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Lair of the Blue Falcon

Chapter 12: Dark Plans

by [J.A. Berger](#)

Luke studied the computer screen intently, watching each additional set of figures triangulate with various points on the northern hemisphere of the ancient mining world. He shook his head; it was taking too much time. Anxiously, he keyed in the signal convergence from the recorded transmission intercepted by the Jack from the Quaylan base and another triangulation was imposed over the grid. He locked it in.

Sliding back in his seat, he studied the data. "This should do it." He touched a key and the lines on the computer screen shifted, the triangulated points converging into a single line. He smiled. "We have it, R2."

The small droid whistled and a tiny appendage appeared to lightly touch the convergence point on the grid.

"By using the information we have here and tying into the TFS aboard the Jack, we'll be able to translate this data. Once we have that, we'll know the location of the base." The smile disappeared. "I sure wish Threepio was here. We could use his geography banks...not to mention his language banks."

The small droid beeped in mournful agreement, missing the companionship of the golden droid.

Turning from the computers, Luke watched Chewbacca and the black Wookiee exit the berthed ship together. "Why can I understand Butaka, but not Chewie, when I shouldn't be able to understand either of them? I wonder if Threepio would know..." Forcing his attention back to the task at hand, the young Jedi caught the Wookiees' attention and motioned them to his side. "Butaka, I've triangulated the data. If you're ready we can plot the location of the base."

Chewbacca traced the angulations on the screen with a fur-covered hand, then threw back his head and howled in excitement.

"Slow down, Chewie. What is it?" Luke frowned, struggling to catch the gist of the Wookiee's excitement.

"My nephew says he knows this place." Anger touched the big Wookiee's royal blue eyes. "He says it is close---too close---and very dangerous for the human who ran this bay. He could not have gone undetected much longer."

"That explains a lot," Luke said. "Especially if Garn stumbled onto some of their transmissions, like you did; he would have known his days were numbered."

Chewie agreed, growling in anger.

Motioning his nephew to silence, Butaka asked, "Have you checked the communication channels, young one?"

"The ion storm is filling the networks with static. Communications wise, we're blind."

"And so are they," Butaka commented smugly, pointing to the triangulation, noting the base's location. He turned to Chewbacca. "If we are to help Solo, we must hurry."

Chewie glanced once more at the computer screen then turned, hurried past the Jack, and out through the bay doors, disappearing into the darkness.

Sensing a sudden increase in activity he had failed to notice earlier, Luke watched Butaka's second-in-command bark orders to the crew who were hurriedly seeing to the refueling and readying of the Jack for lift off. He turned a questioning glance toward the black Wookiee.

"My holds are full, young Jedi," he explained, "and I cannot, in good faith, risk my ship or my crew on this venture. When the screens clear, I have ordered the Jack to lift...with or without us."

"You should go with them, Butaka," Luke state solemnly. "You could be risking death, or at best, outlawing yourself. I'm sure Han never intended for you to get involved in this."

Butaka straightened, his royal blue eyes hard with decision. "Death holds no fear for me. I have faced it many times. I accept the risk willingly, for my nephew and his bondsman." His gaze settled on the small human. "And for you, young Jedi. But my world, my ship, and my crew are neutral, I will not be the one to draw them into our struggle against the Empire."

Luke met the determination in the Wookiee's eyes, then nodded his understanding and silent gratitude. He glanced around. "Where's Chewie?"

"He will return shortly. Meanwhile, there are things I must see to before we can leave." Bowing to the young Jedi, Butaka hurried back to the Jack and boarded her, disappearing from sight into the bowels of the great ship.

"Come on, R2, let's find Chewie." Carefully avoiding the working crewmen, Luke strolled purposely toward the bay doors. Artoo rolled after him, bee ping a quick question.

"Of course you're coming with us. We might need your help to get into the base."

Reaching the open doors, Luke gazed out, the glow from the bay's powerful floods reflecting off the driving rain. Somewhere, he reasoned, Garn would have had a sheltered pad for a land conveyance; he would not have isolated himself without transportation.

As if in answer to his thoughts, twin lights appeared out of the darkness moving towards him. He stepped hurriedly aside to allow the huge land speeder into the already crowded bay.

The domed vehicle hovered to a stop on its cushion of air and the canopy lifted. Unfolding his bulk, Chewbacca clumsily extracted himself from the conveyance.

"I thought that might be what you were after." Meeting the blue-eyed gaze of the Wookiee, Luke sobered. "We've got to get moving, Chewie. Already they could be..." He could not put his thoughts into further words. The expression on the Wookiee's face mirrored his understanding.

