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Lair of the Blue Falcon

Chapter 28: Confrontation

by [J.A. Berger](#)

M'Fe strolled determinedly down the silent halls of the medical facilities, the uniform carefully folded over one arm, the weapon's belt over his shoulder. The hour was late; the dim lighting in the narrow halls threw long shadows across the cold, stone, walls as he hurried past.

Reaching the end of the hall, the Commandant was greeted by guards stationed before the closed door to the wounded Corellian's room. Both men saluted smartly and awaited the old man's orders.

"Remain here, but be ready to come in if I call," M'Fe commanded sharply. "Set your blasters on heavy stun. No! Disregard!" He rescinded the order. "Set on light stun, I will not have the ceremony delayed should he decide to be difficult."

Turning to the dark, roughly handsome youth on his right, M'Fe nodded in recognition. "MaKar, should Solo come through that door with a weapon in his hand, you know what to do."

MaKar dipped his head in quick acknowledgment, his eyes never leaving the face of his commandant. "I understand, sir."

"If he comes through that door with a drawn blaster," M'Fe warned, "It will be set to kill. Don't underestimate him. He learned his lessons well and he's a skilled marksman. Do not doubt that, Captain."

"No, Sir," MaKar answered. "He will not get past me."

Returning Captain MaKar's salute, T'Lar M'Fe motioned for the guard on his left to open the door. Without further hesitation, the old man stepped into the small room. The door was closed and latched behind him.

"Solo."

Dressed in dark trousers faded with age, Han Solo looked up from a seated position on the far side of the small bunk. Freshly polished boots sat beside him on the floor. He turned at the sound of M'Fe's voice.

"I thought it was about time for you to put in an appearance." The tall Corellian got stiffly to his feet and faced his old instructor with suspicion. Bare to the waist, his rib cage bore the marks of the freshly removed re-gin cast. A fresh, white bandage adorned his right biceps.

M'Fe fought the anger already threatening to push past his reasoning. "I'm sorry you came back," he lied.

For several moments the two Corellians stood silent, each wrestling with emotions long held in check.

"You know, there's an easy way out of this," Solo ventured, breaking the uncomfortable silence.

"There always is with you," M'Fe replied, disappointed at the first words spoken between them.

Solo shrugged stiffly. "Usually, yeah." He agreed. "Unless someone gets bullheaded about it."

"Call it what you like, but there will be no 'easy' way out of this." M'Fe tossed the bundle of clothing onto the bunk between them. "Put it on."

"What is it?" Solo glanced from the old man to the bundle.

"Your uniform. Put it on." M'Fe spoke with a cold note of insistence. "Now."

Han Solo reached down, lifted the tunic and shook it out. He touched the gold epaulets on the shoulders, than dropped it back on the bed. His hazel eyes, hooded, unreadable, met the equally cold gaze of the old man. "No."

M'Fe snapped his fingers.

The door to the room opened and two armed men entered, blasters drawn and trained on the arrogant spacer.

"You can dress yourself or be stunned and dressed by a mechanical." The old man shrugged thin shoulders. "I care not; it's your choice. Although, I seem to remember you have a certain amount of dislike for mechanicals."

Han Solo's gaze clouded with angry helplessness, he stiffened belligerently. "All right. Get them out of here."

M'Fe nodded.

The two men holstered their weapons and withdrew from the room, closing the door silently behind them.

"I thought you might see reason."

With tightly controlled anger, Solo slipped into the tailored tunic buttoning all but the top button, than reached for the dark, neatly pressed trousers with the red piping.

"Captain."

Glancing up, Solo met the unrelenting gaze of the old man. Without comment and with hands shaking with fury, he buttoned the top button.

"Thank you."

Under the watchful eye of the old Corellian, Solo pulled on the tightly fitted trousers, carefully easing them over the bandaged thigh. Buckling the matching belt, he straightened before the old warrior.

M'Fe studied the Corellian closely, his face a mask against feelings he struggled to hide.

The dark trousers and matching tunic with the epaulets of his rank on the shoulders and the symbol of the Order on the left breast suited the handsome spacer. His dark hair, grown long in civilian style, gave him a roguish appearance that M'Fe had not remembered in the child Han Solo had once been; a child he had loved. A spark of hope touched his pain. Tradition had drawn Solo away from him and the Falcons; perhaps it would be tradition that would bring him back.

"You may put on your boots," he ordered softly.

"Thank you," Solo spat sarcastically.

M'Fe's eyes hardened to cold steel. "You will not use that tone of voice with me, Captain."

Solo drew a deep breath, his hand stopping in its reach for the boots. He slowly straightened before the old man, his anger under tight restraint. "With your permission, sir."

"Granted."

