

Doctor, Doctor

The aftereffects of anesthesia wrapped Katrila's mind like the silken sheets of the canopy bed around her body in her finely appointed quarters aboard the *Katnip*. She drifted in and out of consciousness, the soft lighting that cast a warm glow on the ornate furnishings blending into flashbacks of blasterfire and the searing pain of a vibroknife in her side.

The memory of her injury felt vivid, a sharp contrast to her current mental state. After months of tense negotiations she had just closed a deal for access to one of her Outer Rim trade routes with an exotic wildlife dealer. They were celebrating at the Azure Moon, an upscale restaurant that served some of his endangered wares, when all hell broke loose. It was unclear who was responsible, but some of her associates fell to the volley of blaster bolts and she had been stabbed. Luckily, Jax knew exactly what to do when she activated the distress signal; the sometimes pilot, sometimes bodyguard carried out the emergency protocol to the letter, extricating her from the situation and paging the nearest of many surgeons she kept on call in various corners of the Galaxy.

Tagrei Sula had an impeccable resume. A Rebel veteran of the Galactic Civil War, his experience with some of the Hutt cartels had proven his discretion. He lived up to expectations, reporting for duty tout de suite. His hands had moved with precision and care as he tended her wound, and his bedside manner shone through. The last thing she remembered before the darkness claimed her was a deep, calm voice assuring her she would be alright.

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The first thing Katrila saw upon awakening was a tall, golden-skinned Devaronian seated next to her bed. A monitor displaying her vitals beeped steadily as she stirred. She began to stretch, but winced in pain.

“Careful, you’ll tear your stitches,” Tagrei said, his baritone voice deliberate and measured. She had never heard the accent before. It was distinctive, melodic. Charming. “How are you feeling?”

“I’ve been through worse,” she strained. Truthfully, this had been her closest call since being ambushed on Togoria. The whole ordeal had shaken her up. Though her senses were still muddled, she felt the medic’s warm hands gently checking her wounds. He had moved to her side and pulled the covers back without her noticing.

“You’re healing well,” he said, applying more bacta and gingerly replacing her bandages. His fingers lingered as he looked up at her with a smile. Even though she had never laid eyes on his angular features, amazonite eyes, or curved onyx horns, something about the visage felt familiar. “The procedure went smoothly. You just need to take it easy for a while.”

*Yeah, right.* Katrila avoided idleness if at all possible. When building a business, there’s always more to be done. And in the quiet moments, she couldn’t avoid some of the darker trails her thoughts followed. The regrets, the longing for home, the loneliness, the urge to escape it all for some tropical planetary paradise...

The lust.

Tagrei continued to check her vitals, fiddling with the machines hooked up to her and pressing buttons on the screen. She couldn't help but notice the precision and care with which his fingers moved. Other doctors had treated her for various ailments, of course, but not with his effortless grace and practiced expertise. They had examined her, but their touch felt cold and joyless. But she still felt the warm tingle of *his* fingers buried in her fur, caressing her skin. His quiet confidence and calm authority drew her in, stirring something deep within her.

It could just be the kind of professional demeanor she would pay handsomely for, but she sensed—she hoped for—a hint of something more, an undercurrent of affection. “Thank you,” she purred softly, her voice betraying a hint of the emotions swirling within her.

Tagrei looked back to his patient, eyes meeting hers with an intensity that sent a thrill down her spine. “I’m just doing my job,” he said. That his gaze remained on her for a beat too long suggested otherwise.

“Still.” Katrila’s eyelids fluttered involuntarily. They felt so heavy, but she didn’t want the moment to end.

The Devaronian’s lips curved into a small smile. He squeezed her hand, sending a ripple through her tummy. “Get some rest. I’ll be nearby if you need anything.”

As her consciousness faded, her room didn’t dissolve. The doctor remained with her, climbing onto the expansive bed. A hungry look crossed his blue-green eyes as he began to massage her shoulders, feeling for tension and knots. When he found them, he bent over to kiss her neck softly...

For the first time in a long while, she felt a spark of something more than survival and ambition. An ember of connection, of desire burned within her. Time would tell if it would catch flame.