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Dreaming

by [Cindy Olsen](#)

"Han?"

A female voice--her voice--quietly calling his name. Insistent yet soothing. Confident, whispering tones.

"Han?"

His head turns slowly to look at her, look *up* at her. For long moments, her image glows above him, shimmering, insubstantial. There is a translucent quality to her skin. She appears ghostly, wraith-like. His breath cowers within the confines of his chest; he is frightened the slightest exhalation, the softest whisper of breath, will be enough to extinguish her presence, scatter the substance of her being like pollen in the wind.

Her lips curve into an approving smile as she floats above him, suspended in the room's dusky sky. Gradually, she solidifies. Her eyes, sultry-dark with promise and carefully nurtured secrets, are a smoldering contrast to the moonlight white of her skin. Long cinnamon hair cascades down her back, around her shoulders, tumbling down to gently swaying breasts. Her nipples perk and redden with anticipation.

Entranced, he lies trapped beneath her gaze, his mind a mess of incoherent pleasure. Her body slides down onto his, her warmth enveloping him, a delicious, shivering, devouring sensation. He tentatively traces down the outline of her slender torso, hands gently caressing the angle of hips and thighs. Her flesh comes to rest moistly against his, eyes closing under heavy lids. He groans, sighs with appreciation and with long repressed desire.

He has dreamed of this moment. Laid awake at night, alone in his bunk, wondering what this could be--would be--like. Until now it had been just that. A dream. A crazy fantasy of a frustrated, over-sexed and obsessed spacer. But this *must* be real. His senses are invigorated, bewitched. No dream could *feel* like this. He pushes the doubts from his mind.

Her legs are folded up on either side of his hips; her eyes flicker open, lips twitch mischievously.

"Looks like I finally have you where I want you," she tells him.

His tongue is thick and clumsy in his mouth. His mind blanks, fumbles for a response. He wants to tell her he always knew there would be benefits to serving under her. Wants to tell her how beautiful she is, how wonderful she feels. How much he has longed for this moment. But she is stroking the muscles of his chest, fingers playing with the soft hair, brushing enticingly across his nipples. Words fail him. His skin tingles at her touch and a shiver of pure lust spikes through him. He swallows, his throat dry and tight.

"Leia," he mumbles inadequately.

The sound of her easy, vindicating laughter calms his thoughts, eases his tension, and a wry grin settles across his face. His hands caress her thighs, her buttocks, the small of her back. She feels good. So good. He aches for her.

"Lost for words, Solo?" she teases, gently pushing the hair from his forehead. "If I had known this was all it would take to shut you up, I might have done this sooner."

His eyes close as her fingertips trail down the side of his cheek, and when he opens them he finds her face close to his. She kisses him, mouth open and moving against his, breath sweet and inviting. Compliant, he follows her lead and returns the kiss, his mouth accommodating her forceful tongue. Her hair falls about their faces, the fresh scent of her filling his nostrils, pervading the very fabric of his being. His senses are overwhelmed.

How's this happened? How'd we get here?

The idea is a fleeting wisp of fog, disappearing the moment it is chased. But there are her hands again...so soft, tantalizing. No...how this began doesn't really matter. She is finally here, in his arms, and doing all the things he has dreamed of her doing for so long. He won't doubt the reality of this for a moment longer. Can't afford to.

With her hands firm against his chest, she pushes herself upright so she towers above him, mistress of his body. Her hands cover the back of his, and she drags

them across the front of her chest and up to her breasts. She encourages him to cup the firm mounds in his palms. Her skin is silk in his fingers. He wets his lips in anticipation of taking her breasts in his mouth, tasting the heat of her body.

Smiling, she rhetorically asks, "Where have you been all my life?"

The weight of her pressed against him imbues him with the sense to respond. "Right under your eyes. Waiting."

Delight and affection tinge her laughter. She tilts her chin provocatively. "A bit like now, wouldn't you say?"

He wants to shake his head in wonder. *Where has this woman come from? Is this really Leia?*

He feels as if he is a teenager with a girl for the first time, giddy with strange new emotions and sensations. He momentarily doubts he knows his way around a woman's body--*this* woman's body. He has watched her from a distance for nearly two Standard years, only able to imagine what she looks like beneath the virginal senatorial robes and the severe Rebel uniform. He has wanted this for so long it has begun to inundate his waking thoughts as well as his dreams. He has an unnerving feeling she too has yearned for the same thing.

