



The Courtship of Princess Leia

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Seeking rich, powerful allies to bring into the Rebel Alliance and a new home planet for the refugees of her native Alderaan, Princess Leia considers a proposal that could tip the balance of power against the evil Empire. The Hapes Consortium of 63 worlds is ruled by the Queen Mother, who wants Leia to marry her son, the dashing and wealthy Prince Isolder. Han Solo has always dreamed of marrying Leia himself, and now he makes a desperate last gamble to win her back. Soon he, Isolder, Luke Skywalker and Artoo will be at the center of an adventure leading to an awesome treasure, a group of Force-trained "witches," and a showdown with an invincible foe.

Features a bonus section following the novel that includes a primer on the *Star Wars* expanded universe, and over half a dozen excerpts from some of the most popular *Star Wars* books of the last thirty years!

The Courtship of Princess Leia Details

Date : Published May 1995 by Bantam Spectra (first published April 1994)

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Author : Dave Wolverton

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From Reader Review The Courtship of Princess Leia for online ebook

Jennifer says

I just want everyone to know that I checked this book out of the library every other month and all I wanted from life was the wedding dress Leia is wearing on the cover.

jessie says

This book hurts my brain. I don't buy Wolverton's characterization of Han and Leia for a second. Also, there are *witches*? A planet of Amazonian female witches? Seriously? The EU novels are basically published fan fiction and, honestly, I've read better on the internets.

Alejandro says

One of the best "Star Wars" novels!

BEGINNING THE PATH OF THE FORCE

This was my very first novel about *Star Wars*!

When I read it, back then in 1996, therefore it has always been very special to me.

I chose it since by then I knew that Han and Leia had married at some time and they have kids, but I wondered how they tied the knot, and certainly when you have characters as Han and Leia, I was sure that it couldn't be your typical "courtship".

So, when I saw the book in a bookstore, I didn't meditate much and just took it from the shelf.

STRONG STORY IS

To my happy surprise, when I was checking some months ago (like in 2014) about which novels of Star Wars can be good options, I was truly glad that this novel, *The Courtship of Princess Leia* figured in many, many lists of several people, so, I was way happy that if I hadn't read much at that point, at least I had chosen one of the really good ones.

I love this book, since if you are fan of the "old" trilogy, you will find all the classic elements that you love of that trilogy, but even one very good thing, now realizing in retrospective, not matter that it was written more than 15 years ago, the story feature elements that in that moment were a novelty but now they are being

quite developed even in the recent animated series of *Clone Wars*.

THE BIG THREE AT THEIR BEST

Han and Leia are in love, but so far, nothing formal or at least not a ring to secure the relationship, and the fresh "New Republic" is still in reconstructing stage and any ally can be valuable, in that scenario, enters a powerful galactic kingdom that if they'd form an alliance with the New Republic could bring stability to the space sector, however, in the demands to sign that alliance, there is a simple request...

...the hand of Princess Leia...

...to marry the prince of that powerful space kingdom.

Meanwhile, Luke will have to face a tribe of witches (The infamous Nightsisters) with knowledge about the Dark Side of the Force. That it was an element that they developed further in the CGI animated series of *Clone Wars*.

Definitely it's a *Star Wars* novel that I highly recommend it, not matter that nowadays it's one of the so-called "Legends" since it's not canon anymore.

Amy Rae says

...Well, that certainly was an experience. I'm so glad this book isn't canon anymore.

I have no idea how to even begin summarizing this experience, so I think we're just going to have to list things out.

Good things about this book

1. This book invented the Nightsisters. And the Nightsisters are awesome. I love their interpretation of the Force as magic, and I think they have a lot of really interesting potential.

2. I was warned that Luke gets raped by Nightsisters in this book, but he doesn't. Being threatened with Stockholm syndrome-induced sex isn't that much better, but it's something.

3. Isolder and Teneniel are kind of cute? Maybe? Teneniel is Isolder's ~consolation prize~ (oops, spoilers), but she's fun and reminiscent of Jirel of Joiry. (She, too, is an angry redhead, except that Teneniel is more about the sorcery than the swords.) The scene where she accuses Isolder of being in love with her and trying to hide it is...really dumb, admittedly, but it reads like classic pulp, and unlike this book, I *like* classic pulp.

4. Isolder is basically Fabio, and Han has a huge boner for him. We first meet Isolder, with his shoulder-length blond hair, muscles, and sea-gray eyes from Han's perspective, and it is preeeeeetty gay. I'm just saying, all of the following quotations are from Han's POV:

His deep-set eyes were a dark blue-gray, like the color of the sea on the horizon, and promised wit, humor, wisdom; his powerful shoulders and firm jawline were strong.

Isolder stood taller than Han, and his thick chest and arms seemed somehow intimidating, but not as intimidating as his regal manners or the calm strength of his face, the sea-gray eyes, the straight nose, and the thick hair hanging around his shoulders. He wore a different outfit now, another silk half-cape, over a white top that did not conceal the sculpted muscles of his belly or the prince's dark tan. Isolder looked like some barbaric god come to life.

Han looked at Isolder's gray eyes, at the golden hair cascading down his shoulders and the strong, handsome face, and he could not see how Leia could resist such a man.

