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RESOLUTIONS SOLO: Part 3

by [Homer Sapiento](#)

"We better start getting ready to go back," he answered quietly.

"Why?"

"For starters, sister, I got a ship to fix. Chewie won't fix that heating unit; he never feels the cold anyway. Let him fix it and we'll probably fry! That'll take a few dozens sun-turns at least. Hell, I don't even know where to look for the problem." He never looked at her.

"You're rambling," Leia interrupted. "The real reason is that list the General gave you ..."

Han nodded. "Just want to get it over." He glanced around the clearing. "I don't want to go ... I can't stay."

"Come on, you old pirate," she encircled him with her arms. "You can start packing the stuff away and I'll fix some lunch. Maybe we can make it back before dark."

They walked back to the tree and Han frowned. "How many times I gotta tell you: I ain't no pirate! And you fix the food? Didn't I tell you I'm allergic to tomaine?"

She matched him. "Didn't hear you complain about what I fixed yesterday, you made a total pig out of yourself! Keep it up and you won't be solo, you'll be a duet!" Leia started to giggle, pleased with herself.

Han grabbed her from behind and held her at eye level. "I wouldn't talk if I were you, Chubbs."

She squirmed in his grasp. "Oh! Chubbs is it. I'll get you!"

"I certainly hope so," he grinned and kissed her nose.

When the possessions of the Corellian's life were stored away and the dishes done for a final time, the Princess sat on the bed and stroked the quilt. "Can we take it with us?"

With everything secured, there was nothing left to do but look around one last time. Finally, Han said, "C'mon, I'll help you down."

"Will you stop!" Leia retorted. "I can do it myself!" He bowed deeply as she stepped onto the ladder and glared at him.

They stopped at the edge of the clearing and Leia turned back. There was no sign of the house which had become a home in the deepening shadows. "I'm going to miss it so much."

He kissed her forehead and hugged her gently. "Yeah, me, too." He separated the foliage and she stepped through. "We'll come back soon," he promised.

By the time they reached Chewie's village, it was full dark. A bright light shone in the tree used by the Wookiee's family. "Would they be up this late?" Leia looked at Han.

"Uh uh. My keeper probably had that on since we've been gone." He sighed. "Always worries."

Leia touched his hand. "Well, we had some time to ourselves, and it's a memory I'll always cherish."

Han stretched slightly. "Thank you." He stared at the tree. "I'm too tired to go in the way we got out." The Corellian held her hand as they climbed the crude stairs. "Please, whatever he says, don't argue with him, okay?"

As they entered the house, the vigilant Wookiee appeared before them and roared at his old friend. Han threw up his hands. "Okay! Okay! Don't get excited, you'll wake everybody up! I'll explain it all in the morning, just let us get up to my room."

Chewie roared again and his mate appeared behind him. Malla sniffed at the bedraggled couple and finally pulled her mate back to their own bed.

The Wookiees' muffled laughter filtered through the door which Han closed. Leia stared at him. "What was that all about?"

The Corellian shook his head. "Malla has an overdeveloped romantic streak. Gonna have to avoid her for a while or she won't let us leave until we give her a 'grandchild'!"

"That wouldn't be so bad, would it?" Leia spread the quilt on the bed.

"In bed, the Corellian held her close. "Some day." He kissed her softly. "Soon as we geet done with all of this ... find a house for you." He eyed her thoughtfully. "Gotta get married ... all that insignificant stuff."

"People have babies without getting married, laser brain." She snuggled against his chest. "Babies get born every day."

"Yeah, but a freighter ain't no place to house a kid," he yawned. Staring down at her, Han frowned. "You startin' a fight?" She shook her head and he hugged her. "Good," he closed his eyes, "we got plenty of time." The Princess took a deep breath and counted herself to sleep.

In the bright sunlight of Kashyyyk Leia awoke totally refreshed and totally alone. She looked around the room and shook her head. Han had obviously left in a hurry, she thought, or a tornado had found its way into their room. Dressed, she found an orange the Corellian had somehow overlooked. From the table she picked up the skins, seeds, and cores which had made Han's breakfast. "Men," Leia muttered as she moved through the room and collected pieces of clothing. She took the rope she had used as a belt and tied the bundle together to take to the Falcon's cleaning unit. Finally, she made the bed and for the first time noticed the note fastened to the head-board. "Princess: Too much to do at Falcon - Sorry for mess - Have a ball cleanin' H."

"Wonderful!" the Princess said out load. "Have a ball, he says!" She grabbed the bundle and ran down the steps.

As she neared the ship, Tandy caught up to her. "I heard you and Uncle Han had come back."

Leia nodded. "Yes. Very late last night. Or maybe it was very early this morning."

"Did you have a good time?" the young girl asked shyly.

"It was beautiful," Leia replied. "If you're looking for your Uncle, he's on the ship. The heating unit or something. I'm just part of the clean-up crew."

Sleep eluded the Corellian that night. He was anxious to get the heating unit fixed, anxious to spend some time with Chewie's family. He was also confused about his feelings toward the woman next to him. He loved her and it scared him. Finally the Corellian gave up his fight against insomnia and dug out the latest plans of the ship and tried to track down the problem. At the first sign of light, he scribbled a note for Leia and left.

As Han opened the hatch and walked inside, the siren went off and he swore loudly. He raced for the off-switch and stumbled in the dark. Just as he shut it off, the lights shot on. Han turned and faced a half-awake Lando who held a levelled blaster. "You old pirate!" he called. "When'd you get back? Chewie's been hopping mad since you took off without telling him!"

"I'll tell you all about it," Han grinned. "Almost all." He glanced around the ship. "Who the hell's been messing with this nav board?"

"Uh, Threepio said something about trying to decipher its language program."

That droid! He was going to tear him apart - transistor by transistor. "I'll kill him!" Han yelled.

"I just might help you," Calrissian laughed.

Over a hot drink, the Corellian explained what he was going to do and by the time Leia made her way to the ship, he was already deep inside of it. The work was mainly hit and miss. As Han crawled deeper into the Falcon, he called to Lando. "I'm gonna check out the oil line. Count to ten and turn it on!" It was harder to take the plug off than he had anticipated. And just as he began to replace it, Lando turned it on. Han was hit with a mouthful of oil. "Turn it off! Turn it off!"

Just as the Corellian pounded in the plug, Lando crawled down next to him. "You okay?"

"I found out that's not the problem," he said as he wiped his face. "What a life." Han frowned. "We're gonna tear it apart ... I don't care if it takes forever."

A familiar voice echoed through the ship. "Han. Han? Han!"

"That's all I need right now," he mumbled as he crawled toward the opening.

"Smile, buddy," Lando said behind him. "Now you start paying for the good times."

When the Corellian finally got to the main lounge, Leia was nowhere in sight. Just as he was ready to go back to work, she came storming around the corner.

"Where have you been? Didn't you hear me call you?"

"Yeah, I heard. Just took me a while to get here." His eyes narrowed slightly. "What're you doin' here anyway?"

"I came to wash some clothes -- and to see if I can help -- and Tandy's here to see you." She stared at him. "You are covered with oil!"

Han rubbed his face with a rag. "Observant. Well, I found out where the problem isn't."

The Princess looked around. "Where's 3PO?" Han looked around the area with an air of total innocence. "Where is he!" she yelled.

The Corellian leaned against a vertical storage panel. "I shut him down."

"You what?"

He hit a button and the panel slid up revealing the golden droid in a frozen state. Leia turned him on. "Oh, my. Oh, my. Princess Leia, how good it is to see you again. I did so want Chewbacca to form a search party for you --" He saw Han and backed up. "Mistress Leia, would you be so kind as to inform Captain Solo that what he did was quite unnecessary."

Han shrugged. "I shoulda blasted him."

"Oh, Han, honestly." She sighed.

Offended, he retorted. "Now look, sweetheart, him and his ideas almost got ME blasted here, so don't go layin' this on me. Just keep him outta my way!"

"Mistress Leia!" 3PO began as Han held his ground.

Leia looked from one to the other and shook her head. "Can't you two ever get along?"

Han glared at her. "I don't have to get along with IT! Now, did you say Tandy was here? You wanna help, go find some oil. We -- uh -- lost some. See if you can track down another tool belt. You better change outta that outfit, too. This isn't a palace, sister."

Leia glared at him. "Tandy's in our quarters. I'll show her to your office, so I can change, if that's all right with you, Captain!"

"Perfectly," he muttered as he rubbed a rag through his hair.

"Thank you -- sir!" she fumed and stormed away.

The Corellian turned to Lando. "Now what did I do?"

Calrissian just smiled. "You really have a way with women, you know. And they still manage to fall in love with you. Kid, you got a lot to learn."

Han shook his head. "No, it's all right. Everything's fine with us."

"Can I ask a personal question?" They stopped in front of the open office door, and Han shrugged. "You going to marry her?"

"You sayin' there's somethin' wrong with that?"

"No," Calrissian said quickly. "You just never -- I mean. I've known you a long time, Han. Never thought --"

The Corellian grinned slightly. "Know what you mean, I never thought it either. 'Bout time I did it, though." He moved into his office. "Never felt this way before."

"Might be the flu," Lando offered.

With the door closed behind him, Han realized he wasn't alone. "I forgot about you," he smiled at Tandy. "Sit down. I'd offer you a drink but I don't think you're old enough just yet!"

"Is -- is it true?" the young girl asked in a whisper.

"What?"

"Are you -- going to marry the Princess?" she asked.

Han pointed at her. "You were eavesdropping, kid. I told you your ears'd fall off last time you did that! I oughta give you one where you sit."

"I -- I didn't mean to, you and Captain Calrissian were talking awfully loudly --" tears welled in her eyes.

"Hey, I was kidding," he took her hand. "What's wrong?"

She started to cry in earnest. "I'm sorry, Uncle Han. I just remembered you were supposed to marry before -- before you left us. Nobody ever told us what happened, we didn't know what happened. At night I'd hear Momma and Father talking. I didn't understand the words, but Momma sounded so angry. When we

got older, they, they told us you were a traitor. I -- I wasn't sure what that meant, but I knew it was a bad word." She studied her hands. "I -- I didn't want you to be that -- I loved you --"

Han moved round the desk and held her tightly. "It's all right now. It's all right."

