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Knights In Pink Satin

by Carolyn Golledge

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Author's Note:

This is comedy-farce and not meant to be taken seriously. Tells the tale of what would happen if a Luke-fan joined the Rebellion. (The punch line concerns the friend upon whom I based this story, suddenly switching from SW to Beauty and The Beast,) Enjoy!

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Han Solo had heard the rumors. Hell, the whole base had heard the rumors! But only Han Solo dared use them as ammunition against his Jedi bond brother. To Han it seemed only fair. The gods knew he took enough teasing, a lot of it from Luke. The lady-charmer Solo, now a married man, head-over-heels in love with Leia. The smuggler and the princess, more often than not seemed to be totally unaware of anyone else at a festival or celebration; so lost were they in the other's eyes as they danced, talked or laughed together.

Luke delighted in taunting Solo about his uncharacteristically sappy demeanor. Even now, seated in the pilot's seat of his other great love, the FALCON, Han knew his very thoughts had produced the usual foolish grin. It was hard to believe his luck. How had he lived so long, ignorant of such happiness? He shook his head, still smiling, and glad that only Chewbacca was there to witness his 'I'm thinking of Leia again' expression. His huge furry shag of a partner was just sentimental enough not to tease Han too often.

But Skywalker was another story all together. Luke had been the reluctant recipient of years of Organa-Solo fallout, and several Han Solo patented cynical "never get married, never trust a woman" speeches. Damn Jedi had a memory like a Kiressi soothsayer! He could even quote word perfect!

Han completed the adjustments to the flight-board and leaned back in his chair. He rubbed his hands together, gleefully anticipating Skywalker's comeuppance. Luke knew the rumors all too well, since they directly concerned him and he was desperate to avoid their source. "Too late, kid!" Solo chuckled "Prepare to meet your destiny!"

Chewbacca, hearing Solo apparently talking to himself, turned and looked at the man. He winced as he saw that all too familiar light of mischief flecking the hazel eyes with gold. "Han?" he honked warily. "What are you thinking?"

The expression Solo presented as he turned about was enough to make Chewbacca feel great sympathy for Skywalker. It was obvious that Luke was the target, Han had owed him a prank for several weeks and had been itching to find just the right form of retaliation.

Solo chuckled wickedly. "Revenge, Chewie old pal. Revenge. Luke's about to get his. Just sit back and watch a master at work."

Chewbacca rumbled a sound of pained exasperation, but secretly he was dying of curiosity. "What are you planning?"

"If I told ya, it'd spoil the fun." Solo winked. "Relax and enjoy." He got to his feet. "Take over here, will ya? We should be coming up on Endor soon. I'm goin' back to have a few words with one of our passengers."

The Wookiee stared at his friend's back. It was several long seconds before he was able to turn back to his work. Remembering the new recruits they'd picked up on Dantooine, Chewbacca suddenly knew exactly what Solo was up to. He flinched sympathetically for Luke's sake, then gave in to a rumbling chortle. This would be good. Chewbacca had heard the rumors too, but now they were rumors no longer. There was living proof of that in the passenger quarters.

As Han approached the appropriate doorway, he tried to rearrange his expression so that he seemed no more than the polite ship's captain checking on his passengers. It wouldn't do to enter the woman's cabin still unable to refrain from chuckling to himself ever few seconds. She'd probably recommend that he see a psych-med. He stopped at her door, straightened his jacket, ran his hand over his hair and swallowed back the last of his grin. He pushed the visitor button and refreshed his memory by reading the name card above the privacy lock. Kandy Soames. Right! Even the name was perfect. Kandy! Oh he couldn't wait until he saw the kid's face.

"Yes?" a woman's deep, sensuous voice asked.

Solo blinked, cleared his throat and spoke into the comlink. "Miss Soames? This is General Solo. I'd like to talk to you for a few minutes, if you don't mind. Maybe there's some things you'd like to ask about the Endor base? Y'know, what sort of things to expect ... as a... new ..... recruit?" His words trailed away in the surprise.

