

Personal log: 35:5:2 Coruscant

Every year it is the same thing. The first day of the fifth month the Emperor opens the Imperial Palace to the elite, the wealthy and the influential and holds the much anticipated Grand Ball. This year, as with every year, it was the usual grandiose, intrigue riddled affair but in difference to previous years this time I saw it from a vastly different perspective. It changes one's perspectives to see such a huge extravaganza through the eyes of someone who has never seen it before. It's an amazing event that appears lovely on the surface but underneath the pretty is a whole other unpleasant world. Merlyn was right when she asked me if anything ever happens here without subterfuge and secrecy and of course the answer is mostly no.

Here at Palpatine's court all is clouded by desire and ambition. Amidst the seamy backdrop of this glittering event, extravagant, lavish and full of deception Merlyn was out of place. This outwardly gorgeous ball is a cesspool of scyks all vying for attention and hoping for gains, it is not a venue for naïve young women. I dare say were I to call her naïve to her face she would take offence but it is the truth. Perhaps she has been exposed to some of life's more unpleasant sides as she has inferred but I doubt very much it has prepared her for what she experienced tonight. Of course nothing prepares anyone for being presented before the Emperor in front of so many witnesses and I do have to wonder at his reasons for doing so. The most likely explanation has to do with Vader and I am quite sure that Palpatine was making some sort of a point and using this young woman to do so. Yet, surprisingly enough, for all the pressure placed upon her she took much of it in stride. There was a brief moment where there were tears but her body language let me know I was to politely ignore them and so I did, choosing instead to dance with her, hoping to take her mind off the less than stellar moments of what should have been a wonderful experience for her. Think what I will of the Empire and Palpatine, this is an event that is never forgotten and not experienced anywhere else in the galaxy.

On the subject of dancing I find myself bereft of words. Merlyn was not lying when she said had been trained in the art of dance but she lacks experience when it comes to partnered, formal dances however once her trust is earned in this area she takes direction well and is a delight to dance with. Something happened while we

were dancing a waltz and I am unable to explain it but I assume it has some connection with her Force abilities. It felt as though she was somehow able to take her emotions, as well as the power of the music and the dance and project them into, onto me. I lack the words to describe it aptly but it was very powerful, passionate and stimulating. I don't even think she really knows what she does and perhaps this is a good thing. I am quite certain that should she ever choose to unleash this power in all of its strength she could command a room of warriors to bend their knee to her will. The air between us was electrifying. In more ways than one this young woman is as dangerous as she is delightful.

The evening, as usual, was filled with meetings and introductions to all the right people, political wrangling and lower ranks trying to get the attention of higher ones. I do so find this particular aspect tedious but it is necessary and I comply. Palpatine has made it clear I am to play along and act the part. No one must know of my true role here or that he was instrumental in my being here. This ruse we play where the rest of the galaxy believes I am a tolerated, found curiosity becomes tedious after a while and I find myself weary of the day to day stupidity that accompanies this game playing. On Csilla, while I may not agree with our policies, at the very least everything is straightforward. Each ruling family has their place and the rules are, for the most part, upheld. So I do as I am told here and I play the games but I find them and many of the players to be detestable. Perhaps that is why, in part, am so drawn to her. She has not learned this art of deception yet. Her moods, her thoughts are readable on her face, through her body language. I feel that with her I can be myself. She does not appear to judge me based on my appearance or my race but rather on the man I am, my personality, my manners. She sees beyond the skin colour into my soul. It is unnerving. I am not used to being judged this way. It may well be the reason why I decided to go to her flat after she had left the festivities. I wanted to be in the company of a person who asks nothing of me. That is a rare respite amidst the whirlwind of lies and deception.

I must admit I felt a surprising surge of disappointment when I heard voices coming from inside her flat but I rang the doorbell anyway and left a glass on the doormat hoping she would understand the message and know where to find me should she wish to see me. Here it does not do to be too obvious about one's possible intentions nor does it do to assume that she has no other suitors because whether she

sees it or not she is lovely and after being presented to the Emperor tonight she also now has a place of importance. I am quite certain that I am not the only man who is interested.