Tandy held on to him. "Then -- then when that Princess got in charge -- we all had to -- to move. Momma was sick a lot after you -- after they made you leave. But she was always angry about the Princess you were going to -- she said she wasn't your kind -- I didn't understand, Uncle Han."

He smiled at her. "Your Momma was a very special person."

Tandy threw her arms around his neck. "I'm so frightened for you."

"Hey, sister," Han took her arms down gently. "It's okay. Leia loves me, too. Honest. You can ask her yourself." He smiled at her and slowly she smiled back.

Han read the letter from Lido and leaned back in his chair. "Why does everybody think I got a solution to everything?" he muttered.

Leia entered and handed him a cup of hot broth. "Trouble? I saw Tandy leave." He handed her the letter and sipped the soup as he waited for the oncoming rampage. "It's impossible! Even if it could be arranged, it's too dangerous."

He returned her gaze with steady eyes. "They're the only people I have left."

"But -- they betrayed you! You were almost killed! How can you even consider it?"

Han cut her off. "I can consider it. Whatever happened before wasn't their fault; they couldn't have prevented it. Yeah, I can consider it. I considered it when some naïve dirt farmer talked me into rescuing some Princess I didn't even know!" Han smiled at her. "Look what that led to!"

Leia sighed and touched his arm. "Well, what are we going to do?"

"I don't know yet, but I'll think of something." He let out his breath then gave Leia a long mischievous look. "Want to help me find out how that oil line's doin', by the way? You look awful clean to have been pullin' you weight around here."

The Princess hit him with her elbow. "I'm just a neat person. I don't know what's going on with the oil line; Chewie and Lando have been screaming at each other all this time. Can't you just buy a new one?"

Han frowned at her. "Sure, we'll just pull into the nearest Imperial repair shop - they might even give us a discount!"

AT dusk, Leia left the Falcon and the Corellian sat on the floor with Chewie and Lando and explained the details of what he wanted to do. "I know it's crazy, but it could work. You always said my best plans sounded crazy." Chewie grunted loudly as Lando chuckled. "And I don't want Leia to know, got it?"

Lando broke in. "If Lido's been in contact with the General, then you have to tell -
_"

"No!" Han yelled. "She'd only want to come along. I don't want her hurt."

As the conversation broke up, Lando met Han outside. "I'll fill in the older kids on this." He glanced up at the stars. "You don't think you're coming back from this, do you?"

Han shook his head. "Never felt like this before. Must be getting' old."

Lando returned the Corellian's wry smile. "You never had anything to lose before."

Han sat quietly and watched as Leia brushed her hair. She looked at his reflection in the mirror. "Is something wrong?"

"No, why?" he replied too quickly.

"You're awfully quiet," she turned around. "and you're staring at me."

"I wasn't staring," he retorted. "I don't stare."

"Could've fooled me," she muttered.

Han moved over to her and put his hands on her shoulders. He softly brushed her hair back as if to kiss her ear. With a sudden motion, he mussed up her hair with both hands and quickly backed off. Leia shrieked, turned and fired the brush at him. He caught it in mid-air. "You no-good, low-down --" she whispered as she came towards him.

"C'mon, c'mon," he chided.

"Give me my brush back," she held out her hand.

He waved it at her and laughed. "Come and get it, Your Worship."

She lunged for it and he moved quickly, sidestepping out of her reach. Anger built in her and she stamped her foot. "Give it to me!"

"Foot stampin'? Havin' a little temper tantrum now?" he backed away from her. "I don't think I'll give it to you. I like the natural look!"

She clenched her fists and moved slowly toward him. "If you don't give me that brush back, I'll -- I'll --"

Han, too, moved, toward the door. "You'll what?" he called as he madly dashed down the stairs.

With a scream, Leia flew after him. The pounding footsteps and yelling brought Chewie and his mate to their door. Malls roared happily as she understood what was going on; Chewie just shook his head - it was becoming clear to him that his old friend and Captain was going insane!

The Corellian broke through the bottom door and leaned against it. 'Definitely too old for these games.' He thought, 'even though they're fun.' He heard Leia screeching behind him, and stuck the brush into his belt. Han inched his way into the oncoming dusk and toward a group of playing children. He was almost to the outer edge when Leia spotted him.

Leia followed him and soon chased him through a maze of children who soon caught on to the game and sided with their own sex. As Han remained inches away from Leia's grasp, her anger rose. "You, you, you -- when I get a hold of you, I'll, I'll, I'll --"

Han grinned. "Watch it, your Holiness, there are children present!"

Leia looked around frantically for something to throw. Finding nothing, she shook her fist at him. Han laughed, "Is that how you did it on Alderaan? We had a different sign on Corellia!" The children laughed loudly.

"OOOHHH!" Leia screamed and stormed through the quickly parting children straight for Han. His short protection gone, Han backed up, looked around and headed for the trees. As the chase moved from tree to tree, they both grew tired. The Princess leaned against one. "Give me back my brush!"

"Come and get it!" Han called back, barely able to talk. His side hurt and he gasped for breath. 'This is ridiculous,' he thought, but surrender wasn't a part of his vocabulary. Pain had subsided and his lungs no longer felt like they were going to burst. "If I feel this good," he mumbled, "Leia must feel a whole lot better." He instinctively grew more alert; he couldn't hear her anymore.

"Han," she said softly from behind him. "Can I have the brush now?"

Startled, he spun to face her. "Come and get it," he smiled slowly.

Leia held out her hand and reached for him. She placed her hands on his chest and slid them upwards until they were around his neck. Han tensed. The Princess smiled slyly. "You're not afraid of me, are you?" He bent to kiss her and soon found himself giving it his full attention. When they finally separated, Leia looked up at him and grinned. "Thank you!" she yelled and ran off, brush in hand.

The Corellian watched as her shape disappeared and laughed. "One round doesn't make the whole fight," he muttered. Slowly he moved toward the Falcon, he intended to make her wait.

Leia was very happy with herself as she ran up the stairs of Chewie's home. Brushing her hair back vigorously, she couldn't imagine a time when the man wasn't in her life. Wasn't a part of her life. And she couldn't imagine not wanting him in it. As time passed, she began to wonder what was keeping Han. Against her better judgment, she crept down the stairs.

Leia moved casually through the moonlit night and was surprised to find the ship's hatch down and an interior light on. She moved up the ramp and stopped at the sound of the men's voices. "-- everything's all set --" "-- the kids all know -- later --" The Princess peeked in to the main lounge. Lando spoke first. "-- so we got it all done --"

"Reflectors? I want them at optimum."

"They might not hold."

"But then again they might," Han sighed. "I just want all I can get."

Lando nodded. "They're up as far as they can get."

"Kids all set, then?" Han asked grimly.

"Uh huh, they'll be here. They all know how to handle a blaster, but you can't count on that, they're just too young."

A chair creaked, Han spoke. "They may be young, but they're all I got. If they pull this off -- when they pull this off," he shrugged. "Maybe we're all just nuts."

"You'll need all of us, boy," Lando said. "Still think you ought to tell Leia."

"No," the chair creaked again. "She'd just want to come along. I need her here to make contact with the General if --"

Leia felt sick as Lando interrupted. "One of the younger kids could do that."

"No. It has to be her. Hey, don't worry. She probably won't have to do it at all. I'm planning to get back to her."

AS the Princess heard the two men move toward the cockpit, she ran down the ramp and didn't stop running until she was outside Tandy's door. The young girl hesitantly opened the door to her. "Yes? Yes, Princess?"

"Can I come in? I need your help."

Once inside the small room, Leia knew the girl was going with Han and Lando. The Princess turned from the pile of clothes on the bed. "Han let me read the letter from your father. I don't know what he has planned, I do know I want to be on that ship. You have to help me."

"Maybe Uncle Han doesn't want you there," Tandy replied coolly.

"I want me to be there!" Leia retorted. "I'm sorry, I don't mean to sound like this. I want, I have to be with him ... don't you understand? Tandy, please, if I have to I'll beg you I will! Help me get on that ship tonight! If I can't go with him, nothing else matters."

Slowly, Tandy walked toward her and touched her arm. "I'll help you," she said quietly. Leia opened her arms and the two hugged each other tightly.

Leia was peeling an orange when Han entered their room. "You mad?" he asked sheepishly.

"No," she smiled at him.

In bed in each other's arms, Han whispered. "I wish this was all over. I love you so much." He moved up on one arm and shifted her beneath him, the kiss that followed was soft and gentle, then long and deep."

Leia touched his face gently. "I don't ever want us to be apart again." His face tightened and she smiled. "Love me. Just love me."

They made love that night as if for the first time. There was an intensity in Han that she had never seen or felt before, and it frightened her. She remembered that, in his mind, this could be their last night together and suddenly she was very sad. When it was over, they held each other in exhaustion.

Some time later, Han gently moved from the bed, dressed and crept out of the room. The hardest thing he had ever done was walk away from the sleeping Princess.

Moments after the door closed, Leia opened her own eyes. She bounded from the bed and dressed quickly in the clothes Tandy had given her. Quietly she slipped down to the girl's room.

With Han and Chewie in the cockpit, the Corellian warmed the engines. As the children settled in the lounge, the Falcon lifted off and Lando made a quick head-count. Puzzled, he counted again and looked more closely at the thirty-one around him. Then he saw her, and she saw him. Her eyes pleaded with him to keep her secret.

As the Falcon sped toward its rendezvous with a well-known gun runner, Han rehashed the plans in his own mind. Having done business with the thief before, the Corellian had no intention of trusting him at this late date. The children would stay well-hidden until the guns were brought on board.

He came back to the lounge to confer with Lando and glanced at the children seated on the floor. 'What a stupid way to run a Rebellion,' he thought.

Lando stood in front of him. "How's it up front?"

Han nodded. "Kids know what to do?" Calrissian nodded. "Okay, I want 3PO to hold the computer dock, just in case we need a fast move outta here."

"What about the kids? The older ones could help in a fight." Lando said.

Han shook his head. "I don't want them involved unless it's absolutely necessary." He looked around the room again. "Guess I'll see to the charges." He carefully made his way through the sea of youngsters toward his quarters. At the door he stopped and turned to look back at the group. Lando watched him and held his breath. Han's face clouded as he approached the familiar looking child. He grabbed Leia's arm and pulled her to her feet. "What are you doing here?"

