

Featuring:

Lucine Vasano (#14877)

Creon Saldean (#12097)

This fiction was written in coordination with Creon Saldean. Creon-specific dialogue was written by him. All non-Creon specific dialogue was written by me.

Lucine Vasano did not make a habit of doing things impulsively. Everything, from the clothes she wore to the relationships she maintained, was the direct result of careful consideration. So when she awoke in bed next to Creon Saldean, her first impulse was to slip out so she could consider the implications of what she had done.

She had not intended to sleep with him. Indeed, she did not even have a plan when she accidentally encountered him while visiting Kiast. It had been their first meeting since their initial encounter on Hoth, which had left such an impression on the Sith. During the course of their conversation with him, she had intended only to find out why the Jedi had had such an impact on her. But they had gotten to talking, and one thing led to another.

I should go, the redhead thought as she listened to the Jedi's heavy breathing. Things are going to be awkward when he wakes up. But despite her doubts, she found herself to be quite comfortable in Creon's warm embrace. So she had stayed.

When she felt the Jedi start to stir, she knew that there was no longer any time for doubt. So she had feigned sleep as she watched him through her thick eyelashes. Watching as he sat up and rubbed his arm. She saw the shadow of doubt cross his face. So he has his doubts too.

It was only after he rose, dressed and left the room did she open her eyes. She stretched, lazy and catlike, as she considered her next move. But nothing came to mind. She had slept with him because she had wanted to, and because it felt right. It had been an impulsive action, and now she had no idea how to proceed.

Very well then, no plan. We will see how this goes, she finally decided as she slipped out of bed. She grabbed the first thing that was nearest at hand, Creon's shirt of the day before, and wrapped it around her curvy frame.

Even if she did not have a plan, she had always found it was best to act as if she did. She turned her attention toward her reflection in the mirror with that thought in mind. Without any of her toiletries, she would simply have to do her best. She quickly pinched her cheeks a few times to encourage a slight blush, before arranging her hair in a casually disheveled way.

Satisfied, she took the blanket from the bed and wrapped it around her hips for good measure, as the scent of caf began to waft gently through the ship. By the time Creon had emerged from

the small kitchen with two cups of caf and a small plate of cream and sugar, Lucine was waiting for him on the semi-circular couch that stood in the lobby.

“For me, darling?” she asked with a pleasant smile.

“Yes. I drink mine black, but I wasn’t sure how you liked yours,” he said as he set his burden down on the small table near the couch.

“You are too thoughtful. Thank you,” she replied as she added a small amount of both cream and sugar to the steaming mug, before taking a grateful sip.

“I usually make my caf strong. I hope it’s okay,” Creon said with a touch of uncertainty in his voice.

“Generally I prefer tea, but when I do drink caf I prefer it strong. This is wonderful,” Lucine assured him.

They continued to share a pleasant conversation as they enjoyed their caf. As they spoke, Lucine was struck by how easy it was to have a talk with him, and how much she enjoyed it. I am going to have to be careful of that. Loose lips, as they say.

A quiet chime interrupted their conversation. Acting by impulse, Lucine retrieved her datapad from the overcoat she had worn the previous day, to see what the notification was. She was surprised to find a number of them waiting for her: from Rhylance, from the upper Summit, and from some of her information contacts. One message in particular caught her eye because the sender was unidentified. My Inquisitorius contact, she realized. “My my, it seems I have suddenly become popular,” she said at last. “It appears something has happened.”

Creon glanced briefly down at her datapad, before looking over at the HUD console. “I’ve got urgent messages too. Something important must have happened overnight. It’s probably the same thing. You can upload your datapad to the terminal if you want a better view. If it’s confidential, I understand. Though I have a feeling our leadership has parallel goals.”

“I do appreciate the offer, darling, but an info broker that reveals her sources does not stay in business very long,” she replied with a feigned twinge of embarrassment in her voice. She could not help but to wonder if his offer had been made out of politeness, or out of curiosity, and quickly moved the conversation along before he could press her. “If you have urgent messages too, then it must be serious.”

She paused, before glancing at Creon out of the corner of her eye. “If you want me to leave so you can retrieve your messages, I understand. Clan security, and all.”

Creon did not reply immediately. Instead, he rose from the couch and moved to the HUD console. He began skimming through his messages, though he did not open the ones labeled confidential in front of her. He is being cautious, she thought in amusement. Smart.

As she watched, he finally selected one and opened it. The face of Marick Tyrus filled the viewscreen. The message he read was a simple one: the Inquisitorius would work with the Iron Throne to fight the Collective.

Lucine raised her eyebrows as she absorbed the Voice's message. The fact that he was pledging the support of the Inquisitorius in such a public manner was surprising. Things are about to get interesting, she decided as she considered the implications and possible responses such a public declaration would receive.

"Where do you stand with the Inquisitorius? Honestly?"

Creon's sudden question broke her thought process, and she considered him carefully. As an Odanite, he would likely be against the Inquisitorius. She rolled her shoulders in a shrug. "I must confess that I am not a fan of their methods. Besides, it is no secret that Arcona's current stance is to view them with mistrust. After, many Arconans are staunch members of the White Lotus." Many, but not all.

Personally, Lucine couldn't care less about the rebellious group or their struggle against the Iron Throne. Still, enough of the Arconan leadership were members of the White Lotus that it behooved her to go through the motions. Of course, that did not stop her from maintaining contacts with the Inquisitorius, and even doing occasional missions for them on the sly. There were certain benefits involved in being in the good graces of such a group. Lucine saw no benefit in taking sides, be it with the Iron Throne, the Lotus, or the Inquisitorius. At the end of the day, the only side she was on was her own.

"Anyway, I can see why this would cause such a stir. The Collective is almost certain to respond to such a challenge," she added as she flipped through her own messages. From where Creon was standing, it was unlikely that he would be able to see the interface of her datapad.