She is staring deep into his eyes, and he can hear her speak though her lips remain closed. Her thoughts tell him she has dreamed of this moment, has longed to feel his body pressed against hers. She is tired of maintaining the pretense she does not care for him. For too long she has been afraid to reveal these emotions, unleash her passions. She has resolutely barricaded herself behind her sense of duty and responsibility, and her own personal war against the Empire. Everything she has ever loved and considered precious has been brutally taken from her. Perhaps this is why she has hid and denied her feelings for him, for she does not want to lose him, too. And, perhaps, she has been afraid he does not feel the same for her. But now, somehow, the time is right. The first night of the rest of her life.

An unfamiliar wave of euphoria, emanating from deep within his chest, ripples across his soul. He is profoundly touched by how much of herself she has revealed to him. In his eyes, she is as beautiful in strength and spirit as she is of face.

The words flow unbidden from his lips. "I love you, Leia."

Her fingertips stroke his lips and she smiles, just for him. "I know, Han," she whispers. "I love you, too. I always have."

Astride him, she begins a slow, sensual, rhythmic motion, long hair brushing past her open lips as her head dips, neck stretches. His hands drop to her hips and he slowly lifts her up, allowing her to move back down onto his body by herself. She leans down and kisses him deeply, hands running through his hair, hips continuing to move. His hands slide up her body, collect her breasts and bring them to his mouth. His lips caress each delicate nipple, drawing the desire and excitement from her body into his. Her thrusting increases. She is consumed with her need for him and her own pleasure, and yet her hands never stop stroking him, caressing and squeezing the muscles of his shoulders, his arms, his chest, gliding down across his tight abdomen. He writhes shamelessly beneath her. Both crave release, but, at the same time, never want this delicious torture to end.

The moments and sensations mesh...the taste of lips and mouths and skin, the musky scent of lovemaking, ardent gasps, bodies joined as one, skin against skin--

BAM!!!

Han's eyes flew open and he jerked upright in his narrow bunk.

Thump Thump THUMP!!! against the bulkhead.

A loud howl carried through the closed hatch to his cabin, concerned and questioning. The adrenaline coursing through his system helped him to quickly orientate himself. He rubbed a hand across his flushed face and through his sweat-slicked hair. Perspiration beaded his skin and the air in the small cabin was stifling. The ship's environmental control systems had certainly picked a fine night to go persnickety; mid-summer on the backwater planet of Kurrijong was yet another reason which kept the tourists away.

"I'm *fine*, Chewie!" Han hollered blearily to his partner. "Go back to sleep."

A low growl escaped Han as he realized he'd simply been dreaming--again. And apparently he had been loud enough to disturb Chewie, though with the Wookiee's sensitive hearing, he hadn't necessarily been that loud. Just loud enough to be embarrassing. He didn't doubt his partner would tease him mercilessly over the next few days.

Han's growl turned into a near whimper as he rolled over onto his stomach and hugged the pillow. *Damn*. Almost every night for a week, Leia had visited him while he slept. He'd had some of the best sex of his life in those dreams. But they hadn't all concerned him and Leia in his bunk, or her bed, for that matter. Sometimes he dreamed of simple things--like walking barefoot down a deserted beach with her, their fingers interlaced as she smiled at him, toes squishing through the sand as they strolled along the water's edge, laughing at the simple

pleasure of sharing each other's company. Once he dreamed about watching her braid her hair, fascinated by the way her fingers skillfully weaved the strands together...

He really couldn't take much more of this.

Angrily kicking the sheets off his hot legs, he was aware of the pulsing ache in his groin, the moist stiffness pressed hard against the mattress. *Why Leia?* he moaned inwardly, his face pressed into the pillow. There were more alluring, seductive and attainable women among the ranks of the rebel troops: a few he had considered asking for a quick "jump through hyperspace", a few who had approached him with the same suggestion, and a few with whom he'd already "pulled the lever". So why Leia? Why now, after all this time? Sure, she was an attractive young woman, feisty enough for his liking and he had to admit he enjoyed her company when she wasn't preaching the Alliance creed to him, and she had a quick, dry wit which appealed to him. But she was a princess, for Kest's sake! A spoiled child of the Royal House of Alderaan. The thought of a princess--not just this princess, but *any* princess--and a guy like him...well, that wasn't just a dream. That was a child's bedtime story no self-respecting storyteller would dare repeat. And yet...what was it about this petite pocket dynamo which had recently piqued his interest?

Interest, Solo? he asked himself skeptically. *You call this interest? Can't think of anything lately, but her. You're acting like a love sick kid.*

Love... He hadn't really said *that* word to her. He'd only dreamed he had.

