

[Back To Index](#)

This story was written just for fun and is not an attempt to make money or infringe on any copyrights or trademarks. Only the original ideas contained within the works on this nonprofit web site are the property of their authors, and please do not copy or link these stories to any other website or archive or print without permission of the author.

Pursuit of the Heart Part One

by [Mikell Johnson](#)

The blazing sun dipped slowly into the blue-green horizon, showering the cobblestone path with a rainbow of color. Two young girls, contrasting in both appearance and manner, stepped lightly along the bands of brilliance. The first, fair-skinned, with nearly white hair and a reedy tallness, took lead. Lagging behind, the second, short, still possessing some baby-fat and hair the color of reddish mahogany, glared at the back of her friend's perfectly coifed head.

A little harmless fun, Winter had said!

Princess Leia Organa fidgeted worriedly with the short length of her dress: a tuck here, an attempt to readjust there, she gave up with a discontented sigh. All she had wanted was time to rest-- to take advantage of the simple relaxation and tranquility afforded to her at the Palace at Antibes.

She had arrived not long after her graduation from the Training Academy on Coruscant. Her well-meaning father bragged relentlessly on his daughter's accomplishments -- she had completed the five year training in only three and a half years -- assuming as always that she was now ready at seventeen standard years of age to sit beside him in the Imperial Senate, if elected. As if she had a choice! Leia felt trapped, suffocated by her own ability and talent.

Her aide and best friend Winter had been able to talk Leia into a night on the town to celebrate their graduation from the academy.

"Come on your Highness, " Winter coaxed. Her eyes grew in size as Leia stuck out her tongue. "Now really, that is no way for royalty to act, " Winter scolded.

"Look, your father allowed you to come to the club with only me for once. Don't waste it by being a child!" She grasped Leia by the arm and pulled her bodily through the cobblestone streets of Aldera, the Capitol City of Alderaan.

The steady clicking of their high-heeled shoes rang out behind them. Leia dug her heels into the intricate stonework just outside the club entrance, and refused to budge. She had never felt comfortable outside of the sheltered walls of Antibes, let alone unchaperoned and wearing the latest teenage fashions. A gossamer layer of silk brushed her bare thighs as a breeze lifted the skirt tantalizingly with the tiniest of movements. Glancing around red-faced, she shrugged helplessly and brushed a manicured hand over the beaded headband holding her untamed mane at bay. She felt practically naked but at least the silk slip dress was white, proclaiming her purity to any Alderaanian nearby.

She just wanted to get away.

"Look Winter," Leia began in a serious tone. "I know you think I need to get out more and mingle, but I am not comfortable in these clothes! I look ridiculous." She tugged self-consciously at the short tail of the dress, bringing the attention of a nearby club patron to her shapely legs. She shot him a look that could freeze a Wampa.

Winter swatted Leia's hand aside. "Stop that!" With her arms folded she began the edifying recitation that she had memorized by this point, eidetic mind aside. "You look beautiful. You always do, despite your low opinion of yourself."

Leia folded her arms stubbornly, arching one eyebrow impossibly higher. "I'm too short to wear this kind of dress!"

"It's called petite, Leia. And, that dress is very flattering for your figure." Winter cocked her head in preparation for Leia's next attack.

"Well, I'm fat!" Leia rebounded after a silent pause.

Winter threw up her hands in disgust, her mouth a fixed frown, her tone an impatient snarl. "You are not fat! You have curves. Your hair is gorgeous, your skin flawless, and your eyes mesmerizing. Shall I go on?" She stepped back pinning Leia with a cool calculating stare. "Stars, no wonder you don't have a guy. You are too high maintenance for any man in his right mind."

"I don't need anyone Winter, I do just fine on my own. There is nothing a man can do for me that I can't do for myself." Winter started to comment, but Leia held up a protesting hand. "Okay, there may be one thing! That isn't what I mean." Leia rolled her eyes, trying to ignore the blush creeping over her neck.

Winter chose to ignore her and pulled her bodily inside the club door.