Han shook her. "I asked you a question!" The Princess glared at him. He pulled her through the crowd of children. "You're going back!"

Leia stopped and dug in her heels. "I am not!"

The children stared at the two in stunned silence. Han's mouth twitched. "Oh, yes you are." He fumed and picked her off her feet. The Princess kicked wildly as they passed Lando. Han glared at him. "You knew about this."

Lando shrugged. "Not till after lift-off!"

"Put me down!"

"Not -- not until we get back to Chewie's," the Corellian hissed through clenched teeth as he tried to dodge her fist.

It met its mark and Han let her go. He felt his mouth as she backed away from him. "I'm -- I'm sorry -- I didn't mean --"

The Corellian looked at her and at his red-spotted hand. Furiously, he pointed at her. "You are going back now!"

He turned and stormed out of the lounge, Leia at his heels. "Han! Wait!"

She caught up with him in the cockpit as he yelled at the Wookiee. "Change it! We're goin' back -- no, I'm not crazy! We're goin' back now!"

"Han!" she called as the Wookiee grunted in understanding. "Han! I'm going with you. You could use the extra hand!"

The Corellian turned on her. "No! I'm not listenin' to anything you have to say." Just as Leia was about to reply, something hit the ship. The force threw the Princess into Han's arms. Chewie howled wildly as an Imperial fighter darted past their field of vision. "Great!" Han yelled. "Just damn wonderful!" He sat Leia down in the nearest seat as a different type of explosion rocked the ship, and knocked him into Chewie. The Wookiee growled in frustration as the Princess studied the floor of the cockpit.

As quickly as it began, what attack there was stopped and Han rubbed his hand in confusion. Chewie mumbled in aggravation as Corellian silence ebbed around them all. "Wow! That was great!" Lando called as he strode into the small room. The Corellian stared at him. "Only took one shot! There was only -- one of -- them --" Calrissian looked from one to the other. Finally he settled on Han. "Did you want to take it out?"

Solo shook his head and slid into the pilot's seat. Leia leaned forward. "Are you taking me back now?" she asked quietly.

His back stiffened as he studied the void outside. "No. There isn't time now." He stared straight ahead. "In all of its bureaucratic wisdom, did the Alliance ever get around to finding out just how many ships the Empire had!" His voice rose with each word. Lando judiciously retreated from the cockpit as the Corellian turned and looked at Leia. She studied her hands. "Or am I the only person who's allergic to being a target!" Chewie chuckled as he fiddled with a control, human behaviour always struck him as more than slightly odd.

In the lounge, Lando helped the Corellian hand out the remaining blasters to the assembled group. The children would be hidden in small groups to better their chances if something went drastically wrong. They were dealing with runners, he

explained, who would think nothing of killing them, or selling them, given the chance. Tandy was in the last group, and as Han helped her into a hold, he kissed her forehead. "Good luck, baby."

The young girl hugged him tightly. "You, too."

As the adults re-assembled in the main lounge, a very nervous 3PO approached them. "Captain Solo, sir, I was assured that the Princess would not be part of this!"

Han glared at him. "Don't talk to me -- ask her."

Leia stepped between them. "3PO, this isn't the time."

Excuse me, your Highness," the droid turned to Han. "Sir, I must protest this course of --" Han drew his blaster and leveled it at the droid. "Now, look, you pile of bolts. I got enough on my mind without worrying about your problems. If you got a problem with your precious Princess, take it out on her, not me!" He glanced at Leia. "Tell him to follow orders, or he's going to be in pieces."

"Han!" Leia gasped.

"I mean it, sister. Either he's gonna do what I say or he ain't doin' nothin'!"

The Princess looked to Lando for help, but he shrugged. "You better do it, Leia."

With Lando in charge of the disgruntled droid, Leia looked at Han. "What do I do?"

He laughed slightly. "NOW you want to know what to do? NOW!" Solo leaned forward in a chair and put his head in his hands.

Leia knelt beside him. "I am sorry."

Han looked at her. "For which of many things? When are you ever gonna listen to me?"

Leia touched his face. "I had to come with you. Don't you understand? Nothing matters except being with you --"

The Corellian pulled her into his lap as the clang sound of docking echoed through to them.

Chewbacca hoisted his bowcaster on his shoulder and stood ready by the hatch. He had never appreciated being only half inside anything. The technology itself only vaguely sunk in, but he had often believed the Corellian wasn't sure how it

worked either, and that didn't help any. Han turned to Lando. "You know what to do. If there's any trouble and you've got time, get out of here. Just don't try any heroics."

The Princess kissed his cheek. "I'll be waiting for you." She smiled. "I love you."

He smiled at her. "Just don't forget that." Solo pulled Calrissian off to the side. "If something happens, make sure they don't get her."

Han and Chewie stopped just inside the runner's ship. There was no one in sight. The Corellian glanced at the Wookiee. "I'm not too thrilled about his," he muttered. As they moved further inside, Chewie looked back at the Falcon and the dark void beyond it. Han motioned to several crates off to one side. "Hey!" he called. "Anyone here?"

Nervously, Han palmed his holster as a man of his height came into view. "You the ones come for this stuff here?"

Solo sized him up and decided this one had fallen on some desperate times which made him twice as dangerous. "Might be. We came for some cargo, don't know these crates. You open 'em and I'll tell you."

The other man came forward and spat to the side. "Can't do that, sonny. You tell me what you want, then I'll let you know!"

Han tensed. "We're supposed to pick up some supplies, mainly dehydrated food stuff. Some bantha steaks, if you got -- clothes, too." His voice trailed off.

The runner spat again and came closer to Han. "That all you want? Seems to me a good lookin' boy like you ought to be lookin' for more than pure cargo! We got some prime females been tryin' to unload. You got a woman, boy?"

Han blanched slightly at the smell of him and backed up a step. "No woman -- not yet. Just me and the Wook here. Gimme a fair price on this cargo, and I'll be back -- can't get a woman if I can't make it --"

"Well, boy, that sounds like your cargo, here. Let's take a look." The runner pulled out a large machete and opened the top. "See here, sonny, finest Bantha steaks around. Cost you though."

Han looked at him and shrugged. "Ain't my credits, I'm just a middle man. Mind?" The runner backed up and the Corellian reached inside; it was all there.

The other man was increasingly more anxious. As the Wookiee reached for the last crate, the runner backed off. "Just remembered, you gotta get a claim form."

"Since when?" Han asked.

"New rules. All over the place. We don't want any troubles; have to look good for the Empire." He smiled at Han.

"You seen anything of the Imps?" Han asked.

"No more'n usual, sonny," the runner responded as he moved around another pile.

The Corellian turned his back and began to head toward the Falcon. The next thing he knew, he pitched forward into darkness. Groggy, he was turned over on his back. Instinctively, he reached for the new missing blaster. Through a haze, the Corellian watched a white-armoured figure move up the ship's ramp. A pair of hands grabbed him roughly and he found himself staring at an Imperial rifle. "Not one sound," the Stormtrooper said. Two others manacled his wrists and shoved him toward a pile of crates.

Slowly, the Stormtroopers brought Chewie, Lando and Leia from inside the ship. Han's mind spun from the blow. "No one else on board, sir, only a droid and we de-activated him.

The situation depressed Han. He caught Leia's eye and frowned a silent note of warning to her. As far as he was concerned, she didn't look like a boy, but maybe these goons weren't so clever.

The Stormtroopers shoved Han toward the others, but the runner intervened. "No. Keep him here." He came closer to Han. "Well, boy, you certainly are worth a lot on the open market." The runner brought the tip of his knife to Han's stomach, and laughed. "It would give me great pleasure to carve you right here, but the Empire has other plans for you. Doesn't he, boys!" The runner looked at the impassive Stormtroopers. Han looked around and counted only six obviously un-informed members of the Imperial forces. Suddenly the runner backhanded him across the face and he stumbled backwards.

The Stormtrooper stepped in. "Our orders were not to damage him!"

The runner smiled greasily. "Why, I don't intend to damage him, I just want to teach him a lesson." The next punch brought Han to his knees.

"No!" Leia cried and rushed to his side, she lifted him in her arms.

"What have we here?" the runner looked on in delight. He pulled the hat from her head, her long hair fell out. "Oh, this is quite nice. Quite nice."

The Princess touched Han's face and he scowled at her. "Can't you ever follow orders?"

The runner yanked Leia to her feet. "This is mine!" He pulled her towards himself and leered in her face. "You'll certainly bring a good price. Or I might keep you awhile for myself!" Leia turned and bit his hand, hard. "Ow!" he yelled and moved her slightly. "Spirit, too. I like a feisty female." He held her pressed against her grimy clothes.

Slowly, Han got to his feet. "Let her go!"

The runner smirked. "You're in no position to give orders here, boy. She's yours, is she? In that case, I might be kind enough to let you watch!"

The Corellian was held back by an Imperial rifle. "Let her go," he sneered.

The runner laughed. "The Empire has no need for a smuggler's slut."

Han's mind raced. "They'd want the Princess Leia Organa."

The Stormtrooper stepped forward. "Darth Vader's been looking for her; she'll have to come with us."

"She stays with me!"

The Stormtrooper turned his rifle on the runner. "You seem to forget who gives the orders. You'll be well paid for Captain Solo, but that's all."

In the background, Lando caught a glimpse of movement in the Falcon's hatchway and nudged Chewie. Chewie growled softly and Han looked their way. A Stormtrooper leveled a blaster-rifle at them.

Helpless, the Corellian glanced at Leia, then turned to Chewie. "Behave, fur bag." At that time Lando caught his eye and gestured toward the ship. Han nodded. Knowing he looked worse than he actually was, Han wavered slightly, and staggered in line with the ramp.

"Don't move any further!" the white-armoured figure commanded.

"Look, you got us," Han said wearily. "Now what? If it's all the same with you, I'd rather not stand here all day." The Stormtroopers looked at each other. Solo smiled. "Empire must be pretty hard up if you six are all they could muster -- bunch of incompetent idiots."

The Stormtrooper hit Han with his rifle and the Corellian fell to the floor. Chewie growled and the runner laughed. "I heard you had a big mouth, Solo, but I also heard you were smart. Somebody must have made a mistake."

