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Lair of the Blue Falcon

Chapter 14: The Interrogation

by [J.A. Berger](#)

Awakened by the sharp twinges of the heavy stun that had numbed his already battered body, Han Solo's first conscious sensation was of pain. His nerves sent their complaints to the awakening brain and his muscles tightened involuntarily, which, in turn, brought more soreness and discomfort. Before his mind could grasp the thin line of reason, rough hands had pulled him to his feet, while others wrestled the vest from his shoulders. Struggling weakly he was half dragged, half carried, to a straight-backed chair and dropped into it.

Forcing his eyes open, the spacer encountered a kaleidoscope of color blinking and spinning in crazy, stomach wrenching chaos. The stark, featureless room waved and shimmered out of focus and his stomach rolled again. He closed his eyes and swallowed hard. It was not going to be a good trip.

Some moving object came in solid, rough contact with his wounded thigh and he gasped in agony. Red-hot flashes of excruciating torment quickly brought his reeling senses to stark and sudden clarity. Again he opened his eyes.

A figure in black crossed in front of him. The rending of cloth accompanied by a cold draft across his bared flesh told him more than he cared to know. Involuntarily, the muscles in his arms tightened as rough hands grabbed and secured them in restraints, while other hands secured his ankles. Making no

attempt to focus on those working over him, Han hurriedly channeled his concentration within; his time had run out.

Allowing his head to fall forward, the Corellian relaxed and opened his mind to the pain he had subconsciously attempted to curb upon awakening. He relished the agony, mentally drawing it to him, while allowing his senses to isolate each pain and track it to its source, until he languished in the torment. He made no attempt to move his wounded leg, the pain would be excruciating when he did; pain he would hold in reserve. From behind his hastily erected barriers, he was aware of a door opening. A cool draft blew seductively across his bare flesh. He retreated deeper into the recesses of his mind, touching, caressing, embracing the pain until was aware of nothing else.

"Is he conscious?"

"He's coming out of the stun, Doctor."

"Excellent."

The medical interrogator crossed to the seated figure, grabbed a handful of the thick brown hair and lifted the Corellian's head. With his free hand, he rolled back an eyelid. "He's fully conscious." Releasing his hold, Doctor Sacher, turned to the closest guard. "Contact the Commander and let him know we are ready to begin."

In the back of Han's mind, behind the fog of pain-intensified stupor, there were faint footsteps, the click of a switch, and a faint voice repeating the medic's words.

"There is no longer a need for you to conceal your awareness, Corellian, I know you're awake."

Drawing a deep breath, Han lifted his head until his blank eyed stare met the cold, unreadable gaze of his interrogator.

"That's better. If you cooperate, this procedure need not get, shall we say, intense," a touch of a smile pulled at the medic's thin lips. "As long as you do as you are told, I can be merciful."

"Sure you can," Han mumbled, his voice faint, disembodied.

"Speak up!"

"Sure," Han replied softly. For an instant his eyes met those of the Imperial with cold defiance.

A door opened and Sacher turned away from the prisoner.

"Doctor, if you're ready, let's begin."

"Yes, Commander." Sacher pointed to one of the guards. "You. Stand behind the prisoner, but stay out of my way. And, you," he motioned to the second guard, "position the probe on the right while I ready the first injection."

"Has he said anything?" Latu eyed the half naked man seated before him, his hands and feet shackled securely to the arms and legs of the interrogation chair.

"No." Sacher filled the hypodermic and moved to the hovering probe. "Nor do I expect him to cooperate; Corellians seldom do."

Subconsciously aware of the ominous hum of the probe as it moved closer, Han reached hungrily for the pain; found it and drew on it. There were no signs of fear or awareness as the needle thrust brutally into his flesh. He merely met and embraced the additional discomfort and added it to his growing account.

A silence filled the small room, while they waited for the drug to take effect. The Corellian sat quietly, his eyes vacant, dead, and totally unaware. Latu stiffened, recognizing the signs. The Corellian's mental barriers were erected and strongly in place. He was going to prove difficult, very difficult, and Latu groaned inwardly.

"Corellian."

Pulled from his depressing thoughts at the sound of Sacher's voice, Latu moved to the probe and flipped a toggle to start the recording of the interrogation. The prisoner remained still, his expression unchanged.

"What is your name and the world of your birth?"

