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Friends and Lovers

by [Cindy Olsen](#)

The Base was returning to normal. The ceremony to commemorate the second anniversary of the destruction of Alderaan and the Battle of Yavin was long over. The speeches had finished, the final notes of sombre anthems played, the ranks of troops dismissed. Informal remembrances had followed the ceremony. Rebels who had not been required on duty had attended these functions, worshipping at private religious services, dancing to the exuberant sounds of a jizz band in celebration of the renewal of life, or simply enjoying the company of their friends.

But now, even these informal memorials had finished. Activity on the flightline was returning to its usual hectic levels. Surveillance patrols had recommenced in the sector surrounding this hot, nameless moon on the Outer Rim. Maintenance crews and droids worked on the variety of fighter craft that huddled under the expansive hangar roof. Logistics and operations personnel had returned to their workstations, and the command staff evening brief had recently concluded.

For Leia Organa, Princess of Alderaan, the day had held special significance. The two years that had past since the Death Star had destroyed her homeworld had not dulled the ache, but she had learned to control her emotions to the extent that she had watched the ceremony without shedding a tear. The young princess had become adept at shoring up her feelings, setting up her shields to protect herself. Protect herself against all, it seemed, except for a certain Corellian smuggler. Han Solo.

Solo always knew exactly what to say, or what not to say, to provoke a reaction from her. A word or look from him could be enough to rile, amaze, excite, or simply make her laugh. So when she had approached him after the formal ceremony had concluded to ask why he had disregarded her invitation to join her on the VIP viewing platform, it should not have surprised her that his ill-thought

words would be enough to make her cry. What had surprised her was when he had later appeared at her room to apologise for his spiteful remarks. It was the first time she had ever heard Solo apologise for anything in the two years that she had known him.

Confused by the emotions that this man -- her friend -- evoked in her, Leia had physically pulled Solo into her room, and invited him to share a drink with her. She wondered now, if she had known then what would follow, if she would have been so bold.

Their friendly bantering and personal revelations had taken on a sexual tone, and she had confirmed what he had always suspected -- that she was a virgin as the formal robes she still chose to wear from time to time. When Solo had suggested that they should have sex for "its own sake" because they were friends and didn't want a commitment or a relationship from each other, she had been receptive. Receptive and aroused.

She had always found Solo attractive, but lately the attraction had taken on a decidedly sensuous edge. She had caught herself staring at him, admiring his loose, casual gait and the way his muscles shifted beneath his clothing. At times, the sound of his voice sent the adrenalin surging through her system, and her dreams and fantasies were filled with him. But he was also her friend. She liked him, trusted him, even admired his flying skills and leadership abilities. It had not been difficult to admit to herself that she did want to lose her virginity to him.

The wine she had been drinking may not have loosened her morals, but it had certainly loosened her frame of mind. When Solo had insouciantly suggested, "Why don't we have sex? Just as friends."

Leia's response had been similarly casual: "All right."

Her reply may have initially floored him, but Solo had quickly recovered. He proved to be a sensual and caring lover, living up to the promise he made that he would ensure her first time would be enjoyable, if not memorable. Although the experience had lasted only 15 or 20 minutes, it was more wonderful than she could have hoped for. Han had pleased her with his tongue, his mouth, his whole body. And while it may have started out as "sex for its own sake", in her eyes at least, it had rapidly become "making love". With him above her and within her, Leia had slipped under his spell, becoming wholly entranced. In every sense of the word, Han became her lover.

She wondered if he might have been touched by a similar notion. Not long after they had finished, his instincts had compelled him to dress and move towards the door, ostensibly to return to repairing his ship. Yet he had seemed hesitant to leave her room. Leia had then taken the initiative and sealed the experience with a kiss. A lingering, sensuous caress that was far from a kiss shared by friends. It

had obviously affected him as much as her, for he had suggested that she should go up to the Falcon that night and allow him to cook her dinner, to really apologise for his previous callousness. Leia's heart had thumped wildly in her chest, but she had been as calm and collected as if he frequently dined her in his ship.

She had accepted the invitation willingly, then boldly teased, "And?"

His reply had been equally tantalising, "And maybe we can discuss our friendship in more detail." Discuss our friendship in more detail, Leia reminded herself as she moved across the hardstand towards the Millennium Falcon, trying to remain as casual as possible. That's all. Eating. And then talking. And then...

Her pace was brisk, which was why, she imagined, her pulse was up and her breath slightly short. I'm not doing anything wrong, she tried to convince herself, keeping her gaze averted from the maintenance crews and technicians that she passed. I'm just going to have dinner with a friend.

But having dinner on the Falcon meant she was missing out on a small formal dinner with other high-ranking members of the Base command staff. She had lied to get out of that dinner. Had made some excuse about not feeling quite herself, which wasn't that far from the truth. The princess had been unable to meet the concerned gaze of General Rieekan, and her stomach had dropped when General Dodonna had agreed with her diagnosis and commented on the flush across her cheeks.

Besides, she reasoned as she neared Solo's battered freighter, if anyone stopped her or saw her now, they probably wouldn't think twice about why she was heading towards the Falcon. Most would surmise that she was about to contract the Corellian smuggler for another freighting run. Either that, or reprimand him for his latest act of arrogance, irresponsibility, stupidity or selfishness. That was how she usually spent her time with him.