The door whooshed open before he'd finished speaking. He had to struggle to stop himself from backing away as the cabin's occupant fairly leaped at him in her eagerness to admit him. Maybe he'd gotten this all wrong, maybe she was one of his closet admirers! He stood staring uncertainly at her. She was very beautiful, all bust, hips and narrow waist, wrapped in some kind of flimsy, clinging material. A night robe. Han swallowed hard, pulled his eyes away from her cleavage and politely looked her in the face. He was instantly rendered speechless by a pair of huge, almost translucent blue eyes, long dark eye-lashes fluttering across them. Beneath the eyes was a set of the most luscious red lips he'd ever seen. Her mouth was slightly open and he could swear she was panting. Her hair was long and lustrous, gleaming bronze and gold beneath the door light. Her hand came up to move a lock of hair back over her shoulder and he caught sight of an enamel-shelled hair brush. So she'd been prettying herself up for arrival at the base.

"Do come in, General Solo," Kandy purred.

Han's feet froze beneath him. He was not at all sure he should enter the temptress' den. "Ahh," he stammered, "Maybe this could wait till later." Then he caught sight of all the evidence he needed. On the gleaming blue back of the hairbrush was lovingly embossed in gold the one letter, L. Han smiled and the woman's lips curved in response. Gods, she was a knock-out! A real man-killer. Maybe even Luke didn't deserve this. To hell with that! he thought. All's fair in love and war, and I owe you one, Junior!

Kandy was smiling pleadingly at him. "Please don't disappoint me now, General," she said huskily. "I am so excited to be going to Endor at last, and I would love to hear anything you have to say that might help me to fit in."

"Sure," Solo nodded. Full speed ahead and damn the proton-torps! he decided as he stepped through the door. You asked for it, kid! "Anything to oblige a beautiful woman," he said.

"Why, General Solo," Kandy giggled girlishly, "you are just as charming as I've heard." Solo's smile tightened nervously. She waved at a chair. "Do sit down. Tell me all about Endor."

"What would you like to ... hear ... about ... first?" Han's voice failed him as his gaze fell upon her night-stand. His bondbr6ther's face smiled boyishly up at him. There had been a lot of publicity vids taken of Luke after the Endor victory and

the swearing in of the interim Government but Han had never seen this particular one before. Surely Luke wasn't really that handsome. Gods, he was still a kid, wasn't he? That twinkle of mischief in those big baby blues would have done a Corellian proud.

Kandy was very quick at noticing what had captured the General's attention. She was not in the least embarrassed. She was very proud of her favorite 2D of her hero. And she had every reason to own one. Skywalker's oh-so- handsome face was used on recruitment calls all over the sector. It was the real reason she'd chosen to leave home and join the new government's administrative section. She picked up the photograph, caressed it lovingly, and handed it to the general who still seemed unable to tear his eyes away from it. "Is it a good likeness of Commander Skywalker?" she asked.

Han had to swallow a few times before he could answer. "Ahh, yeah. It's a real good likeness," he said as he took the thing in his hands. He could get used to Luke's face grinning impishly at him as if he knew what Solo was up to, but he could not quite accept the way the vid-frame was decorated. It's five centim gilded edge was covered with pink satin and heavily interwoven with lace ribbon. And he'd thought the rumors about a Skywalker cult of female worshippers had been exaggerated. As finally he was able to look away from the 2D, he realized just how understated the rumors were -- if Kandy's room was any guide.

It was only a three day journey from Kandy's home to Endor, but she had unpacked all her mementos and decorated her cabin with them anyway. On every wall, ledge and shelf, there was at least one reminder of Luke. Holo's, 2Ds, and artists' impressions, some of the latter showing Luke in various stages of undress. Han gave up all pretense of nonchalance. He sat and gawked.

"Lovely aren't they?" Kandy approved as she watched the Corellian's reaction. "But this one is my favorite. The artists do their best, and they have wonderful material to work with, but they just don't seem to be able to do him justice as does a camera, don't you agree?"

"Huh?" Han blinked. Being surrounded by a dozen or so Lukes wasn't good for his mental equilibrium. Desperately he looked away from them, back to the woman. Her cleavage provided welcome distraction. "Uh," he mumbled, "you ... is this the reason why you joined up?" She reached out and he gave back the 2D, glad to be rid of it. "You, ahh, you've heard about Commander Skywalker?"