Silence greeted the sharply voiced question. Sacher moved to the spacer's side and checked his vital signs.

"Doctor?" Latu asked, his voice tense with concern. "Is something wrong?"

"I don't think so," Sacher replied. He checked the prisoner's eyes and pulse. "Everything is as it should be. His eyes are already showing the effects of the drugs."

"Then why hasn't he spoken?"

"It..it takes longer in some," Sacher hedged.

Latu glanced over the medic's shoulder at the prisoner. "He's blocking it out!"

"It's possible, of course," Sacher admitted, frowning. "Still it is unusual to find control to this degree." He shrugged. "I'm sure it's only a momentary setback. I'll prepare a stronger injection."

"As you will, Doctor, but get on with it. Lord Vader grows impatient."

The medic prepared another needle. The garrison commander watched as it was administered. Again they waited in silence.

"What is your name and the world of your birth?" The medic repeated the question to the now heavily drugged prisoner.

The right leg moved and something changed in the Corellian's blank expression, and then was gone. The spacer sat as before seemingly oblivious to the drama unfolding around him.

"For a moment..." Latu hesitated. "Another injection, Doctor! I believe he is weakening."

Checking the prisoner's vitals, Sacher shook his head. "I dare not. His system is filled with the drugs. His heartbeat has slowed. Another injection and we chance losing him."

Latu gazed at the silent figure in disbelief. "How is he doing it? How is he able to block the effects of the drugs for this length of time?"

A calculating look crossed Sacher's sardonic features and he swung an open handed slap to the Corellian's face, snapping the prisoner's head back roughly. The stricken flesh whitened, then reddened with the outline of the medic's fingers. Slowly as they watched, the marks disappeared.

The change had been minute, but both men had seen the angry surprise that had touched the spacer's hazel eyes before they once more glazed over and returned to the blank star of the unseeing. The right leg shifted.

"Doctor?"

"For a moment, I reached him." Sacher swore in frustration. "I don't understand it? We broke through! He should not have been able to regain control. The drugs should have prevented it!"

A look of respect filtered across the Imperial officer's features, then despair. "That won't work again, if his barriers are indeed as strong as that. Without the use of more drugs, Doctor, what do we do now?"

Sacher studied the prisoner for several moments. "We use pain. Pain intense enough and sudden enough that he will be unable to block it out."

"Shock?" Latu voiced in repugnance.

"Unwise," the medic rejected. "Too often an intense shock will stop the heart already weakened by the interrogation drugs, even in a superbly conditioned specimen."

"That we cannot risk," Latu agreed. "Lord Vader has made it quite clear the importance of this prisoner."

"Then I would suggest the laser."

"The laser..." Latu repeated in disgust.

"Yes." A cold light of pleasure touched Sacher's pale eyes. "This man sees nothing, ears nothing; his concentration is complete. But the laser, Commander," he smiled. "The laser will get his attention and the drugs will keep it."

His horror carefully veiled, Commander Latu remained silent, his attention of the helpless prisoner, his eyes averted from the guard who placed a gun-like implement into the doctor's hand. He heard Sacher check the weapon's power pack and activate it. The tiny hum was inaudible except for those ears straining for the sound.

"Take care, doctor," Latu warned.

"I assure you, Commander, I know what I'm doing." Sacher snapped. "He will not be permanently damaged." He attached the device to the probe. "I will program a short, intensified beam to be administered to the fleshy part of the right arm, followed by a fifteen second break; then a second, lighter brush along the wounded area to heighten the pain. Once his concentration is broke, the probe's drugs will control his mind and we will control him."

"Proceed," Latu ordered, his attention locked on the face of the Corellian and away from the probe with its small, innocent looking device.

In the silence that had settled around him, Han Solo felt the gnawing edges of the drugs pushing brutally against his mental barriers. Desperately, he tapped into his reserve; the leg jerked hard. A monstrous wave of intense pain rose to engulf him in a curtain of extreme agony, forcing the drugs away from his sheltered mind; and he dwelt in the safety of his torment. Reason cautioned that soon the pain would not be enough. Already lethargy was dulling the sharpest edges of his suffering. His control was failing.

Without warning a blinding flash of intense agony struck his right arm; he screamed aloud. The room focused before him in stark reality. He gasped, forcing in great breaths of air, his heart pounding, throbbing, beating, driving against the walls of his chest. Then it was gone. His body twitched in shock.