I wonder when it was I lost my grace. When it was that this life I now find myself living sucked so much joy out of me. I have become old in this place and if this is the case then am I trying, like so many men my age, to recapture some lost youth by courting the heart of a young woman who stands at the beginning of her career and life not somewhere in the middle of it.

It turns out that my concerns that someone else has her interest were unfounded and what happened between us on that balcony we both like was unexpected and delightful. I cannot, this time, blame my bold behaviour on bad alcohol but perhaps the heady mixture of her perfume and the brandy we were drinking made me less inhibited. Our conversation was unusual to say the least, I am starting to wonder if this is actually the norm for her and as we spoke, as she asked her questions and expressed her worries I felt a peculiarly overwhelming sense to protect her although from what exactly I couldn't say. Although there is a fine thread of strength running through her she seemed very vulnerable. Perhaps it was unfair of me to kiss her in the manner I did but I do not care, it was worth it. I know she is attracted to me because I can read it on her face, in her eyes, in how she responds to me as plainly as the day. But I also scare her and rightly so.

It is easy to see that she has not yet been taken to a man's bed and taught the pleasures of sex so it is only natural that my attentions and the feelings they stir up in her are overwhelming, at least, so it appears. Her eyes were as wide as saucers and she was trembling at my touch but she returned my kiss and did not slap me so I assume my attentions were not unwanted or undesired. Her inexperience is surprisingly delightful and it pleases me to think that I may be the one show her more of this delightful world of seduction and physical pleasure. As I write this I am astounded at how history repeats itself and I find myself thinking back to the woman who taught me the fine art of copulation and how to be take pleasure as well as how to please. Oddly enough I can no longer recall her name but her face and her lessons will stay with me for the rest of my life.

I was a young man at the start of my career. She saw something in me and took me under her wing to *mentor me in the finer arts of the bedroom battlefield* as she so eloquently put it. Under her guidance, both patient and insightful, I learned to map a woman's body as much about I learned the needs, the abilities and the limitations of my own. I can still hear her sultry voice telling me *'It is easy to fornicate for the purpose of procreation. You copulate until seed is placed in the hopes for a union of sperm and egg. There is no mystery, there is no artistry needed and pleasure is not a requirement. But to make a woman's body quiver, to make her wanton with need and full of fire only for you, well that requires more.'* And then she had proceeded to teach me these skills slowly, with agonizing clarity. She taught me well. It was not a love match, she had made that abundantly clear from the very first moment she asked me to her bed and now looking back I see that I was a conquest of sorts or perhaps better to say a project. We were together for just over a year and when it was over we parted amicably with no regrets.

It is not unusual in Chiss society for such pairings as long as they do not interfere with other arrangements and produce no unwanted offspring. I had my entire career in front of me, as Trial born I understood that eventually I would be expected to pair with a suitable mate and provide offspring infusing my genetics into the Mitth bloodline. Such matches have little to do with love and everything to do with duty. However now this is now a moot point. I am an exile, a disgraced warrior who cannot officially return home. I am free to choose with whom I bed, to choose a partner, to choose my bondmate.

Now nearly thirty years later I find myself drawn to a much younger woman and I have to wonder if I have become one of *those* men. Do I seek some sort of affirmation through sex with this girl or is this more? Does this go deeper than simple lust or should I walk away. I have no answers and only time will tell what this is. If my comm had not interrupted our kiss I wonder how far things would have gone because I cannot speak for her but as first kisses go this one was extraordinary.

I do not need this distraction and make no mistakes she is a distraction. It is a good thing I am now back in space. I do not need the complication of a relationship of any sort. However, I can safely say that the dress she was wearing was indeed worth it, she was breathtaking and I now have one of the most beautiful holocaptures

I have ever seen taken when she was unaware that she was being captured by the holographer. I believe this is the start of an attachment and I am standing on the precipice. I should be concerned but I am not, instead I find myself full of unexpected anticipation.