Kandy sighed and sat down on the bunk bed. "Oh yes. I hear every word that's broadcast about him. But what they say is so... sketchy. He's such a charismatic leader, so brave." She paused. "And so alone." She touched a gentle hand to Luke's smiling face and replaced him on the nightstand. "If he sees fit to risk his life for the Alliance and the Jedi way, the least I can do is offer my support, don't you think so, General Solo?"

"Uhh, I guess so," Han mumbled.

Kandy blushed. "Forgive me General. I do tend to prattle and I want so much to hear what you have to say." She leaned forward eagerly. "You are Commander Skywalker's bondbrother, aren't you?" Solo nodded. "Then tell me, what is he really like? Are all those stories true?"

Han blinked for a moment, his head still spinning. He searched for a focus and found it in remembering his mission. All those taunts Luke had made about him being a lady-killer were about to rebound right in his face. Luke had heard the rumors about women who adored him from afar. Nothing embarrassed him more. Solo grinned evilly as he imagined what the cool, composed Jedi Knight's reaction would be if he was actually introduced to one of his fans. He looked straight into Kandy's mesmerizing blue eyes and began to tell her the 'truth' about Luke Skywalker, Hero.

"Well," he said admiringly, "a five minute political broadcast can't really do him justice, as I'm sure you can imagine." Kandy nodded eager understanding. "The truth is hard to believe. I'm tellin' ya, the kid, uh, Commander Skywalker, is just so brave that he makes me feel proud to fight alongside him. Why I remember one time..."

An hour after his visit to Kandy's room, Han returned to the cockpit and brought the FALCON in to rest, home on Endor. He whistled and smiled to himself all the while, driving his partner mad with curiosity but refusing to say a word about his planned revenge.

It was after midnight at Endor Base. The new recruits were greeted by a bored, sleepy team of officials who checked their documentation and showed them to their quarters. Han waved goodnight to Kandy and headed for his own home at the edge of the village. Even his master plan to get Skywalker was forgotten in his eagerness to be with Leia again.

With the new day however, Han could think of little else. He hurried to the mess hall and the table where he, Luke, Chewbacca and Leia usually met for breakfast. Leia had awoken before him, left a note saying she'd enjoyed his home-coming and would meet him here after seeing to some calls at her office. Han strode through the door and smiled as he spotted Luke already at the table. Skywalker also saw him and called a cheery greeting, but his smile slipped a little as Han sat opposite him. Han grumbled to himself.

"Is something wrong?" Luke asked. "You seem a little preoccupied."

"It's nothin' kid," Han smiled his most innocent smile which only made Skywalker's

blue eyes darken further with suspicion. "I got in late last night and ahh, I didn't get much sleep. Leia was real glad to have me back." Han congratulated himself as immediately he threw Luke off the scent.

Somewhat embarrassed, Skywalker broke eye contact and began fidgeting with his knife and fork. "So," Luke asked. "did you have any problems locating the new recruits? How is the base on Dantooine coming along?"

Han was happy to join in the small talk, but he could barely contain himself. He knew that Luke knew he was up to something, but not what. It did his heart good to watch the younger man squirm. Chewbacca arrived and Han could tell that Luke picked up the same sense of anticipation from the Wookiee. Skywalker was beginning to feel most definitely nervous, especially when Han and his partner indulged in a few secretive, amused glances. Leia was a few minutes late. She was somewhat flustered and out of breath and as a result more beautiful than ever with her cheeks all flushed. Or so Han told her as she sat beside him and gave him a quick kiss, which he promptly corrected to a more thorough version.

Everyone exchanged greetings, ordered their food, then settled back' to enjoy it. Han waited and watched, looking for just the right moment to fire the first volley. The instant Luke had taken a rather oversized mouthful of bread and egg seemed about perfect. "Y'know, kid," he said, clearly, distinctly and with just enough of an edge to his words to attract Leia's and Chewie's attention. "I had no idea you'd look so good in lace and pink satin."

The volley struck dead on target. Luke's eyes bulged and his face purpled as he choked on his food, spitting some it out in sheer astonishment. Chewbacca patted him gently on the back and Leia gave him a 'Luke, how could you. I never knew!' stare that turned her brother's complexion from purple to vivid scarlet. He tried to speak but was too busy coughing. He took a swallow of water.