'If somethin's gonna happen', Han thought, 'I wish they'd hurry up; otherwise somethin' gonna get broke.' He got to his feet and glanced at Leia, still in the runner's arms. Looking back at the hatch, the Corellian noticed a glint off a blaster and swore. 'Shoulda taught those kids how to attack.' Han took a deep breath and flung himself sideways into the runner and Leia; each fell in different directions. The dazed runner grabbed his machete and moved toward Han. Meanwhile, the Wookiee hit one Stormtrooper and Lando the other as blaster fire came from the hatch. The first fire hit the runner and Han struggled to his knees toward the approaching Leia. He shoved her down and covered her body with his, as blaster fire rang overhead. One hit the crate behind them and it shattered.

The eternity of fire lasted only a short while in real time and soon the docking bay was drenched in silence. Han lifted his head and looked around. "You all right?" he asked the Princess. She nodded and crawled from under him. "C'mon, let's get outta here." As the dazed children realized what they had accomplished, they broke into happy cheers. "Cut it out!" Han yelled as Chewie broke the manacles on his wrists. "This is only the beginning."

With cargo and children secured, the Corellian and Leia moved to their quarters. There Han crawled into the bunk. His body was sore and his head ached. He closed his eyes and tried to decide which fate was conspiring against him now.

"Get up," Leia shook him. Han groaned and turned further away from her. "Oh, no!" she insisted. "I've got to clean you up." She shook him harder.

"Go away!" he mumbled and pulled his arms tighter around himself.

"Chewie expects me to take care of you. If you don't let me, I'll call him and you know what he'll do!"

Han turned slowly and looked at her. "Okay! Okay! Just stop yelling already!"

Leia studied his bruised face and cut lip; she dabbed at the latter with a wet cloth. "Why do you have to aggravate people like that?"

His face tightened as she wiped off the blood. It stung but he wasn't about to give her any satisfaction. "Somebody had to do something until the kids got into place." He muttered. "'Sides, I didn't like the way he was handlin' you."

"I can take care of myself!" she retorted as she felt the lump on the back of his head.

"Ow! Take it easy, will ya?" He felt the lump for himself and looked sharply at her. "Take care of yourself? You don't know enough to get out of the way when the shooting' starts.

"Well, you didn't have to ram me like that. I'm not the enemy!"

Han sat on the edge of the bunk. "Sometimes I wonder." He mumbled.

"I heard that!" she snapped at him. "Now take off that jacket and shirt." She tugged a sleeve.

"Don't get so excited!" he grinned at her.

She yanked a handful of hair. "Stop it! Just stop it!"

"Stop what?"

Slowly, she helped him off with his shirt. "I don't have a sense of humour when it comes to you --"

"I knew it all along." he snickered.

Leia ignored him. "Can you raise your arms? Does this hurt?" she probed his ribs.

"Course it hurts!" he jumped. "I'm not usually coloured black and blue."

The Princess glanced at him. "And green and purple. If I were your body, I'd leave you."

"Nice. Look, just give me that tube. I'll do it myself. I don't need any more abuse."

"Oh, no." she shook her head. "I intend to enjoy this. Lie down and unbutton those pants."

"Your Worship, this is so sudden.!"

"You have got to be the Galaxy's biggest Black Hole." She pushed him. "Do it!"

"Yes, sir," Han mumbled. Leia worked the ointment into his bruises slowly, massaging his aching muscles along the way. Han relaxed deeply. "Chewie never felt that good. Shoulda hired a female for this tub long ago. One day I'll tell you about the one Lando wanted to bring onboard. She was really somethin', had these --"

Leia hit him on the seat. "Turn over and shut up."

"That hurt," he muttered as he moved on his back.

"What a mess," she sighed. "You're lucky this isn't more serious. Looks like an Imperial walked stepped on you!"

The Corellian raised up on his elbow and she pushed him back down. He gave her his most hurt look. "I never ridiculed your body."

Leia felt his ribs. "You called me short."

"You are." He flinched.

"Well," she kissed his forehead, "you are a mess." She looked at his bloodied shirt while he pulled on a fresh one. "I'll never get this clean!"

"Next time I'll try not to bleed," he muttered. Han shoved his shirt in his pants and watched as she rubbed her arm. "When I hit you, did I hurt you?"

She shook her head. "It's just a little sore."

He held her gently. "Maybe you oughta take your shirt off, so I can put some of that stuff on you." Leia slowly stepped on his foot. "Why'd you do that!" he limped around the room.

"Because you're acting like a -- like a --" she sputtered. Leia turned from him. "Sometimes I think you stay up nights thinking up ways to be crude. You're not like that, Han. You weren't raised -- you weren't trained to act like a -- Mos Eisley cantina rat!" She looked at him. "You can be so sweet and gentle; not to mention well-mannered. Then you turn around and purposely act like a smuggler!"

As she lectured him, Han located a bottle, poured himself a drink and climbed back into the bunk. He stared at her. "You finished? In the first place, your Holiness, I AM a smuggler! That's what I am. In the second place, this ISN'T Alderaan and you don't tell me how to act or how to talk. Got it? That way of life is over, sister. The war's finished it." He held out his arms. "That's the way it is -- you want me, sweetheart, this is how I come -- take it or leave it." He laid back in the bunk. "One time we might not start arguing --"

She came to him. "I'm tired. How do you feel?"

"You're avoidin' the issue."

"I know," she sighed. "I don't have any answers." She touched his mouth. "I'm sorry I hit you earlier."

"You oughtta be," he kissed her finger. "You talk about how I act, least I don't throw things."

"You just throw fits," she said as she climbed in next to him. "Where to now?"

"Back to Corellia. Have to dump the cargo and the kids. First we gotta pick up the smaller ones." He yawned.

Leia sat up. "You can't possibly mean you're taking the children back! With the guns!"

Han pulled her down to himself. "Not guns, sweetheart. Simple cargo. Guns are illegal. Anyway, it's a job. I deliver. I'm getting' paid for it!"

"You're what?"

"Getting' paid for it." He leaned toward her.

"How can you take money from those people?"

Han blew out a breath. "I don't believe you! First you didn't want me to have anythin' to do with "those" people, NOW you don't want me to get paid! Look, I used what little credits I had to get that cargo. This ain't a charitable organization. And this tub doesn't run for free, in case you ain't noticed! Chewie and me got debts, too."

"How much are you taking from those people?" she glared at him.

"I'm not taking' anythin'," he played with her hair. "They give me what they can. If I don't accept at least what I put out, I'll have every hustler in the Galaxy offering' me runs. Look, doin' favors doesn't pay for jet juice and you know it!"

Leia brushed her hair away from his hand. "I don't understand you. How can you take payment? Now? I thought that part of you was gone --"

"Why?" It was Han's turn to be confused. "Just because I do things for your Rebellion doesn't mean I'm going to be out of work. I need credits. Chewie needs credits; he's got a family to support! Who's gonna support them?" He glanced at her. "Who's gonna support us?"

"I --" she began.

"Hold it, sister." Han swung out of the bunk. "Don't even say it -- your Rebellion couldn't pay for our charges!"

Leia stood to face him. "Of all the egotistical statements! The Rebellion had no problem taking care of you and Chewie all this time!"

"You took care of us all right," he leaned back against the wall. "You fed us and when it didn't interfere with your own interests we were able to get one of your druids to lend a hand on this crate. Maybe even a part of two now and then, but," he pointed at her, "BUT, when you wanted somethin', it was drop everything and play Rebel soldier!"

"You want a medal!" she yelled at him.

"I got one!" he yelled back.

"Well," she sighed, "what do you want?"

Han's face softened. "You. This ship. The freedom to run it the way it should be run. Enough credits to live on." He shook his head. "I just don't know any more."

The Princess touched his arm and realized how complex and simple this man was at the same time. She kept forgetting what the Rebellion had cost him in physical pain alone. Leia put her arms around his waist and he responded slowly to her touch. She looked up at him and whispered, "How about a nice testimonial dinner?"

"Only if you don't cook it." He grinned at her.

"You're making fun of my cooking again." She poked his side.

Han smiled. "That's right. You did sort of learn how to cook --"

"What did you like best?"

Han thought a moment. "Oranges. You really learned how to peel them!" He caught her as she swung at him and hugged her tightly. He picked up her and carried her to the bunk.

The door slid open and Tandy entered, she held two plates. "I thought you -- oh, excuse me."

Leia pushed herself out of Han's arms and he shook his head. "That's all right. Come on Leia, I'm starved."

They sat at the table, Leia whispered. "Starved for what?"

Han cleared his throat and motioned for Tandy to sit. "How're you getting' along? Any problems? Got enough to eat?"

The young girl nodded. "Oh, yes, Uncle Han. I'm afraid we're eating your entire food supply. I don't know how we'll ever repay you."

The Corellian began to speak when Leia stepped on his foot. "No problem, my treat." He smiled.

The feeling was returning to his foot when Tandy pointed to his plate. "Are you going to eat that?"

Han poked the purplish cylinder gingerly. "No, whatever it is. You want it?" The girl nodded and he frowned. Take it, it looks disgusting."

"It's good for you." Leia looked at her plate.

"Tastes good, too." Tandy bit the object.

She and Leia finished the vegetables with obvious relish, the Corellian stared at them. "How can you do that? How the hell did vegetables get on this tub anyway? We haven't had any since -- Lando! I'll kill him!"

"No," Leia put a restraining hand on his arm. "I had Chewie load them."

"Why? They only add extra weight!"

"They are good for you." The Princess said firmly.

Tandy laughed. "Princess, you'll never get Uncle Han to eat anything he doesn't want. Momma said he and father would rather fly than eat anyway, so she only made them meat and fruit. She always said she wouldn't waste good cooking on people who wouldn't know the difference!" Her hand flew to her mouth. "Oh, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that. Don't tell Father, please!"

"That's okay, angel," the Corellian grinned. "Your mother was right."

Tandy frowned. "I was supposed to ask if you wanted to land in the same area. Chewbacca wasn't sure."

Han pushed away from the table. "Not sure! He must be getting' senile!" He shook his head and left for the cockpit.

"You love him very much, don't you?" Leia asked when he was gone.