All would think that, she realised, except Luke. Luke would suspect something was up. The same way he had been suspicious when he had shown up at her door not long after Solo had left. When the entrance chime had sounded, Leia had initially thought it was Han, that he had changed his mind and had returned to spend the rest of the afternoon with her. She didn't know who had been more shocked when she had opened the door to see Luke standing there, not Han. Poor Luke gaping at her because she was dressed in only her underpants and an Alliance-issue undershirt.

Blushing a brilliant shade of red, Luke had stammered out an apology and explained that when he couldn't find her after the ceremony, he had come looking for her to see if she was all right. For his sake, Leia had covered herself with a 'fresher robe. She assured him she was fine, but she had felt drained and

had decided to lie down for a while. To lie down with Han for a while, her traitorous thoughts had teased.

Luke's face had paled as he had looked past her into the room. She had guiltily followed his gaze, hoping there was no incriminating evidence of the recent lovemaking, and was reassured that only rumpled covers of her bunk remained. Yet to her, there had been the distinctive scent of sex in the air, and she wondered if Luke could smell and recognise it.

Before she could guess what Luke's reaction would be, Leia had brusquely told him she was tired and would see him later. She had closed the door on him, cringing at her own abruptness and trying not to imagine what Luke was thinking.

Poor, sweet Luke. The young man's schoolboy crush on her had matured into a deep and close friendship, a friendship that Leia now considered one of the steadying influences in her life. But she believed there remained a yearning in the emotions Luke felt towards her, an echo of the romantic ideals he had once harboured.

Leia didn't know how Luke would react if he discovered she'd had sex with Han. That she had chosen the smuggler as the man to lose her virginity to. The man she was currently skulking off to see in the hope that they would make love again. She prayed, to any deity who cared to listen, that Luke wasn't on the flightline at that point in time.

The princess reached the boarding ramp of the Millennium Falcon and forced herself not to stop at its foot, despite her sudden hesitancy. It occurred to her that she could be expecting too much, from both herself and Han. Perhaps he did only want to cook dinner for her.

She had expected to find him in the forward compartment, either working on his ship or conducting diagnostics at the tech station, yet he was nowhere to be seen. Now she did hesitate. Ordinarily it would not have concerned her to go looking for him, but for some reason that level of comfort and familiarity had left her. She swallowed and cast a cursory glance down the corridor towards the cockpit. It didn't even feel right to call out for him, as if she was intruding on his personal space.

Her innate resolve galvanised her into action. She made a logical assumption about where he might be, and moved along the ring corridor, relieved to hear the clang of cooking utensils as she neared the galley. The unexpected sound of his voice intrigued her, until she realised he was singing, humming those words he couldn't remember. Smiling to herself, Leia stopped in the entrance to the galley and watched him.

His back was half towards her as he stood on the other side of the galley, dicing vegetables in a processor. The shipboard trousers he was wearing hung loose on his hips due to the lack of belt and gun rig. His feet were bare, and she found herself admiring the long arches for a moment before her eyes travelled up the length of him. The sleeves of his white shirt were rolled up around his elbows, the tails of it half tucked into the waistband. Enticingly scruffy.

Leia moistened her lips and opened her mouth a few times before the right word came out. "Hi." His torso twisted around first before the rest of his body followed. The surprise on his features turned into a bright smile that lit his eyes, and Leia felt her insides melt.

"I was just thinking about you," Solo told her, leaning back against the counter top. The front of his shirt was open, as though he had thrown it on and roughly tucked it in without bothering to close the fasteners. "I wasn't expecting you until later."

"The briefing finished early. Not much happening," she explained. She indicated her uniform with a gesture and a shrug. "I came straight from there."

But she'd had another 'fresher before she had dressed for the briefing, her third water shower for the day, a luxury that was available thanks to this moon's vast artesian water basin. Leia tried not to stare too obviously at the strip of skin, muscle and chest hair she could see through the halves of his shirt, and guessed that he had also had a shower. She coerced her gaze up to his face, noting that he had recently shaved and even combed his hair.

"Well, I'm a bit behind schedule," he told her, nodding at the preparations on the counter. Leia moved into the small galley and sidled up next to him as he stirred a spoon through the simmering contents of an auto cooker.

"What's on the menu?" she asked.

Solo looked down at her. "Now, or later?"

She blushed and elbowed him gently. At this close distance, she could smell the scent of his aftershave, and it was playing havoc with her hormones.

Without taking her eyes off him, she inhaled deeply and said, "Something smells good."

She watched the larynx bob in his throat, but he assured her, "Must be the y'rucur."

"Must be," she agreed.

Behind her, the simmering pot started to bubble. Solo reached around her and adjusted the cooker to a lower temperature, his arm grazing against her side in the process.

"I'll get out your way," she belatedly offered, knowing she would probably get in the way if she remained in the cramped galley for much longer. Besides, she had never been comfortable in kitchens due to her complete lack of cooking skills. Truth be known, she was even a little envious that Solo was far more capable at cooking than she would ever be.

He stopped her before she could leave. "No, it's all right." He unexpectedly placed his hands on her hips, lifted her up, and sat her on a vacant spot on the counter top. "Let's put you up here outta harm's way."

"Harm's way?" she queried, arching an eyebrow at him.

He rested his hands on either side of her thighs, and leaned towards her. At this height, she was at eye level with him. She ached to find an excuse to run her hands through the hairs on his chest. "Remember what happened last time you wanted to help me cook?" he asked, a mock sternness in his voice.