Again it hit. This time he reached for the pain, met it, pulled it to him and absorbed it, concentrating on each brutal caress. It was all he needed. In attempting to break his concentration, they had only strengthened it. He fought to hold every essence of the agony and still retain the consciousness necessary to keep the slowly dissipating drugs at bay.

The program completed, the hovering probe backed away and awaited its next assignment. The silence in the room was heavy with disbelief and shock.

In the chair, the prisoner sat motionless, in full control, unaware, his body rigid, his face and upper torso glistening with the sweat of his ordeal; a small, blackened hole in his arm cauterized by the laser beam's second brushing.

"We broke thought!" Latu whispered, his mouth dry. "How could he have regained control?"

Sacher slowly shook his head. "He should not have. I'll get some bandages and dress the wound, then we try something else."

"This...cannot...continue," Latu insisted hoarsely.

"It won't," Sacher assured him angrily. "He's human, he can be broken."

"In time, perhaps, Doctor. But time is something we no longer have," Latu reminded him. "Lord Vader will demand the information this man carries and we cannot refuse him. Our careers, doctor, perhaps our lives, ride on this interrogation."

Spraying a disinfectant into the laser wound, Sacher tightly bandaged the prisoner's arm against infection. "I understand, Commander. However, this interrogation cannot be hurried or we chance permanent damage to the prisoner *as well as* the loss of the information he carries."

Latu, already fearing the futility of their actions, remained silent watching the prisoner's chest rise and fall in what appeared to be normal respiration. Something caught his attention and he moved closer. Curiously, he bent and studied the area directly above the Corellian's left nipple. There, partially hidden by dark body hair, was a faint bluish outline of an old marking. He pushed the matted hair aside and outlined the drawing with a gentle finger. "Doctor, did you notice this?"

Sancher glanced at the mark. "It looks like a bird of some kind. A raptor, perhaps?" Disinterest reflected in his voice. "Spacers are prone to body markings. I've seen them before."

"Like this one?"

"Maybe, I can't say for sure. A symbol of his ship perhaps."

"Perhaps." Latu traced the odd pattern of the circle that bisected the bird's graceful wings. "But the marking of the bird, while elaborately detailed is fainter, older, than the circle. Very strange."

"Corellians are bred spacers," Sacher reminded him. "It could be a family marking of some sort. A crest."

Latu nodded and stood up, dismissing the strange marking, but not the man who bore it. "Doctor, stay with the prisoner and do nothing more until I return."

The medic raised questioning eyebrows. "Commander?"

"I think it is time we allowed Lord Vader to question his own prisoner. Perhaps with his powers, he can succeed where we have failed."

* * * *

"I assure you, Lord Vader, the interrogation has been handled with the utmost efficiency. Doctor Sacher is one of the Emperor's most valued interrogators. We are fortunate to have him here on Quaylan." Commander Latu led the way toward the small bank of turbo-lifts waiting to carry them to the third floor. "However, the Corellian has continued to maintain control throughout the procedure. There is little doubt that he has been expertly trained in MPR; his mental barriers are unusually strong."

"The drugs, Commander," The dark lord questioned. "How much has been administered?"

"He has been injected twice," Latu informed the robed figure. "More and Doctor Sacher feels we're likely to endanger his mind and ultimately lose the information he may carry."

They walked on in silence, the base unusually quiet, their footsteps echoing in the empty corridors.

"In my quarters, you mentioned some hesitation in his control," Vader hissed inquiringly. "Explain, Commander, and leave nothing out."

Latu swept the dark lord with a curious glance before speaking. "Yes, my lord. Facial reactions and some muscle response were noted briefly after the second injection. His concentration was broken, but he quickly corrected before the drugs could take control."

"And after he was struck, Commander, was muscle response noted again?"

Latu frowned. Had he mentioned the medic's hard-handed blow to the prisoner's face? He didn't think so. "Y...es. Actually more pronounced than before. Does this mean something to you, my lord?" He stopped before the closed doors of the lift, and turned. The tall figure in black had paused some steps behind him, his attention centered somewhere down the empty corridor. "My lord?"

Sweeping the corridor carefully, his right hand lightly touching the silver tube snapped at his belt, Vader's rasping breath screen hissed his uneasiness.