The shadow of a frown crossed her face as she absorbed the information that her contacts had sent her. Every bit of knowledge, even the smallest bit of gossip, fit into the larger picture. The trick was figuring out how to assemble it. "There is little doubt that this is in response to the propaganda that the Collective has been blanketing the galaxy with," she added thoughtfully. "And my sources indicate that the Collective is preparing to make some sort of big move. What could it be, I wonder?"

Creon started to reply, but his response was interrupted by the appearance of Jael Chi'ra, the Battleteam leader of the Wildcards on the holographic display.

“The frak have you been?!” The half-Sephi demanded. He glared at Creon, before and started to say more, but his eyes fell upon Lucine. At the sight of her, his expression darkened into a glower. “...Oh.”

The half-Sephi’s reaction was enough to tell Lucine exactly how he felt about her. She offered him an impish smirk and a little wave. Creon, meanwhile, shifted nervously. “How did you—”

“I built this thing. Come on man,” Jael cut in.

Awkward silence filled the living area as Jael glowered at Lucine. It was clear that he wanted to have a discussion with Creon in private. Lucine, for her part, was far too comfortable to be bothered to move. Instead, she directed her attention toward her datapad, making an effort to appear as if she was not eavesdropping.

“What is it?” Creon asked at last, breaking the silence.

“You are needed. The Wildcards are being sent on a retrieval mission to recover data and personnel from the Psi Termina I. You should have the coordinates uploaded already. Tell her to take the walk of shame and hurry up, you’re spearheading the Wildcards in this one.”

Lucine suppressed the urge to roll her eyes at the half-Sephi’s words. As if she would let anyone catch her taking the walk of shame. But that did remind her: he dress from the day before had ended up in a crumpled heap on the floor. She quickly tapped a message to her butler to bring a fresh change of clothes.

With that done, she turned her attention to the message from her Inquisitorius contact. She quickly skimmed the coded message, translating it using the cipher she had previously memorized.

Her contact’s message was brief and terse. Her contact, Amarite Corsya, was currently aboard the Psi Termina I. She requested assistance with extraction, preferably before anyone from the White Lotus showed up.

Lucine deleted the message as she considered its implications. If she did not want to encounter any members of the Lotus, then it was likely that she was carrying something that she did not want to be confiscated by them. It would be handy to find out what exactly it was. Of course, it did not hurt that Amarite would wind up owing Lucine a favor if she helped her.

Her thoughts were abruptly interrupted when Creon turned his gaze onto her, with an apologetic expression on his face. “I apologize for Jael’s rudeness. He’s that way when he cares.”

Lucine smiled pleasantly at the Jedi. "Well, I would hate to see how he acts when he does not," she replied without a hint of anger in her voice. In truth, she did not care what the half-Septhi thought of her. "So, duty calls?"

"I'm afraid so," Creon responded with a twinge of regret in his voice. "There are survivors from a ship that was impacted recently. I'm to lead a team in for a search and rescue op, as well as recovering any data from the destroyed vessel."

"Is there any place you'd like me to take you before I leave?" Creon asked. Lucine noted there was a hint of distraction in his voice. Clearly, his thoughts were already turning toward the mission at hand. That man is all business, she thought with a trace of amusement.

She gave him a slow, lascivious smile before glancing pointedly back at the sleeping area. "Well, if you think you have the time..." she allowed her voice to trail off suggestively.

Creon paused and looked at her. She could see the mental gears turning as he considered her words. At last, a slow blush crept up his neck and into his face, making it clear that he had finally gotten her meaning and struggled to come up with a response.

At last, she took pity on the poor Jedi. "But seriously, I was hoping you would allow me to come with you. As it turns out, I have a mission aboard the Psi Termina I as well. It does not sound like the parameters will interfere with your mission, so I promise I will not get in your way."

"Besides," she added, a hint of shyness creeping into her voice. "I really enjoyed spending time with you, and I am loathe for it to end so soon." She was a bit surprised to realize just how much truth there was in her words. The idea of spending even a few more minutes with the Jedi made her feel surprisingly happy, and she could only hope that he agreed to her request.

"I don't know if that's a good idea," Creon replied slowly. "Personal life and work isn't something that should be mixed." A brief shadow crossed his handsome features, poor that he was not talking about just the mission. Clearly, he was still suffering from some conflicting emotions about their activities from the night before. "Besides, that kind of move without authorization could go as far as a court-martial," he finished lamely.

Lucine studied Creon carefully as she considered both his words and his body language. He had not given her a definite no yet. Perhaps he could still be swayed. Perhaps a bit of logic coupled with emotional blackmail might sway him.

"Your superiors would punish you for accepting an ally's assistance? Assistance that is being offered freely and without expectation of recompense? That is a shame," Lucine replied. As she spoke, she quirked an eyebrow at him, making it clear that she thought he was hedging.

“If I did not know any better, I would say that you were embarrassed to be seen with me,” she added with a pout. “Let me be clear, darling. I will be going to the Psi Termina I, one way or another. All I am asking for is a lift there.”

She reached out and gently took his hands into her own. “If we go there together, it will be easier to keep track of each other. I might even be able to lend assistance if you need it. Or at the very least, it will be easier to avoid your group if you do not wish to be seen with me.” As she said this, she dropped her eyes. “Of course, I will understand if you prefer that I do this on my own. If that is the case, then I will simply have to do what I can to accomplish my mission by myself.”

The Jedi heaved a heavy sigh. “Alright. You can give me the mission details on the way. I’ll do what I can to help.”

“Of course, darling,” Lucine purred as she gave him a brilliant smile. Of course, she had no intention of giving him all of the details. A girl had to have her secrets, after all.