The girl nodded. "He's so funny. Especially when he gets confused. I'm going to miss him, but I'm glad I had the chance to see him again. I never thought I would." As Leia began to pile the dishes, Tandy jumped up. "Oh, no. Let me do that." Done, she reached into her pocket. "Would you give this to Uncle Han after

we reach Corellia?" Leia stared at her. "It's payment for the food. I might not have the chance to give it to him."

"I couldn't do that," the Princess shook her head. "Han wouldn't want it, either."

Tandy glanced at her. "You don't know him very well, do you?"

"What do you mean?"

"Father hired him, we have to pay him." Tandy said.

"But, you're his people -- his friends .. you need that more than he does."

Tandy nodded. "Yes, we're his people. But this is payment for more than this trip. The older people, they're ashamed -- some of them still won't talk about him -- but they think this will pay back for what they did, or didn't do to help him before." She sighed. "They never would have allowed this trip if they weren't allowed to pay him. Father had told them he wasn't so sure they had sent Uncle Han to his death." Tandy sat down. "We'd hear about him sometimes when a freighter came. When father heard he was with the Rebellion, he tried to contact him for some help."

"Why -- why did they make him leave?"

Tandy slowly shook her head. "The children were never told. Some of the children that are here still don't really trust him. They remember how much their parents hated Uncle Han. Father said it helps them to lessen their own guilt." Tandy looked away. "Even Dell doesn't like him much after all this time."

"Why?" Leia asked. "Whatever could he have done to him?"

"Dell wanted to be a pilot, his position in the Academy was assured until then. Before we were forced to move, the other boys teased him about his traitor Uncle." Tandy sighed. "He never accepted it."

"But your mother," Leia asked. "couldn't she make him see?"

"No. He blamed her, too, because she stood by Uncle Han. Even father was angry when she stood up for him." The girl gave a small smile. "My mother was a very outspoken person. She always said Uncle Han was right; I guess I believed it because she believed it. Sometimes I wonder if father --"

The Princess looked at the girl. "It sounds as if your father was jealous of Han. Did he know your mother before she married?"

Tandy stared at the Princess. "Of course he did!" She shrugged. "I guess father was jealous of him. But only because he could get mother to do anything he wanted. Father would be very upset when Uncle Han would sometimes come to our home after he was paid -- momma would tell us he was 'happy' -- I didn't believe that after I was two. Father always got angry when momma would put Uncle Han to bed." She smiled slightly. "We always had to tiptoe in the morning."

"They -- Han and your mother must have loved each other," Leia stumbled over the words. "Did they, did they grow up together or something?"

The girl looked at her strangely. "Of course they did. You don't know, do you?"

"I don't --" she shook her head.

Tandy interrupted. "Han is my Uncle."

"Yes, I know," the Princess nodded, "Your father is his best friend."

Tandy shook her head. "But, he is really my uncle. My mother is -- was his sister."

"Sister!" Leia whispered. "I never knew --"

"Please don't tell him I told you," Tandy grabbed her arm. "He'd be very angry with me. He -- he would have told you when he -- when it was right."

Tears welled in the Princess' eyes. "But, he just found out she was dead -- and he took you and Dell -- he didn't even --"

"What? Care? Cry?" Tandy stopped in shock. "Oh, your Highness, I'm sorry. I shouldn't speak to you like that; momma always said I took after Uncle Han." The girl's eyes filled with tears, too. "I just don't like it when anybody says anything against him -- and I'm afraid for him."

Leia held the girl's arm. "You don't trust me, do you?"

Tandy shrugged. "Oh, I don't know. Momma was so angry at the one he was supposed to marry. She didn't want him to marry her, but she could never say no to him. When he left -- when they made him leave, she never," she broke off in sobs. "When, when -- I sneaked after father once and heard some freighters tell him that, that thing that Uncle Han -- I heard what they said he'd done to him -- I thought he was dead! And I wanted him to die -- I didn't want him to be hurt any more -- momma was dead -- and he was the only one I had -- and I wanted him to die!"

Leia held the sobbing girl close to her and rubbed her back. "Sssshhh, it's all right." She stood and went and found a bottle of liquor. She poured each of them a small amount.

Tandy lifted the glass and sniffed. "I never had anything like this before. Is it all right?"

Leia raised her glass. "I have a feeling we're both going to need this before we get to Corellia. But sip, your Uncle has very strange tastes!"

The females confided in each other, Chewbacca brought the Falcon into a perfect landing on his native planet. Han was kept busy counting heads, setting co-ordinates, and appeasing an irritated Malla. He promised her faithfully that they would return soon, and he received a bone-crushing Wookiee hug in return.

With the ship back in space on course to Han's planet, the Corellian was determined to find out what had occupied Leia and Tandy's time so much. Just as he got to his door, Lando stopped him. When Solo explained his objective, Calrissian laughed. "What could they possibly be up to that's gonna get you in trouble?"

Han draped an arm about the dark-skinned man's shoulder. "Lando, old buddy, think back to all the females in my life --"

"There isn't time." His friend laughed.

"Now," the Corellian ignored his remark, "tell me I got nothin' to worry about when TWO of 'em get together!"

Tandy's a child!"

Han shook his head. "She's a female -- that makes her dangerous." He turned sharply as giggles filtered through the door. "I know, I know, the kids're waitin' on a lesson." The two men walked down the corridor and the Corellian shivered slightly. "Ever feel that someone was walkin' over your grave?"

The Princess smiled warmly at Tandy. "You're staying with us!"

The young girl shook her head. "I can't -- the Rebellion --"

"Is not fought by children!"

"My father," Tandy said.

"Would understand," Leia interrupted. "Why else would he send you with Han?"

Tandy shook her head. "Uncle Han would never agree."

Leia pulled her to her feet. "Leave him to me. We just won't tell him until it's over. You can still help with the Rebellion -- there's much to do." Leia held her tighter.

"Really?"

"My family, my people were killed when Alderaan was destroyed." Tandy nodded in acknowledgment. Leia continued. "I never knew Han had anyone. Now we can have each other. Especially Han, he loves you very much. He needs you, Tandy! You are his only link to his sister. You're a part of his past he needs desperately!"

Tandy wrung her hands. "I don't know --"

Leia brightened. "Dell could come, too."

Tandy shook her head. "He wouldn't come, he -- just -- wouldn't." she began crying again.

Leia held her arms. "Tandy, it'll be all right. We better go find Han. Sometimes I've a hard time keeping track of him."

Tandy giggled. "Momma always said that, too. Will it really be all right? I'd like to stay with you and Uncle Han. I really would."

The two females hugged and the Princess whispered in the girl's ear. "Maybe you can think of me as a big sister?"

"--. I'd like that, I really would." Tandy held her hand as they left the room.

They found Han and he stood looking from one to the other, trying to figure what they were planning. "She's coming with us," Leia said firmly. Han began to shake his head.

Tandy shrank back as the Princess stopped. "I want her with me -- with us."

The Corellian looked from one to the other and finally held out his hand to the girl.

THE door slid behind him and he faced the females. "Sit down!" The girl and the woman stared at him. "I said 'Sit Down!' Now!"

Frightened, Tandy slid onto the bunk. Amused, with just a touch of fear, Leia joined her. She took the young girl's hand and squeezed it gently. The Princess smiled at Han. "Okay, hot shot, we sat. Now what?"

Han glared at her. "You two are up to something. I want to know what -- and I want to know now!"

Tandy clung to Leia's hand, and she glared back at him. "Your niece is staying with us."

"My -- what?"

"Niece. As in the female child of one's own brother or sister. Tandy is staying with us." Leia said calmly.

Han shook his head. "We have to ask Lido. I'm no kidnapper -- and I ain't a refuge for runaways!"

Leia slid off the bunk and moved toward him. "Will you shut up! This girl loves you. She's as close to you as your sister was!" Han spun as if he'd been slapped. "Must you always push people away from you? You loved your sister, didn't you? What I heard from Tandy, she surely loved you! Let her stay with us! Don't act like a Bantha now!" Han stared at her as Tandy moved back further into the bunk. Leia reached out and touched his face. "Please -- Han, don't push her away from you. You need her! She needs you! Please, Han, I need her --"

The Corellian stared at Leia. "You need her --?"

Leia nodded. "I need her. I need family: yours, mine, it doesn't matter. I have no one, you want no one. Tandy's your sister's child; you can't push her away from you! You can't! Oh, you are so stubborn! I want Tandy with us!"

"You want?"

Leia touched his face. "I need a woman with me now." The girl's eyes brightened and she slid to the edge of the bunk.

Confused, Han asked, "You just got done tellin' me you could take care of yourself! Now you desperately need Tandy! I don't get it --"

Leia hit his stomach lightly. "You are so thick-skulled. You are -- oh, Han, I can't ever explain it any more! Dense! You are dense!"

Hurt, the Corellian stared at her. "Well -- I can cook --"

The Princess put an arm around his waist and moved him to a chair. "You better sit down."

Tandy sidled up to her. "Are you sure?" she whispered.

Leia nodded. "As sure as I can be." The two women hugged each other.

Han began to rise, when Leia pushed him back down. She sat in his lap and sighed. "I didn't want to tell you this way, but I don't have any choice any more. Just remember, it's all your fault." She leaned forward and whispered in his ear.

Han's face contorted somewhat and he looked at Leia. "No. No?"

The Princess nodded and smiled. She kissed his cheek lightly. "I love you, Han."

He looked at her with more love than Leia had ever seen before. "A -- a baby? You and me, ours. I know it's ours, but now?" A silly grin crossed his face. "A baby? Me. You're sure?"

Leia sighed. "YOU were the one who was so sure on Endor --"

Han shrugged. "Yeah, but -- I mean -- that was just --" He blinked and stared at her..

Leia giggled. "Yes, a baby." She glanced at Tandy. "Get him some of that jet juice, please."

Han shook his head. "No. It's okay. I just gotta get used to this." He stared at her. "This isn't a joke, is it? You are sure?" She nodded and he stared into space awhile. "I think I'll have that drink now."

The Princess took Tandy's arm and steered her toward the door. "I think you better go now; I'll handle this. And, for now, don't say anything to anyone."

At the table Leia poured Han a drink, thought about it, then added more. She put it in front of him and tapped his shoulder. "Huh?" he stared at the glass. "Oh, thanks."