Leia did remember the occasion, about a year ago on a mission to Tra'sha. The first and last time she had offered to help him cook.

"That wasn't my fault," she reminded him, her lips turned out in a slight pout. "You tripped over me."

"Only because you spilt oil on the deck, then threw that sauce down the front of my shirt." "You make it sound like I did it on purpose."

He grinned at her. "And you didn't?"

Leia glanced at her nails. He failed to mention that the whole episode had developed into a full-scale argument that saw neither of them talk civilly to the other throughout the rest of the mission.

"The oil was an accident," she admitted. She met his gaze again. "But the sauce, I meant."

He chuckled at her admission, then went back to his cooking. She watched as he removed the diced vegetables from the processor and tapped them into the cooker. A handful of aromatic herbs came next, followed by a dash of condiment, all of which he stirred through thoroughly. He settled the lid back on the pot, washed his hands at the tiny basin, and raised a stubby, long-necked bottle to his lips. He winced apologetically at Leia as he swallowed his mouthful.

"Sorry. Can I get you something to drink?"

She smiled at his endearing lack of social refinement. "Nothing alcoholic for me, thanks. That wine I had earlier was more than enough." She remembered that he had left three small flasks of beer in her room. "If I'd thought about it, I could've brought your beer with me."

He twitched his nose indifferently. "No problem. I'm off the booze myself. It's too hot out there to drink."

And despite the ship's environmental control system, it occurred to her that it was definitely getting a little warm in here.

She nodded at the bottle he held in his hand. "What are you drinking then?"

"Kochvit. Tastes like fizzy kaffe, but with an added kick. And it's non-alcoholic. You wanna try some?" Before she could respond, he leaned across the galley, opened the cooling unit, and hunted through it. "Damn. I've got the last one."

"That's all right. Water's fine."

He closed the door, reached back for the bottle of kochvit and held it towards her. "We can share mine."

Leia looked at the bottle, then focused on the expectant look on his face. Her fingers brushed against his as she accepted the kochvit. Her initial instinct was to wipe to her palm across the mouth of the bottle, to remove his saliva from the surface as she had done in the past, but then she suspected that was precisely what he was expecting her to do. Besides, just this afternoon she had been running her tongue through his mouth, and hoped to do it again. The thought of drinking from the same bottle as him became a ridiculously erotic concept.

Leia took a sip of the kochvit and was pleasantly surprised at the tingling kaffe-like flavour. She gave him a small smile and went to hand the bottle back.

"Take a bigger drink than that," he encouraged.

Solely to please him, she raised the bottle to her lips again and this time drank a mouthful. A buzzing high rushed through her system as she swallowed the kochvit. Solo was carefully watching her reaction, and she smiled at him guiltily as she enjoyed the surge of adrenalin.

"Nice, huh?" he asked, taking the bottle from her and having a quick swig himself.

Wide-eyed, Leia nodded and quietly admitted, "Wow."

Solo grinned. "I think 'Wow' sums it up."

Leia placed a hand to her mouth to repress a hiccup and Solo's grin broadened. He turned back to the simmering cooker, removed the lid and stirred a spoon through it again. He breathed in the aroma of the food, then cautiously tasted a mouthful of the mixture.

"Mm," he told himself with more than a touch of self-satisfaction. "Good. Hot, but good."

He scooped up a small spoonful and turned back to the princess. He carefully gestured with the spoon towards her mouth. "Try."

The casserole of vegetables smelled deliciously piquant. "What is it again?"

"Y'rucur." He slipped the tip of the spoon into her opening mouth. "Traditional Corellian dish." He was right. It tasted good and hot; heat hot and spicy hot. Leia quickly swallowed the vegetables, then gasped at the sensation that burned across her tongue. Solo handed her back the bottle of kochvit and she gulped at the relief it offered.

He innocently asked, "Too hot?"

She swatted a hand at him. "Aah!"

Laughing, he gave her a piece of flat bread. "Eat this. It'll help."

For some reason, that she didn't care about right now, the sweet, unleavened dough provided more relief than the kochvit. She accepted the tumbler of water he offered, and rinsed the remaining spice from her mouth.

She eyed him accusingly. "You did that on purpose!" The look of innocence he gave her quickly dissolved her irritation. "What is it with Corellians and spicy food? Especially when it's about 40 degrees outside."

"The hotter the better," he explained. "If you eat hot food when you're hot, the quicker you cool off."

Leia shook her head and chuckled. "There's got to be some logic in that somewhere."

"Corellian logic," he advised sagely, hunting back through the cooling unit again. He pulled out a tub of white, whey-like substance and tipped it into the cooker. "That'll calm it down for you." She frowned as he stirred the white goo through the vegetables. "I'm glad you know what you're doing, Solo."

"Who said that?!" he crowed.

When he was finished, they silently shared the remains of the kochvit, passing the bottle back and forth, their eyes never leaving the other. Leia found that the incredible upsurge of ardenalin in her body seemed to heighten her sexual desire. With each mouthful of kochvit, the tension between them cranked up a notch, until the very air seemed to spark and crackle.

Eventually the bottle was empty. Solo slid it into the recycling processor, and turned to face the princess again. Resting against the edge of the counter directly opposite her, he was less than an arm's length away. The heat and desire radiating from him was as palpable as the meal he was preparing.

His deep voice broke the silence. "Thanks for coming to dinner."