A shadow fell across the speeder and they turned to meet Butaka. Twin bandoleers crisscrossed his massive chest and a bowcaster was carelessly swung over his shoulder. In his left hand, he carried another bowcaster and bandoleer, which he handed to his nephew, then cast a disapproving glance at the small R2 unit.

"He will slow us," the black Wookiee protested, frowning.

"R2's been through a lot with me, Butaka," Luke explained simply. "I won't leave him behind."

"Then enough time has been wasted, we go."

Without further protest, the small R2 unit was hurriedly loaded onto the speeder and covered with a cargo sheet.

Forcing his bulk into the front compartment of the speeder, Butaka motioned his nephew to the controls, and Luke into the small storage area behind them, where the young Jedi gratefully stretched out.

Butaka pulled the domed canopy over them and shut it. A moment later, their traveling lights activated, Chewie drove them from the protection of the bay.

Their faces blue tinged by the lights of the instrument panel, Luke watched the Wookiees with silent admiration and respect. A race, he knew, looked down upon by the Emperor as unworthy of conquest. He smiled. What a mistake the Empire had made in their judgment of these shaggy aliens from the ancient world of Kashyyyk.

* * * *

"Lord Vader, a word with you, Sire."

The massive being in flowing, black robes turned to meet the garrison commander who had stepped in to the commandeered office.

"Commander Latu, have my orders been carried out?" Vader demanded, the grotesque breath screen hissing, breathing for the powerful being, his eyes unreadable behind the red concave lenses of the black battle helmet.

"Yes, my Lord, the mind probe has been programmed for the interrogation." The garrison commander stood stall before the helmeted being, his demeanor professional and obedient. "Will you be handling the procedure yourself?"

"After the initial probe, and primary data has been extracted, I will finish the questioning." Vader commented; his deep voice tainted with darkness.

"Meanwhile, you may proceed with the interrogation, Commander."

The Imperial officer saluted smartly. "As you wish, my Lord." Turning on his heel, Commander Bimm Latu hurried from his confiscated quarters.

Returning to the interrogation chambers, Latu entered the small, featureless room.

Bolted to the floor, a lone, straight-backed interrogation chair sat, its sturdy arms and legs equipped with wrist and ankle restraints. A medic stood beside the chair adjusting various settings on a round, black globe with a multitude of metal arms tipped with an array of delicate instruments.

Once a member of the Death Squad, Bimm Latu knew well the barbarity and outrages programmed into the probe's soulless memory; he fought down his distaste.

"Doctor Sacher, your report?"

The medic turned, his cold-eyed stare alight with eager anticipation. "I have completed the programming, Commander, and the injections have been prepared. We are ready to begin."

Latu nodded curtly, his stiff posture and hardened jaw masking his repulsion of the man and the task before him, turned to the uniformed men standing at attention before the door leading to the detention area. "Bring the Corellian."

* * * *

Han Solo heard them coming. Their steps echoed throughout the detention area, raising the hairs on the back of his neck. He thoughtfully rubbed at the spot. He glanced about hurriedly. He'd heard nothing from the other cells, all had been strangely, unnervingly silent since his arrival; and, for the first time, he dared to hope. Maybe, just maybe, Luke had managed to escape. He put the thought from his mind. Rescue for him from outside would be slight. Even if Luke had somehow managed to get away, he would be alone and a long way from the garrison.

His jaw line hardened at the avenues open to him; they were few and far from pleasant. With each movement, sore muscles reminded him of the abuses he had already taken at the hands of the Empire. They were nothing to what would be awaiting him at the cruel, efficient hands of an Imperial medical interrogator armed with his drugs and torture.

"Solante, I hope all that MPR training you drilled into me," his mind filled with unpleasant memories, "...pays off." He swore again as the steps moved closer. "Gees, as much as I hated that old man, I sure hope he knew his business half as well as he knew his needles."

The steps came to a stop and Han got to his feet, facing the cell door. It swished open and reality stepped into his small enclosure. He straightened expectantly before them.

"Come with us, Corellian."

Han met the cold, emotionless stare of the two Imperials, their hands resting lightly on the butts of their holstered blasters, their attitudes scornful of any serious attempt at disobedience.

He studied the two men, his eyes reflecting a cold calculating light. If he could force them to stun him it would case a delay in the start of the party he was expected to host. He would have to catch them by surprise, off guard; but then, he reasoned, why would they expect an escape attempt in a high security cellblock?