Leia touched his arm. "Are you all right? I really didn't want to tell you like this, but every time I was ready something else popped up. But now, I didn't want Tandy to leave. And we're getting too close to Corellia!"

Han looked at her and jumped, the untouched glass spilling over. "Corellia! I forgot all about it!" He started toward the door. "Don't go away!" He rushed back to her and moved her into a chair. "Just sit, or do whatever it is -- whatever you're supp- you know, just don't move!" The Corellian went to the door and opened it, turned and came back to Leia, kissed her and ran out the door.

Leia watched his receding back and laughed. "Oh, my poor Captain." Slowly, she pulled herself out of the chair and picked up her own blaster. 'He's going to need all the help he can get!' she thought.

Part 4 - Truth at Last

In the lounge area, Leia nodded happily at Tandy as she made her way to the cockpit. Half way there Lando passed her. "You old pirate is sure acting strange!"

The Falcon jerked as the Princess entered the cockpit. "I know! I know!" Han yelled at Chewie, who bellowed back. The ship jerked again. "Don't yell at me! How should I know what's wrong with that engine! You were workin' on it! Okay! Okay! It'll hold! No, I'm tellin' you, it'll hold!" he fought the controls.

Leia stumbled and held onto Han's seat. "What happened?"

"Think we blew an engine," he muttered. "What the hell are you doin' here? I told you to sit!" He turned back to the controls.

"I'm sitting!" she yelled as she moved to the seat behind him.

Calrissian came up behind her. "how soon can you set down? The kids are getting nervous."

"If this makes them nervous, they have no business bein' in a Rebellion." He muttered. "We'll be comin' in range soon, just tell them to hole on." The Falcon swung sharply and just as suddenly as it started the engine smoothed down, gave a final cough and purred on. Chewie growled in relief and Han hit his arm. "See! I told you she'd hold! Hold? She's beautiful!" He rose from his seat. "Take over here."

Lando shook his head. "Ever see such luck?"

"Luck?" Han was incredulous. "Luck! That was sheer genius. Not only this beautiful bucket of bolts, but yours truly. It's all in the way you handle her, Lando, I been tellin' you that all along." Han laughed and patted the controls once more. The Corellian noticed Leia in her own hysterics and gently pulled her to her feet. As he moved her out of the cockpit, Chewbacca yowled behind him. "I know! I know! Just call me!"

By the time they reached the lounge, the kids were back to normal, thanks to the fruit Calrissian had handed out. Han whispered in Leia's ear. "There goes some more food."

She poked his still-sore ribs. "Children need food, laser brain."

"Okay, it's a gift. No, more than that! I'll beg them to take it all! Happy?"

Leia smiled. "That's better. How long will it be before we set down, really?"

The Corellian shrugged. "Not long, but we're not going in right away -- gonna circle a while -- see what happens. We either get a call from Lido, or they cut us down!" Han smiled at her. "Speakin' of food, I'm starved."

"You just ate!" she frowned.

He shook his head. "You ate. You and Tandy. If it wouldn't be against the rules of impending motherhood, would you make me something? Something I like?" Han leaned on her.

Leia shook her head. "It wouldn't. I'll go make something fantastic."

He grinned at her. "Don't try for a miracle, just make it edible."

She stuck a finger in his stomach, then worked her hand up around his neck. As they kissed, the mood was broken by a rousing round of applause from some of the children.

Leia pushed away from Han, her anger rising. She looked around the room as the children watched her expectantly. Slowly she put an arm around Han's waist. The Corellian grinned. "Now, do I get somethin' to eat? Or do we stand here and give lessons?"

"Well you could at least help me find the pots and pans."

"All in there -- " Han waved a hand. "I gotta go get something. Be right back."

Some time later he had still not returned. Leia went after him. "Han!" she yelled. She saw he was bent over searching in a cabinet and stuck his head in. There were clangs and thumps and a louder "Ouch!" He pulled out from the drawer and rubbed his head. "What'd you do that for!"

The Princess glared at him. "I did call you first. What are you doing? Look at this room!" Leia sat down among the clothes and papers. "Oh, Han, look what you did."

"I was just lookin' for this." He knelt down beside her and handed her the box he had given her when he had first come back. "Thought I saw it somewhere. Why didn't you open it?"

Leia fingered the crushed bow. "I was so mad at you, I almost threw it out." She glanced at him. "Then when I decided to move in here, I forgot about it in the shuffle." She opened it and pulled out bright coloured tissue paper and a small flannel pouch. The Princess reached in and pulled out a finely crafted silver cup, fork and spoon - all by size. "Oh, Han, they're lovely." She whispered.

Embarrassed, Han shrugged. "They were a bargain." He smiled slightly. "At the time I thought it'd be better to be prepared -- just in case -- you know --"

She reached over and kissed him gently. "I think they're beautiful. I really do. Thank you."

The Corellian smiled slightly. "It's all right, then?"

Leia nodded as she repacked the set. "I love them and I love you."

Han picked up the clothes and papers, he crawled around the Princess. Finally he sat opposite her and asked. "Why? Why now?"

Leia glared at him slightly, as she placed a hand on herself. "Why this?"

He sensed her rising anger and quickly added. "I just meant there are ways not to -- you uh, have access to them --"

"So do you," she retorted.

Han smiled wryly. "Never had need for anything since before the Death Star --"

"You never had need for anything -- period!"

The Corellian flushed slightly. "I know. I just mean -- Hell, I don't know what I mean!"

The Princess studied his face. "Do you mind? Is it only the baby you're worried about? Or me? Or both of us?"

Han pulled her to her knees to face him. "You just don't come out and say 'baby'. We talked about this." He looked at her. "What happens if you don't want to marry me? It's my baby, too."

Leia touched his face. "You're serious, aren't you?" He avoided her eyes. "Just what do you think I am? Do you think I make love with every smuggler I meet!"

"I didn't mean it that way!" he yelled.

"Just what did you mean?" she yelled louder.

Han drew her close to himself and held her tightly. "It's just that -- you're a --"

"Princess," Leia sighed. "You were going to marry one before; what's so different about me?" Silently, Han rubbed her back. She searched his face for an answer. "You're afraid of me, aren't you?"

Han glared at her. "That's ridiculous."

Han tried to turn away, but she held his face. "No, it isn't. You are afraid of me."

"I never heard such guano," he muttered.

"You're afraid I'll hurt you like the other one --"

Han pulled to his feet. "No!"

Leia rose and followed him. "After all we've been through, how could you think that?"

"We'll be getting' back to the rendezvous soon."

"What has that got to do with it?" she asked.

"There's a bit difference between your life and mine. When we get back to those people, I -- I don't know if --" his voice trailed off.

The Princess faced him. "You're my people now. I can't live without you." She looked up at him. The Corellian held her in relief.

Finally Han said, "Shouldn't you be sittin' or somethin'? Are you hungry? I don't know --"

Leia smiled at him. "I thought you were hungry." She led him to the table and the tray of food.

Han glanced at his plate. "It looks good."

"He sounds surprised!"

The Corellian glanced at her and back at the plate. Slowly he chewed a mouthful. "Not bad. Leia punched his shoulder. "OH!"

He grabbed her wrist. "Calm down, sweetheart. It really is good." He kissed her fist. "C'mon, sit down so I can eat. Please? And unclench the fist, makes me nervous."

"What are you doing?" The Princess stared at his plate.

"Eatin'. What does it look like?"

"Why did you mess it all up like that?" she asked.

"I don't know. I always do. Tastes better. Winds up that way anyway, don't it?"
He grinned at her.

"It looks terrible."

"Do you always have to have everything neat? Even my plate?" He turned in his chair. "Look at this place! You even hang up my blaster!"

Leia glared at him. "If you keep it on the floor, you could step on it."

"I keep it on the floor," he hissed, "so I can get to it, if I need it! Which I did on a number of occasions!"

"You probably slept with it before," she mumbled.

Han looked at her. "As a matter of fact I did!"

"Oh, Han," she sighed.

"Well, it was handy that way --" he retorted.

"Like this room the way it is right now," she hit the table, "I like the way it sparkles!"

"We could eat off the floor!"

"Not if you don't remember to wipe your boots!" Leia picked a napkin from the floor.

Han glared at her. "Next time we get boarded, I'll stop everybody and tell them that!" He flung the napkin across the room. "We never had napkins, or vegetables on this tub before, either!"

"It's about time you did, then." Leia said as she began scraping the plate. The Corellian walked to the window and stared into the void. He turned only when he heard the door close behind Leia.

As the Corellian carefully avoided Leia, he took sanctuary in a hold to sort out his confused feelings. He wanted nothing more than to please the woman and make her happy, yet something in himself was moved to either provoke her or to get her to provoke him. There would be time enough to sleep before they landed on Corellia. 'If only we could stay in bed,' he smiled. The idea was quickly rejected, his mouth still hurt.

She didn't look up when he entered; her only acknowledgement of his presence was a nod when he asked about the kids. Han moved to a cabinet and opened it.

"Chewie's got everything under control," he said lightly, "there's time to get some sleep. Hey, how about that? I found the mugs I wanted right away!" He put them on the table. "And they're clean. A first on this tub!" He smiled, but she didn't look up. He moved to touch her hair and she pulled away from his hand. He sat and watched her in silence.

Her head down, Leia said, "You're staring again."

"It's because you're so beautiful," he said simply. Han broke another silence. "I'm gonna touch your hand; I swear if you back away I'll blast myself." Soon he held it, but she didn't look up. "Interesting book?" he asked. Leia nodded. "Must be, you haven't turned a page since I got here." He bit his tongue. "I'm sorry, you know, I was sorry when I was sayin' those things. I don't know why I kept talkin'. Maybe I'm crazy -- maybe the carbon freeze -- I shouldn't take it out on you --"

The Princess put a finger on his mouth. "Ssshhh."

The Corellian pulled her hand down. "Let me finish. You're right, it is better this way. I just didn't want to admit it -- I just didn't think my life would change so much with you here. I knew it would, but I didn't think it out. It's just so fast, Leia - - that's all."

Leia interrupted. "I was just thinking how much I've disturbed your life. Moving in without even telling you, that wasn't right. This is your home. All I did was barge in and take over, not even asking you. I want to stay here. This is my home -- our home now."