He knew he didn't love her. He *liked* her and desired her sexually, but any more than that and he'd be deluding himself and her.

Maybe he'd only said he loved her in his dream to convince her of the propriety of her actions; in the past, he'd certainly told a lot of woman an awful lot of things just to get them into bed. But he'd never actually told any of them he *loved* them. He didn't believe in playing with someone's emotions. Even he had his limits.

"I love you, too." Her voice resonated in his ears. *"I always have..."*

Sometimes, when they were alone together or when he caught her furtively looking at him, he could almost imagine maybe she *did* feel something for him. Something more than friendship. Whether it was love, though...

Han punched at the pillow and ground his teeth together. *This is ridiculous! Kest, I don't wanna marry her,* he thought angrily, dismissing his self-doubts. *I just wanna screw her!* He pushed a hand through his hair again and sighed heavily. *But there's far more easier targets around here than that one. Let it go. Unlock and re-aim.*

Restlessly turning over onto his back, he thumped the bulkhead with a clenched fist and settled his legs back onto the mattress. The heat was obviously getting to him. What he needed was a solid night's sleep, free of interruptions from Wookiees and princesses.

He closed his eyes, trying to clear the jumble of remnant images from his mind. His legs twitched uneasily in the stillness. He rolled onto his side and, despite the heat, dragged the pillow across his face, wrapping his arms around his head. He sighed again, trying to relax.

Forget about her, Solo, he chided himself. You don't need that kinda trouble.

For long, oppressive moments he lay on his bunk, listening to his own heavy breathing and trying not to imagine where Leia was just then.

The ECS finally kicked in again with a *whump*, sending a cool breeze skittering across his naked body. It succeeded in cooling the temperature of his burning skin, but not the effect of his dream.

She knows she is dreaming, but she doesn't care. Although her eyes are closed, she knows where she is.

It is night. A summer's night, for there is still a lazy warmth left over from the late afternoon sun. She lies on the familiar softness of her bed, a deep pillow cradling her head. Somewhere a cool breeze has entered through an open window, caressing her skin in the night air. In the near distance, she hears the laughter from a dinner party she should be attending. And over that, a colony of crickers chirps.

Alderaan, she whispers to herself. Home.

Slowly, tentatively lest the dream disappear, her eyes flutter open. For long moments she stares at the canopy above her bed, her gaze tracing over the cascading material. Soft light from the illumines outside the window bathes the room in a glowing blue-white. With her eyes open, she can now focus on the voices. Her ears strain to discern the voice of her father. Logically, she knows she shouldn't be able to hear the conversation in the room used for intimate dinner parties, for it is located on the other side of the palace and three levels down. Regardless, she hears the deep baritone of Bail Organa; his loud chuckle makes her smile.

Home. She is home. Safe.

Beneath the covers, she wriggles her toes and closes her eyes again, luxuriating in the simplicity of the dream. Her dreams of Alderaan are seldom so peaceful and carefree. She drifts, floating on memories that still haunt her.

There is another presence in the room--in her dream--with her. A familiar presence, one Leia knows well, yet still there is something slightly threatening about it. She props herself up on her elbows and searches the room.

He stands in front of a window, hips casually tilted, arms hanging loose by his side. The heavy blaster pistol is absent from his side. Illuminated from behind, his face is dark and unreadable, but she can somehow tell he is staring at her intently. The pulse flicks in her throat.

Despite herself, she speaks his name. "Han."

He steps into the light, moving towards her, and she finally sees his face. The intensity in his eyes wanes, and he smiles his lopsided smile. Her stomach flips the way it always does whenever he smiles at her like that. But she can't let him know the effect he has on her.

"What are you doing here?" she quietly demands.

He stops suddenly, yet his smile broadens at her defensive tone. "You invited me."

"I invited you?" Her voice quavers at the thought he might really know how she feels. "Why should I invite you into my bedroom?"...*into my dream?*

He half-shrugs and moves towards the bed again. "So I anticipated the invitation. You want me here, don't you?"

Her head shakes. "You can't stay."

"Why not?"

She responds quickly, before she has time to reason with herself, before he can convince her otherwise. "My father--"

"Afraid of what your father will think?"

"No!" she cries out. The denial echoes off the walls and her eyes drop. "No," she says more quietly. Her eyes return defiantly to his. "I'm not afraid of anything."

"You don't scare easily, Leia," he agrees. "One tough lady."

