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Solo's Bedside Manner

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The busy hangar was no place for a pilot to do repairs but Han Solo had no choice. He had just gotten back from a supply run for the Rebellion and desperately needed to do some repairs on the hyperdrive. If he didn't get some new motivators his beloved Falcon would be out of commission, until he had time to do a major overhaul. He had been aware that this problem was going to occur so he had filled out a requisition for the parts before he left on his mission.

Han Solo was not a man with a lot of patience. He had been waiting for three days for Leia Organa to sign his requisition order for some hyperdrive parts. In between working on repairs he had been haunting the HQ offices looking for her. Everytime he stopped by she was unavailable. He vowed that this was the last time he would go looking for her.

The slightly exasperated and more than slightly tired Corellian headed for the HQ command center to check on the status of his requisition. He stopped an aide, "Where's Her Highness?"

The aide was unable to provide an answer. No one seemed to have seen her. Han didn't have the time or the energy to waste on looking for the diminutive Alderaanian. He took a deep breath to keep himself from losing his temper.

"Where's someone who does know where to find her?"

"You might try General Rieekan."

Han sighed and headed over to where the General was studying a readout.

"General, I'm looking for Princess Organa. Know where I can find her?"

Rieekan turned to look at the smuggler and shrugged. "I haven't seen her in a few days," he said, clearly distracted by the report he was reading.

Han's patience was at an end. "What kind of outfit is this? You have no idea where to find one temperamental Alderaanian Princess? It's not like you have a surplus of them."

Rieekan was shocked. He had not realized that Leia was missing since he had just gotten back on Base and found a pile of tactical reports to read. "I'll check into it Captain Solo."

Han threw his hands up in frustration. "I don't have time to wait." He turned and made his way out of the command room. He headed to the hangar in search of Luke. Surely the kid would know where to find Leia or at least have more information than Rieekan, or anyone else for that matter. Luke Skywalker was definitely lovestruck when it came to Leia Organa. He found Luke in the hangar, engaged in flight sim training.

Short-tempered and short on formality at any time, Han simply strode in, disconnected the power feed to the Sim Trainer and started asking questions.

"Slow down, Han!" Luke pleaded "What's wrong?"

"What's wrong?" Solo scowled. "Oh nothing, nothing at all! No one knows where Leia is or where she has been for days -- so why worry, right?" He shook his head disgustedly.

"Leia's missing?" All the color drained from Skywalker's face and his blue eyes widened in horror. Clumsy in his haste, he began unstrapping himself from the flight chair. "What are you talking about? I haven't seen her in a few days, but I just figured she was busy with the tactical reports High Command have been working on."

"Doesn't anyone around here care that the Princess hasn't been seen in three days?" Solo's voice was deathly quiet, his eyes blazing. Luke flinched. Han turned on his heels and stormed back toward the hangar entrance.

Unable to follow the Corellian without taking leave from the Deck Officer, Luke called frustratedly, "Han! Don't you want to know where her personal quarters are?"

Han flashed Luke a lopsided grin over his shoulder, "I already know, kid." He couldn't pass up the chance to make Skywalker blush. "You do too, huh? So you go there often while I'm away?"

Several techs nearby laughed and Luke turned a vivid scarlet and hurriedly pretended to be busy checking the deactivated Sim trainer.

As Solo made his way out of the flight training area, Rebel pilots and techs scattered away from his killer glare and menacing stride. They had all seen it before. Han had expected Luke would have word on the Princess and all would be well. Now he was more worried than ever -- and more than ever angry that nobody had taken the time to see if she was all right. He headed to the section of the base where the personal quarters were located. The recently so-important requisition was the last thing on his mind. Surely she couldn't have been kidnapped or died without anyone noticing? But then again General Jan Dodderly Dodonna was one of the supposed brains of this outfit, and Rieekan had been absent. Anything was possible.

Finally Solo halted outside the Princess' door and debated whether to enter his ID and politely request entry or just pick the lock. Best not risk the Princess' wrath. Maybe she just wants her privacy -- what then Solo? Flushing at that thought, he opted for polite and slid his ID card into the visitor slot. The door hissed open. From inside the quarters he heard a muffled response, but no one came to the entry and the foyer was empty.. He rapped his fist against the wall and called irritably, "Anybody home?" Beneath annoyance fear was gnawing, if she wasn't here and she wasn't at work anywhere on Base--?

"Oh my!" a prim, familiar voice said with surprise and Threepio hurried into the foyer. "How can I help you Captain Solo?"

"By getting lost permanently," Han muttered. He brushed past the droid and entered the living room. Still no Leia. "Where is she, Goldenrod?"

"Princess Leia has ordered me to tell all callers she is in the middle of a project and can not see them."

"I ain't a caller-- I'm someone who melts down droids who try to tell me what I can't do. I need to see her. NOW."

Threepio started to comment but Han interrupted him.

"Look why doesn't anyone know where she is? Tell her I'm here and I ain't leavin' till she shows up."

