of it talking about trivialities, past missions and general smalltalk to pass the time as well as disperse the slightly reserved and awkward atmosphere they still shared. It was obvious to both of them that despite what Koliss had said, they were approaching this night with at least a modicum of mutual interest, neither willing to simply consider it another day out with the mates.

Strolling past another amorous couple eagerly snuggling on a park bench, Tali could not help but feel a hint of embarrassment and turned to look away as a very soft, yet distinct moan escaped the woman's lips as the man's lips trailed down her neck. "Erm, is Valentine's always this... umh, visible?" Tali asked as they put more distance between themselves and the snogging couple, taking their time to enjoy the marvelous architecture and the expansive underwater parks that provided such a contrast to their life on Ol'Val.

"Depends where you happen to spend it, but yes. It can get a bit... sappy." Koliss replied with a meaningful cough. "Though I assume you've had your fair share of such experiences, no? A lovely Twi'lek such as yourself." He continued with what he felt might be a suave inquiry into her dating history veiled in a compliment.

The reaction he got was not quite what he'd hoped for as the Twi'lek seemed to grow colder, looking down at the cobblestone street as the cadence of her steps slowed.

"Umh, n-not really." She muttered. "I... uh, haven't partaken." She admitted with a palpable sense of guilt and unease.

It did not take much to realize he'd made an error and he swiftly attempted to amend his mistake. "Ah, perfectly understandable question then. I've been busy on most Valentines as well, so don't you fret. I understand fully." He offered with a conciliatory smile.

"Mmmmh, yes. *Busy...*" Tali muttered awkwardly, the fledgling tender moment they'd shared cooling down considerably as old memories returned to her. She was well aware of one side of Valentine's, but that included outfits quite different from the elegant evening gown she was now wearing and activities far more physically demanding than a leisurely stroll through a pleasant city. Also, considerably less self-loathing the morning after, or so she hoped.

The pair arrived at the restaurant, *The Gilded Gills*, right on schedule, Koliss systematically glancing at his watch to ensure a punctual arrival. The place was as upscale as the rest of the city, with the waiters dressed in pristine attire and each table decked out with a freshly picked flower. The flickering candles and elegant decor along with a soft melody playing in the background left Tali a bit wrongfooted as she felt slightly out of her element. Despite her years, she had never dined in a place like this.

Koliss, on the other hand, seemed to know the ins and outs of the place as he suavely chatted with the waitress and led the Twi'lek over to their table that offered a magnificent view of the ocean floor where a coral reef spread like a pink and purple maze. The only time she had seen him this confident had been with a scalpel in his hand and Tali made a note to inquire about it later on.

"May I bring you something to drink before you order?" The waitress, a well-groomed Togruta inquired.

"I'll take a Coruscant Cloud Car." Koliss replied, much to the approval of the Togruta who turned to look at Tali.

"I'll have a Pink Lekku, if you can make one?" She stated after a moment of thought, naming one of the only cocktails she could think of.

The waitress's professional smile broke for a moment as she let out a soft chuckle, causing Tali to raise an eyebrow. "Erm, excuse me, ma'am. It's just that the Pink Lekku is typically a bar cocktail, not an aperitif..." She stated.

Her lekku visibly sinking in dismay, Tali averted her gaze and mumbled something along the lines of an apology, though her words were mostly lost. Yet Koliss' were not.

"And if the lady wishes to enjoy a Pink Lekku, then she shall. Actually, change my order, I'll take one as well." He stated firmly, causing the Togruta to look visibly shaken.

"O-of course, sir. Ma'am, d-didn't mean anything by it. Apologies..." She stuttered, offering an apologetic gesture with her lekku to the Twi'lek before hurrying away.

"Thank you, Koliss. You didn't have to change your order on my accordt though." Tali smiled with a soft blush once the waitress was out of earshot. "It's just that I... really haven't done this sort of thing." She admitted with a hint of shame, her eyes still averted.

“Don’t mention it, Tali. You’re my d... guest and we’re here to have a good time, not follow some stuck-up etiquette manual.” He replied with an encouraging smile. “Besides, with a name like Pink Lekku, I simply had to give it a try.” He added with a soft chuckle.