Leia gave him a small smile. "Thank you for inviting me."

He briefly matched her smile, then his gaze dropped to the deck before returning to hers. "I had a great time this afternoon."

The blood rushed in her ears and the breath tightened in her lungs. "So did I."

The side of his face curved into a grin. "I'm glad you did." He shook his head in awe. "You were incredible."

She wondered if he really meant what he said, or if he was only saying it to get her into bed again. But from the sincerity on his face, she felt compelled to believe him. There was, however, one thing she needed to clarify.

"You didn't want to kiss me to begin with, did you?" she asked. "Why was that?"

Solo shook his head again. "I did want to. I just didn't know if you wanted me to. You know, seeing as we're just friends."

He thought it would complicate things, she realised. And it had. She was the one who had kissed him. And once she had done that, she couldn't stop. Couldn't stop any of it.

"I did want you to kiss me," she quietly admitted.

Eyes locked on hers, he pushed himself towards her. "Let me make up for it now."

Despite the compelling need to let him do just that, Leia suddenly wondered if Chewbacca was somewhere on the ship. Solo must have noticed the furtive

glance out the corner of her eye and her momentarily hesitation, for he stopped his progress, his face only centimetres from hers.

"Chewie's not here," he assured her, somehow managing to make his explanation sound romantic. "He's still pissed at me for not going to the ceremony, so when I told him I was having company for dinner and wanted some privacy, he stormed out. He's probably in the mess at the moment. And, knowing that Wookiee-sized stomach of his, he'll be there for a while."

Embarrassed at how easily he had read her, Leia averted her eyes and her face blushed.

"So," he tried again, "can I get back to making up for it?"

She managed the slightest of nods and was raising her eyes when his lips touched hers. Her whole world seemed to explode at that moment, and she heard herself whimper in welcome relief.

His mouth worked across her upper lip, lifting it up and inviting her to return the caress, which she did. With her lips parted, his tongue slid into her mouth and gently prodded at her own tongue, bringing it to life. His breath was hot and tasted of kochvit, exciting her further. Then she felt his hands steady her shoulders, and she had found her excuse to press her hands against his chest. They spent some time slowly exploring each other's mouth, feeling the different shapes and textures, bumping teeth as they eventually synced into an agreeable rhythm.

Inexperienced as she was, Leia gasped for breath before Solo did. He took the opportunity to graze his lips across her cheek, then mouthed the soft lobe of her ear. The touch of his breath on the sensitive folds of her ear sent trembles through her body, and she turned her head to allow his tongue greater access.

The open-mouthed kisses he pressed down the length of her neck raised her head to the upper bulkhead, and made her realise this was all happening so quickly. For a moment, a girlish panic speared through her. Her resolve and desire quickly flushed away the cold alarm, and she reminded herself that she was no longer a virgin, that she'd had sex before, and in fact, she'd had sex with this man. Made love with Han. He would not hurt her. He had already proven that. Making love with Han would give her more pleasure than she had ever experienced before.

His hands were on her breasts, cupping and kneading them, and she felt his fingers fumbling with the fasteners on her tunic as he nuzzled the base of her throat. Leia placed her hands over the top of his, and he ceased his unsuccessful attempt to open her shirt. He backed away from her, watching hungrily as she unhooked the fasteners and pushed her shirt open. She smirked at the

enraptured look on his face; she had especially worn a delicate, lacy bra instead of the standard issue corset-like crop top, and her nipples were visible through the fabric.

She released the bra's clasp that sat above her sternum, and freed her breasts, her nipples erect before he reached out to claim one. Her eyes closed as he fondled her breast and gently placed his lips to her cheek.

"You're the guest, Princess," he whispered in her ear. "So it's your choice. Do you want dinner, or do you want me?"

"Difficult choice," she told him playfully.

"Let me make it easier for you."

Leia sighed as his tongue circled the nipple of the breast he held, opened his mouth and dragged his teeth over the erect skin. She clutched at his shoulder, pushed her fingers up the back of his neck. He moved his attention to her other breast, and she tangled her fingers in his hair. His lips worked their way back up her chest, to her throat, over her chin. Then he took her face in both his hands and slowly devoured her mouth.

When he eventually released her lips and face, Leia opened her eyes. He was staring at her intensely, his gaze smouldering with promise and intent. She realised he was waiting for her decision. She bit her bottom lip and nodded.

Solo took her hand, helped her down from the counter and led her from galley, turning off the cooker with a swipe of his hand as he passed it. Following him along the ring corridor, inevitably towards his cabin, Leia felt dazed, the gentle tug of his hand her only link to reality. Her desire for him was like a drug. It consumed her. Gave her the ability to walk through the ship with her shirt open and her breasts exposed. The need to make love with Han became the only reason for her existence.

They entered his cabin and he sealed the hatch behind them, set the locking mechanism. Before she could think, he was there in front of her, releasing the remainder of her hair from the unkempt braids, caressing her tunic from her shoulders as his kisses continued where they'd left off in the galley. She found herself intuitively copying him, pulling his shirt from the waistband of his trousers, slipping it down his arms, anything to reveal more of his skin.

Her bra got caught up in her shirt and fell to the deck as he started on the belt that looped her trousers. He nibbled on her ear and told her to take off her boots. As the only easy place to do that was on his bunk, she sat down. She became distracted as she watched him remove his trousers. She hadn't had the opportunity to see him undress when they had made love before; he had

undressed in her 'fresher and re-appeared in her room, holding his clothes to his chest. Now she had the chance to study the way he slid his trousers down, admire his long, muscled legs and narrow hips, she simply forgot to remove her boots.