The smoky room vibrated with the blast of modern synthesizers and electric drums. A shower of laser lighting blasted in from all corners of the hexagonal room as driving lyrics pounded from the gigantic mounted speakers lining the mirrored wall. Distorted images flashed brightly from the glass where a trio of frenzied inebriated dancers demonstrated why some people should never drink.

The effect was enough to make a person disoriented. It just made Han Solo dizzy. He fervently wished he had been able to get to his abandoned drink just ten feet away. But it might as well have been a distance of ten thousand light years. Alderaan!

Of all the sorry places to be assigned, this was way down on the list of Imperial Commander Han Solo's choices; he wanted adventure-- danger-- action-- advancement. No truer words had ever been spoken about Han Solo -- he was ambitious to a fault. Being stuck on this peaceful Utopian world on ground patrol, he was certain to remain a Commander forever. Inwardly, he cursed a long string of favorite Corellian expletives, wishing he had the poor taste to express himself aloud. But above all Han Solo purported himself a gentleman.

Sitting beside the beautiful but vacuous redhead, Han fidgeted in his leisure clothes. With a pained desperate look, he cocked his head and stared through the wall behind her -- not that she would have noticed. Her voice had all the quality of old sandpaper as she droned on and on about some subject that Han really had no interest in. She laughed, the sound resembling an ancient school marm dragging her talons down the slate board at the forefront of a classroom. It hurt his ears and made him want to escape.

He concentrated on his own breathing for lack of anything better to do. His shirt fit all wrong, too tight in the neck, too loose at the waist, a totally foreign sensation in comparison to the trim fit of his field uniform. In leisure fatigues, he was as average as any man in this club, not the overly ambitious Imperial Officer he had become. However, with his head proudly thrown back, eyes coolly scanning the scenery, he commanded the respect due him. Physically and mentally fit-- at six foot two inches, a bit taller than most of the men in his command -- he cut an imposing figure in the tight coverall of olive-gray. The material molded to his long muscular legs, firm from years of military training. Only the thin strap tied just above his knee securing his holster broke the long, lean lines. A jet black flight jacket concealed his well-muscled chest and arms as he shoved his hands deeper into his pockets.

Inwardly he groaned. Why is it always me?

The redhead was Penelope--Penny for her thoughts -- except her thoughts were not worth a half-credit. Han feigned interest in her new topic! the dance audition she had just completed.

"Naturally, the manager thought I was by far the best dancer. He said I was the most beautiful and I definitely had the best body." She flipped her orange-red hair arrogantly, not noticing his disinterest. "Well I ought to after dancing five hours every day. On top of that I hit the gym pool for two hours every night. I work hard to stay looking this good. Can't you tell?" It was the same old song and dance routine of the beautiful but brainless.

If she whined any more then Han might just have to shoot her. It would definitely be a mercy killing. He could see, along with the other patrons, the body that she spoke of barely covered in an emerald green mini dress that climbed way too high on the bottom and dropped much too low in the front. 'Why bother', Han mused, trying to avoid looking at the semi-transparent slip of fabric. He might be bored but he was a male. Good thing that she had so much on the outside, because on the inside she was a vacuum.

He scanned the crowd for Dylan Siva, a newly commissioned Lieutenant in his squad, or anyone else who could rescue him from his fate. Speak of the devil. He waved Dylan over and turned to Penny. "Penelope I want you to meet Lieutenant Dylan Siva. Siva, this is Penny--" He paused and looked from the girl to his confused officer, whose youthful dark face had a decidedly panicked look. "Good luck." Moving brusquely past the open-mouthed, glaring redhead he leaned down to whisper into Siva's ear. "You're gonna need it!"

Breathing a sigh of relief, Han moved to retrieve the drink he had been trying to reach when accosted by Penny, half an hour earlier. He wrapped long dexterous fingers around the clear glass, and just stared intensely into the swirling dark brown liquid, wishing he could divine the future as he had witnessed Xaverri-- a talented and beautiful magician from his past-- do countless times with teana leaves. What he wouldn't give for a deck of Sabaac cards right now! much more accurate for divining one's future. The fingers of both hands curled around and intertwined midway on the glass. He drummed them to a silent tune playing only in his mind, unaware of the throbbing beats from the speakers.

