

She kept waiting for something to go wrong.

The hybrid couldn't help it, really. Her anxiety was a constant, low buzz crawling under her skin, electric and faint on her fur. She smiled when she needed to and she knew she was saying things but it all sort of washed together while her bridal party fussed around her.

"Here ve go! All done! Don't you look perfect?"

Zujenia blinked back to the present. Tali's hands in her hair had been surprisingly soothing, the Twi'lek so well trained in massage, allowing her to drift in the hum of her mental static without tensing too much over all the different people touching her— Diy had been doing her makeup while Tali fixed her curls and somewhere in the corner her mother was pinning up a hole in her dress for her tail that the designers had forgotten.

Amber eyes flicked to the mirror in front of her and...stared.

"Um."

The door kicked open, and in waltzed her last bridesmaid, Ivoshar padding at her heels.

"Oi, I found booze, frakking finally, everybody get a sip before we gotta march— oh Shadows, what the shit did you do?"

"Vhat?!" Tali demanded hotly. "Is the most I'm demandt style this season!"

"For who, lekheads? Oh, move over, I'll do it. And you, Kif, we said subtle!"

Diyarian didn't scowl at Satsi, but Zujenia knew the lazy grin she put on was a mask for one.

"I think she looks great."

"But does she think she looks great? Eh, Spotsie?"

The half-Ryn blinked back to reality again. Looked at her reflection. Couldn't seem to summon up the upset she knew she might otherwise feel. It was all very...far away.

"It's fine," she said quietly, and didn't notice the flurry of whispering that ensued.

"Look what you did!"

"Is not my fault!"

"She's just nervous, ain't a big deal—"

"Children," snapped Vai, coming out from behind the mannequin. "Out."

"But—"

"Out."

The door opened and closed again. Footsteps. Then weathered, furred hands on her shoulders, her scalp. Fingers unknotted her white locks from two tails above each ear and gently scraped them into a loose, passable bun. A few curls spring free, lazily framing her face. Vai had never been a woman concerned with appearance, a trait she'd passed on to her daughter, but she made an effort.

The Run matron finished and came around to the vanity, picked up a cloth, and started wiping at her face. Zujenia held still, leaned a little into her mother, trembled.

"You're alright, girl," Vai muttered. "Chin up, now."

She tilted her head, realized belatedly it had been metaphorical, and blew out a long sigh.

"I should be happy."

"You're allowed to be damn well whatever you are. But don't be afraid. You're alive, he's alive, just make the most of that."

"I'm waiting for— for something. Mom, something always happens! My master— she nearly died, then she DID die. Tali was stabbed. Uji and Satsi got bombed. Lucine was shot. *Kord was shot*. It's never going to stop, why would it stop today?"

"Then we'll deal with it. But worrying won't help. Come on, girl, you've got a walk to take." And with no more fussing, Vai pulled her by her hands out of her seat, hugged her tightly, and then steered her towards the mannequin. "You, harlot, get back in here," she called over her shoulder.

The door cracked back open, and a scowling Satsi stepped in.

"How'd you know I was even there?" muttered the Human, and the medic ignored her.

"Help her up while I lace," the Ryn directed, and Satsi grumbled but complied, giving Zuji one scarred hand as she stepped up onto another stool and then down into her dress when it was presented for her. The Human didn't let go, though, not even when she was back firmly on the ground.

"I got your back," the Tameike sister said, soft, meeting amber eyes with brown, and Zujenia was grateful.

But also.

Her gaze narrowed while Vai did buttons and tied ribbons.

"We said no weapons, Satsi. What are you carrying?"

"Nothing."

"Satsi."

"Okay, three knives."

*"Satsi."*

"Frakking— I shouldn't have lowballed, frak. Fine. Eight."

"On the table. Now. All of them."

"But—"

"No! Nobody is coming to my wedding armed. I'm not letting anyone walk in with a blaster just so they can hurt Kord again. Put. Them. On. The. Bloody. Table."

Satsi cursed long and hard while she pulled blades out of *places*. Her robe-like outfit had long sleeves and a full, floor length, straight skirt, but it was still tight and corseted, and the hybrid didn't know where the weapons were coming from.

