

*A little scene from Luke and Mara's way home from Nirauan. Set inside **Vision of the Future**, ch. 42.*

Timeline: 19 ABY

Characters: Luke and a very tired Mara

Rating: G

Genre: romance, fluff, canon

Giving in

“What else? Thrawn's copy of the Caamas Document.”

Luke looked up at her with a foolish smile that went from one ear to another.

It seemed to Mara that bright happiness was radiating from him and she realized that no-one had ever smiled to her like that before. Of course not – because nobody could smile like him!

Actually she hadn't seen even him smile like that but once before, to his sister's children a long time ago.

“Great. Fantastic.” she mumbled mechanically, while the import of his words slowly sank in. “Then everything is just as it should be.”

Luke gave the droid an affectionate pat and then moved close to her. He took her hands in his and talked – a long stream of words – and she understood nothing but his light around her, warm and loving, and that he was happy, and that she was too.

“Mara! You are completely exhausted! Do you at all hear what I'm saying?”

Mara forced herself back to presence. “Not, really, no,” she mumbled and let her thumbs play on the back of his hand. “But I caught that what you were saying didn't have any practical consequences – so does it really matter?”

“Hmmm, we've been engaged only a couple of hours and you've already stopped listening to what I'm saying!” – Luke tried to sound offended, but couldn't help smiling.

“Mmmh. But you appeared to be content. Wasn't that the point? I got that all right.” She realized she sounded as tired as she felt. Did she really have to understand anything now? But that she was happy, maybe for the first time in her life? That her happiness – and his radiant smile, didn't depend on anything she did or said, nor on anything else. That right now, it was perfectly enough just to be. With him. That right now, right here, she could let go of the control she had maintained all her waking life. And that it didn't matter.

He gently brushed her hair away from her temples. “My love, it's just fine.” His smile became softer, almost tender, but the light in his eyes as intense. “You should go to sleep, Mara. I'll just check the coordinates, and then join you. We'll have time later.”

“Hm... Is there any other place to sleep in in this ship but in this chair?” Someplace where he could be a little bit closer.

“Wait a second.” Luke hurried off and Mara almost swayed where she stood but he was right back. “There is a single cabin with two bunk beds. And there are blankets and cushions.”

She walked after him like she was sleeping. Never, never ever had she been so exhausted. And it still didn't matter. She curled up on the lowest bunk. He tucked her in and she allowed him.

“Mara?”

“Mmmhmmh?”

“How badly are you still hurting? Should I put you in a healing trance?”

She grudgingly realized that her body ached and her head was thumping. “Mmm. It might be a good idea. Can you get them in a light edition?”

He laughed. It wasn't that funny.

“No fuss for my sake, Luke.”

She could feel the Force envelop her. Luke's warm, loving acceptance steeped all over her and into her, and she was so tired that she never really noticed when she just slipped away.

Hours later, Mara woke up and found herself staring at a low ceiling with a strange netlike structure.

Slowly it dawned to her that she laid in a small cabin and was looking at the bottom of another bunk. Even slower still, she realized, that those deep breaths that could be heard over the humming of the hyperdrive, weren't her own. They were Luke's. She had become used to the sound of them after all those nights in the cave. There too, he had lain close to her and yet always maintained a respectful distance. Like it had been a common, silent agreement. To here, but not closer.

Mara slipped out of the bunk. Her body felt soft and agreeable. Still a bit heavy after the trance, but not mistreated like it had been last time, after five days and nights on the floor.

He lay with his face towards her. Sleeping deeply with that inexpressible, heart-rending peace over his features.

Was he in a trance?

Did it matter?

She wasn't finished sleeping, but something needed to be rearranged.

She grabbed her blanket and pillow, and clasping the metal railing of his bunk, she swung herself up ó quite clumsily, she thought a bit embarrassed.

She managed to get behind him up without jabbing him with a knee or elbow and she squeezed in between his back and the wall. He smelled of sweat ó old! ó and cold cave, and that dank water that had come so close to crush all her newly awakened hope. And he smelled of Luke. That smell she was familiar with. It went way back and already then (when?) it had tickled and teased her. Already then, when she still hated him, she could now remember that she had reluctantly admitted to herself that she liked his smell. She took a good breath through her nose, and wondered if she smelled as much of sweat, and if he would mind as little when he woke up.

Then she fell asleep again.