Just once Sweet Derheri! Just once couldn't I meet a woman who has something on the inside, as well as the outside! smart, beautiful, concerned with something other than her self? The gods had never helped him. He had gotten where he was with "luck" and "common sense" not some sort of divine intervention.

His eyes were drawn to a small commotion in the entranceway. A beautiful young blonde woman entered then stopped and whirled to look behind her. Throwing up her hands with a slight groan, she returned to the entrance and emerged pulling another young woman into the room behind her. The girl folded her supple arms

across a barely covered bosom and held her ground, not budging an inch. She had drawn quite a crowd of observers, he noticed.

A chuckle of appreciative laughter escaped him. "If the little lady doesn't want to come in then there is no need to make her sweetheart," he murmured under his breath with a smile.

The two beauties made their way to a clear table, the dark haired one walking with a stiff uncomfortable gait, eyes rapidly moving from side to side, as if scouting for the nearest escape. Once they were seated at their table, Han casually moved further down the bar so that he could observe them more closely. Undercover surveillance, a particular specialty of his, often came in handy when checking out the scenery. The tall blonde, calm and composed in her royal blue dress, coolly assessed the room with ice-blue eyes. She was smart--no doubt--but looked about as warm as a blizzard on an ice planet.

The other girl captured his attention for some reason. Definitely out of her usual element, her arms had not unfolded since her entrance. She took in the sights with a scowl of defiance, her tiny nose upturned and her lips pressed together tightly. Tiny, not much taller than five foot he estimated. However, he was drawn to her eyes! big, beautiful and dark as a skittish doe's eyes. Twin flames burned brightly as she shot her non-perturbed friend a deadly look.

The girl's most striking feature, however, had to be her hair. Most girls wore their hair long on this planet, but her hair was a living entity. A deep reddish-brown, held tightly back by a white band in front, flowed like a wild river in back. She kept pushing one unruly strand back from her face with a sigh of exasperation. An unbecoming sneer settled on her face.

Leia looked around the room frowning, as she intermittently sipped her drink. "Who let in all the blasted Imperials tonight?" She griped loudly. Although her father was an Imperial Senator, and she had considered running for office, she in truth wanted nothing to do with anything related to President Palpatine-- correction! the Emperor.

Winter looked around and shrugged. "That I most certainly cannot tell you, Your Highness." She smiled at Leia mischievously. " I don't know about you, but some of them don't look too terribly villainous to me."

Leia narrowed her eyes and cocked her head. The room was too crowded, wild and pulsating, and Leia, never one for socializing outside of the political arena, felt as if the walls were closing in on her. She needed to get away, collect her thoughts, rally her reserves. And, I really have to go to the sanno, she realized

with a start. This of course meant she had to walk through the crowds, not a desirable event for her.

"Well then you can have your pick Winter, because I've got to go refresh myself." She rose carefully and froze suddenly in her tracks. For a moment she had the strange feeling that she was being watched. Turning curiously, she locked gazes with the most unusual eyes. Pools of hazel peeked out from beneath long dark lashes and sleepy lids.

The man flashed her a lopsided smile. Her brown eyes widened. She inhaled deeply, her chest rising and falling rapidly as their eyes held. She could not look away. If the room had made her uncomfortable, those eyes made her swoon. She felt a magnetic pull from this distance, imagined what it would be like if she were actually near him. Her enchanted gaze caught on his shoulder and immediately recognized the hated symbols she knew so well.

Imperial?

She abruptly lowered her eyes feeling anger stain her cheeks. The soft gaze faded quickly, replaced with a hard frown. Leia Organa swooned for no man, especially not for an Imperial. She tossed her head back with a sniff of disgust. As she tried to recover her composure her ankle twisted, catching her heel on the chair leg. Her arms flailed wildly in an attempt to keep her balance as white fabric rose higher than decency allowed. She had just rewarded the officer's diligence with a flash of ivory covered with delicate white lace and firm muscled legs.