Leia's breath caught in her throat. Solo's skin-tight shorts defined the strong lines of his body, then revealed it as the shorts pooled on top of his trousers. In two strides, he was at his bunk and squatting down in front of her. He shook his head, grinned up at her. He turned his attention to her boots and began removing them for her. With her boots off, her trousers and underwear soon followed. Entranced, she allowed him to slip the final items of clothing from her body, raising her hips and thighs to assist him.

Solo moved over the top of her, and she scooted back further onto the mattress until her shoulders eased onto the pillows. His hands rested on either side of her torso, and he propped himself up, hovering above her. Leia looked down the length of him, admiring the lean hardness of his body, the delineation of muscles and the latent strength radiating from him. She ran her hand up his arm, feeling the different textures beneath his skin, and realised if she didn't trust him so implicitly, she might have been intimidated.

His eyes roamed over her possessively, and she relished the idea that she was his lover, that she was responsible for this level of arousal in him. They shared a smile, and he shook his head ruefully as he traced her hairline with his fingertips.

"This time," he told her, "I'm gonna take it nice and slow."

Leia squeezed his biceps and asked, "You weren't slow last time?"

"Nah, I rushed it," he admitted, trailing his touch down her neck. "You were just too much for me."

"But I didn't do anything."

"You did plenty. See what happens when I just look at you." In explanation of what he meant, he nodded down at himself.

Leia smirked at an image that suddenly occurred to her. "That better not happen at any of the briefings I give."

She gasped as he caressed the underside of her breast.

"Why do you think I don't turn up any more?" He waited for her focus to return to him before continuing. "Let's think of this as 'Our First Time: Part Two'."

Leia was just about to ask him whether he meant the first time either of them had had sex or their first time together, when he leaned down and kissed her. She moaned into his mouth and gripped both his arms. He was such an incredible kisser he literally took her breath away.

For a while she followed his lead, accepted his tongue in her mouth while his hands moved over her body. Her own hands made their way up his shoulders, kneaded the muscles while surrendering her mouth to his. She reached his neck and pulled him closer, bringing his chest down to hers. Her fingers slid up behind his ears and into his hair, inflaming her desire for him. She tugged on his hair and speared her tongue past his. Accepting her initiative, his own tongue retracted, his response further igniting her passion.

Her mouth found his ear, and she replicated the actions that he had done to her, nibbling the flesh and circling her tongue along the folds. He shivered and leaned closer, and Leia gave his ear more attention. The gentle breath she blew made him moan, but when she whispered his name, he gasped and pulled away from her as if scalded. Suspecting she had provided him too much stimulation, she lay back and allowed him to resume control.

Solo smiled at her hungrily and moved back over the top of her, deliberately dragging his skin across hers. He bent his head to hers and seized her mouth in a bruising, passionate kiss. She accepted and returned his ardour, matching desire with feelings she had never experienced before. Dropping her head, she kissed the line of his jaw and down his neck, her caresses turning to nips and bites as her arousal increased. Leia was so consumed with absorbing him into her body that when Han slowly entered her, her senses were overwhelmed by a wash of pleasure, fulfilment and destiny. This had been inevitable. She had come to see him knowing they would end up in his bunk, making love. This is what she had wanted. This is what they both wanted.

The love they shared now was more considered and savouring than earlier in the day. They spent long minutes slowly moving against one another, expressing their needs and wants with sighs, moans and the occasional question and request. The fervour was as strong as if this was their first time, perhaps even stronger as their confidence and familiarity with each other increased.

The cabin spun around her as Solo pivoted himself on his knee and rolled onto his back, taking her with him. Leia gasped at the unexpected change in position, and he released the protective hold he had on her as she used his chest to push herself upright. She straddled his hips, her legs folded up on either side of his thighs. He was still inside her, had been throughout the manoeuvre, and she could feel him flex himself as he grinned at her. Leia felt her confidence unexpectedly drain away.

"You look beautiful up there," Han assured her softly, his eyes clouding with an emotion she had never seen in him before.

Leia's stomach dropped and a spike of pure lust rushed through her system, but the uncertainty was still there. "I don't know what I'm doing," she admitted.

"There's no rules or procedures. Do whatever feels good. I can tell you it feels great from down here."

And it feels fantastic up here, she silently agreed, and took solace from his words. Bestride Han's narrow hips, he lay flat out in front of her, under her and in her. His hands had roamed across her stomach, and he now cupped her breasts, stroking her nipples with his thumbs. His face revealed many levels of pleasure, rapture and adoration.

Her instincts and desires took over, and her body assumed a natural, swaying rhythm. Han leaned forward and suckled at her breasts. She moaned deeply, threw her head back and tilted her body towards him to make his efforts easier. Her hips continued their grinding tempo. Every movement drew an almost primal sigh from her throat, which in turn heightened her arousal.

Her quest for release became all-consuming, and although she enjoyed the touch of Han's mouth on her breasts, it became an impediment to her. She pushed herself upright, pulling away from his lips. She concentrated on the intense sensations emanating from the core of her being, and with one hand on his chest and the other clutching his waist, focused on riding his body.