Leia turned her attention to Solo. He was eating with seemingly total disregard for his bondbrother's discomfort, but was wearing the most suspiciously smug expression Leia had ever seen even on his face. So this was Solo's revenge, huh? Or the beginnings there of. It seemed he had planned his assault as thoroughly as usual. Leia smiled and settled back to enjoy the fireworks. But it seemed she was not intended to be a passive spectator

Solo nudged her foot. She was not a diplomat for nothing. She caught on fast. She put on an injured expression and asked, "Why Luke, whatever would make you want to dress in lace and satin?" It was Solo's turn to choke as he struggled to hold back his laughter.

Luke finally regained his composure. "I do not!" he declared in an indignant tone that was not very effective as his voice squeaked with the after effects of his coughing. "I don't even own any!" His protests died away as Solo surrendered to his laughter. Skywalker straightened up and glared at his sister and her husband. "What's this all about?" he demanded.

Solo tried to regain an innocent expression. He failed but plunged on regardless. "Luke, I swear to you," he said solemnly. "You do look fantastic in lace. I've seen it." Skywalker opened his mouth to deny it, but Solo waved a hand. "Oh, you weren't wearing it, of course, but you were surrounded by it." He batted his eyelids flirtatiously and gave a good imitation of Kandy's sensuous voice. "You looked so cute!"

Skywalker's expression seemed to indicate that he thought now was the perfect time to surrender to the Dark Side and use its power to strangle his bondbrother. Leia giggled, Chewbacca snorted, and Han rambled on, blithely ignoring his peril.

"It was a 2D some woman had of you - on her nightstand yet!" He smirked. "She adores you. Remember all those rumors we've been hearing?" He paused for dramatic effect. "They're true! I've seen the proof!"

Luke's murderous expression disintegrated into one of sheer horror. "Where?" he pleaded. "Not here!"

Solo smiled serenely. "No, not here ... exactly. Around."

"Around where?"

Han frowned as though he were honestly trying to remember. "Sorry, I can't recall exactly."

"Han!!" Luke threatened. "You must remember something like that!"

Solo shrugged innocently, but his lips twitched. Leia made a choking sound as she smothered a giggle. "Why should I remember?" Solo replied. "It wasn't important to me, and I was real busy at the time. But, if it's gonna worry you, I'll try to track her down."

"No!" Luke said quickly. Suddenly he realized what was going on. "You've had your fun. Let's just forget it."

Solo's eyes rounded with an innocence that would have looked at home on a newborn baby. "Fun? I don't know what you're talkin' about, kid. But if you wanna drop it, that's fine with me." He went back to eating, but the gleam in his eyes and

the smile that still played about his lips made Luke feel very uncomfortable. It wasn't over yet.

Skywalker was left in this state of nervous anticipation all day. He saw Solo again at lunch, irritated by the smirk that decorated the Corellian's face when Luke admitted the reason why he'd ordered only a glass of milk. His stomach was giving him trouble, and Han knew full well that only happened when his Jedi friend was nervous.

If the mid-day meal was a loss, dinner was an absolute disaster. Luke should have seen it coming, would have but for the fact that it was routine for the four of them to share a special meal every tenth day. It always took place at Han and Leia's home, so Luke saw nothing amiss as he strode bravely up the flower-lined walk. He kept an eye out for booby-traps but was fairly certain there would be none - neither he nor Han would even consider pranks that could backfire and cause injury. There was always the possibility of a dousing with water or mud or some such thing, but to give credit where credit was due, Luke knew Han would never stoop to anything so unsophisticated. No, whatever torment Solo had in mind for him would be much more subtle and much more embarrassing - unless he could avoid it, but that would be difficult if he couldn't guess at the time, place or type of prank.

The crack at breakfast was his only clue. Something about looking cute? Thus emerged in his thoughts, Luke barely noticed when Threepio opened the door, took his jacket and led the way to the dining room.

"Hello Luke." Leia called. She gave him a kiss on the cheek. "Have a seat. There's some wine on the sideboard. Dinner's almost ready."

Luke studied the wine bottle suspiciously. Deciding it was safe, he opened it and poured himself some fortification for what was to come. There was a good chance it would be tonight, Solo was not known for patience even when relishing revenge. Luke carried his wineglass into the kitchen. "Where's Han?" he asked.

"Oh," Leia replied, not turning away from the programmer, "he should be here any minute."