They made a clinking, shiny stack next to her bouquet, though.

The half-Ryn looked to the heavens.

"Where's that drink you promised my nerves?"

Satsi handed her a flask. She unscrewed the cap, took a gulp, and coughed. The buttons against her back strained.

"Careful!" Vai barked.

"Sorry," replied her daughter sheepishly. She passed back the container, which Satsi tucked away somewhere. Probably where a knife had been.

"Alright, let's go. You're good," said her mother. Zujenia took a deep breath and turned to take one last look in the full mirror, and her breath caught.

"Yes, you are that pretty," Satsi whispered, and nudged her. "C'mon. Gotta go."

"W-wait," the hybrid gasped. "One more thing."

She rushed back to her bags by the vanity, rummaging, until she found her prize: two lengths of fabric. One was a purple ribbon, and she tied it around the bun of her hair. The other was a blue blindfold, well-worn and faintly sparkly. That one, she tied around her wrist. Touched briefly. Smiled at.

Her eyes got wet. She rubbed them and spun back around.

"You look beautiful," Vai told her, touching her cheek. They smiled at each other.

She didn't have time to be anxious after that. Everything began happening very quickly. Eilen arrived driving the carriage-like speeder that would take her to the chapel they'd erected on the Parade Grounds a short distance away, under the gaze of Atyiru's statue and in honor of the Ryn Gathering that had once hosted there. She and her bridal party piled in, Tali and Diy cooing at her. They set off, and in seconds, it seemed, were there. Her bridesmaids went first, and then Vai, who helped her down, and then she was walking arm in arm with her mother, following the other women. Music was playing, she knew, and everything around her was beautiful— poles tied in ribbons and wreathed in flowers, small fires burning merry, people and smiling faces. Behind her came her own daughter and Samantha on Kelviin's shoulders, the former giggling and happy in a poofy white dress to match Zujenia's and the latter seeming to have taken the ring bearer title literally, having snuck a headband with furry brown ears on in with her own clothes.

But Zuji was hardly aware of any of it.

Just of the gray eyes that met hers from up at the altar and the brilliant smile that broke over his face.

They reached them. Uji escorted Vai to her seat, then went back to stand abreast Kord. Celevon smiled, and Strong was bawling openly. Satsi, Tali, and Diy lined up across from the men. Ivoshar barked once, low, the massive cythraul actually brushed and wearing, it seemed, a blue bowtie. His intelligent eyes gleamed with a sorrowful sort of happiness.

Zujenia looked to Kord, who took her hands, and suddenly, she felt the ground again. Her anxiousness faded into the background too along with the rest. There was just this. Just them.

"Beautiful," Kord was whispering to her, tears gleaming in his fur around his eyes. His smile was so wide.

Turel said things, they said things. They'd written vows, and recited them, but she didn't retain it. She barely remembered each word she said once it left her lips. There was just their hands, squeezing tight, holding on, shaking and happy. Someone handed them rings, and he put one on her, and she on him, and then finally they stepped closer and their lips met and the distant cheers meant nothing next to how their wet cheeks were brushing and they were grinning too hard to properly kiss.

They turned, walked back down the aisle. More happy faces. More cheers. They didn't get back into the speeder; instead they just walked as a group to the dance floor and tables and chairs that had been also set up close by, tent shading things from the intense tropical sun or any sudden island storms. Kord kept an arm tight around her, and she turned her head to press a kiss to the top of his white hair.

She was just starting to come back to herself as they all got seated and food started being served, so of course, that was when the Force buzzed a warning.

"Get down!" yelled Kordath, and yanked them under the table seconds before plasma burned through the air. Shouts erupted, and more shots came, but they broke against an invisible barrier as Uji threw a hand out towards them.

"I FRAKKING CALLED IT!" his wife and sister screamed, standing up, ripping open her dress in one swift motion, and vaulting over the table. She had a vibrodagger in each hand.

*Of course she did*, Zuji thought, scowling. But somehow, as Satsi threw herself at the assailant currently running for the brush and tackled him with a whoop, the hybrid didn't feel mad. Not even distressed.

She laughed.