Not-so-good things about this book

1. Luke Skywalker definitely advocates eugenics. Fuckin Luke Skywalker. This was weird and shocking to me, and it's by far my least favourite part of the book. His opinion is basically that intelligence and charisma and shit probably have genetic components, so "perpetuating a guild of leaders might not be a bad idea." He might be saying "guild," but when it's in context of having people inherit the right to make decisions based on genetic fitness, I'm not hearing "trade organization people join out of personal interest." I'm hearing "what if we breed people to be better than they are now?"

2. The Nightsisters aren't nearly as cool as in *The Clone Wars*. First of all, they're described as having broken blood vessels, which just makes them sound like old people with broken capillaries in their cheeks. Second, all of Dathomir's POV on the Force is treated as backwards and inferior to the Jedi understanding.

(Point 2a. Luke is such a Force evangelist in this book. It's super boring to hear him fellate the light side of the Force the way he does in Wolverton's writing. He's like someone who just discovered Buddhism and won't shut up about it. EU Luke is so fucking boring, you guys.)

3. Han and Leia aren't romantic at all. There's nothing romantic about tricking someone into going on vacation with you so she'll fall back in love with you. There's also nothing dignified or enjoyable about watching Princess Leia make Han wait on her hand and foot, to the point of cutting her meat, because she's pissed at him. It's all embarrassing and unenjoyable. I'd absolutely welcome a good romance novel about Han and Leia post-ROTJ, but this is a mess of awful mid-late 20th century romance tropes. Ugh.

Plus, Han and Isolder treat Leia like a prize to be won. I didn't want either of them to "get" her by the end.

Dave Wolverton is afraid of conjunctions. Not always, but a whole fucking lot of the time. It leads to these awful, awkward sentences like:

He wasn't used to thinking of the world in terms of forces of darkness, forces of light.

Leia felt a sudden sense of bliss and desire, realized she had touched Luke's emotions.

Han reached up with one hand, said "Ow!" as he touched the hot metal.

Leia stared hard into Han's eyes, grabbed his face and kissed him.

That last one is part of an incredible paragraph in which Han gets over multiple broken teeth in the span of

about five words. The next sentence goes *Pain flared from the broken molars and Han nearly screamed, but instead held Leia and closed his eyes, just enjoying it.*

Long story short? What's enjoyable about this book is minor at best. What sucks about this book is basically all of it. Don't read it unless you're looking for something terrible and also several hundred pages long.

Matt says

If zero stars were an option that is what this book would warrant. Nigh on one hundred pages in, and I simply put could not suffer through anymore because I am a Star Wars fan and this book was doing as good a job as Lucas and his recent film outings to extinguish that love permanently.

I have never read any Dave Wolverton before, and given the poor quality of writing exhibited in this book he is an author I will stay away from in the future. Not only did I not care for him on a craft level as it pertained to style, but he also failed utterly in his portrayal of Han, Leia, Chewbacca, Luke, C-3PO (the only characters I encountered before throwing this book out) which astounded me. I mean did Wolverton watch the same Star Wars movies I did? Because if he did his book clearly does not show in his portrayal of the characters as they bare at the best of times only a passing resemblance to the characters you grew to love in the movies. In glancing at the other reviews on here, I am shocked that this book has any ratings above one star, but often fans have blinders on.

Trying not be tangential, but what the hell is up with the cover art for this book (the quality is fine), but why does it feature Return of the Jedi imagery, I mean it has been four years since those events, and I for one would have enjoyed some sort of here they are now artwork versus what we have on display. The latter is especially true given the fact the artwork does a far better job of bringing that movie to life beyond the screen than Wolverton's uninspired writing could ever do.

Trisha says

I totally geeked out on SW books back in the 90's and this one was my favorite. There's romance <3 and witches! and it's totally Han-centric! What more could you want.

Kaylin (The Re-Read Queen) says

To call this fanfiction is an insult to fanfiction

And somehow this book is on so many "best-of-Star-Wars Expanded Universe" lists, and everyone's all nostalgic about it??

Look at it:

Let's examine the main elements of this cover.

- Han Solo in a turtleneck

- Princess Leia in a wedding dress that doesn't look like it's going to stay on
- R2D2 and some stormtroopers looking lost as heck (there are no stormtroopers in the book)
- **Alien Micheal Bolton**

I should have known better. I really should have. But child-me shipped Han and Leia before I knew what shipping *was* and I just wanted a fun, cute story about them, okay?? Instead we got this: (spoilers? Does anyone care?)

Our story starts with Alien Micheal Bolton proposing to Leia

Apparently his name is Isolder and he's a prince of this super fabulous and rich planet system. He saw her once and thought she was hot, so he brings her ships full of gold and proposes to her on some business meeting being live streamed to all of the New Republic

(Why don't people ever see me once, decide they love me and bring me copious amounts of gold?)

Jedi Luke is on some space roadtrip

For literally the entire first 100 pages. I don't remember where he was going, I'm not sure he knew. He just kept talking to R2 and setting a new course

Despite being in a relationship with Han Solo, Leia seriously considers Alien Micheal's proposal

(After she accepts the gold of course.) But she gives neither of them an answer and they have numerous allegorical dick-measuring contests and fight over her.

"General Solo, what can you really offer Leia?"

"She loves me and I love her. That's enough."

"If you love her, then leave her to me!"