Her thoughts became erratic, disjointed. But above it all, there was one thing she was conscious of: I'm making love to Han. Making love with Han. Making love with Han, again. And again, and again, again, again...

She cried out at the incredible tremors that shook through her body, and heard a similar gasp of release from Han. She collapsed onto his chest and into his embrace, shivering and panting, relishing these extraordinary sensations.

With her head resting against Han's shoulder, she felt him shudder as tremors shook his muscles, heard his heart thumping as his pulsed raced, and his chest heave as he found his breath. It was gratifying to know that he had been as affected as she had. Then she realised his arms were around her, gently caressing her back and arms. His breath ruffled her fringe and he kissed her forehead. He hadn't done that after the last and first time they had slept together, she reminded herself. But then, that had been sex for its own sake. This time, they had been making love.

When her own breathing steadied, she levered herself up on his chest and looked at him, conscious that he was still inside her. Last time he had pulled himself out almost as soon as he had finished.

"How was that?" he asked her softly, his breath still short, tracing the outline of her face with his finger. "Better?"

Unaccustomed as she was to frankly discussing sex, Leia blushed as she nodded. "Better," she agreed. The gold highlights in his eyes glimmered and she added, "Better than better. It was unbelievable. I never imagined it could be like this."

"Neither did I," he admitted.

She frowned at him. She thought he had enjoyed himself, but now she wasn't quite sure. And he was still inside her; she could feel every centimetre of him, though perhaps not as hard as he had been.

"So you...?" She allowed her question to trail off, hoping he would understand her meaning.

He grinned at the delicate blush that tinged her cheeks. "Of course I did. Didn't you feel it?"

He lifted her up slightly and she felt a warm liquid start to trickle down her thighs. He stopped the flow by snuggling himself back inside her.

"Took me by surprise," he told her. "I can't usually do it in this position."

Fascinated and thrilled by his admission, Leia entwined her fingers in the hairs on his chest and asked, "And why's that, Han?"

He shrugged, not in the least embarrassed. "I like to be in control. But this one snuck up and hit me from outta nowhere. Especially the intensity." His gaze became solemn. "You're fantastic, Leia."

She blushed again and averted her eyes.

"I mean it," he insisted. "I could do this forever."

She stared at the way her fingers looked so right splayed out on his chest, listened to the background noise of the ship's environmental systems, felt the slickness of the sweat they shared as her body lay pressed against his -- anything to ignore the implicit commitment in his words.

He's only a smuggler, she reasoned. You're getting carried away because you've allowed a smuggler to screw you twice in one day. And he'd probably say anything to keep on screwing you. Even tell you you're fantastic and that he wants something more than just friendship.

"Make love to me like that every day, Princess, and you won't have to pay me to freight for the Rebellion."

Her eyes returned to his, blatantly aware that it was she who had described their union as 'screwing', not the gutter-mouthed smuggler. But Solo was smiling at her impishly, and she was uncertain whether he had tempered his language for her benefit, or if he genuinely believed it was love they had made.

"What about Chewbacca?" she asked playfully. "Surely he's got some say in this?"

His response was deadpan. "He's not into inter-species sex," he explained, "but I'll pass on the offer."

Despite her complicity in it, the sexual banter suddenly irked Leia, and she thumped him as she pushed herself off his chest. Surprised at her unexpected anger and the fist he wore in the sternum, Solo cried out an indignant, "Hey!" and grasped at her wrists before she could escape from his bunk. He pulled her back against him, trying to return her to his embrace.

Struggling in his hold, Leia bit out, "Next you'll be suggesting I screw all your other smuggler friends as well! That'd save the Alliance coffers, wouldn't it?"

He let her go just as suddenly as he had grabbed her, yet she didn't realise he had until she thrashed her way out of his arms and to the edge of the bed. She turned her back on him and swung her legs off the edge of the mattress, but stopped when he didn't make a lunge for her.

"I'm sorry," she heard him mutter. "I was...joking. I didn't mean to upset you."

Leia wrapped her arms across her chest to steady herself. Twice in one day that Solo had apologised to her; what has happened to her world?

"I wouldn't let another man touch you," he offered quietly.

She glanced over her shoulder at him, met his gaze. Perhaps he did feel about her as strongly as she felt about him. Could they be friends as well as lovers? "You wouldn't?"

"How could I? Not after this." He reached his hand out to her. "Come back to bed, Leia. Please."

She did not hesitate in returning to his arms, watched in silent amazement as he closed his eyes, pressed his cheek to hers and held her closer. The kisses he placed across her face were less desperate than before, more loving, and with each caress she felt the bond between them strengthen. As they held each other, a quiet peace settled over them, and they drifted off into a light doze.

A horrendous crash from somewhere deep in the ship broke their repose. Leia instinctively clutched at Han and stared in concern at the hatch.

"What was--?" She glanced at Solo as he shook the sleep from his brain and ran a hand over his eyes.

"Chewie," he explained, dropping his head back onto the pillows and shaking it.

"Chewie?" Leia frowned in the direction of the noise. It sounded as though something -- or someone -- was tearing the ship apart.

Solo pinched the bridge of his nose. "He's trying to disturb us. Or annoy the shit outta me."

Leia pulled the sheets up around her body. "He won't come in here, will he?"

"Not if he knows what's good for him."