Leia quickly jerked the tail of her dress down with an audible gasp. Her face colored in embarrassment as she drew in a breath and looked around with panicked eyes. The handsome officer across the room winked and raised his glass in salute to her. She drew her mouth into a thin angry line as she shoved her chair under the table with renewed vigor. She could not resist staring defiantly at the man poking his dark-skinned friend in the ribs as they watched her flight. Their smiles could shadow the Alderaan Plains.

She saw a flash of movement in the mirrored wall as Winter stood and followed her. Ever the faithful chaperone.

Once inside the sanno, and finished with her business, Leia stood before the full-length mirror, desperately attempting to pull the hem lower and make the thin straps wider. She tugged so hard at the material barely concealing her chest that Winter feared she might rip it.

"I cannot believe that just happened to me!" Leia ground out between clenched teeth, her accusing eyes on the image of her innocently smiling friend. Winter

carefully applied more lipstick. Leia glared while Winter first drew an outline on the top then the bottom lip and filled both in with a similar color, completely ignoring the scathing look. Just when Leia had decided that she was going to be ignored, Winter spoke.

"Yes, you undoubtedly gave that cute officer a thrill." She informed her with a smirk.

"Oh, shut up Winter!" She covered her face with her hands. "How will I ever go back out there?" Leia touched her forehead to the glass image of herself and began to softly strike her head against it.

"You should ask him to dance," Winter's mouth curved and her eyes lit up humorously as her companion, forehead still touching the glass, turned slightly and looked at her from the corner of her eye -- a deep scowl etched in her face. "After all you haven't anything to hide from him now."

"Ha ha--" Leia leaned back slightly with a hesitant sigh. "Didn't you see the insignia on his jacket? He's an Imperial, Winter. A Commander! There is no way that I would give the time of the day, the hour, the minute, the month, the year, or the century to an Imperial-- "

"So I take that as a resounding no to asking him to dance!? Pity! he's a hunk!" Winter waggled her white brows.

"--no matter how good-looking." Leia finished as if she had not heard Winter.

Winter leaned closer speaking conspiratorially in Leia's ear. "So you thought he was good-looking too?" She fought hard not to grin at Leia's shocked expression and sudden loss of speech.

Leia stomped over and sat resolutely in a hover chair, arms crossed, eyes hard but twinkling. "Of course he was-- he- he was gorgeous--but Winter! He-is-an-Imperial." She informed her again, emphasizing each syllable as if that made a difference in the man's appearance.

Winter flung her hair back with a huff, her own gaze penetrating Leia's in the mirror. "You are the most stubborn woman I have ever known. The man was looking at you and he was devilishly handsome. So he's an Imperial! That is still the best looking thing I've seen on this planet in a long time. " She grabbed Leia's arm and twisted it upward behind her, a form of persuasion that had been effective in the past. "Come on!" "It's just one dance! Live a little!"

"Owww! Okay you win!" Leia stood and Winter released her. "Sithspawn, Winter! You are as bad as my aunt Tia who, by the way, would make a priest go through the royal protocol interview before letting me even dance with him." Leia snapped

and brushed down the fabric at her waist with a rueful shake of her head. She knew when she was beaten.

Winter's bemused expression gave way to melodic laughter flitting through the empty room like a tinkling wind chime on a breezy summer day.

When Leia laughed, she snorted like a draggat. Thank heavens she was not easily amused.

"I know." Winter lifted her eyebrows mischievously. "That is why we are here. You have to get out from under that royal yoke, courtesy of your loyal aide and trusted chaperone--me!"

Leia sighed and hung her head, grimacing. With a resigned frown, she raised her eyes to Winter's. "Okay, if it shuts you up, then I will go back out and make nice to the mean old Imperial. But, I'm not asking anyone to dance. It's just not proper!" She pointed an accusing finger in her friend's direction. "I don't see anyone asking me to dance since everyone knows who I am and who my father is, so there!" She threw her head back haughtily and walked out the door in front of her grinning friend.