"Well, lets see..." Threepio said. "Isolder is extremely wealthy, generous, well-mannered, and-- at least by human standards--attractive. So now all we have to do is see what you have to offer that he doesn't have." Threepio searched his files for several moments, overheating his memory drives. "Oh dear! I see your problem!"

Han gets insecure and decides to play some space card game to win enough money to impress Leia

His winning hand consisted of "the two of sabers, the Evil One and the Idiot"

He wins a planet. Because plot.

After less than 30 pages, Leia decides she no longer loves Han and wants to marry Micheal Bolton

Page 37: *"Look, I don't know why people would even think that I'd marry the prince. So don't listen to them. Listen to me. I love you for what you are--remember? A rebel, a scoundrel, a braggart. That won't ever change."*

Page 53: *Leia found herself crying, had never really imagined that she would let something like this happen. But at that moment, whatever attachment she had ever felt for Han suddenly seemed to become as insubstantial as fog, as a gentle white mist, and Isolder was the sun, burning it all away. With tears running down her cheeks she tangled her arms around Isolder and promised, "I'll come with you!"*

Han doesn't react to this news well, and instead stuns Leia with his gun, locks her in the cargo bay of the Falcon and flies to the planet he won.

"You used to love me. You believed it, and you made me believe it. I thought our love was something special, something I would gladly die for, and I'm not going to throw away our future just because some other prince comes along.

Umm... where is the Han who calmly faced possible death with an "I know" and told Chewie to look after Leia? And was going to leave and let Luke and Leia be together (before he learned about that ancient plot twist in Ep. VI). This is all so out of character and creepy.

Luke feels a disturbance, comes back from his roadtrip and teams up with Micheal Bolton

Micheal turns into Menelaus after Helen runs off with Paris and vows to get "his" woman back. Luke goes with him, because Micheal has a scary empress mommy who wants to kill Han.

Han and Leia crash land on 'his' planet and end up camping in the jungle for like 100 pages

And hiding from big scary creatures.

"Come on, come on, you guys!" Han said. "Let's have an organized retreat here."
"Fine," Threepio said, "you organize while I retreat."

(Did I mention Han takes Chewie and C3PO with him when he kidnaps Leia?? Because apparently to reignite the flame of romance, you need your Wookiee best friend and protocol droid)

Of course, they become prisoners who are fought over by force-witches and some warlord.

"We'll be very happy to pry those answers out of you-- along with your toenails--during your interrogation!"

While looking for the prisoners, Luke decides Micheal is force-sensitive

This leads to several chapters of Luke "probing" him about his past, making him cry and sing, and then ultimately being kidnapped by another group of "force-witches"

Luke bonds with Teneniel, one of the witches, and they discover an old Jedi temple

This includes a montage where Luke is revealed to be so powerful he no longer sweats, can carry women miles in the woods, and heal most wounds.

Teneniel also declares Michael Bolton her slave, and reports her society of witches are allowed to buy and sell men.

Han sells his planet back to his kidnappers, in exchange for Leia's hand in marriage

But the witches say they won't force her hand, and instead Threepio attempts to persuade her through song and dance.

"He's got his own planet
Although it's kind of wild.
Wookiee's love him.
Women love him.
He's got a winning smile!
Though he may seem cool and cocky,
He's more sensitive than he seems,

(Chorus sung in accompaniment with three women who all sound like Leia)

Han Solo,
What a man! Solo.
He's every princess's dream!"

(I swear I wish I was making this up)

Then, as if realizing there's plot to resolve, the last 100 pages are confusing and rushed battle scenes

I'm still not sure who was fighting who or what the tactics were, but our guys win so yay?

(Somehow it involves Han strapping a detonator on himself and marching into some war meeting. Leia finds this all really mature and hot)

Han and Leia decide they *are* in love again

(Assault and kidnapping be damned!)

"Han bent down and kissed her fiercely, passionately, and the blood thundered in her ears. Leia suddenly realized how much she had missed this, missed feeling such raw, elemental fervor for a man.

Alas, Alien Micheal Bolton, it was not meant to be.

(But for real, the suicide bomber thing really turns her on)

"I've got to say, you really look good with a bomb strapped to you."

Side note: is it a good idea to make out while someone HAS A BOMB STRAPPED TO THEM? Because it seems like a FUNDAMENTALLY FLAWED course of action.

Don't feel too bad for Micheal, because he decides to marry the witch who claimed him as a slave

Because he's into that, apparently.

Han and Leia get married without ever having a real conversation the entire book

Han *does* yell out "Kiss my Wookiee!" in battle, and after that, are words really needed?

In Conclusion:

Idk man, this was more of a recap than a review because I'm still trying to process everything. Hands down one of the most poorly written, horribly constructed and ooc messes I've ever read-- but it was also one of the most fun and I laughed so hard??

Crystal Starr Light says

"I'm supposed to be happy that we're going to crash into the planet instead of blow up in space?"
My quest to review all the previous Star Wars Expanded Universe books I read in my teenaged years continues!

Leia Organa has been campaigning to get the powerful Hapan Cluster to aid the New Republic in its fight against the Imperial Remnant led by Warlord Zsinj. Things somewhat backfire when the Queen agrees...under the condition that Leia marry the Queen's son and heir, Prince Isolder. Han, being outraged, captures Leia and takes her to a mysterious planet, Dathomir, where both meet up with Luke, who has been searching for missing Jedi.