"Lord Vader?" Latu whispered cautiously, his hand reaching for his holstered weapon. "My lord, is something wrong?"

The grotesque mask turned to meet his concern, the eyes behind the red tinted lens unreadable. "There was a tremor in the Force. As if someone..." The being turned to the lifts and touched the control that would bring the conveyance to them. "It's gone."

"The storm perhaps?" Latu suggested.

"Yes..." Vader hissed softly. "Perhaps a reflection...of the storm."

The Commander made no further comment, Vader's interest in the Corellian's physical reactions during the thwarted interrogation heavy on his mind. "You believe the muscle reactions have something to do with the prisoner's continued control?"

"Yes, Commander." Vader turned his attention away from the empty corridors and back to the Imperial officer.

"In order to break his control, we must break his concentration," Latu reasoned aloud.

"Easily done, Commander, once we know on what he is concentrating."

The lift doors opened. The two men stepped in. Latu gave a voice command to the computer and the small lift silently started upward. "We have tried, my lord. With the use of unexpected and intense pain, Sacher almost succeeded."

"He was not damaged!?" The breath screen turned toward the garrison commander. The officer stiffened.

"He was not seriously injured, my lord. Doctor Sacher programmed the probe to subject the prisoner to a narrow, penetrating laser beam, followed by a low grade, searing burn to the raw wound, very painful, but doing little damage. The wound was insignificant and has been cleansed and dressed."

"The Corellian's reaction?"

"Total awareness at the moment of penetration, followed by even stronger control. With our standard probes and interrogation techniques, I seriously doubt we will be able to break him without risk."

Vader stepped to the front of the lift anticipating its stop. "Was there a reoccurrence of the muscle response you had noticed earlier?"

The doors opened at Latu's command onto the corridors of the third floor. They stepped out and the doors closed silently behind them.

Latu paused. "I don't...wait. Yes. Before the laser was fired. The prisoner attempted to rise or straighten his leg. He hit the restraints and reacted to them violently. The action was not repeated, but I saw no other signs of weakness in his control. If anything, I would have to say his barriers were strengthened."

They crossed the corridor in silence. Upon reaching the closed doors of the interrogation chambers, Latu coded in the override and they entered.

The Corellian sat before them in the straight-backed chair, the bandage on his right arm white against the darker skin.

Latu turned to the medic. "Has there been any change, Doctor?"

Sacher moved from the prisoner's side to meet the two Imperials, his uneasiness in Vader's presence obvious. "No, Commander, he's the same as when you left." Glancing back at the prisoner, Sacher turned to address the tall, intimidating figure in black. "Lord Vader, I...I'm sure Commander Latu has brought you up to date. I can go no further into this interrogation with the use of mind probe drugs, the prisoner carries all I dare give."

"I don't believe any further drugs will be necessary, doctor." The deep voice echoed within the small room and Vader's gaze behind the red lenses of the helmet centered on the bound Corellian.

"My...my lord?"

"Commander Latu mentioned muscle response at the times control has threatened to fail, can you verify that?"

"Yes, my lord." The medic shifted his gaze from the tall figure to his commanding officer. "However, I don't see the significance. While the prisoner's body is superbly conditioned, it has been under tremendous strain; I would expect some involuntary muscle reaction."

"And *that* is why you have been stationed on Quaylan, *Doctor Sacher!*" The dark lord's right arm lifted, his fist closing ominously. "You will answer my questions and answer them only! Do you understand?"

Sacher's hands reached to his throat clawing at his collar as his face reddened, then turned a sickly green, then blue.

Vader's fist continued to tighten and Sacher went to his knees.

"Lord Vader," Latu voiced softly. "If we are to continue this interrogation, you will have to release my medic. He is the only qualified mind probe tech this base has."

For a moment, Latu feared he had been ignored. Then slowly, Vader's fist opened.

Sacher wheezed, his lungs fighting for each painful breath, the veins in his neck relaxing as oxygen again pumped through them. He struggled to his feet, fear and the closeness of death naked in his eyes.

Vader turned in a swirl of robes and advanced toward the seemingly comatose Corellian. "What muscle response *did* you notice, doctor?"

"Right...right leg," Sacher rasped, forcing the answer from a raw and painful throat.