Kordath peered at her in concern.

"Uh, luv? Light o me life? Ya alright now?"

"I'm fine, Kord. Actually, I feel better, finally. It was the waiting that was killing me. But now it's over so... Now we can just celebrate, right?"

The man with the rifle started screaming and very quickly stopped. Neither of them looked. The wedding party could handle all that.

"Aye... Now we can just celebrate."

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A few hours later, once arrests had been made, furniture had been rightened, children had been soothed, and food, delicious food, had been served, they all mingled and chattered. Zujenia tossed her bouquet, which the extremely tall Eilen caught easily, and promptly bit her hand until she passed out, bright red, when Leeadra winked at her. They had their first dance, then three more, until Zujenia was nearly crying with giggles, and then they cut into the cake.

The guests started to disperse more amongst themselves, and the bride and groom broke off long enough to politely mingle. Zujenia watched from the corner of her eye as Satsi approached, tucking knives, of course, back into holsters that were revealed by the rips running all the way up to above her hip.

"I'm surprised you didn't just start tossing grenades," Zuji muttered into her champagne when the Human reached her, and Satsi actually...*blushed*.

She rubbed a hand through her mussed hair. "Don't get me wrong, I frakking would've, but. Uh, about that."

"About... What?"

"Let's wait for Kordy."

Apprehension rising, the hybrid nodded and hiked up her miles of white skirt, sending her fian—*husband* a mental nudge to catch his attention. He turned away from consoling Strong for his 'dishonor to the Bleu service and Garmis name' to trot over to the two women.

"Wot is it, missus?" he asked, smiling, and damn, was it charming.

"Aww," Satsi cooed when Zuji kissed his cheek.

"Satsi has something to tell us, apparently," the halving muttered, and Kordath immediately went stiff. The Human rolled her eyes and threw up her hands.

"Oi, frak you two! Why's it gotta be bad cause it's me?" she demanded. Then, she scowled, but it was much closer to a pout. "Okay, fine, shit, but *this* isn't bad."

"It has to do with grenades, I'm not convinced," Zujenia said, and Satsi blushed yet again. Kord noticed and gawked. It really was a rare sight.

"It's not about the grenades, dammit! Well, not exactly. I just— shitfrak, I had a whole plan for this, *ugh*, just— here."

She pulled an envelope out from her corset — and the Force knew how it got in there along with all the knives *and* her cleavage — and extended it to them. When neither took it, she shook it at them.

"It's your wedding present, you jackasses."

"Luv ya too, Red," Kord snorted, and finally took the thing. He licked his thumb and deftly broke the seal, pulling out a...grainy black and white holoprint? "Uh, it's...um. Nice?"

He turned it more to Zuji, obviously hoping to be rescued from offending their...temperamental...friend. After a moment of staring, Zujenia gasped.

Her eyes widened. Her heart stopped. She covered her mouth with one hand and felt the tears springing up.

"Zuj?" Kord yelped in concern, but amber eyes went to Satsi, who was smiling, strained, and nodded.

"I didn't pull any bombs 'cause I got some precious cargo," she murmured, gentle and teasing.

"It worked?"

"It worked."

"*What* worked?" her husbrynd cried.

"It's a s-sonogram, Kord," Zuji whispered. "The implantation... It took. We. That."

"You're frakking pregnant, Bleus. Congrats," Satsi jumped in, slapping the Ryn on the back.

"You think I'd willingly be sober for this?"

Zujenia dropped to her knees, dress and mud be damned. Kord sat right down on his butt next to her. Satsi smiled, bent over, *gently*, and hugged them both.

"Good day?" she asked, a tremble in her voice that belied her own tears, and the hybrid swallowed. The blindfold on her wrist sparkled in the sun.

It wasn't what she'd been expecting.

It was so much better.

"Yes," she croaked, and buried her face somewhere in the mess of muscled limbs and chests and white hair and gray fur. "Yes, it's wonderful."

Kord lifted his head, hooted, "I'ma be a pop!" at the top of his lungs in sheer disbelieving joy, and went right back to hugging his wife. Zujenia laughed.

This time, she heard the answering cheers loud and clear.

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