Unconvinced by his comment, Leia eyed the hatch uncertainly. She wondered if Solo had told the Wookiee that she was his dinner guest. Wondered if he had boasted about his plans for that evening. Solo squeezed her shoulder. "I didn't tell him about you," he assured her. "Just said I was having someone over for dinner."

She propped herself up on her elbow to better look at him. "He'll work it out, though, won't he?"

Chewbacca was an astute character, with an incredible sense of smell; she didn't doubt that he would quickly work out who had been in Solo's cabin.

Solo shrugged and nodded. "But no one else has to know. Not if you don't want them to." He smoothed his hand down her arm. "You wanna keep this just between you and me, then that's where it'll stay."

His offer was tempting and extremely practical. As much as she was physically and intellectually attracted to Solo, she had to admit that if it became common knowledge that she had slept with him, it would be a liability. Princesses didn't sleep with Corellian smugglers; it was just one of those things that didn't happen. And perhaps if they could keep this a secret, then there would be more opportunities to indulge herself in the more basic pleasures of life.

"Are you saying you won't talk about anything that's happened between us today," she asked, "or about anything that might happen in the future?"

The corner of his mouth turned upwards into a grin. "That's up to you, too. I told you. I could do this forever."

Leia's stomach fluttered with unrestrained excitement. He was suggesting they have an affair. An illicit affair, right under the noses of the Alliance. But although she found the idea thrilling, even daring, she figured he didn't need to know how enthralled she was.

"I believe we should not disclose to others what has occurred today," she told him, slipping into her diplomatic parlance with ease, "as nothing can be gained from it. And as far as the future, why don't we just see what happens."

Solo chuckled at her tone, and leaned towards her. "Why don't we do that, Princess."

His lips were touching hers when another loud bang interrupted them, and they both cringed at the screeching sound of metal being dragged across metal. Solo kissed her cheek apologetically and sat up on his side.

"But right now, I've gotta go skin a Wookiee."

He kissed her again and moved over the top of her. For Leia, the sight of his body above hers was a temptation she could not resist. She slid her fingers down the side of his torso and grabbed him before he got too far away. Surprised but delighted by her actions, Solo hovered above her. His eyes held hers, then glanced down at her hand clutching him.

"Doesn't that look nice," he said, his eyes returning to hers.

Leia's gaze never strayed from his. "Feels nice."

Her hand moved down against his groin and he agreed, "Feels very nice."

"Stay," she half-begged/half-commanded. "Forget Chewie. Just make love to me."

He could not deny her this request, and so he loved her, oblivious to any further distractions. Things had significantly quietened by the time they had finished and recovered. Except for the rather loud rumblings of Solo's stomach. Leia giggled at the audible gurgles and slapped an affectionate hand at his abdomen.

"What?" he asked with mock-indignation. "It's way past my feeding time. Besides, man cannot live on sex alone."

"But I'd bet you'd like to try."

He waggled his eyebrows at her suggestively. "I bet you'd like me to try."

She shrieked as he made a dive for her crotch. "No, don't!" she pleaded, laughing as she tried to close her legs and push his head away at the same time. "I'll wet myself!"

He managed to drag his tongue down her inner thigh. "You like it kinky, huh?"

Leia shrieked again as she almost toppled out of the bunk. "I'm serious, Han!"

He grabbed her by shoulders and helped her back onto the mattress, grinning at her mischievously. "So am I." He swatted away the pillow she threw at him, then rolled off the bunk and pulled her to her feet. "Come on then. We'll get cleaned up and have that dinner I promised."

He snagged up his undershorts and pulled them on, watching as Leia attempted to find her own underwear buried under the tangle of clothes on the deck.

"You wanna bring dinner back here?" he asked hopefully.

Leia looked up at him through a mess of hair, sliding her underpants up her legs. The boyish eagerness on his face was endearing. "Why not?"

"I was hoping you'd say that." He grabbed his shirt and passed it to her. "You can wear this, if you like. Save you from getting fully dressed."

She smiled at his suggestion, recognising its different elements of consideration, possessiveness and voyeurism. But, she admitted to herself as she shrugged on his shirt and fastened the front of it, wearing his clothing was both erotic and empowering, declaring herself as his lover, if for their eyes only.

She followed him to the 'fresher, undertaking her ablutions with no embarrassment as he washed his hands and face, and wiped a wet cloth over himself. She used the same cloth to clean herself. When they were both finished, he took her hand and they walked around to the galley.

Chewbacca was nowhere to be seen or heard on the ship. Solo said the Wookiee had probably taken himself for a walk out past the perimeter of the Base, yearning for his old hunter's life back on Kashyyyk, and if that was the case they wouldn't see him until dawn.

"Does he do that sort of thing often?" Leia asked as she watched Solo spoon the y'rucur into two bowls for them.

The Corellian's face twitched indifferently. "Only if he's really pissed with me. He likes to get away when he's tempted to strangle me. Wouldn't do much for his Life Debt if he did that."

Leia was mildly startled. "He's really that angry about you not coming to the remembrance ceremony?"

He placed a few slices of flat bread onto a plate and handed it to her. "Well, you were."

She blushed. He was right. Earlier that day, she had been so overwhelmed by hatred for him, she would gladly have throttled him. And now... now they were lovers.

"I guess I should apologise for that as well."

Having missed his train of thought, Leia frowned at him. Then she realised what he meant; he was apologising for ignoring her invitation to attend the ceremony.

"You don't have to do that," she said. "You didn't want to come, so you didn't come."