A small, humorless smile pulled at the spacer's handsome features. It might work, if he could get past them and out of the cell. While there was no way he could escape, he hoped they would stop him the easiest way, with a hard stun. As uncomfortable as the stun would be, the time bought could prove invaluable. His eyes downcast, Solo estimated his distance to the cell door, then his chances of reaching the end of the corridor before he was hit; he moved innocently toward the open cell door and the men who waited.

One of the Imperials stepped forward to meet the Corellian, the other moved in behind him.

"Oh, hell," Han mumbled, his weight shifted to the balls of his feet. "I never was any good at running." He smiled. "Especially when I'll enjoy this so...much...more." With that, he spun and threw a fist into the unsuspecting face of the surprised Imperial. The blow, carrying the full power of the Corellian's lean body, staggered the officer and, before he could recover, another right on the heels of the first buckled his knees and sent him to the ground.

With one down, Solo shifted his attention to the second guard who had reached for his blaster. Stepping in close with a sweep of his hand, Solo forced the weapon away from his body and doubled the Imperial over with a driving blow to his midriff, followed by a chopping cut to the man's exposed neck. The blaster fell from the Imperial's numbed fingers.

Grabbing the weapon and thumbing it to 'kill', Solo threw himself to the hard cell floor and rolled. Too late, he saw the first Imperial on his knees, his blaster centering on the Corellian's prone body; he fired. The blasters erupted together within the confines of the small cell. Both shots found their marks; both men fell.

Recognizing the paralyzing blow of a heavy stun and in the final dregs of consciousness, Han Solo smiled in satisfaction and drifted painlessly into numbed oblivion.

The remaining Imperial stumbled slowly to his feet still reeling from the blow that had taken him down. He retrieved his weapon from the prisoner, slipped it into his holster, then knelt to check his partner; the man was dead. Regaining his feet, he grabbed a limp arm and dragged the conscious Corellian roughly from the cell.

"Commander?" Sacher glanced at the closed door leading into the detention block. "That sounded like..."

"Shots!" Latu finished.

Both men bolted for the door. Latu, reaching it first, motioned the medic behind him. "Stay back! He can't escape, there's no place he can go."

"Of course not!" Sacher snapped. "But if he's injured...or killed..."

His weapon drawn, Latu hit the door release, stepping swiftly to one side as it opened. Surprised, he took a step back allowing the dark uniformed guard entry into the room dragging the limp, unresponsive body of the Corellian prisoner.

"Omak! What is the meaning of this? Where is Taso?"

"Taso is dead, Commander." Omak dropped his burden, coming to attention before Latu. "He was overcome and killed by this...this slime...before I could drop him." A boot thumped into the side of the unresisting prisoner.

"Enough!" Latu snapped. The abuse stopped. "Doctor, check the prisoner. Is he..?"

Sacher already kneeling at the Corellian's side, reached for a pulse point. "His pulse is thready, but he's alive." He looked up in anger. "This imbecile hit him with a heavy stun. The prisoner will be unconscious for hours."

Climbing to his feet, the doctor turned to Latu. "Lord Vader will have to be informed of the delay." A cruel smile touched the medic's lips. "He will not be pleased. I am glad the task falls to you, Commander, and not to me. Men have died by Vader's hand for far less...inconvenience."

"I agree it was unfortunate, Doctor," Latu agreed. "But, like it or not, it's done." He turned back to the guard standing uncomfortably before him. "You are on report. Remove Taso's body to the morgue, and then report to your barracks. Tell Mitl and Vaato to report to me at once."

"Yes, Sir." The guard saluted smartly.

Latu turned back to the medic still kneeling at the Corellian's side. "I'll have other guards here shortly, Doctor. What do you want done with the prisoner?"

The medic grunted. "I want him watched closely. He's young and in excellent physical condition," he nodded toward the cellblock. "I don't want any more surprises, Commander...or delays."

Latu nodded in agreement, looking up as two black uniformed officers entered the room. He motioned to the prisoner. "Watch him." His eyes met the officers intently. "When he shows signs of reviving, strip him to the waist and secure him for interrogation, then notify me at once."

Both officers saluted before taking up positions on either side of the prone figure on the floor. Latu turned back to the medic. "As you kindly reminded me, Doctor, I have someone who must be informed of the delay. I will return when the interrogation is ready to begin."

Doctor Sacher nodded curtly. "I await your return, Commander."

end Chapter 12

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