She joined in the laugh, grateful for the distraction as she took her menu and checked what might be suitable for such a special occasion, mouth already watering at the smorgasbord of seafood on offer. The waitress arrived a while later to take their order, bringing with her a pair of pink cocktails served in tall wavy glasses before offering her apologies once more and departing.

“Well, I guess a toast should be in order right about now, no?” Koliss smirked as he took his glass and swirled the quite thick almost smoothie-like cocktail around, smelling berry notes and a great deal of base spirits.

“Indeedt. Hmm, I guess To Valentines’!” Tali smiled as she raised her glass.

“To Valentines’!” He replied in kind, tapping the brim of his glass against hers before taking a sip from the aggressively flavored cocktail and stifling a cough.

“Vell, how do you like it?” She asked, happily sucking up the cocktail through her straw.

“Its, uh, sweet.” He admitted in the most diplomatic tone available, earning himself a beaming smile from the Twi’lek who seemed none the wiser.

After marvelling at the view outside and finishing their cocktails, Tali offering to finish his once it became painfully obvious he was merely soldiering through the sickeningly sweet slurry of berries and booze, their starters arrived; a selection of lightly seared seafood for her and a creamy seaweed soup for him.

Once the Togruta departed once more, Koliss sipped the accompanying wine to clear the taste of Pink Lekku from his mouth and began. “So, I know you’re pretty handy with that lightsaber of yours and you like overbearingly sweet cocktails. But what else is there to know about you? I mean, how did you end up with... *our employer*.” Koliss asked as they began to dig through their appetizers.

“Oh, vell, uh... Like you may recall, I usedt to be a dancer. You know, touring from place to place. Depending on the bar and all that.” She lied through her teeth, distracted entirely from enjoying the subtle nutty flavors of her seafood platter. “But that vasn’t much of a life for me. I made the error of signing on with a Toydarian who vantedt a... private show onboardt his yacht. It didn’t endt too vell. You know how some people, *a lot of people*, tendt to think ve’re all... you know, available just because ve’re Twi’leks. Vell he most certainly thought so as vell, so I hadt to make a hasty exit. Endedt up on Eldar and hadt it not been for Xenna, I might never have survivedt. She took me back to Ol’... base andt showed me the ropes, or at least part of them. So that’s how I’m here!”

She flashed a light hearted smile, hoping to distract with a nonchalant display of cuteness before returning to her meal with renewed gusto. Compared to the endless cup noodles she’d had to subsist on while trying to make do with what few credits she could glean from her lek-accessory shop and the allowance she received for her other work for the Clan, this meal was beyond astounding. Even if for the simple fact it had flavors beyond stale grease and carbohydrates.

Koliss nodded politely, savoring the soup and its rich, oceanic tones that blended perfectly with the crisp wine served alongside it. “I would never have guessed that one could end up where we are now

from such unlikely origins.” He mused. “But then again, from what little I’ve learned from our fellow greenhorns, seems we’re all a bunch of misfits and vagabonds.” He chuckled.

“I’ll give you that, though you don’t seem much of a misfit.” She smirked, shifting the focus of the conversation over to him instead. “Howcome a medic like yourself knows so much about etiquette? That Togruta seemed taken by your knowledge of it anyway.” She added with a slight barb.

“Well, I don’t consider it much of a secret, but compared to my current standing, I used to be a bit higher up the social scale when I grew up.” He admitted with an unnerved chuckle. “Had this whole thing drilled into my spine before I learned how to ride a swoop. Though speaking of which, what about your folks? I know what you did for a living, but where do you come from, actually?”

“Ah, vell. I was forced to leave home when I was pretty young. We had some money trouble, so my parents sent me away to live with an uncle who couldn’t better provide for me. Unfortunately, his health wasn’t the best and I ended up without his protection only after a few years. Without much in the shape of money, there wasn’t too much I could do beyond... dance.” She explained.

“Before I got knighted, we went with Kordath to visit my folks. I hadn’t even known where they were, but he’d somehow found them. Vell, their graves anyway.”