I Liked:

Unlike about 90% of the other reviewers, I actually didn't mind Leia's turmoil over her feelings for Isolder and Han. I felt it was realistic. After all, it had been four years since Return of the Jedi, and I would have thought, had they loved each other so much, wouldn't they have found a chance to get married in that time? I know Leia is driven for the New Republic and all, but surely they would have found ten minutes to haul Admiral Ackbar over and have a quiet ceremony. But no. Instead, four years later, they are still unmarried and even separated for huge chunks of time, with Han fighting Zsinj and Leia campaigning with the Hapans. So, to think that Leia might have developed a crush on Isolder, who is very handsome, very charming, and very appreciative of her, isn't that too out of left field.

There are many moments in the story where Han and Leia's characterizations are spot on. The review title's quote, from Leia, is one perfect example. It's easy to believe that she would have snapped something like this to Han, just as she does in Courtship. And Han has quite a few good moments too, and some good smarmy lines.

Luke Skywalker adopts an interesting mission, to resurrect and investigate the Jedi. This is a good foreshadowing of later novels.

New characters that stand out are Prince Isolder and Teneniel Djo. Their chemistry is really nice and is well built. Besides, the two characters themselves are pretty interesting. Prince Isolder is a rich brat, but he still manages to be likeable. Teneniel also is well-written as a woman struggling with the use of the Force for good.

Also of note, the Hapan and Dathomiri cultures are founded in this book. These cultures (female centric, very interesting, if sometimes overboard) become quite prominent in later books, namely the New Jedi Order series and the Legacy of the Force series. Furthermore, this quote from Ta'a Chume is very interesting, in light of later books: "I won't have our descendants bowing to his, ruled by an oligarchy of spoon benders and readers of auras."

I Didn't Like:

If I were to read this novel now (and not listen), I can only imagine how many times this book would end up smacking against a wall!

Right from the beginning, Han Solo ogles over a "Gun of Command", which, when shot, will allow the "victim" to do whatever the shooter wanted (of course, this weapon comes from a stereotypically "technologically advanced" world in the Hapan cluster). When I heard this, I wanted to scream in terror. This is the most ludicrous Star Wars invention ever! It sounds almost as if someone had recently read The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, didn't realize THAT book was satire, and took the concept from the Point of View gun! ACK! It doesn't work, and it's a lame plot device!

Then, when Han feels that he is losing Leia, what does he do? Does he take her aside, have a nice evening with her, tell her his concerns as you might think a four year boyfriend might? Of course, not! He instead sets his ship up for a loan and tries to make himself as wealthy as Isolder, because THAT is what Leia wants, royalty and money, not love for its own sake or the New Republic or anything else. Did Han disappear and get replaced by his evil and much stupider twin?? It seriously makes me wonder, since the actions of Han in this book do not remind me of Han Solo from the movies at all.

But the part I really disliked was when Han, and this is post-ROTJ Han, kidnaps Leia. This is from the man that was willing to let Leia have a chance with Luke in ROTJ, but now he is willing to commit a serious crime to get her to be with him? What happened to his being somewhat respectable? Any respect I had for

Han was lost at this point.

Luke Skywalker, every chance he gets, tries to convert people to "Jedi-ism" or "Light-side-ism"--even when they aren't Force Sensitive! He tells Isolder at one point, the other man needs to "join the Light Side". And then Luke's Force teachings get muddied when he tells Teneniel Djo that it's not the spells but the meaning, the heart behind them that makes a person a Dark Sider/Nightsister. This goes against all the teachings of the Jedi up to this point. The Dark Side had been treated as a separate entity from the Light and it was with Jacen's time that the two were begun to be seen as an individual's choice and not two distinct factions. Then, I grew irritated when Luke would randomly kill individuals and then champion against killing in the next breath. Talk about hypocrisy!

While we are talking about Luke, I should mention how he comes off way too powerful. In the Thrawn Trilogy, Luke was a perfect balance of Jedi Knight/Master and naive idealist. Here, one year before Heir to the Empire, he is near omnipotent, able to appear dead, float down to Dathomir's surface, float Isolder and HIS ship down safely to the surface, and not break a sweat! That doesn't even get to the part where he flies the Falcon single-handedly (why can't Chewie or Leia or Isolder fly the ship?!?) and is able to fire the weapons to perfection! Completely out of character, completely off the wall, completely TOO powerful! The plot of the story is, in a nutshell, how Leia and Han fall in love and get married. Only, they had already fallen in love by ROTJ, so there really is no need for them to "fall in love" again. Particularly if it is done as poorly as Wolverton has, creating a conflict where one didn't need to be (even if I didn't mind Leia considering Isolder, I think the execution was poor). Why can't they just get married and have a nice adventure on Dathomir, searching for Jedi with Luke? But, no, that can't happen! We have to throw in some out of character moments for Han, make him unlikeable, and force a romantic obstacle so Han and Leia can "show" their love to each other. Oh brother! If we are going to do this, couldn't we get a REAL romance writer instead of a scifi/fantasy writer??