She folds her arms across her chest and says nothing.

"But you're afraid of something," he continues. He stands at the end of her bed, places his hands on his hips and suggests, "Me maybe?"

"You?!"

"Maybe not me," he concedes. His brows raise in thought. "Maybe you're afraid you've fallen in love with me."

She counters his warm hazel gaze with a withering glare. "Now you're being absurd."

"Am I?"

The honesty and sincerity on his face is unfamiliar to her, and for a moment she feels flustered, stumbling for a response.

"W-why should...should...I-I d-don't--"

"Don't what?"

The tenderness in his voice calms her racing thoughts and heart. She meets his solemn gaze.

"I don't," she tells him. "I just don't."

The smile slides up his face. "Let me, then."

Entranced, she watches him shed his vest, then slip the shirt over his head, his tanned skin a stark contrast to the white material. His gaze momentarily leaves hers as he deliberately places the clothing at the foot of her bed. She studies the strong lines of his upper body, aware of the sudden increase in her pulse as her eyes move over him--the broad shoulders and muscular arms, the fine hair across his chest, tapering down to a flat stomach and slender waist. She has seen him shirtless on numerous occasions--mostly from a distance, sometimes at close range, infrequently with the luxury of stealth to cover her study.

She continues to watch as he scuffs the boots from his feet, unbuckles the belt, and pushes his trousers to the floor. The sight of him makes her ache. She wonders how it would feel to touch him, to be held by him. To press her face against his chest, feel his arms around her.

He kneels at the end of the bed, then moves towards her on all fours, hazel eyes golden with desire, feline and hungry.

Somehow he is under the covers with her, kissing her. His mouth tastes hot and sweet. His hands, like fire brands, move across her body, caressing her arms, breasts, hips. Her legs compliantly part to accommodate his body. Then he is inside her, a part of her, and he begins his slow, stretching rhythm.

Staring at each other, entranced with each other and the moment, they move as one. The sensations and emotions well up from deep within her. She has never had a lover before and yet, intuitively, she knows how it should feel. And it feels like contentment. Fulfillment.

Their bodies roll, tumble, and then she is above him. Absorbed with the sight of him lying beneath her, she ignores the sudden, thumping noise sounding from outside the window. However, as she would expect of this cautious man, his heads turns towards the sound, momentarily distracted.

"Han? Han?"

She smiles as his attention returns to her. As he lies beneath her, there is something different about the way he looks; his face seems younger, unguarded.

She slides herself down onto his body, enjoying the sensation of the emptiness inside her being filled. His hands move down her sides to her hips as she slowly sinks onto him. Her body finally stops, pressed against his. Her eyes close and she hears him utter a contented groan and sigh.

Her eyes open to find him staring back at her, enraptured. To her, he seems like another person--not the over confident, arrogant smuggler who swaggers his way around the base. And so strange to see him like this, dumbstruck, without a quick, sarcastic remark leaping from his mouth.

"Looks like I finally have you where I want you," she tells him.

Her fingers run up his forearm, squeezing his biceps, then along the prominent clavicle and down his chest, relishing the different shapes and textures.

"Leia," he mutters.

She chuckles fondly, and the laughter brings a crooked grin to his lips. Work-roughened hands move over her thighs, buttocks, and to the small of her back.

She pushes the hair from his forehead and asks, "Lost for words, Solo? If I had known this was all it would take to shut you up, I might have done this sooner."

Wanting to feel every part of him, she gently touches his cheek, fingers brushing down the faint shadow of stubble. His eyes close longingly. Her fingers stop near his mouth and she has an uncontrollable urge to feel his lips against hers, to

taste him again, to experience as much pleasure as he can give. Staring at those full lips, she leans down close to his face. His eyes open and she kisses him, her tongue moving inside his mouth as she cradles the sides of his face.

The kiss, and the control, fuel her desire. She rises above him, astride him, and pulls his hands to her breasts. His hot palms firmly cup her. Her desire swells, and she knows she is nearing a point of fulfillment she has never seen before. Above all this, she is amazed at how quickly this has happened between them, how wonderful this dream is...and yet, in reality, there is nothing like this between them. She feels compelled to voice this inconsistency.

"Where have you been all my life?"

His answer surprises her. "Right under your eyes. Waiting."

She laughs at the truth in his response. "A bit like now, wouldn't you say?"

Stretching out with her feelings, it is as if she can read his mind. She senses he has dreamed of this moment, but she decides she had already guessed that. Han Solo has never hidden the fact he has an unquenchable sexual appetite.