"A scalpel."

On shaking legs, Sacher crossed to his instrument tray returning to carefully hand Darth Vader the requested implement. He stepped back.

A swift, clean stroke and the trouser leg parted under the sharp blade wielded by the black-gloved hand. Surprised interest pulled the medic forward. Reaching down he pulled the material away from the spacer's naked flesh revealing the shattered sealant over an inflamed wound. "A blaster burn!"

"I don't understand," Latu frowned, staring at the exposed wound.

"Doctor?" Vader turned to Sacher who had noticeably blanched.

Stepping to the prisoner's side, Sacher pulled a port-a-scanner from his belt and with a trembling hand activated and passed the instrument over the burned flesh. Reading the data it provided, he clicked it off. "It...it has reached apex. He...he's been drawing on the pain."

Activating the scanner again, he made another quick pass over the Corellian's body. "The blaster burn, cracked ribs, multiple bruises are all providing him with significant levels of pain to draw on to..to maintain control."

"But not an insurmountable amount until..." Vader hissed.

The medic turned a sick shade of green. "Until...until we used the..the laser. We...I...I strengthened his faltering control when...when I used the laser."

A look of unbridled amazement touched the commander's sharp features. He glanced into the unseeing eyes of the entranced Corellian with new respect. "Very clever. He formed his controls around the one thing we were sure to provide him."

Vader nodded handing the scalpel back to the ashen faced medic. "It is a situation easily corrected." The red-eyed gaze settled on Sacher. "Do not fail me again, Doctor." He hissed.

"No. No, my Lord." Sacher whispered, his voice raspy and unreliable. "The..the probe drugs have receded and with care there will be no mental or physical harm. He will have to be carefully monitored. Too...too much after the MP drugs could, of course, cause death."

"I'm afraid, I don't..." Latu faltered, leaving the dark lord standing before the bound prisoner.

"We will give the Corellian a strong pain reducer, Commander. Once his pain has subsided, he will lose control. The drug also causes lethargy which will keep him from activating other control stimuli."

Latu nodded his understanding glad an answer to one of his problems had been so easily provided. Immediately another touched his memory. He glanced again at the partially hidden marking on the Corellian's breast.

"Lord Vader, have you ever seen a ...a family crest, perhaps, of a bird of prey, wings swept back, diving through a circle bisecting the bird's wings?"

The black robed being stiffened. "What do you know of such a crest?" There was cold danger in the artificially reproduced voice.

Surprised at the dark lord's reaction, Latu took a step backward, the tension in the air around him somehow thick and sinister.

Without thinking he slipped a finger into the collar of his uniform. "I...I know nothing of such a crest, my lord. I...I saw it for the first time today, on the Corellian; an old laser marking, just above his left pap. I found it while Doctor Sacher was dressing the laser wound.

"It's not possible!"

The air crackled with explosive static. Commander Latu watched in fear as the dark lord advanced upon the helpless prisoner.

"Pawns of the Jedi, they are *long* dead! Their light has gone out of the universe."

Roughly, a black-gloved hand pushed the spacer's head to one side and brushed the thick body hair aside to expose the strange marking.

"Doctor!" The black robed being hissed urgently. "An age scan!"

"At once, my lord," Sacher scurried to Vader's side, fumbling for his scanner. His hands, cold with fear, shook as he advanced against the hatred that emanated from the towering figure.

The small instrument whirred, rose in pitch, then hummed to silence as it finished its scan of the prisoner. The medic deactivated it and put it away. "He's...he is approximately thirty-five standard planet years. He's young for a Corellian spacer. I believe their life span increased to approximately 150 standard years prior to the Wars. It is a bit higher than that now."

"Too young," Vader hissed. A black-gloved finger traced the bisecting circle on the bared flesh. "Warrior bred, warrior trained, but when? Where?" The dark lord voiced softly, ominously. "The order could not have survived! The Blue Falcons, attuned to the Jedi in the power of the Force. They could *NOT* have survived!"

"My Lord?" Commander Latu cautiously inquired.

Vader drew his hand away from the Corellian and whirled to face the frightened medic. "Give him the injections, but do no more! I'll be insecurity. You are to call me immediately upon his awakening. And heed me well, doctor, there is much he *will* tell me or you will sadly regret the day your path crossed mine!"

end Chapter 14

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