The latter half fares better as it deals more with the events on Dathomir than the forced conflicted with Han, Leia, and Isolder, but still there are absurdities that just won't go away, one of them being the two female-centered societies in one novel. What the...? I don't have a problem with them, but I found it oddly coincidental...and a little sexist. The female-centered societies seem more cruel, more "barbaric" than the male-centered societies (i.e. the main character's). The Hapan females are personified as cruel, power-hungry, and insulting to men and the Dathomiri females capture men to be their slaves. What happened to Wolverton in his youth that made him want to portray women in such a distasteful limelight? Can't we have one female-centric society that doesn't oppress the people (and the males specifically) in such a blatantly hyperbolic way?

Speaking of which, if the Hapes Cluster is so powerful, why did the Emperor keep them around? Why didn't he ally with them or destroy them? Why did he leave the Nightsisters on Dathomir instead of recruiting them as his Dark Jedi (as he has done with his Inquisitors)? This makes absolutely no sense.

Lastly, the satellites blocking the sun's energies? Don't get me started...

Also, as is typical for an abridged audiobook, this was very choppy, very hard to follow, and sometimes confusing.

Dialogue/Sexual Situations/Violence:

A spattering of h*** and d***. Kinda shocked to see that in a Star Wars book.

Isolder is one hot babe and Han declares he and Leia are "lovers". Teneniel captures Isolder and Luke, hoping to have them bear her sons. Isolder wonders if his mother will sleep with Luke. For a Star Wars novel, it gets pretty sleazy.

Space battles, lightsaber duels, rancors, Imperials, Force-wielding Nightsisters...all come into play in this book. Not to mention beheadings, multiple broken bones, dis-arming (literally), and burst blood vessels. Joy of joys.

Overall:

Words aren't enough to describe how silly this book is. When I read it in my teens, my under-developed senses blazed past the crazy tactics Han employed to "woo" his woman, Luke's ham-handed Jedi preaching, and the bizarre female dominated societies (not one but two in a single book!). Now that I'm older, I can't help but want to bang my head into a wall.

Also, I have to send out an apology to Michael Reaves and Steve Perry. In a previous review of their co-authored book, *Death Star*, I criticized heavily their bad attempt at writing romance. Well, I now rescind those remarks. I've found an author who is even worse at writing a romance story (since the whole point of *Courtship* is to say how Han and Leia got married!) than they are.

The Courtship of Princess Leia is pivotal in establishing cultures and characters that will come into play in later books. But honestly, with as silly and embarrassing as the events in this book are, I would suggest skipping it and creating your own love story for Han and Leia. 2 stars.

Lisa Brown says

Although it was not the most well written of the *Star Wars* books I have read, it was what sucked me into reading them in the first place. I am a sucker for romance, and you just can't beat it between Han and Leia.

In this book, they have drifted apart though the business of their duties, but Han is forced to go to extreme measures when Leia is about to be married off to the Prince of the Hapes Consortium. After a winning her a planet in a sabac game, he kidnaps her and takes her to it, which is when the real story begins, as they encounter "Force witches" and other problems.

Allison says

I've seen a lot of reviews comparing this book to fan fiction. I think that's really doing an injustice to authors of fan fiction.

Rachel says

You couldn't set out to craft a book better designed to extinguish my *Star Wars* obsession than this particular offering. Blech.

First, Wolverton has no clear concept of who Leia is and what makes her tick. He tries to pretend that Leia could not love Han after the ending of *Jedi*, and even seriously consider marrying someone else. Hogwash.

Second, he spends more time in the heads of Han, Luke, and the would-be wooer (even C-3PO!) than he does in Leia's head, although given his already stated inadequate understanding of her character, it's just as well.

I finished it because I wanted to ensure that I would never be tempted to read it again. It sucked, and there is no other way to say it.

Nicole says

The first "Star Wars Extended Universe" book I ever read (May 1995). I was surprised to like it, and it led to me reading more EU books. This one I had to reread largely for the Han Solo and C-3PO sections, which I found really funny. But Isolder is such an oaf!

Styler Ribarovic says

DID NOT FINISH. If the thread of misogyny that weaves its way throughout this insipid tale doesn't delight you then perhaps the thrilling manner in which your favs are written completely out of character will enchant you instead.

Katie says

Um, so the premise of this doesn't make sense. Leia gets an offer of marriage from this prince and, at first, it's played as if this is something she is considering for political reasons. Which would make sense and be a good conflict! But suddenly she starts to have feelings for him right away??? (He's already in love with after seeing her once or something.) I seriously thought there was some mind control going on here because I didn't buy it at all.

Meanwhile, everyone (including Leia!) acts as if Han is weird for having a problem with this whole deal.

So then Han kidnaps Leia.

Right.

And, of course, there's a lot about each man "stealing" Leia from the other.

I don't know. I'm on this run of books with poorly executed third party threats. FIND A NEW CONFLICT. (I don't think Han/Leia even needed a conflict. The movies were enough!)

There was also a lot of plotty stuff that was whatever. And way too much time spent in this prince's head. BTW, he (view spoiler)

Siggggh. At least I'm good at forgetting books.

Shadowdenizen says

12-28-16: Originally read ages ago, but reread upon the recent death of Carrie Fisher. While Fisher was and will always be an icon, (May she rest in peace!!) this book remains pretty terrible.

Anyone have any GOOD EU books (or comics) featuring Leia prominently?

John Yelverton says

Such a great book. It picks up right where "Return of the Jedi" leaves off, and it is such a fun read for fans of the films.