“I’m sorry to hear that...” He offered, but was swiftly cut off by her snappy reply.

“Don’t be.” Her words seemed to stun him and she realized the response wasn’t quite what would be expected when someone offered their condolences for another’s dead parents. “I mean, no need to. I hardly knew them.”

The awkward moment was mercifully interrupted by the Togruta coming to collect their plates and bring in their main courses. They both had opted for the same one, a fat fish steak from one of the indigenous tuna-like fish which even now could be seen outside the hydrostatic membrane, seemingly oblivious to their brother about to be devoured. Served alongside was a selection of greens and a light sauce that accented the fish’s delicate, yet surprisingly meaty flavor.

Koliss barely had the time to wish her “bon appetit” before the Twi’lek was already digging in, the succulent aromas from the seared fish steak too tempting for her to restrain herself. Though he behaved far more reserved, Koliss couldn’t help but smile to himself as he watched his ‘date’ eagerly sampling the food with gusto. Clearly, she was having a great time and he felt pleased to have been able to offer her such an evening. Despite their differences, he was starting to warm up to her presence. And of course, with her choice of attire, at least he was never short of a pleasant view.

“You said you hadn’t spent Valentines’ too much either, being busy and all that, but surely I can’t be the first one to enjoy your delightful company?” Tali smiled as the waitress came to take their plates away, having dined in almost complete silence until then.

“No, no... There’s been a few. Nothing really serious though.” He sighed nonchalantly, her expectant expression forcing him to elaborate further.

“Well, there was this one girl I met in the militia. A real heart-taker. She was a wild one, I’ll give her that, but in the end I realized our world views were a bit too different to make it work.”

“What sort of views were those?” She inquired, visibly intrigued as she leaned forward and unconsciously granted him an ever-deeper view of her generous neckline.

“Why, uh, ahem...” He coughed to clear his throat, trying his best not to stare, instead shifting his attention to her softly swaying lekku. “There were some things about patient rights and ownership of biological samples.” He deflected casually, preferring not having to mention the debacle surrounding his paramour selling organs from freshly deceased patients to supplement her own income.

“A shame, but of course, if your worldt views don’t line up, it can be pretty hardt to co-operate. Right?” Tali pressed, giving him an obvious jab.

“Hey, we went over this and I apologized, even if I didn’t need to. You were right that the slavers were sleazy scumbags, but you admitted yourself we would have lost way more people, even the entire fight, if we hadn’t had them on our side.” Koliss defended.

With a deep sigh, Tali shook his head. “Fair enough, fair enough... But you know I don’t like them. Ve shouldn’t have trustedt them. You shouldn’t have trusted them.” She muttered.

Dismissing her accusations, but his interest piqued, he pressed the issue. “That’s a bit I don’t really understand yet, so maybe you could shed some light on it? Why is it that you hate them with such a burning passion? I mean, I don’t like them and morally it’s an outrage that they exist, but there are worse people out there. Like Pravus or...” He paused for a split second, his voice losing its impetus upon speaking the final words. “*The First Order.*”

She was too distracted by his question to notice the slight shift in his tone, the question drilling too close to her painful past. How could she explain her very clear and visible hatred for the slavers without exposing that part of her past? How would he see her if he knew what she had been? If he knew what had been done to her? Even as a dancer she was far from pristine and a man from such high upbringing, how could he ever associate himself with... damaged goods like herself.

It took her a moment to form a comprehensive reply, though he didn’t seem to notice. “I, I ran into them a lot in my past. I saw vhat they didt to people, how they treatedt people. I vas one of the lucky, but many vere not as fortunate. They hadt to endure treatment vorse than that of animals, Koliss. Their masters vere cruel andt vicious creatures vho didt not care about them at all. To them, a slave vas just meat...” She replied solemnly, the pain in her eyes clearer than the water in her glass.

“I swore to never trust one, help one or vork vith one. I have seen vhat they do to people, Koliss, the pain they cause others by not only breaking families, but by stealing the very souls of their prey. It’s not a life I vish for even the vorst of men. To be enslavedt is... it’s beyondt hell.” Her words trailed off as she stifled a sob, a ripple of emotion fleeting over her golden yellow eyes.