Aha -- there they were! So the cinnamon-haired little beauty was back. Boy did she look unhappy about it. Eyes like fiery diamonds dared any man in the room to approach her.

Han Solo, being Corellian, never turned down a challenge. Never tell me the odds. He made his way stealthily to the bar directly behind the two women, now busily arguing in hushed tones. The dark-haired girl flung out her hands, desperately attempting to hook the arm of the blonde, missing her mark and sinking slowly into her seat -- red-faced, groaning. Her dark head moved side-to-side in consternation. Han chuckled in amusement and turned around to take a swallow of his Torvas, musing about how good a fine Corellian whiskey would taste. Nothing had quite the pizzazz of --

"Excuse me! Commander?" A soft melodious voice from behind him, like the tinkling of a brass bell, caught his attention. Turning slowly, Han was chin to forehead with a shock of white blonde hair. He looked down to see the woman who was making the life of that little brunette so difficult. Beautiful in the classic sense of the word, with fine high cheekbones and thin aristocratic nose perfectly placed on a long slim face, she reminded him of royalty. The disdain in her eyes was undermined by a curiosity she seemed unable to hide. She was probably around eighteen, a woman yet still very much a child. Her eyes were odd, almost lifeless and devoid of color in her pale face.

Another spot of trouble, he reminded himself quickly, recalling the still fuming Penelope across the room. "Yeah? Name's Han Solo, doll. What can I do for you?" Han leaned back onto the bar top casually, adopting his finest Casanova pose -- arms propped casually, ankles crossed, head cocked in interest -- as he sat the glass behind him. The ice cubes clinked against the sides as it tumbled in a wild circle, threatened to topple and righted with a clunk as his fingers brushed the side.

Winter's eyes followed the movements of his hands curiously, then lifted her cold eyes to his. "Well sir! Umm! Han, I wanted to see if you would like to do what everyone seems to be doing. "

Interesting approach! Han's brows rose to his hairline, and his head cocked toward her with a wicked grin. His body language suggested he knew what she wanted. "What did you have in mind, Sweetheart?"

Winter folded her arms defiantly. "Dancing of course. What else would we do? I've only just met you!" she snapped back, tapped her foot and paused, waiting for his response.

Han did not answer immediately. This girl was strange, no sense of humor at all. "Sure, why not. A turn on the floor sounds just peachy." He turned slightly, took another much-needed sip of the cool brown liquid and blew out his breath with a reluctant sigh. "Let's go." His strong grip loosened some as he twirled her onto the mirrored surface.

Leia sat fuming with her arms folded tightly against her. Either Winter had missed her annoyed frown of disapproval, or she was ignoring her -- probably the latter. But, Winter had been right. The man was incredibly handsome.

His reflection multiplied before her in the shining metallic surface of the far wall and she felt her chest tighten involuntarily. His head tilted slightly toward the woman in his arms. Obviously, the man had some familiarity with etiquette. With a respectable distance between their bodies, his full lips moved almost imperceptibly, silently repeating the popular lyrics in his head.

Leia picked up and sipped on her own Virgin Alderaanian Spritzer, absently wondering if Winter enjoyed being held in the Commander's strong arms. Her unladylike snort went unnoticed.

On the dance floor, Han tried his best to make small talk with the woman before him.

"Winter, huh? Like the solstice – really cold. Guess your parents really disliked you," he chuckled and was met by a pair of cold blue eyes. His grin faded. Great! What had he done now?

"My name was bestowed upon me by my grandmother because of my unusual hair and eye color. My parents love me very much, I don't see that it has any bearing on my given appellation," she retorted quickly.

Han rolled his eyes. Stang, he was a glutton for punishment, wasn't he? Did he mention the girl had no sense of humor? He had once had a more enjoyable experience shoveling Bantha dung after one of his pranks in the training academy had backfired. At least that had earned him some points later on. He was getting nowhere fast at the moment.