And then it hits her deep in her stomach. She has also dreamed of this moment. She has yearned to feel his body against hers. Suddenly weary of the pretense, she aches with the feelings she has for him. And it scares her. It has been too easy for her to hide behind duty and responsibility. To ignore emotions and passions. Far too easy to hide and run away, lest she lose them, and him. Like Alderaan. And what if he doesn't feel for her the way she does for him?...But now, somehow, the time is right. The first night of the rest of her life.

He smiles for her and says, "I love you, Leia."

Inside her, something ignites. She smiles, touches his lips. "I know, Han. I love you, too. I always have."

Astride him, she begins a slow, sensual, rhythmic motion, long hair brushing past her open lips as her head dips, neck stretches. His hands drop to her hips and he slowly lifts her up, allowing her to move back down onto his body by herself. She leans down and kisses him deeply, hands running through his hair, hips continuing to move. His hands slide up her body, collect her breasts and bring them to his mouth. His lips caress each delicate nipple, drawing the desire and excitement from her body into his. Her thrusting increases. She is consumed with her need for him and her own pleasure, and yet her hands never stop stroking him, caressing and squeezing the muscles of his shoulders, his arms, his chest, gliding down across his tight abdomen. He writhes shamelessly beneath her. Both crave release, but, at the same time, never want this delicious torture to end.

The moments and sensations mesh...the taste of lips and mouths and skin, the musky scent of lovemaking, ardent gasps, bodies joined as one, skin against skin--

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

Leia wearily swatted a hand in the direction of the bedside chrono and missed the operating sensor. The chrono continued its incessant, high-pitched alarm. Now with eyes open, she tried again and was successful in rendering the timepiece silent. She lay there for a moment, breathing heavily, waiting for her heart to calm its racing pace. Something twinged in the pit in her stomach. *Just a dream*, she told herself. *Just a stupid dream*.

Her arm dropped across her face and she realized she was shaking slightly. Why had the chrono's alarm caught her off-guard? Usually she awoke just before it sounded. Had she been so absorbed in her dream that she had forgotten about everything else?

Leia rolled her head, looked at the chrono's readout, and abruptly sat up. It was nearly four hours before the alarm was scheduled to sound. She found the sensor for the lights, activated it and checked out the alarm's setting. It was set for four hours hence, just as it should be. So why had it gone off now?

Her mouth and throat suddenly dry, Leia drank from the flask on the bedside table, holding the container with both hands. She shivered in the room's artificial coolness, grateful for it, knowing that outside the door, the heat of Kurrijong would be oppressive.

Gradually, the pulse stopped thumping in her neck. She returned the flask to the table, turned off the lights and settled down under the covers again. An image of Han flashed through her mind. She screwed her eyes shut, but the vision persisted. *Why*, she asked herself, *of all the eligible men on this base, do I have to dream about him? I don't even like him!* There had to be some logical explanation for her to be fantasizing about Han Solo.

Then it occurred to her what the cause of her dream was. Yesterday. It was what she had seen yesterday.

She had gone for a walk away from the transportable huts and hangars of the rebel base, looking for a small water feature a scout had located nearby. She'd headed out over the ochre-colored ridge and low scrub that surrounded the base, hoping the cool, rock-enclosed spring would ease the terrible headaches the oppressive heat caused her. The walk had not been long or overly difficult, merely hot and dusty. Although the ridge was pock-marked and gouged with ancient water holes, all were dry, and she doubted any rain had fallen here in the last few Standard years.

Eventually she had climbed to the highest point of the ridge and looked back down at the expanse of camouflaged hangars and huts, all covered over in an extensive counter-measure shield. There was no spring here, she had decided. Either the scout had been mistaken, or she had gone the wrong way. Then she had heard it--the faintest splash of water.

Leia had eased herself down a few steps of rock and peered through a crevice. There, not twenty meters from where she sat perched, a pocket of water glimmered in the late afternoon sun. The pool lay nestled in a basin carved from the rock and measured no more than ten meters across. Its surface rippled and reflected flickers of light as a swimmer moved beneath it, then broke through with a gush of breath. She had recognized him immediately. The swimmer was Han.

For a moment she had nearly called out to him, but as he had seemed unaware of her presence, she instead took the opportunity to covertly watch him. Hidden behind an outcrop of rock, she had watched as long overarm strokes carried him the length of the pool and back. The water was cloudy with disturbed silt, allowing only glimpses of his body as he swam along, legs kicking powerfully.