Koliss looked at her with a concerned expression, seeing that the issue affected her deeply. Even deeper than what a mere second-hand experience might warrant. He had his suspicions, but he saw best not to voice them. Not now.

Instead, he reached forward and wrapped her hand in his, holding her firmly and giving her a reassuring squeeze. “I can only imagine, Tali. And seeing that can’t have been easy. I’ve been lucky to have been born well off, but you’ve made it this far with much less. I just want you to know, Tali, that I’m proud of you. No matter your past, you’ve made it here and know that I’m going to stay by your side. No more slavers, I promise.”

His sincere eyes and soft, encouraging smile warmed her heart. Even if she couldn’t be sure if he’d seen through her lies or not, his words felt too good to ignore. She just hoped against hope he was

being truthful as she whispered her reply. "Thank you, Koliss. I'm glad to hear that. I really hadn't told anyone about that before..."

He simply gave her a warm smile and nodded. "I am honored by your trust, Ms.Sroka." He bowed his head slightly. "So let me tell you something in return."

"I met a girl after my graduation. A sweet little number, you know the type from next door? The kind you'd love to take over to meet your parents. She was smart, a great doctor and when not in the operating whites, a very pleasant sight as well." He momentarily trailed off as he recalled the woman of his youth, the scent of her hair, the touch of her skin, the taste of her lips...

Shaking his head, he continued. "We worked together at the same hospital. She was a fresh transfer and I had barely been stationed there for five weeks. I guess we were both new and found some comfort in hanging out with someone as lost as the other." He chuckled. "Things threatened to get pretty serious, pretty fast."

"So, what happened with her? She seemed like a pretty good match, no?" Tali inquired, leaning gently forward as she seemed to have forgotten most of her previous distress.

Recalling the exact details of her betrayal made him pause, a visible silence which the Twi'lek easily picked up on despite his best attempts to hide it. "Mmmh, I guess you could say our relationship had a pretty explosive end." He coughed, putting on a brave face as he tried to push aside the memories of a devastated hospital and the screams of injured patients.

She could see the matter was a touchy subject and felt bad about pressing it as far as she had. "Vell, there's always more gooberfish in the sea." She stated with a comforting smile, reaching her hand out to touch his.

As their fingers touched, he seemed to jump slightly though he did not pull his hand away. Turning back to look at the softly smiling Twi'lek, he could not deny the girl was at least trying to understand him. "Yeah, that. And plenty of drinks at the bar. What say you if we take a shot at dwindling their number? See if you're any good without your lightsaber." He tried his best to shift the focus anywhere else, which she readily agreed upon.

"Sounds like an excellent idea. Lead the way, Dr.Velcott." Tali smirked with an amused chuckle as they got up from their table and headed over to the bar to continue their evening.

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Several drinks later, the two exceedingly intoxicated Valentines sat by the counter, Tali giggling softly at one of Koliss' tales from his army days. It wasn't much of an army experience, just some homeworld militia stuff, really, though it had become clear to her that he'd seen action beyond his home as well. Some sort of volunteer unit, though only medical relief.

Throwing back the last dregs of his whiskey, Koliss slammed the glass onto the counter and leaned back, gently tugging at the collar of his jacket to loosen it just a bit. As his eyes panned over the dancefloor, he couldn't help but notice a pair of Nautolans spinning and twirling to the familiar beat of Alderaan Twist, a particular favorite of his back in the day.

A mischievous thought, perhaps birthed by the latest ingestion of alcohol, popped into his mind and with a cocky smirk, he turned to the Twi'lek beside him. "Say, I know it's been a while, but I'd like to



see how well you used to dance, back when you still did it as a profession. You see, I was also a bit of a dancer before I had to leave for medical school.”

“Is that a challenge, Dr.Velcott?” Tali smirked with a raised eyebrow.

