

## *Wookiee and the Beast*



“I can’t believe we’re going through with this!” she gasped, the moment she closed her bedroom door. Why, she hated him just a few days ago. He was her captor, and she his prisoner. But something about his mannerisms made her feel like this wasn’t his idea at all. If anything, he was just acting on orders from a mysterious figure above and trying to make the best of it. Or perhaps he thought she was his pet to be pampered.

Belle glanced around the room. He certainly made sure she was taken care of, in his own eccentric way. A repurposed lighting droid that appeared to be paw-assembled from scratch tended to her every need. The label on the droid stated that it was called LU-M3R. A modified time-keeping droid stood by its side, labeled C0-G5. Belle wasn’t sure why they were there, but she certainly appreciated the company. There was also a broom- it didn’t seem to be a droid or anything but Belle was told that it was very important. Her captor (...host?) had even left a cobbled-together food dispenser machine labelled “HUMANE TREATS” in case she so much as thought about being hungry. Ut, there it goes again! As if activated by her thoughts, it gave a quiet chime as a ‘treat’ dropped into the tray. How does it work?! Belle would feel insulted, if the mystery nuggets weren’t so delicious.

“This is no time for treats, I need your help! We’re having a dance in an hour and I have to look GORGEOUS.”

The appliances chirped and whirred to life, and Belle disappeared in a nebula of fabric and sequins.

“Is he here yet?”

Belle’s words echoed into the cavernous hall.

[07:59PM] replied C0-G5.

“Very true, Cogs. Very true.”

Soon enough, the room itself seemed to respond to her with the faint strains of an orchestra, recorded from an ancient time in a distant world. She wondered where the music was coming from and looked to the top of the stairs, only to discover her young host. Her heart swelled against her ribs and she felt her cheeks grow warm. She had never seen a Wookiee look so refined before. His luxurious mane found a breeze to gently float in, and the smoothest fabrics perfectly complemented his frame the way his usual clothes never did.

She closed her gaping jaw and looked down at her own gown, disappointed.

“Well, we can’t both wear the same thing!”

Kelviin emitted a confused whimper and his datapad robotically translated:

[WHY NO, WE MATCH PERFECT]

Belle sighed. “Yes and I almost don’t want to ruin it. But you’re a boy-Wookiee, aren’t you? So you should be wearing a lovely suit or tuxedo or something!”

Kelviin considered this suggestion. It wasn’t ideal, but he could make it work.

[OKEY AM UNDERSTAND. WHEN YOU WEAR HUMAN WOMAN DRESS I WEAR THE MAN ONE]

He scurried off excitedly. That wasn’t *quite* what Belle was trying to explain, but she sighed and let it go. What difference would his clothes make, anyway, as long as he’s happy in them?

She turned to C0-G5. “So, anything new?”

[08:05PM], chimed her chronological companion.

LU-M3R emitted a thin jet of flame in agreement.

It wasn’t much longer before the Wookiee reappeared.

“THAT’S more like it!” gasped Belle. Kelviin strutted out in the finest tuxedo she had ever seen.

Fabrics so soft they might have been repurposed from various dresses. Colors that fully activated the retina, without quite clashing. Accessories Belle had never seen before. This was the moment she had been waiting for.

He sashayed down the stairs, emitting a soft growl that translated to [CAN HAVE DANCE?]

Belle giggled, “Why of course!”

The music started up again. Both dancers somehow knew the words by heart, though neither could remember where they heard it before. They sang together, alternating the lines most relevant to their roles. The room spun around them as they became lost to the music, swelling up to the chorus.

“Tale as old as time,”

[OLD SONG LIKE RHYME]

“Beauty-”

[BEAUTY-]

They both stopped.

[WHY SING IN SAME TIME]

“Well I considered if we both sang the line at the same time, but I wasn’t sure how to line up with the cadence of your datapad. So I figured we could alternate lines again, I could sing ‘Beauty’ and then you could sing ‘the beast’.”

[WHY AM SING BEAST]

Did he not know?

“I just thought... ‘Beauty’ would be me-”

Kelviin suddenly let her go in tearful shock.

[AM NOT BEAUTY?]

“Ah oh my gosh, that’s not what I meant at all! It’s just that my name translates-”

[KELVIIN NAME IS MEAN BEAUTY TOO]

“Oh... I didn’t...”

After a long pause and multiple robotic time announcements, Kelviin sniffled and growled

[MAYBE YOU GO]

Belle began to protest, but remembered she was a prisoner here.

“I can just go? I’m not a prisoner anymore?”

[YOU WERE PRISONER? NO JUST HANG OUT?]

Belle wasn’t even sure anymore. She glanced at the ballroom, at Kelviin, and down at herself.

What else would she be doing anyway? This evening had been amazing. Now that she knew she wasn’t trapped, she couldn’t think of anywhere she would rather be.

She walked quietly to the confused Wookiee and wrapped her arms around the highest part of his waist she could reach.

“I do want to hang out. I just decided.”

[YUSS AM HAVE MORE MUSIC]

The sound of an electric guitar began to rattle the halls, as Kelviin ripped off his sleeves.