Every one of Luke's survival instincts, Jedi and otherwise, sounded the alarm. Leia was keeping something from him. "What's he up to?"

"Up to?" Leia was struggling to maintain an appearance of ignorance. "I don't know what you mean. Here, carry this through to the table for me will you please?" She pushed a platter of cheese into his hands then turned to give instructions to the Dinner-Droid.

Defeated, Luke obeyed. He had just set the platter down when he heard Threepio fussing about trying to be in two places at once as he left the kitchen and hurried to answer the door.

"Keep y' britches on, Goldenrod," Solo called. "I don't need a guide in my own home. Is Luke here yet?"

"Yes, General," Luke heard Threepio answer. "May I announce your g..." The last word was abruptly cut off. Curious, Luke moved to the hallway and immediately collided with a buxom woman who had Solo's arm as he led her to the dining area.

"Ah, there you are Luke." Solo smiled victoriously. The trap was closed. Skywalker was already blushing furiously. Han bit back his laughter as he noticed that his bondbrother had spilled wine on Kandy's tightly stretched blouse. Luke picked up a napkin and apologized profusely, but he didn't dare actually try to wipe away the stain. Kandy's ample cleavage had him well and truly flustered.

"Threepio," Han called. He decided to be merciful before Luke spoiled his plan and died before the torture began in earnest. "Would you take care of that?"

"Certainly, sir." Threepio hastened to find a dry-sponge then dabbed at the dampened area.

"Thank you, Threepio," Kandy said. Her eyes had not left Skywalker for an instant.

Han made introductions. "Miss Kandy Soames, meet my wife, Princess Senator Leia Organa and my bondbrother, Commander Luke Skywalker."

Leia said a polite greeting, Kandy replied but her attention was obviously elsewhere. Leia smiled at Han and returned to the kitchen.

Kandy was practically hyperventilating. Her bust quivered as it rose and fell rapidly beneath the red shimmersilk of her blouse. She held out her hand. Luke smiled and squeezed it, and she sounded faint as she said, "I don't really need an introduction. Everyone knows about Luke Skywalker. But," she added, demurely lowering her dark eyelashes, "not many know he is even more dashing in person."

Luke turned an even more impressive shade of red. "Thank you, Miss Soames," he said between gritted teeth. He gave Solo a murderous glare over the woman's head and Solo winked back at him.

"Please, call me Kandy," the woman said.

"You look absolutely beautiful, Kandy," Luke complimented as he took her arm and led her to dinner. "This is an unexpected pleasure." He threw the word at Solo as he settled Kandy at the table.

"Thank you," Kandy replied. "I never expected to be here. I mean," she looked gratefully at Solo, "the General is most kind to invite me into his home."

Han smiled. "We're happy to have you here," he said, including Leia as she came into the room. Han went to her side and graciously moved her chair out for her. She looked up at him with a mixture of exasperation, sympathy for Luke, and anticipation. "I felt you should meet Luke." Solo added, "seein' as how you admire him so much."

"Oh, I do," Kandy admitted proudly. "And with good cause." She looked at Skywalker who was seated beside her, but his head was turned toward Solo. "There are so many exciting stories told about you, Commander."

Resigning himself to his fate, Luke gathered more courage than he had needed to attack the Death Star. He smiled at his admirer and said, "Please, call me Luke."

The evening crawled to a close and the torture ended. Luke could be grateful only that Han, Leia and Chewbacca (who called in later) were the sole witnesses to his embarrassment. Kandy regaled them all with elaborate stories of Skywalker's heroism. Whenever she faltered for words, which wasn't often, Solo prompted her. Luke made many attempts to change the subject, and mumbled modest denials which were quickly overridden by both his foes. But the worst came after Kandy had downed several glasses of wine and they all retired to the living area. Han made certain that Luke and she wound up sharing a sofa. The woman sat as close as possible and began discussing how lonely Luke must feel since he had the awful burden of restoring the Jedi Order single-handed. Surely it would be an easier task if he had a mate to console him, to offer encouragement and support?

Luke endured the conversation and the unwanted attention as best he could. As early as was in any way polite, he began making excuses to leave, saying he'd had a hard day and was very tired. When that didn't work he tried dropping hints that he had to start work early in the morning. He was allowed to escape only after Solo had tricked him into offering to escort Kandy back to her quarters. As she adjourned to the powder room, Luke cornered Solo. He was torn between the desire to strangle him or dismember him.