“Please, call me Dr.Koliss. Dr.Welcott was my father. And no, it was not a challenge. *That* however...” He pointed at the dancefloor where the Nautolan couple were causing a bit of a scene with an outrageous display of dancing prowess, earning them applause from the other patrons. “...looks to be one. I mean, a former dancer like yourself can’t surely let those two steal the limelight?” He added with a cocky smirk.

“What do you mean, *former*?” She winked playfully while finishing her drink before taking his hand and leading him onto the dancefloor. “Just try to keep up, *Dr.Koliss*.”

The two moved closer to the Nautolans as the music seemed to pick up, the band sensing a new challenger approaching. Flexing her shoulders as she gave Koliss a confident smirk, Tali took an elegant, but firm stance with her flank facing her partner. Hands raised by her side, lekku perking up to mimic the gesture, she clapped her hands before beginning to circle the human like a predator.

For his part, Koliss knew this routine fairly well, letting her slip beyond his vision and waiting for his time, heel tapping to the beat. As she came around on the second pass, arms stretched out towards him, he reached out and grabbed a firm hold, pulling her closer before spinning her around in a pirouette and dipping her so low her lekku graced the floor.

Snapping back up as if drawn by elastic cords, Tali broke the contact with a step to his side, Koliss backing away as well as the two swayed to the music among the approving murmurs from the gathered crowd. Her hips swaying from side to side, hands held up above her head with her lekku adding to the titillating writhing of her supple form, Tali let the years she’d spent perfecting her art guide her. Despite the circumstances leading to her profficiency, she had always enjoyed dancing and made it apparent as the beat flowed through her like an organic force, body and sound melding into a seamless whole.

By her side, Koliss did his best to keep up, his steps not quite as fluent but nonetheless balanced and well measured as he too felt distracted by the mesmerizing lek-head swaying before him. Perhaps it was the music, the cheering crowd, the several cocktails consumed or maybe just the tantalizing lekku, but something drew him closer to her as he matched his steps with hers and slid his hands along her midriff.

Seemingly undisturbed, the Twi’lek responded in kind, her back arching in exceedingly scandalous ways, much to the annoyance of the Nautolan couple trying their best to keep up. The flirtatious tone of their dancing, technically pure and pristine, failed to measure up to this new contestant of unbridled passion and raw emotion.

The music reaching its crescendo, the beat pounding through their bodies as gleaming pearls of sweat adorned Tali’s lekku like a string of silver pearls, the Twi’lek grasped his hand and raised it above, spinning around with her dress rising up almost too high. Halting the motion abruptly as the music reached its peak with a slam of her foot onto the floor, she wrapped her arm around the back of his neck and pulled him down with her into a low dip, her lekku rising to teasingly cover their faces while the brass horn blared its final lingering tunes, what exactly took place behind the lek forever left to the viewers’ imaginations.

The crowd exploded in a shower of applause and adulation, the Nautolan couple quietly retreating to a more crowded part of the dancefloor while Koliss finally pulled his Valentine back up. "Vow, Dr.Koliss. I must say I'm impressed. You heldt your own quite vell out there." She smiled with an approving gaze at the red-faced human who did his best not to pass out from the exhaustion.

"Thanks. You. Too. Tali." He wheezed, the collar of his dress jacket feeling uncomfortably tight all of a sudden as the Twi'lek gave an amused giggle.

"Come on, I think ve earnedt ourselves a few more drinks." She winked, leading the grateful human back towards the bar. A few moments later they were nursing a pair of refreshing cocktails and Koliss' condition was swiftly improving. Having loosened his collar a tad, the beads of sweat had stopped flowing and his face was slowly returning to its normal color.

"Vell then, I think ve showedt those two, yes?" Tali chuckled before taking another sip of the greenish cocktail before her, tasting cucumber and meiloroon. "Now that ve've indulgedt my passion, vhat couldt ve do to indulge one of yours?" She asked, her coy tone of voice and glimmering gaze causing the human to struggle for words for a few moments. He had always suspected there was more to her than met the eye, but the way he'd progressively lost control of the date, and his mind, to her was proof enough that she had done a bit more than just danced for a living.