Seated gingerly on the edge of the bunk, Han Solo pulled on the high-topped boots, his eyes remaining locked with those of the ancient Corellian. "If Luke thinks he can bring this off, he's a fool," Solo voiced with conviction.

"I agree."

Solo glanced up in surprise. "What?"

"I said, I agree," M'Fe repeated coldly. "He's a fool or he would realize he deserves better than what he's gotten from you."

"Now hold on," Solo spat angrily. "You don't know anything about what's between the kid and me."

"I'm not here to listen to your procrastinations, Captain." M'Fe stopped him. "I'm here to see that you are properly attired for the ceremony of Sealing. Nothing more and nothing less."

Stomping his feet into the boots, Solo climbed stiffly to his feet and faced the old warrior. "You've got to know, M'Fe, that this wasn't my idea. Coming back. I wouldn't be here if Luke hadn't programmed the Falcon with your coordinates."

"True," M'Fe agreed readily. "But if he hadn't brought you, you would probably have died. I saw the condition of the blaster burn when you arrived."

"I'd be no deader than I'll be after this damned ceremony, M'Fe!" Solo spat contemptuously. "Can't you get anything through that thick head of yours? The Jedi are gone! That mumbo jumbo of theirs doesn't work, and it never did. If it had, they would still be around," he challenged.

"You will NOT blaspheme that which you do not understand!" M'Fe roared.

"Oh, I understand far more than you might think," Solo returned hotly. "I've seen one of the ancients; a Jedi Master. I watched him---with his weapon in his hand---allow himself to be cut down. He fell, old man, and he died!" Solo stumbled to a halt, reading the pain he had inflicted in the old man's features. He softened his

voice, but the words held only bitterness. "No almighty power stepped in and saved him, M'Fe."

"Obi-Wan." M'Fe struggled with feelings he was no longer able to hide.

"Yeah," Solo whispered, unwilling to hurt the old man further. "All I'm trying to say is, if this all powerful Force could not save one of its own, why should it save me?"

"Perhaps, it already has," M'Fe remarked softly, his eyes hooded with grief. "Not once, but twice."

Solo swore under his breath. "And we're right back where we started from, ain't we? Right back with Luke and this damned Sealing."

"Listen to me!" M'Fe snapped, anger flashing in his pale eyed gaze. "The boy is already filled with guilt for bringing you here, can't you at least admit that by doing so he probably saved your life?"

Solo started around the bunk toward the old man.

Drawing his blaster, M'Fe trained it on the advancing spacer. "You *will* listen to me." He flipped the weapon's toggle to heavy stun. "Sit down."

Solo hesitated, his eyes never leaving the leveled blaster.

"I will not repeat myself, Captain. Sit down."

Reluctantly, Han Solo sat.

"Butaka has told me something of what the boy has been through for you. And, sadly, for the first time since his awakening, I would venture he's doubting the power within him. Doubt he would not have were it not for an arrogant Corellian who cannot keep his damned mouth shut."

"Now hold on..."

"Shut up, I'm not finished."

"I don't have to listen to this."

"But you will," M'Fe threatened, his finger tightening on the trigger guard of the weapon.

"All right," Solo gave in. "Go on, have your say."

"Later today, for the first time in over thirty years, Kalyynn will host a Sealing. I intend to see that it is carried out with all the reverence, dignity, and pride it demands." The old man's hand tightened around the butt of his weapon. "You will follow tradition, if not before the chapel altar than before the parade wall. Do I make myself clear?"

"You've made your point, M'Fe," Solo replied. "You can holster that damned thing, I won't mess up your ceremony. But you might as well get the firing squad assembled, because the kid can't pull it off. This stuff was all before his time. Hell, it was before my time, too. He can't possibly know what to do."

M'Fe shook his head in sad agreement. "You're right, he can't do it alone. May the Force be with him---and you."

"Not with me, M'Fe, I don't need it."

M'Fe's eyes hardened at Solo's stubborn denial. Refusing to be baited further, he reached to his shoulder and tossed the belted weapon to the younger man.

Solo caught it left-handed, a look of shocked distrust crossing his handsome features. "You're giving me a blaster?"

"You will be properly uniformed for the Sealing, Captain. Put it on."

Solo buckled the weapon around his waist, shifted it into a comfortable and familiar position on his right thigh, and buckled it in place. With a suspicious eye on the old man, he carefully released the thong and drew the blaster, swiftly checking the power levels. "It's fully charged. You're trusting me with this?"

"We both know what will happen if you try to use it, don't we?"

Han Solo refused to comment, accepting the old man's treat as fact. T'Lar M'Fe was Corellian; he never bluffed.

Carefully, the Captain of the Millennium Falcon holstered the blaster, thumbed the thong over the trigger, and reached for the flight jacket still folded neatly on the bunk.

end Chapter 28

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