Solo, seeing a dangerous gleam in his friend's eye, backed off. "Now take it easy, kid," he pleaded. "It was only a joke!" Solo laughed nervously. "Sure."

where's your sense of humor! She's beautiful and she's crazy about you. You should thank me."

"Thank you??!!" Luke shouted. "I'd like to..." Whatever he had in mind was left unsaid as Kandy re-entered the room. She looked at him quest and he smiled and finished. "I'd like to thank you, Han, Leia, for a truly delightful evening. I hope I will be able to return the pleasure someday. Soon.."

The last word sounded strangely like a threat, but Kandy did not comment. She was too excited about the prospect of being alone with Luke all the way back to her room.

In the days that followed, Luke never again saw Kandy Soames. He made every excuse to refuse any calls or messages she left for him and went out of his way to avoid the area where she worked. It wasn't that he didn't like her exactly, and she certainly was pretty, it was simply that the hero worship routine embarrassed him to the point of being painful. He was relieved to discover that Solo had lost interest, he'd had his revenge, and saw no need to pursue it further. The Corellian also knew when it was wise not to push his luck.

The prank had been fair retaliation for the time two months ago when Luke had trapped Solo into a similarly embarrassing position. It had been a simple enough ploy. Luke had run across one of Solo's ex-lovers, an Illuvrian feather dancer, and had brought her to dinner without warning, just as had Han done with Kandy. Luke smiled as he recalled how Solo had blushed and glared as he tried to fend off the hints Illera dropped - within Leia's, hearing - of her past liaisons with Solo.

So Luke eventually calmed down, admitting that fair was fair, he and Han were now even, and peace would reign... at least for the time being. But Luke's trick had employed a willing accomplice. Illera had relished the prank as Luke explained it to her, then afterwards, she and Leia had had a good laugh at Solo's expense. Luke therefore assumed that Kandy Soames had also been aware of Solo's intent. He could not realize he was hurting her with his blatant evasions.

It was nine days after the dinner before he learned otherwise. He was sitting alone in his favorite meditation spot, a flower-strewn clearing deep in the forest, when he sensed a familiar aura approaching down the hill behind him. Happily, he broke trance, calling to Solo as he got to his feet and dusted off his slacks. "What brings you out here?" he asked as the Corellian came over to him. Solo looked uncharacteristically downcast.

"Hi, kid," he said dispiritedly. He sat down on a fallen log and began plucking at the moss growing atop it.

Luke watched and waited. When Solo simply sighed a few times and said nothing further, he sat beside him and asked, "Did you and Leia have another fight?"

Solo did not look up. "Nah. Nothin' like that. I feel like a fool."

"Oh?" Luke refrained from making some crack about that being nothing new. "Want to tell me about it?"

"That's what I came here for," Solo said heavily. "You remember that new recruit I introduced you to, Kandy Soames?"

If it weren't for the fact that Luke knew Solo was not faking his current mood he'd have been very suspicious. "How could I forget?"

Solo snorted. "No, I guess you wouldn't." He looked up into his friend's blue eyes. "She wasn't in on it, kid. I should have considered her feelings. I didn't think she'd take it so seriously, y'know? But she figured you liked her and now..."

Luke lowered his head to his hands. "She didn't know? Sands! She must think I'm the most ill-mannered ... "

"No, she doesn't," Solo cut him off. "She's got a mad crush on you. You could never be less than perfect in her eyes. She thinks it's herself. She thinks there's somethin' wrong with her. She's miserable."

"How do you know all this?"

"She brought some paperwork to my office day before yesterday. She looked unhappy; I asked her what was wrong and she burst into tears and told me everything. I thought about telling her it was only a prank, but that'd hurt her worse."

Solo stood and slapped his hand against a nearby tree trunk. "I'm an idiot! I never thought she'd take it so hard, but she's only young, and she's mad about you. I should have seen it coming. I never intended to hurt her."

"Of course you didn't," Luke consoled. He also got to his feet. "I'll go see her when she finishes work today." Han turned to face him, his expression hopeful. "You will?"