"Umh..." He muttered, trying his best to clear out the numerous suggestions that almost slipped off the tip of his tongue, many of which, he was sure, would have earned him a faceful of green cocktail and an outraged Twi'lek. "Well I doubt we can find a patient to operate on at this hour and though I do some of my best work after a few, I guess we should not press my luck."

"Oh? So playing doctor vas on your mind?" Tali winked, causing the human to almost choke on his drink, much to her amusement. Letting out a vivid chuckle, the Twi'lek shook her head as she sipped her drink. "Oh you're so predictable. Come on, Mr.Etiquette. Show me your Dark Side." She winked playfully, ordering another set of shots as Koliss tried to wipe away some of the drink he'd spilled from his chin.

"You... are really something, you know that Tali?" He sighed, though did not seem upset as the bartender poured them a pair of golden yellow shots. "Still, let it not be said I do not abide my lady's wishes. However, be warned that what will follow is your own fault, hmm?" He replied as he took the shot and held it up.

The chuckling Twi'lek picked up her own and raised it up as well. "Give me your best shot, Dr.Koliss." Words she would soon learn to regret.

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"Pull yourself together, Koliss! Ve're in public!" Tali hissed, though in reality no-one paid them any mind, the scene all too common especially on a night like this. "And vill you stop that? They're sensitive!" She snapped as the man she continued to escort back towards their hotel seemed mesmerized by the lek bobbing and waving in front of his face like an anglerfish's lure, his ill-aimed hands making clumsy attempts to snatch it.

"I'm... urp, terribly sorry. But... they're quite fascinating. You know? I've always wondered how they work and what their purpose is... urp, I mean beyond the obvious." Koliss blurted a semi-coherent reply. One of the better ones he'd managed over the past thirty or so minutes.

“And what purpose is that, Dr.Koliss?” She grunted, finding renewed strength within her to keep the man from stumbling and hurting himself.

“Why... to look enticing of course.” He replied with a boyish grin before adding. “And it’s working...”

The flash of pure redness that flared upon the Twi’lek’s cheeks spread all the way to her lekku, stunting her for words as she merely stared at the drunken human in dumbstruck shock. He merely giggled, seemingly oblivious to his own words or the reaction they’d caused.

“And it’s funny to say too... Lekku.” He paused for a moment and tried his best to pronounce the word once more, seeming to savor each syllable. “Lek-ku. Lekku. Leeekkk...kuuu”

“Alright, that’s enough of that!” The peeved Twi’lek muttered, slapping her lek across his face for a soft yelp from the infuriating human as she hauled him the final steps up to the hotel room.

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The following morning the surprisingly perky Twi’lek and a depressingly hungover Human made their way back to Ol’Val. Koliss dozing off or staring blankly through the window for most of the shuttle ride, Tali couldn’t help but smile to herself at the sight of nature’s revenge on her brave Valentine. He’d be alright after a while, she reckoned, and the slight karmic revenge for tugging on her lekku was an added bonus in her mind. He hadn’t earned that right, yet.

The shuttle touching down in Ol’Val among a cluster of others like it, the passengers disembarked in a haphazard mess of various states of sickness. It seemed their night had not been one of a kind at least as far as entertainment and choice of beverages was concerned. Standing at the portside where they’d departed the day before, Koliss had recovered enough to stand a bit straighter though the bright beams from the control towers still seemed to irritate him a great deal.

“Well, Ms.Sroka, I guess this is the part where we say goodbye, for now.” He muttered, straightening his scuffed jacket that was still, amusingly, buttoned one row off. “My apologies for the way we ended yesterday. I shouldn’t have taken that last... those last cocktails. It got a bit out of hand. Sorry.” He coughed, looking genuinely sorry for ruining her evening.

The Twi’lek simply smiled and shook her head. “No needt to apologize, Koliss. I likedt seeing you cut loose for a change.” She smirked. “Andt you are quite forgiven, on one condition.”

He gave her a quizzical expression. “That ve do this again sometime. Before next Valentine’s.” Tali smirked, pecking a kiss on his cheek. “Until then, Dr.Koliss!” She smiled, waving goodbye with her right lek mimicking the gesture before turning around and disappearing into the crowd of pedestrians.