

*Pat. Patpatpat. Pat pat. Pat.*

"Marry. Marry. Maaaarry. Wake up." A poke in his arm added to the tiny paw batting at his cheek, *patpatpat*. The Hapan opened his too-blue eyes to look at his partner.

"I am awake."

And he had been, since she'd first climbed out of bed, and then again when Fela moved up the bed, and then out to follow Atyiru, and then back up to make herself at home on his chest, tucking her wet, cool little berry nose into his face. And then to circle around, and plop her fluffy cloud of a tail and butt on his face.

He could sense Ivoshar's amusement from where the other cythraul lounged on the floor.

"Shhh, I know," Atyiru whispered, as if she had any reason to, like the world would crack open if she did not. Her finger pressed to her lips, then to his, shushing him in turn, and she lowered her voice even further to say, sing-song, "Marry, guess what day it is."

His clockwork mind immediately supplied the information, and he recited — in a whisper, because he would do anything, anything for her, always — said date.

"Yes," the Miraluka replied, and her smile was so bright and sly, full of secrets to be shared with him. "Which means— it's Life Day! Sithmas!"

A pause.

"No it isn't," Marick says, and she hushes him harshly, and so he just sighs, and then corrects, "Happy Sithmas."

"*Happy Sithmas!*" Atyiru squealed, and dove, hugging him around the neck and nuzzling in. Fela was dislodged, a fact she clearly did not appreciate, as she turned her nose up at her masters and put her back to them at the end of the bed.

"What do you want to do for the holiday?" the Hapan merely asked once he was released but not before pressing a kiss to her short curls, already resigned to the mischief. His gaze flicked about, cataloging. It was not yet dawn; even resurrected, the farmer's daughter rose before the sun, and how anyone continued to think Atyiru was not Atyiru, he did not know. Still, he could hear some stirrings of the shadowport outside their little home.

"The moon told me it snowed in Estle today, on the peak," the Miraluka confided, still bright and broken and bound and determined to make happiness nonetheless. "Fela has never seen snow, has she? I thought we would take her."

The small, marshmallow-poof of a wolf flicked her ears back towards them at this, half-turning, before she seemed to catch herself and remember she was ignoring them. Marick's lips twitched.

"No, she hasn't."

"Then it's a plan!" squealed Atyiru, clapping gleefully, and from somewhere on her person, produced a fuzzy set of earmuffs that she stuck over his head with no further preamble.

The master assassin did not pause or flinch or blink. He just sat up with her and nodded once, and said, "I will get our cloaks."

-X-

The shuttle was stifling, landing on tropical Selen had them sweating through multiple layers even when both masters of the Force were controlling their body temperatures, and Fela chewed through the scarf Atyiru had made her before they even got out the door.

It was more than worth it, though, to see the cythraul pup run in excited circles and leap directly, boldly into a snowbank only to immediately disappear into it with a muted *poof*.

Atyiru howled with laughter. Fela just howled. Ivoshar padded over easily in icy crystals up to his chest, dipped his head, and lifted the smaller of the pair out. Undeterred, Fela merely shook out her coat, which was immediately crusted again with possibly every snowflake to have ever existed, he was sure, scientifically, and went about leaping through the drifts and yapping happily, chomping at clumps of snow.

And Marick—

Marick smiled when Atyiru pulled him out into the mountain cliffs with her and tackled him into the snow too, making angels and snowpeople and kissing him with cold lips that did not taste like tears only because she could not cry, wishing him — asking him for — a happy holiday for every one she had missed.

"You need never apologize to me," he told her, because that was the way of things for them now, it seemed, him giving back to her to share everything she had once given so freely, so fearlessly, to him. These were their gifts, on their Life Day That Wasn't. Each other. So he told her, and she said back,

*"I love you too."*