Han watched as Winter looked over at her friend slumped in her seat with a frown, tightly knitted brow barely visible from their viewpoint. He smiled slightly as she murmured. "How many times has she been told to sit straighter"? Although, in the girl's present position, underneath the table, Han figured that would be nearly impossible.

"I couldn't help but notice your surveillance of our table, Han. " Winter's eyes met his and he gulped noiselessly.

Han remained silent for a second. Kest she was good! He had never been caught girl-watching before, unless he wanted to be caught, that was.

Busted! Bigger than a supernova, Slick! He tried the direct approach. "Oh! well you know! The scenery around here leaves a little to be desired." He extended his arm in a sweeping gesture. "Two cute girls come in and I take notice real quick. " He flashed her his most devilish smile and she arched a perfect eyebrow before continuing.

"Two cute girls!then you find my friend attractive as well. "

Han could sense that she was feeling him out for something. She studied him, making him vaguely uncomfortable. He suddenly felt like a specimen being dissected under a laboratory microscope. And, he knew that he wasn't going to be anesthetized first.

Han frowned slightly. "Yeah, I guess I do! She sure is a tiny thing, but stubborn as a kratt!" He paused reflectively. "Doesn't look like she wants to be here, though." He eyed Winter's friend appreciatively at the table across the room before she snapped her gaze in the opposite direction.

"Naturally, she would rather be running around in trousers and combat boots, than be in an evening dress," Winter explained as Han looked back at her, a curious tilt to his head.

"That fits. She looks like she runs or climbs frequently."

"I gather you caught a glimpse of her earlier?" Winter teased.

"Me and about every male in the room. " He chuckled at the memory of her lacy underthings.

"Well Han, I have a proposition. "

He pulled away uncertainly. "I'm listening."

She sighed. "My friend needs a dance. She has been severely lacking in social activities lately. Seeing as you think she is interesting!" She twirled a lock of white hair between her fingers in a flirtatious gesture. Laughing, Winter thanked him for the dance and moved to a group of friends in the far corner. Han stood quietly in a state of indecision.

Leia stared intently at her drink, wishing it contained something much stronger and more alcoholic than she was allowed. Planning her own escape and the eventual murder of her well-meaning friend and aide, she did not see a dark shadow fall across her table.

"Excuse me miss! I wondered if you would care to dance?" A smooth baritone seduced her from her reverie.

Leia's downcast eyes widened as her vision came to rest on a pair of black combat boots polished to a glassy sheen in which she could nearly see her reflection. Of their own accord her eyes moved upward slowly. His dark olive-colored pants were tucked into his boots, and she could see that his strong calves and thighs filled the fabric nicely. A holster containing a non-Imperial issue blaster slung low across his slim hips and tapered waist, tied down tightly just above his knee. Though covered by a heavy black pilot's jacket, she could tell his chest was well defined too. His shoulders looked impossibly wide. A chiseled jaw line held a prominent scar -- no doubt from some knife fight. Wide mouth and full sensuous lips defined a curiously lopsided grin, but most unusual were his eyes--hazel but seeming to waver on another color. Despite his military issue haircut, she could see his light brown hair was stubbornly unruly. Last of all, his shining insignia caught her attention--Commander in the Imperial Forces.

"I am really not in much of a dancing mood, Commander," she spoke evenly in a cool tone that could not be mistaken as friendly. Her eyes became pinpricks of fire. The man had the audacity to take the empty seat beside her.

"That's probably a good thing because I am not a very good dancer. Call me Han! Han Solo at your service, Sweetheart. And you are!"

"Ready for you to go away--" She realized too late that he remained undaunted by her disdainful mood. If anything -- from the sparkle in his eyes -- he saw it as a challenge. His intense scrutiny made her very uncomfortable. "I'm sorry, Commander, but my friend is sitting there, you'll have to leave." She looked out at the dance floor, refusing to acknowledge him.

He chuckled. "Last I talked to Winter, she was going to mingle with some more charming friends and sent me over here to rescue you from your self-imposed anti-social bitchiness, pretty lady."