Tor.com Publishing says

To be honest I barely remember the plot of this book, but it had Dark Side witches riding on Rancors, & what else do you want? There's not much else I want from the Star Wars EU than that. -MK.

Jerry says

Synopsis: After the death of Darth Vader and the Emperor, what is left of the Empire is still fighting against the weakened Alliance. Leia finds a cluster of planets known as the Hapes consortium that could give her aid, but, in order to seal the deal, she must marry the Queen Mother's son. None too happy about it, Han takes her to the planet of Dathomir, which appears beautiful, but has some dark secrets that will threaten not only the two of them, but also Luke.

My Review: This was relatively mediocre. Nothing spectacular, but, still a mildly entertaining *Star Wars* adventure. Though there was a lot of suspense--more than I was expecting, given the romantic nature of the title--it was a bit light on action, which may disappoint some fans.

Content Concerns:

Sex: Kissing at worst. **4.5/5**

Nudity: None. **5/5**

Language: The d-word and h-word are both used twice. **4/5**

Violence: Action sequences are present, but there's nothing graphic. **3.5/5**

Drugs: None that I recall. **5/5**

Frightening/Intense Scenes: The end battle is a bit freaky. **4/5**

Other: Some may object to some characters being known as "witches". **4/5**

Score: **3.5/5**

Scott Rhee says

Dave Wolverton has the distinction of having written one of the cheesiest and worst Star Wars Expanded Universe novels that I have read so far. I'm probably being generous giving this a two-star rating.

"The Courtship of Princess Leia" is, as the title suggests, the story of how Han Solo eventually woos Leia's hand in marriage. Published in 1994, "TCOPL" takes place two years after the events of the film "Star Wars

"Episode VI: Return of the Jedi". Rumor has it that Wolverton intended it to be a trilogy. Based on the structure of the novel, that rumor makes sense. It seems rushed, and there are many disjointed elements within the story that may have been fixed if Wolverton had been given time to develop them in three separate novels.

The New Republic is gaining ground, building alliances with many new worlds that were oppressed by the Empire. Pockets of Imperial forces still survive throughout the known galaxies, so skirmishes still persist. Leia Organa, the President of the New Republic, is swamped with work. She doesn't have time for a relationship.

Han Solo, a general and a noted war hero now, is busy himself. He and Chewbacca are still leading squadrons into occasional battle. His only downtime are the occasional times he can get back to Coruscant to see Leia.

Unfortunately for Han, Prince Isolder of the Hapes consortium (a group of planetary systems controlled by a somewhat benevolent Queen) has made a proposition with Leia. He has asked for her hand in marriage, and in return, the New Republic will control the Hapes consortium. Leia, a born politician, sees the benefit of the proposition, and she is actually considering marrying Isolder.

Seeing red, Han does something drastic: he "kidnaps" Leia and flies her off to Dathomir, a planet that Han won in a card game. He hopes that he can convince Leia that he is the man for her. Hot on their trail, of course, is Isolder, with the help of Luke Skywalker.

Dathomir, it turns out, is home to powerful Force-sensitive witches. A war has been waging there for a long time, apparently, between good witches and evil ones, called Nightsisters. The planet is also guarded by Imperial troops, supposedly left there years ago by Emperor Palpatine, who was even afraid of the Force witches. The Nightsisters, however, basically control the Imperial troops. On the upside, the good witches are allied with rancor beasts. (Yes, the same creature that tried to eat Luke in "ROTJ".)

I'm not making any of this stuff up, by the way.

This book is pretty bad, mainly because Wolverton can't decide whether he's writing a fantasy adventure or a romance novel, because there are elements of both genres in the book, and neither one are approached very well.

As critic-proof as the Star Wars novels are, this one is pretty bad.

Meggie says

I'll start out with some *The Courtship of Princess Leia* trivia, courtesy of the Star Wars wiki: Dave Wolverton was originally contracted to write a trilogy, which was canceled. Because of the numerous plot threads running through this novel, it's been suggested that CoPL is the conglomeration of that trilogy. The paperback cover was also changed--from the original one, featuring wedding dress Leia, *Blade Runner* Han, and Fabio-esque Isolder, to a more action-orientated cover with rancors and the trio in Endor garb. The reason? Sales for the hardback book were lower than expected, possibly because the first cover made it look

like a romance novel.

Now, the term "romance novel" has come to acquire many negative connotations, probably because readers new to the genre are more familiar with infamously horrible examples than anything else. But essentially, any novel that focuses on "the relationship and romantic love between two people" could be categorized as a romance novel. (The "happily ever after" is usually required, but sometimes optional.)

I'll break it down:

--Does CoPL focus on the relationship between Leia & Han?

Yes.

--Is there a HEA?

Yes, I guess.

--Is it a romance novel, then?

Yes, to some extent. There are many plot threads, but Leia and Han are often the main focus.

--Is it a good romance novel?

HELL NO.

SUMMARY

Han Solo comes back from (apparently) destroying Warlord Zsinj's Super Star Destroyer to find that the Hapes Consortium has sent a buttload of ships and gifts to the New Republic. They're willing to ally with the New Republic, on a few conditions: Princess Leia has to accept all their crap, and oh yeah, marry Crown Prince Isolder as well.

In a totally OOC move, Han wins the planet Dathomir in a sabacc game. He fails to impress Leia with his new-found wealth and prosperity, so he kidnaps her and runs off to his planet. (Chewbacca comes along.)