Solo cocked his head at her. "But I could've at least told you that."

This day, and Solo, continued to amaze her. She had never imagined he could be so solicitous. "But if you'd done that," she reasoned, "then none of this would've happened."

He gave her a small grin. "I guess there's something to said for being rude and arrogant."

Leia smiled indulgently and shook her head. "Promise me you'll never change, Solo."

"Never."

They returned to his cabin with their meals, sitting cross-legged at either end of the bunk with the plate of bread between them. The vegetables were not as spicy as they had been when she had first tasted them, but the piquancy increased as she chewed, and she tried a piece of bread to calm the heat down.

"Still too hot?" Solo asked, obviously having no trouble of his own as he spooned more of the casserole into his mouth.

Leia swallowed her mouthful and inhaled in an attempt to cool her tongue. "I'm getting used to it."

He smiled around his own mouthful and placed his bowl on the bunk. "I'll get you a drink."

He was halfway across the cabin before she could protest, so she thanked him instead. While he was gone, she used the time to look around his cabin. She'd been in here before, but that was before they had been lovers. Now, she viewed the dishevelled state of his private space from a new perspective, looking for clues to his personality and prepared not to pass judgement.

She heard Solo's footsteps coming back down the corridor again, and was considering giving the y'rucur another try when a familiar voice rang out. "Han?"

Leia froze. It was Luke, and here she was, in Solo's cabin, sitting on his bunk and wearing his shirt, with the hatch wide open.

She reached across and hit the remote to seal the hatch, hoping that Solo wouldn't be too upset that she had shut him out. Her heart was racing, the blood rushing in her ears, and she held her breath as she tried to listen what was happening on the other side of the hatch.

Luke called out again, "Han?"

There was a muttered, "Shit," from Solo, then a more friendly, if resigned, "Down here, kid."

The two men exchanged brief greetings before Luke brought up exactly why he was here. "Have you seen Leia?"

There was an awkward silence and Leia wondered what Han was thinking, what he would say. She panicked when he finally responded, "Uh, yeah." There was another agonising pause before he added, "Earlier today."

Luke's frustrated sigh was audible through the closed hatch. "Was she all right? I haven't seen her since the ceremony. I was concerned she might be upset. You know...considering..."

Leia couldn't refrain a grin at Solo's explanation. "Last time I saw her, she looked great."

"Oh?" Luke's confusion was evident.

"Fine," Solo amended. "She was fine."

"But you haven't seen her recently?" Luke pressed. "I think she went to the evening brief, but no one's seen her after that. And she's not in her room."

"Look, kid, I'm a bit busy. I've got company."

"Ah--"

"And I don't like keeping a lady waiting."

Leia sensed Luke's embarrassment, heard it voiced in the mumbled farewell. A few moments later, the hatch to the cabin opened and Solo waltzed in as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened on his journey to the galley. He handed Leia a beaker of juice and resumed his seat, trying to ignore the way she kept staring at him.

It wasn't long before he broke. "What?"

She tried to keep a straight face. "You lied to Luke."

He smirked at her. "I didn't lie."

"You were parsimonious with the truth."

"I didn't lie."

They shared a grin and returned to their meals, leaving Leia to wonder just how difficult it would be to maintain this relationship in secret. They may have passed the first test, but she was certain there would be more to come.

After they had finished eating, they spent the rest of the night lying on his bunk, simply talking and touching one another. Neither seemed inclined to turn the caresses into anything more. For Leia, it was gratifying to know they could spend time together and enjoy each other's company without having to resort to sex.

Relaxed and satisfied, somewhere in there Leia fell asleep. It was late when she woke, only a few hours before dawn. Han's arm was around her waist, and he pulled her into the curve of his body as they both stirred. It seemed a natural reaction for her to lean back and kiss his cheek. "Wassup?" he mumbled sleepily.

"I should go. Before it gets too light."

He tightened his arm around her and rested his chin on her shoulder. She rested back into him for a while, enjoying the warmth and touch of his body, then reluctantly left his side. He was silent as he watched her dress in her crumpled uniform and twist her hair into a tail at the back of her head, all the while rubbing at the scar on his chin. When she sat back on the bunk to pull on her boots, he moved up behind, pushed her hair to one side and rested his chin on her shoulder again.

His voice rumbled in her ear. "I'll walk you to your room."

She tried to concentrate on fastening her boots. "It's all right." She shivered as he nuzzled on her neck, touched her hand to his head and closed her eyes. She whispered his name, "Han," uncertain whether it was a plea for him to stop or continue.

It took all her strength to stand up and leave his bunk. His disappointment was unmistakable, so she took his hand and encouraged him to rise with her.

"Walk me to the ramp?" she asked.

They said their farewells at the Falcon's entrance, inconsequential small talk that only delayed the inevitable. Then Leia kissed him quickly and headed down the ramp, hoping that any of the shiftworkers on duty in the hangar would be used to females leaving the smuggler's ship at this time of the morning. Regardless, she ducked her head down and strode quickly across the hardstand and into the Base accommodation wing, not slowing her pace until she reached her room.

Leia collapsed onto her bed and sighed deeply. The scent of Han, and their lovemaking, lingered in her nostrils. It had been a truly incredible day. She had discovered that Han was indeed her friend. And now he was also her lover. Her secret lover. She wondered how long it would last. Forever, like Han had promised? Friends and lovers?

She knew that only time would tell.

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