Leia's mouth fell open in offended disbelief. This man was infuriating. She narrowed her eyes and lowered her voice an octave. "Look, I am not in the mood for your company, Commander!"

He just flashed that impish smile again. A shame that he was an Imperial. "I said call me Han."

"Fine then-- Han!" She dared to look directly into his eyes and was overpowered by a sense of déjà vu. "Have we met before?" Both spoke the words simultaneously.

They grinned and burst out laughing. The officer cocked his head rakishly. "You know, you have a beautiful smile! You should wear it more often." He reached one finger out and touched her cheek, then sliding it downward, touched her upper lip.

She shivered, her face aflame. The places he had touched felt wonderfully alive and pulsing. His eyes reached into her soul and stripped her of her resolve with that simple touch. Such impropriety for a man she knew not at all.

Leia blushed from head to toe. Seldom had she been told there was anything remotely beautiful about her. The most common phrases were: 'Leia sit straight! Don't slouch! Fix your hair up! Go clean up! Why can't you act more like Winter, one would think she was the princess? Get out of that tree! Get that dirt off of your face! Please act like a young lady and not a stable boy!' -- a never-ending refrain of negativity.

"Come on!" he coaxed, leaning closer to her and trying to force her to look his way as he moved his head side to side to block her view. "One dance and then I'll be out of your life forever."

Somehow she seriously doubted that, but reluctantly acquiesced. "One dance and then I am leaving this place, and most especially your company." The smile she gave him was fixed and insincere, rather sarcastic.

Han suddenly regretted asking her to dance. Now he knew why no other man had asked this pretty girl for a turn on the dance floor. Beneath the fragile vision of loveliness was a hissing viper "Fine with me." When would he learn? Women were trouble -- plain and simple. And why in the hell was he so fascinated with this one when it was obvious she would rather see him dead? He had seen friendlier looks from men on the executioner's row.

There is something familiar about this young woman, though! Han 's mind whispered insistently. Scrutinizing her secretly, Han took in her innocent eyes, her face slim yet still holding a hint of puppy flesh, and realized with a start that she could not be over eighteen. Any other time he would have dismissed her and gone on his merry way -- but this girl struck a chord in the depths of his heart he refused to acknowledge.

Leia reluctantly gave the man her hand and held back a gasp at the electricity singing through her body when he pulled her to her feet and caught her against him. She caught sight of their image in the reflective surface across the room: dark against light, short against tall, white against black. Yet oddly enough, they fit together perfectly. He held her firmly but lightly, just a little closer than was proper for a new acquaintance.

Leia felt the heat of his hands against her bare skin, moving slowly up and down, barely grazing her sensitized flesh, but sending goosebumps up and down her spine. Her heart beat in time to the tempo of the haunting melody in the background She barely breathed. All of her senses were overwhelmed by a surge of pure male intensity, work-hardened texture of the hand stroking her back, the hint of woody cologne that clung to his neck, the rapid thump-thump of his heart mingled with his slow steady breathing, and her own dry mouth. She floated within his arms, her breath quickening, her eyes softening, everything fading to nothingness except the man before her.

When the dance was over, they remained, staring quietly, still reluctant to move from one another's presence. His lips started to move.

Nervously swallowing and failing to avert her eyes, Leia sought to find her voice. She could only lick her lips, leaning closer to him. He moved closer as well. She spied Winter pointing at the chrono on her arm, waving her slender arms over her head with a knowing grin plastered on her perfect face.

"Please excuse me," Leia whispered breathlessly, silently berating herself for forgetting what he was.



Han watched her move farther from him, a sense of loss so intense that it threatened to overwhelm him, pressed down on him. He had to see her again. He didn't know why -- he just knew he did. Who was she?

As the two girls moved quickly toward the exit, Han rushed forward, slightly out of breath. "Hey, wait!" He propped his arms on the sides of the doorway, his eyes filled with regret, watching as the two faded into the night. "I didn't even get your name!"

THE END

[Continue To Part 2](#)

[Back To Index](#)