Meanwhile, Luke Skywalker is acting like an all-powerful Jedi loser, and joins forces with Isolder to track down the kidnapper, kidnapped, and kidnapper's BFF. (He may have been trying to track down some Jedi history before this, but I wasn't buying much attention.) Using his amazing Force powers, he finds a faster hyperspace path to Dathomir, pretends to be dead, floats down to a graceful landing, floats R2-D2 & Isolder & his ship down too, and discovers the remains of the *Chu'unthor*, a floating easin  Jedi academy.

Of course, bad stuff happens. Han, Leia, and Chewie are captured by Imperials, then rescued by the Witches of Dathomir (good guys) and have a slumber party. Luke and Isolder are captured by Teneniel Djo, and become her oh-so-willing man-slaves. The Nightsisters (bad guys) try to capture the *Millenium Falcon*, and generally act crazy and Dark Side-y. Luke almost dies, but miraculously heals himself within a few hours! He also pilots the *Falcon* all by himself, saves Han, takes out the Nightsisters, disables the orbital nightcloak (more on that later), and acts like KJA-era Luke on Force crack.

Meanwhile, C-3PO wants to be BFFs with Han, so he spends the whole novel sucking up, claiming Han is the descendant of the King of Corellia, and being a general nuisance. Isolder's mother may have tried to kill Luke or Leia (or both) earlier in the novel, but I forgot.

In the end, Han destroys Zsinj's Super Star Destroyer again, and marries Leia. Isolder marries Teneniel, because he seems to be into that kind of thing.

TEN THINGS HORRIBLY WRONG WITH THIS NOVEL

1. Sexual Objectification

For a Bantam era novel, CoPL is surprisingly sleazy. Isolder is super hot (he's called Space Fabio for a reason); his mother, Ta'a Chume, is gorgeous and vicious; all the Hapans are beautiful; Teneniel is barely legal, but super hot as well. So much time is spent describing the sexual attractiveness of various characters that the reader starts to feel...well, tainted after a while.

Not to mention that this might be the first SW book to contain the word "breast." As in, "with totally no clothes covering it up." Teneniel takes Luke and Isolder as her slaves, and has high hopes for Luke, because any of their children would have Force superpowers. The Dathomiri culture, on a whole, is all about the sexual dominance of women. But instead of being empowering for women, it's female dominance viewed through the male gaze: a weird erotic fantasy, with women seen through the eyes of the heterosexual male. Frankly, I find it insulting.

2. Barbaric Matriarchal Societies

Both Hapes and Dathomir are matriarchal societies. At first, that seems a reason for celebration. As a female reader, I have no problem with a world ruled by women--in fact, it's nice to see a novel with more female characters than just Leia.

But Hapes and Dathomir are not just ruled by women: their cultures are violently barbaric. Ta'a Chume maintains power by killing off her rivals, even her own children. The Dathomiri clans enslave others, and are stuck in the Stone Age thanks to the lack of modern technology. The combination of gender inequalities and savage violence suggests that female dominated societies are not only fodder for kinky male fantasies, but inherently wrong as well.

3. The Curious Anomaly of the Independent Hapes Cluster

If the Hapes Cluster is so large and powerful, and could be such an asset to the New Republic, why did Palpatine ignore them? Why didn't he swallow them up in his Empire? (And judging by their actions before and during the Battle of Dathomir, they probably wouldn't have won. For the descendants of space pirates, they're not that great at warfare.)

4. Palpatine Was Scared of Gethzerion

To which I have to respond....SERIOUSLY? The most powerful Sith of the age knew about a bunch of Force "witches," and just let them be? I don't think Palpatine would have left a planet full of Force sensitives alone. He wiped out almost the entire Jedi Order--he would have had no problem disposing of some women who had primitive weapons, and only a basic understanding of the Force.

Along the same lines, I very much doubt that the Dathomiri could have prevented Yoda and other Jedi from retrieving the wreckage of the *Chu'unthor*. Yoda was badass; has Wolverton never watched *The Empire Strikes Back*?

5. The Orbital Nightcloak, and How Zsinj Fails as a Villain

The Orbital Nightcloak is composed of a network of satellites that prevent sunlight from reaching the planet they orbit. Awesome way to freeze out a planet, right? Well...except for the small fact that, like old school Christmas lights, knocking out a few satellites would deactivate the entire network.

That idiocy defines Zsinj's character in CoPL. Everyone says he's a genius, but all the examples Wolverton gives the reader of Zsinj's evil plans are downright moronic. Using an interdependent control system on his secret weapon? Making deals with evil Nightsisters and expecting them to honor them? Not getting the hell out of Dodge once the Hapan fleet showed up? Major fail!

Fortunately, Aaron Allston retcons Zsinj into a mastermind who merely pretends to be stupid in the *Wraith Squadron* trilogy, but Zsinj's first appearance in the SW canon is utterly disappointing.

6. The Gun of Command

Wolverton tries to shoehorn various new technologies into the book, but none are as groan-inducing as the Hapan Gun of Command. According to the SW wiki, "[the] guns worked by releasing an electromagnetic wave field which disabled the victim's thought processes. Once affected, the victim would follow any simple command given, even blatantly suicidal ones."