When he came to the edge of the pool for the third time, he had stopped for a moment, searching for a step or a ledge. Then he stood up, rising from the pool as the water sluiced down his naked body. Leia's immediate thought had been, *I shouldn't be looking*. But that hadn't stopped her. She had watched as he had turned in the hot sunshine, pushing the water from his hair, allowing her the chance to appreciate the lean lines and muscles of his body. She realized that even now, just remembering this encounter, she could still recall echoes of what she had felt, what her body had felt...

Enough! Leia pulled the pillow across her face. *Enough.*

She didn't have the time to be thinking about nonsense such as this. It was simply a dream. A stupid dream fueled by a juvenile experience that was unworthy of her. All of it originating, she suspected, from the strange moods she had been experiencing lately. So what if Han Solo happened to be the spark that ignited her basic feelings? There was no question he was a sensual, handsome man. Leia knew she wasn't the only female on base who appreciated the way he filled his trousers. But it was nothing more than that. Nothing. She didn't have the sort of emotions for him she had professed in her dream. And she knew for certain that he--an arrogant, egotistical, selfish, no-good smuggler--would never feel, let alone express, the depth of emotion for her as he had in her dream. *Nothing.*

Leia pulled the covers up around her shoulders. *Relax*, she told herself. *Relax, and forget about it. There are more important things to concentrate on. More important things to worry about.*

For long, oppressive moments she lay in her bed, listening to her own heavy breathing and trying not to imagine where Han was just then.

Just a dream, she told herself. Just a stupid dream.

Leia tipped the mug of kavit towards her mouth and sipped at the steaming bitter liquid, all the while concentrating on the datapad in front of her. Her other hand pushed a fork through the remains of her early breakfast. As it was still a good two hours before shift change and the official start of the base's day, the mess hall was nearly deserted. Only a few chairs at the long rows of tables were taken by techs, ordnance staff and other uniformed personnel. Leia had eaten her breakfast in relative solitude, though she had found the report on the datapad more palatable than the processed mush on her plate.

Her eyes moved to the mug she held close to her, and she considered the chipped and bitten nails on her fingers. She should be taking better care of herself, she thought. Eating better. Sleeping more. Banishing ridiculous fantasies from her mind.

Her gaze was distracted by a newcomer to the mess hall, and, despite the distance, their eyes met as he ambled towards the food dispensing unit. She averted her eyes from his hazel stare, immediately aware of the rush of adrenaline through her system. *Trust the man to have insomnia at the same time I do!*

Leia turned her attention back to the datapad, staring at the screen but not reading the words, trying to watch Han's movements in the periphery on her vision. *Please don't let him sit here, she chanted to herself. Not here.*

She lost sight of him as he collected something from one of the food dispensers, and for a moment she thought he had taken a seat some distance from her. Then she heard footsteps approaching her, tapping on the tiled floor, and she knew he was heading in her direction. The blood pounded through her veins.

She sensed more than saw him move down a row only two or three across from hers, place a mug on the table and assume a seat at a slight angle from her.

Read the report, she told herself. Ignore him and read the damn report.

The words scrolled across the screen but their meaning was lost to her. She seemed aware only of the way her stomach pitched and churned, the hammering of her pulse and the shortness of breath that had struck. Images from her dream

and the water hole washed through her. Then came the terrible thought that she was being rude. That he knew she knew he was there, and because he was a friend, of sorts, she should acknowledge his presence. She should at least be polite, look up and say hello. She could do that much, couldn't she? Or would he always have this terrifying effect on her?

She took a deep, cleansing breath and placed her mug on the table. She willed her fingers to stop shaking and, as casually as she could manage, looked up in his direction. Her mouth opened slightly in dismay. His mug sat on the table, a wisp of steam curling from its contents, but the chair was empty. How could he have left so quietly, without her hearing? And what had made him leave so suddenly without even touching his drink?

From her chair, Leia scanned the mess hall. A few more people had entered in the last few minutes, but it was still relatively empty. She saw him striding across the hall, through the maze of chairs and tables, heading towards the entrance. His back was firmly set towards her, but she could tell from the hardness in his shoulders and the way his hand clenched above his blaster that he was agitated. She wondered what had caused this reaction in him, seriously doubting he was perturbed by her ignoring him; his customary response to that was to annoy her more than usual.

She hoped he would turn his head, look back and see she was searching for him. But he didn't. He continued on towards the sliding doors that opened at his approach, and marched through without a backward glance. And then he was gone.

End

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