Luke smiled. "Sure, but you're coming too." Solo looked a little less happy. "We're going to have to make up some kind of story. You're the expert. We'll have to tell her that I'm interested in someone else, and you didn't know."

"Are you?" Han asked slyly. Skywalker glared at him. "Okay, okay, it sounds good. And you can prove to her that it's not personal by offering to take her out to dinner tonight."

Luke stiffened. "Sometimes Solo, you go too far."

Han shrugged and smiled, mustering all his famous charm. He placed an arm about his bondbrother's taut shoulders. "What can I say, kid? It's you Jedi types, you bring out the worst in me."

Luke snorted, then smiled. "All right, I take her out to dinner, but only this once."

As the sun lowered, casting long golden shadows through the tall trees, Han and Luke waited outside Kandy's place of employment. Finally she appeared, walking down the path toward them, her head lowered, shoulders stooped, not at all her usual bubbly self.

Han felt a stab of guilt. Luke nudged him and he stepped forward and called, "Kandy! Hey, Kandy? Can you spare a minute?" Her face lit up as she recognized him.

Luke was further back amongst the trees; she did not seem to notice him. He winced as he imagined what was in store for him. She joined Solo, and he led her to a nearby bench. They sat in uncomfortable silence for several long seconds before Han began trying to explain.

"There's somethin' I have to tell you," he mumbled. "I didn't mean for you to get upset after I introduced you to Luke the other night."

Kandy seemed distracted. She glanced at her wrist-chron, then shaded her face and peered down the walkway. "Hmm?" she said as she looked back to him. "Darn! I wish I could find that button. It popped off my blouse somewhere back there."

"Uh," Han blinked. He noticed that her blouse was gaping where it pulled tight over her breasts. He could see some white lacy material beneath. "Oh, that's too bad," he finished lamely. He looked over at Luke, sure enough the kid was blushing.

"Maybe it's in here somewhere," Kandy decided. She probed down inside her bra. "Here it is!" she exclaimed happily. She squinted into the sunlight haloing Solo's face. "What were you saying?" She gasped in surprise as she noticed Luke. "Oh, hello Commander, it's nice to see you again," she greeted.

Luke came round to face her. "Umm, Kandy," he said hesitantly, he assumed that her off-hand hello and formal use of his rank had been some kind of self-defense. "I just wanted to tell you that I'd never do anything to hurt you. I have been trying to avoid you, but not for the reasons you think." She stared up at him, waiting. "I've been meaning to explain, but ahh, I've been very busy. Perhaps you'd like to come to dinner with me tonight and I could..."

Luke halted as he realized she was no longer listening. She had caught sight of someone beyond him. She jumped to her feet and began waving

"Over here, Vinet!" she called. She looked back at Skywalker. "I'm sorry, Luke. Were you saying something about dinner tonight?" He nodded. "I-Well, maybe some other time, all right? I have a date tonight." She leaned down and whispered to Solo. "Isn't Vinet just simply the cutest thing you've ever seen!"

Stunned, Solo gaped at the approaching figure. The fellow was heavily muscled, very tall and broad shouldered. The most striking feature of his apparel was a long flowing, hooded cloak. Even from this distance it was obvious that he was not fully human. "He's a Leonine, isn't he?" Han asked

"Yes," Kandy answered breathlessly. "Just look at all that fur!" She shivered with excitement. "Oooh, I simply adore males with tails!"

Luke and Han traded astounded glances then turned in unison toward the newcomer. He was indeed swishing a long and heavily tufted tail behind him

"Excuse me," Kandy said. "I really must go. Vinet's ever so shy. He's taking me wildflower picking in the forest." So saying, she ran the remaining few paces to her friend's side. He smiled, baring his fangs, swept her up with one powerful arm, kissed her then lowered her back to her feet. They disappeared off into the trees, walking hand in hand. Skywalker turned angrily to Solo. "You set me up! Again!"

Han raised both hands in pleading. "I swear, on my honor, I told you the truth. I knew nothing about this. Honest!"

Luke knew that Han was telling the truth. His anger melted into puzzlement. "I don't get it," he said. He sat down wearily.

"Me neither," Han agreed.

They sat a while silently mulling over the sequence of events. Finally, coming to the same conclusion, they turned and looked at one another and declared simultaneously, "Women! They're so fickle!"

END

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