You have to be very careful with technology in SW novels; there's an uneasy balance between the complexities of their ships and weapons, and the frontier-like quality of the original trilogy. The Gun of Command bypasses that completely, and pushes the story into sci-fi farce. A gun that takes away the victim's free will? The Empire would have loved that! Ugh, Wolverton, you make my brain hurt.

7. Han's General Characterization, and His Approach to Wooing

I can accept Han getting jealous and pissy about another suitor showing up for Leia's hand. But getting drunk and trying to win fame and fortune in a game of chance, so that he'd be worthy of her? Kidnapping her and stuffing her in the *Millenium Falcon*'s hidden cargo sections? This is not the man who coolly answered "I know" to Leia's proclamation of love in ESB.

In CoPL, Han is overbearing, insecure, and unbelievably dense--a particularly heinous passage involves Han pulling a drunk whuffa worm out of a puddle, and believing this to be an impressive feat. His characterization is so far left-field that I'm actually surprised Leia marries him in the end.

8. Leia's Ambivalence and Fickleness

Of course, that's not perplexing when you look at all the uncharacteristic things that Leia does. Wolverton takes a strong, stable relationship between two equal partners, smashes it into the ground, and attempts to show them "falling back in love"...problem is, there's not much visible proof of their undying love to placate the reader.

I don't have too much of an issue with Leia considering the Hapan proposal: politically, it might be a good move to ally themselves with the Hapan Cluster. But she doesn't even discuss this with Han, and their relationship is just wrong. She's nasty and snappish with him, her interests constantly switching from one man to the other and back again. If the men in this novel--exemplified by Han--are idiots, the women are shrews, and Leia the queen of them all.

9. Han's Lack of Response to the Continued Existence of the *Iron Fist*

When the novel opens, Han is returning to Coruscant after destroying Zsinj's flagship, the SSD *Iron Fist*. However, when he encounters it again in the Dathomir system, there's not a hint of shock or outrage or anything. Han spent MONTHS hunting this man down, believed he was dead, and when he encounters him again, he just shrugs it off and blows him up again. "Ho hum, another Imperial Warlord to destroy, just in a day's work," he seems to say. WHAT THE HELL, Wolverton, I can't even dlkfgjlgkfhddkhfl....

10. LUKE FREAKING SKYWALKER

Chronologically, CoPL comes before Timothy Zahn's *Thrawn* trilogy, where Luke behaves much as he did in the original trilogy--by which I mean that his Force powers are nothing too extravagant. He participates in lightsaber duels, glimpses the future, faces a Dark Jedi, and hones his instincts. You'd expect Luke to act much the same in this novel.

Nope. Instead, he seems to have sprung fully formed from the pages of the *Jedi Academy* trilogy; Luke performs daring feats years before he faced the reborn Emperor and proclaimed himself a Master. It doesn't fit into the Expanded Universe timeline.

Additionally, Luke acts like the most obnoxious kind of Jedi: the constantly proselytizing teacher. He even instructs Isolder (as non-Force sensitive as they come) in the ways of the Light Side. When captured by Teneniel, Luke calmly goes along with it and tries to explain that gosh, she really shouldn't rape him, it's not nice. He makes no moves to escape, and I don't buy it. To reference Zahn again: in *Heir to the Empire*, Luke didn't escape from Mara in the forests of Myrkr because the ysalamiri blocked the Force, and they both were in the same bad situation. Here, Luke can access the Force perfectly fine, so he has no reason to stick with Teneniel. (She wants you to be her sexy slave, Luke. Get out while you still can!)

And the climax of the story, where Luke faces down Gethzerion, ruptures all the blood vessels in his face, and yet still manages to heal himself and save the day....I can't even discuss it, I'll get too angry and degenerate into senseless typing again.

ETA: *Plus it's always really, really, reeeeally annoyed me that Wolverton thought it would be okay for Luke to almost miss their wedding. Like he wouldn't be there BEFORE IT EVEN STARTED TO BEGIN WITH.*

Ugh, why I did not mention that in my review? Horrible! Wolverton, he's Leia's twin brother--her only family still alive. He should be there at least three hours before the ceremony, probably being an usher and finding Mon Mothma a seat and everything. It is unacceptable for Luke to walk in at the last minute, like "Hey guys, sorry I'm late, you can continue."

CONCLUSION AND CLOSING THOUGHTS

The Courtship of Princess Leia introduced characters and cultures that played a large role in later SW books, especially the *New Jedi Order* series, the *Dark Nest* trilogy, and the *Legacy of the Force* series. Isolder and Teneniel Djo had a daughter (Tenel Ka), who eventually produced Han and Leia's only grandchild (Allana). Dathomiri witches joined Luke's Jedi Order, while Nightsisters became the Sith Ladies of Tomorrow. The Hapans are always willing to pop up and provide some naval help in times of trouble, and Ta'a Chume still tries to assassinate family members.

CoPL fills a crucial gap in the post-*Return of the Jedi* timeline. Unfortunately, it's just not very good.

NOT RECOMMENDED.

SOURCES & ADDITIONAL READING

Wiki articles referenced:

Romance novel

Sexual objectification

The Courtship of Princess Leia

A brief definition of the old school romantic hero

Other CoPL reviews:

TV Tropes entry for CoPL

this review on GoodReads

Good romance recommendations:

Smart Bitches, Trashy Books

Dear Author