"The Princess is in her bedroom, if you must know," Threepio said haughtily. "She is not well. Wait! You can't go in there! She is..." The droid tried ineffectively to block Solo's path. Han reached around and deactivated him.

Han headed down the short hall to what he assumed was her bedroom. He knocked on the door. "You in there Your Worship?" He heard a response but could not make out the words. "I'm coming in, ready or not." Slowly, he opened the door.

On the bed under a pile of thermals and propped up on a mound of pillows was a very bedraggled looking Alderaanian princess. Her nose was red and her usually immaculate hair was haphazardly spilled across her shoulders.

"You?! SOLO!" Her voice was barely recognizable, hoarse and raw but just as indignant as ever. "What do you want? What are you doing here? Get out!"

"What do I want? I came to see if you'd been knifed in your sleep. I ain't going anywhere 'til I find out what's wrong." Han set his jaw defiantly, and stood there with his hands on hips.

Leia burst into tears.

"Princess?" Frowning worriedly, Han moved to her bedside. He sat down on the edge and tried to figure out what to do. "Hey," he said awkwardly, "it's okay, Your Worship. Whatever it is I'll help you through it."

Leia sniffed and blew her nose. "It's anything but ok! And it's worse now you're here!"

Insulted and more than a little hurt, Han stood and headed for the door, "Gee, well I'm so glad I could help. I'll get out of here now."

"Wait don't go," Leia called hoarsely. "No, Han, please stay I'm sorry."

Solo stood with his back to her for a moment, amazed. Then he turned to say with a smug, but gentle smirk. "You're apologizing to me? You're asking me to stay? You said please? Now I really am worried!"

Leia giggled and sniffled at the same time.

Relieved to see her amused, Han returned to sit on the edge of the bed. He put a hand to her brow and said, "Yep, I figured as much, you're outta your head with fever."

Leia lifted her chin primly and pushed away his hand. "Fever maybe, but I am never out of my head."

Solo gave her a searching, deeply intent look and said softly, "Well, maybe that's the real problem here."

"Oh, so now you're a shrink, Solo?" Leia said irritably.

"Nothing about me is ever allowed to shrink"

Leia fought a smile then said seriously, "Thanks for checking on me, Han, but really I am okay."

Solo rolled his eyes. "Yeah, sure I can see that. "

"It's just a cold."

"Maybe," Han drawled, "and maybe not."

"I am in no mood for psychoanalysis or playing doctor here, Solo. Thanks for the visit, now just leave me to rest."

"What?" Han spread his arms wide and blinked at her innocently, "You don't wanna play doctor with me? You're no fun."

Leia snorted. "Funny." She turned away from him suddenly. "Look, unmm, I need to be alone."

"You've been alone for days! You've had enough alone!"

"I need to--to--throw up!" Leia groaned and leaned toward the side of the bed. Solo jumped hurriedly out of her way. "Quick! Hand me that bucket!"

Han did so only just in time. She heaved and gagged and he patted her back gently.

Looking mortally embarrassed, Leia tried to turn away from him. "Please go, I don't want you to see me like this."

Han ignored her and continued to rub her back soothingly. "Princess," he said, his voice so low it was barely audible "You will always look perfect to me."

Leia blushed and was glad she had her face turned to the wall. She could hardly believe her ears, decided not to say anything.

"Nausea too, huh? Have you seen a doctor?" Han asked more loudly

Leia looked at him over her shoulder and gave him a weak smile, "Only you."

Solo did not react to the humor. He stood and paced a few steps. "Dammit, Leia, you should have had a doctor in here days ago! No wonder you're no better."

Annoyed, Leia glared up at him, "Don't you lecture me, Han Solo! You're the one who nearly bled to death all over me rather than admit you were wounded!"

Han stopped pacing and looked back at her, eyes round with pure innocence, hands directed at his chest. "Me?"

Leia's lips quivered into a smile. "You."

Han returned to her, leaned down close and drawled meaningfully, "Well then, I musta been outta my head with fever."

Leia sighed. "I guess I'll have to give you that one. Look, I had Threepio with me and he ran a scan. It's flu, nothing for it but to sit it out."

"Ha! Droids don't know nothin about TLC! And that's what you need!"

"TLC?" Leia looked up at him hopefully.

He smiled. "Lots and lots of TLC. Just so happens I'm an expert."

"You are?"

"Yep. I am taking over the operation here -- no more droids. First thing you need something for the nausea and the fever. I'll get the golden nursemaid to run down to sickbay for something."

"No."

Almost to the door, Han halted and turned back. "No?" His brows lowered threateningly. "Leia, you need medication."

She looked down at the coverlet, clearly embarrassed. "I don't want anyone to know I'm sick."

"Oh yeah?" Han drawled sarcastically. "I would never have guessed."

Leia lifted her chin and glared.

"Look," Solo said more gently, "if you didn't want people worrying it didn't work, everyone is more worried than ever." He added in an annoyed mutter under his breath, "When they realized you'd been gone three days. Idiots."