Han nodded and kissed her hand. He stared at her in silence, then jumped up. "I almost forgot!" He looked at her. "Would you like some wine? If it's all right for the -- the --"

Leia grinned at him. "It's proper to say baby, atom head."

"You gonna call me names when we have the -- the --"

"BABY!" Leia shook her head. "It's a baby, Han. A small version of you -- I take that back." She grinned at him. "Are you having trouble with this?"

Han nodded. "Yeah, I am. You mind? I never had a -- a -- before."

"You aren't!"

The Corellian cleared his throat. "As I was sayin'. I never had this situation to face before -- at least I was never told about this situation before --" He smiled as Leia glared at him. "Anyway, do you -- can you have some wine?"

"I think so. I've never been in this situation before either, you know."

Han held out the bottle to her. "Ever have this kind?"

She shook her head. "After the jet juice, are you sure it's safe to drink?"

"Wait till you see this, this bottle'll talk to you!" Han opened it. Leia watched as the seal was cracked. The bottle's glass surface became covered with bright lights. The lights transformed into letters which told of the wondrous qualities of its contents! There was even a musical background. The Princess clapped her hands in glee. Han had never liked anything that talked back to him, but he enjoyed watching Leia take it all in.

Han turned to slide open the door in answer to a knock. "Did we hear the merry melodies of Mos Eisley's finest?" Lando asked. Han waved his hand and he and the Wookiee came into the room.

When the lights and music ended, Leia looked up. "Oh, that was fun! Do you have any more?"

Han rubbed her shoulders. "First, we have to drink this one. Believe it or not, Princess, this stuff costs a lot of credits."

She noticed Lando and Chewie. "Oh, I'll get some more mugs!"

"No you won't," Han declared, "I'll get them! You just sit!"

As they all sat down, Lando asked, "Are you missing something here?"

Leia glanced at him and rose. "Well, I have a toast to make. Since this is such an expensive bottle, we shouldn't waste it, laser brain!" She looked at Lando and Chewie. "It isn't any secret, how we feel about each other and that as soon as we can, we're getting married." Lando smiled and Chewie rumbled happily. Leia grinned at Han. "But now, I want to make a toast to our baby!"

Lando coughed, Chewie bellowed. "That's it!" Han got up. "That's all!"

Calrissian grabbed his arm. "Take it easy, you old pirate," he said. "She just caught us off-guard. Now, I'd like to propose a toast: a triple toast! To the baby's coming, the mother's health and the father's sanity!" Chewbacca chuckled loudly.

"Thanks a lot," Han drank. Chewbacca grunted and moved over to embrace Leia as gently as possible. He howled some more and slapped the Corellian on his back which caused him to spit out half the wine and choke on the rest. Han looked up at Leia. "He's very happy, in case you didn't notice!"

Lando squeezed Han's shoulder. "I knew you'd get with it some day! Han Solo - father - boggles the mind!" Standing, he nudged Chewie. "C'mon, we don't want to overstay our welcome!"

Leia giggled as they left. Han stared at her. "You, my pet, had too much wine!" He held her. "How do you feel? Is the -- the -- okay?"

The Princess rubbed his hair. "I feel fine, I don't feel sick or anything, and the -- the -- is probably asleep!"

"You're makin' fun of me."

"No, I'm not," she smiled. "Don't you know anything about babies?"

Han shrugged. "How not to get them -- they need diapers, cry a lot."

"You don't know how they grow?"

"Uh uh," he shook his head.

Leia smiled. "This is really going to be an education for you then."

Han held her close. "I don't want an education, sister, just a healthy, b.. ba.. baby."

"He said it! He said it!" Leia yelled.

The Corellian lifted her. "You're goin' to bed right now."

"Your wish is my command," she giggled.

'Solo,' he thought, 'you get 'em all.'

Leia sprawled on the bunk. "I love this bed. I love this ship. I love you." Han pulled her boots off and undressed her. He pulled his shirt out of his pants. "Are you coming to bed?"

As he climbed in, Leia turned slightly and smiled at him. "I hope the baby's a boy. I didn't mean it when I said I took it back that he'd be a small version of you." She yawned and snuggled closer to him. "A nice, little boy, just like you." The Corellian watched her as she drifted off.

Some time later, Leia stirred and opened her eyes; she was alone. She dressed quickly, and moved around the room to pick up the remains of the night before. Tandy came in with a tray. "Hi! Uncle Han said you were supposed to eat this."

"Where is he?"

"Working. He's been at it since before any of us got up." The young girl laughed. "I think he had another fight with the oil line."

"I bet that put him in a good mood." Leia sighed.

She finished her meal quickly and set off to find Han. When the banging stopped, he crawled out of the access hole. "What's up?"

"Look, sweetheart, I got my hands full with that oil line --"

"Can I help?"

Han shook his head. "Not unless you like the taste of oil. You just get up?" She nodded. "Sleep good?" She nodded again. The Corellian looked at her closely. "You all right?"

"I'm fine," she smiled. "You look terrible."

"Thanks, sister. I gotta go. Why don't you both -- uh, see if Chewie needs any help." Leia smiled and slid away.

Chewbacca greeted Leia warmly, then went back to the computer. The Princess frowned. "What are you doing?" He answered vaguely. "Han's not going to like that!" The Wookiee roared loudly. "Well, don't yell at me! All right!" I'll go get him!"

At the access hole, Leia heard lowered banging and muttered oaths from inside. Slowly she knelt by the opening. "Han! Come up here!"

"What?"

"COME UP HERE!" she yelled.

The Princess heard a muffled, "Now --" followed by a loud, pain-filled "Ow!" and an increasingly louder "Damn, Damn, DAMN!" Next came a loud banging, more oaths, and finally Han's head appeared, flushed with anger. "This had better be good." He pulled himself up and laid back on the floor.

To Leia it appeared that he had fallen headfirst into a grease pit. His left hand was wrapped in a rag. "What happened to you?"

Through a tight smile, he said, "I had a fight with that damn oil line."

Leia grinned. "Bet I know who won?"

"You fix it?" Lando asked.

"Fix it? Fix it! I can't even get it apart! What'd you do to it!" Han glared at him.

Calrissian shook his head. "Don't look at me. That's how I got it. Man, you are a mess."

The Corellian ignored him and looked at Leia. "Why'd you call me?"

She backed away as he got to his feet. "Chewie wants you -- and only you."

Tiredly, he glanced down the passageway. "Now what --"

With the computer in pieces, the Corellian grabbed some old-fashioned paper and stormed back to his cramped office. Leia found him bent over his desk, at work with the ancient instruments. She walked in and started picking up some crumbled papers. "Leave 'em," Han said. 'Just leave 'em." He looked at her through oil irritated eyes. "Take care of our quarters, but don't touch one thing - not one thing - in this room! You hear me?" Leia nodded and he asked. "Good. You want anything else?"

The Princess shook her head. "I just wanted to know if you needed anything -- or wanted anything -- I didn't mean to -- to --" Tears welled in her eyes.

Han moved to her side, holding her carefully. "I'm sorry, Princess. I just don't have time right now. Are you all right?"

She looked at him, tears streaming down her face. "I'm, I'm sorry. I don't know what's wrong with me." She broke down in sobs.

The Corellian led her back to their quarters and helped her into the bunk. "Maybe it's got somethin' to do with --" he placed a hand gently on her growing form. "Guess you're allowed."

Leia's eyes opened wide. "No! I can't be turned into a -- a -- weeping -- female!"

Han rubbed her back gently and chuckled. "Don't think there's much you can do about it now, anyway." He kissed her red nose. "It's all right -- I can learn to live with it."

Leia's eyes flashed hurt and anger. "Well, I hope we don't inconvenience you too much!" His mouth opened, and he looked away quickly. "Han, I didn't mean to say that.. I'm just not .. not myself right now."

The Princess reached for Han, but he just stared at her. "Yeah, I guess you are." He stood in the doorway, anger and confusion in his eyes, then turned and left.

Han cornered Lando in the corridor. "When we set down, make sure the Princess stays on board. I don't want her off this ship at all."

Calrissian stared at him. "Something wrong?" The Corellian ignored him and moved on.

With the Falcon in position off the far side of Corellia, Han tried to radio to Lido. After he got through, he turned to the Wookiee by his side. "Take us out!" he yelled to the Wookiee over the intercom. The rolling Falcon slipped out of reach of the oncoming barrage of fire.

The Corellian ran into the lounge and grabbed Dell's arm. "Where would your father go?"

The young boy jerked his arm away. "Why should I tell a traitor?"

"Somebody better talk and talk now!" the Corellian tried to hold his temper.

The Falcon set down in a jungle area, foliage crushed under her weight. The Corellian held Dell's arm in a tight grip and walked him off the Falcon. "Now we see your father." While the other children unloaded the cargo, the pair moved through the bush to the new encampment.

Han kicked the door in and pushed Dell ahead. In the darkness, the Corellian shoved the boy into a corner and called "LIDO!" He kept his blaster leveled at Dell as Lido entered the room.

The older man smiled. "We didn't expect you back so soon."

Han glared at him. "Just who is we? Or didn't you expect us back at all?"

"We?" Lido smiled less. "Is all of us, of course. The Empire got too close, we had to move."

"Where are the others?" Han demanded.

"They moved further into the hills --"

"You stayed here alone?" Han asked.

Lido backed up. "No, not entirely, there are a few of us .. we had to wait for you and the children to come back with the guns. And here you all are! We had great faith in you Han; we knew you'd make it back with the children and the guns!" Lido smiled. "Now why don't you just holster that blaster? You always were overly suspicious!"

Han stared, confused, in the darkness. "Things just don't smell right here is all."

From the corner, Dell called. "Maybe that smell is you, traitor!" He threw himself into the Corellian and knocked the blaster from his hand.

Dell picked up the gun and held it to Han's head. "No!" Lido yelled. "Don't kill him!"

"Why not?" Dell looked at his father in confusion. "He's a traitor! You always told me so!"

Han's mind cleared of its fog. "Yeah, buddy, tell your son how much of a traitor I am -- tell him he shouldn't kill me; if I'm a traitor, let him kill me now." Han shifted position on the floor.

Lido looked at Dell. "We can't kill him yet. We will, but we have to take him back to -- to the others."

Han laughed, "Don't you mean to the Empire, Lido?" He rubbed his arm and looked at the boy. "See, sonny, I don't have too many friends. Look at your father, he's the traitor here!"

The blaster still on Han, Dell's voice shook. "How -- how would you get a reward from the Empire for the Rebellion?"

"Yeah, Lido, how?" Han smiled at him.

The older man brought out a rope and moved in front of Dell. "I'm going to tie him up, so you can put the blaster down. Then I'll call the other -- you're old enough now to be in part of the decisions around here." Lido smiled at his son as he watched him grow in self-importance. The Corellian grimaced as Lido tightened the ropes around his wrists. "Does that hurt, Han? I really am sorry." He laughed. As he backed up, he kicked the younger's side. "We were almost certain you were a goner when Jabba had you -- did he hurt you? I hope so. I hope he hurt you as much as you hurt Helena."

Han lifted his head. "I never hurt her."

Lido kicked him again. "You could never be one of us, could you? You could never go along with the group, could you? Why, Han? Why? We had a pretty good thing going here -- until you started thinking. You were too good for it, weren't you? After you left -- Helena changed. All she thought about was you, till the day she died. You killed her, Han. You."

The Corellian shook his head slowly. "There was a time I might've believed that, but not now. No, Lido, if anyone killed her, you did. You and your deals with the Empire!"

"What's he talking about?" Dell hollered.

Lido kicked Han's side again and turned to his frantic son. "Nothing. He's just trying to trick you."

Han pulled himself up. "Trick him, Lido? Why don't you tell him how you trick Corellia? What about all those people who didn't want to go under Palpatine, huh? What happened to them?" Han looked at Dell through blurring eyes.

"You're too young to remember that, aren't you? Or did they call them traitors, too? Unite the planets! What a hypocrite you are. Sure, you wanted them united -- but under who, Lido? What happened then -- my best friend -- they didn't want you in their inner circle, did they? 'Cause you were married to my sister! They shipped you out here, too. Then she died and they probably thought you'd serve them better with the rebels -- am I right, Lido?"

The older man charged Han as gunfire sounded from outside. Lido looked out a window and the Corellian smiled. "Is your world fallin' apart, Lido? Or, is it mine? Does it matter? Maybe it depends which of us got more to lose -- I don't care -- not any more -- there been too many lies -- either way it's over." Han laughed. "Guess I'm not as greedy as I thought." The older man kicked him harder and he plunged into a well of darkness.

As Han came out of that dark hole, he felt the soft material of a gown on his cheek. His first thought was of Leia and how she'd yell at him for bleeding on her, and he smiled faintly. A soft voice called him by name, brought him back to the dim light. But it wasn't Leia's voice. "Han? They told me it was you."

A soft hand touched his cheek. The Corellian opened his eyes and looked at a face from his past; the pain and heartache was as fresh as when it first happened. The now-Queen of Corellia kissed his bruised mouth. "Pilar." Han whispered in disbelief.

She caressed his cheek. "Yes, darling, it's me. I never stopped loving you. Now you can join me."

Han stared at her. "And your husband?"

She stroked his hair. "He is old -- we shall live our lives now."

Han's head spun. "And my friends?"

Pilar looked above him. "Do they matter now? Now that we have each other again." Han's pain-filled head echoed with the shooting from outside the house.

Lido stepped forward. "Your Highness. Surely you don't mean you'll keep him from our allies in the Empire? He is worth much -- it can do much good for us -- for your Majesty."

Queen Pilar glanced at Lido as she might a wamp rat. "What care I of reward, Sir Lido? If you had kept your word years ago, I could have kept your wife's brother. But my father would not allow it. Life could have been good, long ago, with this one at my feet. Instead I have no children left, a senile husband, thanks to your folly. I might re-arrange our own contract!"

Lido knelt before her. "But, but your Majesty, you cannot blame me alone --" He bowed his head. "You cannot trust Han, your Highness. He'd never follow you --"

"Quiet!" she screamed. "He loves me! He's always loved me! I'll teach him to follow me -- he will be my slave!" Pilar moved her hand across his chest.

Han's head spun from more than the noise outside: everything had been a plot from the beginning. The pain of it all made his heart pound more than ever. He moaned involuntarily.

Pilar held him tighter. ""What's wrong, Han?" She kissed him again.

He looked up at her. "My niece, Cassander -- is on the ship -- I don't want her hurt." His eyes closed. "They won't kill her -- they'll sell her .. I won't go with you unless she's safe and with me."

From the darkness, Dell yelled. "Cassie's on the ship?!"

Pilar stared at the boy and back to Lido. "Control your issue." She freely rubbed Han's leg. "I don't care about the girl -- if you care for her, she'd only be an interference in what I have planned for us."

The Corellian pulled away from her. "I love her."

She pulled him back roughly. "I'll train you to love only me." She smiled cruelly. "You shall love me back or you shall have a great deal of pain."

Outside, the noise and gunfire reached earthshaking proportions. Inside, somewhere in the blur of Han's mind, there was blaster fire. Dell yelled, "You won't sell my sister!" A flash of light came from the corner. Lido turned and fired at Dell. The door was kicked in, Lando fired a direct blast at Lido.

When the smoke cleared, Lando cut through Han's bound wrists and turned him over. "Where's Leia?" he asked.

"She and the Falcon are in one piece!"

In the smoky destruction of the house, Han crawled forward in shock, first to Lido's still body, then to his dying nephew. He held the boy in his arms. Dell looked at him through glazed eyes. "You never were the traitor, were you, Uncle Han?" The boy clutched at him.

"It's okay, Dell, nothin' makes much sense any more." The young face went slack and Han laid his body next to his father's. He crawled through the clearing smoke toward the body of the Queen of Corellia. A sob tore through Han's throat as he cradled Pilar's body to his own. He remembered -- remembered so many things. All the time periods of his life flowed through his mind, and he sobbed.

Leia raced toward the room as Lando grabbed her. "Give him time, Princess." He led her back to the ship.

They watched as Tandy raced past them. The young girl stopped and stared at the dead bodies of her father and brother, then turned to her uncle. Still holding the dead Queen's body, she approached. "Uncle Han? Uncle Han," she gently loosened his grip from the body.

The Corellian looked at her and smiled wanly. "You're all right?" She nodded and cradled his head to her chest. Times were now turned: she was the comforting adult and he was the lost and confused child. What Leia had questioned before, she now watched as Han cried openly for his sister, his nephew, and even the Princess he loved first. Lando steered Leia back to the Falcon where she could meet with the remaining leaders of the Rebellion on Corellia.

Lando slowly moved up the ship's ramp and found Tandy wrapped in a blanket, sipping a warm drink. He sat next to her. "How are you feeling?"

"Better, thank you," she pulled the blanket tighter around herself. "I -- I'd like to thank you for all your help today."

"I just wish," Lando said slowly, "That no one had to die. If there been any other way --"

Tandy nodded. "I understand -- I think I could have killed him myself then." She turned and looked down the corridor.

"How is he?" Lando asked.

"Chewbacca's taking care of him," Tandy said. "I just wish the Princess was here. He needs her right now -- he's so hurt --" she broke off into little sobs.

Lando comforted her. "Did he ask for her?"

"No, that's just it," the girl shook her head. "He just keeps saying he wants to go back to Kasyyyk and stay there."

"Did he ask about her at all?"

Tandy nodded. "We told him she was meeting with the people and he just said that she was in charge or something."

Lando walked into Han's quarters and found Chewbacca yelling at the Corellian. "Well, you old pirate. How do you feel?" he smiled with as much enthusiasm as he could muster.

Han looked at him, eyes red and barely focused. "I never felt better in my life -- thanks. Guess I owe you more than a couple now. You gonna stay around with me and the Wok? Could use your help, at least for a while -- could start on the far side -- there's a great cantina in one system -- don't think you ever been there." He shifted with great difficulty. "Has great food -- and females like you never seen!"

Lando cut him off. "What are you talking about?"

"I'm talkin' about my future, buddy." He coughed and spat up blood.

"You bleeding inside?" Lando asked.

Han shook his head. Chewbacca growled and Han glared at him. "I'm all right!"

Calrissian pulled back the sheet and looked at Han's body. "You never felt better in your life! Who are you kidding?" His body was covered with large bruises and ugly looking welts; on the right side of the rib cage there were signs of swelling. Gingerly Lando touched it and Han shrank away. "Never felt better in your life?" Lando looked at Chewie. "Get that fancy medi-pack out here. And some tape. Looks like your Captain's got a few cracked ribs. You might be back in a medi unit before you know it!"

The Corellian grimaced as Lando helped him into a sitting position. "Uh uh -- I'm not goin' back."

Lando began taping. "Maybe you'll be lucky. Some rest, you can get it checked out on the transport."

Han shook his head, coughed and spat deep red. "I'm not goin' to the transport. You and Chewie can deliver the cargo to the General --"

Lando pulled the tape tighter. "And what about Leia?"

Han grimaced. "What about her?" He glanced at Lando. "Oh, you mean ME and her Highness? It was fun for a while -- you know me, pal, I'm not the type to settle down. Once a pirate always a pirate. Anyway, she's a Senator with a government to run, a jerk like me would only cramp her style."

His anger built, Lando glared at him. "She also has a baby coming - or did that slip your mind? How's she supposed to deal with that?"

Han looked at him dully. "I already did all I know how on that score --"

Whatever he would have said next was cut off as Lando slapped him. Han rubbed his cheek. "Thanks, buddy." He leaned back in the bunk and reached for the flask.

Lando shook his head. "You really are insane."

Han smiled as he studied the flask. "No, pal, before I was insane -- really nuts. I had all those weird ideas again and I really believed them. Took that mess to straighten me (top line of p.69 missing) -- off this cesspool as soon's I can."

"What happened, Han?"

"Like I said, I got my sanity back," the Corellian shifted in the bunk. "When her Highness gets back, have Tandy take care of her. I'll get outta her way tomorrow, so she can pack her stuff."

Lando rose to leave. "Out of curiosity, just what are you going to be doing while Chewie and me deliver this cargo?"

Han opened one eye. "I'm gonna cut down a tree, make some firewood and burn it."

"That's all?"

"It's a pretty big tree." With great effort, the Corellian turned and faced the wall.

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