Not allowing any more protests from the Princess, Solo left the room and sent Threepio for the appropriate meds. While the droid was gone, Han prepared some soup and carried it to the bedroom. He propped Leia up with pillows and put the tray across her lap. She stared at him as if she couldn't believe her eyes, then slowly she began to smile, looking straight into his eyes, seeing right through him, it seemed.

Uncomfortable with the sincerity and warmth of her gaze, Han turned away and tidied the bedside table. "You should try going outta your head once in while," he advised. "Unrelieved stress will make you sick every time."

"Why thank you for the diagnosis, Doctor Solo," she said teasingly. "I never knew you had medical training. Why have you kept this talent hidden?"

"Yeah," he turned back to her with a smug smirk, "I got a lot of hidden talents. Some day I'll show you them all."

"No doubt I will be overwhelmed." Leia said sarcastically, wishing she couldn't feel her cheeks reddening. She avoided his gaze by sipping at the steaming soup. It smelled wonderful and suddenly she realized she actually felt hungry. Her eyes widened in surprise as she swallowed the first mouthful. "This is good, Han! Another one of those hidden talents?"

"Right! But you haven't seen my best. I guarantee you will be most impressed by what I do best -- it's a real gift and I like to share."

Wisely, Leia decided she knew when she was cornered in the verbal repartee department. She wasn't about to let him elaborate. She finished her soup, watching in growing appreciation as Solo tidied the room. Then he helped her to the bathroom and all but carried her back to bed and tucked her in comfortably. She was almost disappointed when Threepio came bustling in with the medicine. But she needn't have worried. Han grabbed it from him and shooed him back out of the room.

"Okay these should help you feel better," he said, checking the labels. He held out some pills and watched as she swallowed them. "I'll put these dishes up and be right back. Get some rest, Your Highness."

Leia drifted off to sleep still thinking about the kindness Han was showing her.

Han came back in the room to check on her. He felt her forehead and already he could tell the medicine was working. He sat back down to keep an eye on her. He pulled out a data reader and scanned it for something to read. Every so often he checked the Princess for traces of fever. When at last the fever was gone he leaned back in the chair to rest.

Much later, Leia woke to find Solo asleep in the armchair by her bed. The lights were set low, casting soft shadows over his peaceful face. His head had fallen back against the cushioned rest, his mouth was open slightly and he was breathing deeply and evenly. He had taken off his black vest and hung it neatly over the back of the smaller chair close by her bed. Shirtsleeves rolled back to the elbows, his bare forearms rested loosely on the padded armrests of the recliner. His long legs were sprawled out, booted ankles crossed. His soft white shirt was ruffled and pulled back from his chest a little and she watched the tanned flesh rise and fall. Lying very still and quiet, Leia absorbed the sight like parched earth beneath a gentle summer rain, all her senses revitalizing, overflowing, and she felt an upswell of tenderness.

Han shifted in his sleep, rolling a little to one side, seeking a more comfortable position. Something fell from his hip pocket. A data card. Very carefully Leia leaned down and picked it up, thinking he might crush it should he stand on it when he woke. She glanced at it curiously and saw it was the requisition he had asked her to sign days ago. And he

never said a word about it after he came in here, she thought, looking fondly back to him. She signed it, stretched out and very carefully let it fall into the nearby vest pocket. She had just leaned back against her pillows when Solo woke, stretched and yawned.

"Hi your worship!" he said, pleasure shining in his hazel eyes as he found her awake and sitting up. "How ya feelin'? With such a handsome doctor I know you got to be better."

She smiled. "Yes I do feel much better. I don't know what I would have done without your help, Han."

He shifted uncomfortably in the chair then got abruptly to his feet. "No big deal. No need to go all mushy on me. Now you're feeling better we can get back to business. I need your signature on this requisition." He hunted for it in his hip pocket, then finally located it in the vest.

Biting her lip to hold back her amusement at his obvious ploy to avoid a sincere thank you, Leia held out her hand to take it from him. She looked at it, frowned in pretend puzzlement, and said, "It's already signed."

"What?" He stared and took back the card.

"Out of your head, Solo? Overcome by fever?"

"I swear it wasn't..."

She couldn't hold back a chuckle at his astonishment and he glanced up in time to read the truth in her eyes.

"You signed this just now, didn't you?"

"Maybe I did, and maybe I didn't," Leia teased. "You'll never know. You'll always wonder if maybe you are going out of your head. If maybe you need a shrink."

"Funny." He leaned his head to one side and gave her a sour smile, but his eyes gleamed enjoyment of the joke. "If your mouth is working again, I know you're gonna be all right. See ya round, your Holiness." He walked to the door.

"I'll try not to hide next time you need spare parts!" Leia called after him

"Do that!" his voice drifted back to her. "I'll give you a demonstration of my best talent -- you could use a good kiss!"

"Why you --!" Leia looked for something to throw at the door, but then she heard the outer door hiss closed. She thumped her fist into the bed instead, flopped back into the pillows, then slowly began to smile. His best talent, huh? Maybe she'd just take him up on that offer one day.

END

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