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## **Lair of the Blue Falcon**

### **Chapter 34: Imperial Attack!**

by [J.A. Berger](#)

Commander Akut'n Pactella stepped from control and moved down the command walkway to the main view port, all the while studying the green fertile world of Kashyyk floating in space ahead of him. He snapped an order and the armada moved past the lifeless moon of Karma and closer to their chosen target.

"Mackta, what of the Corellian freighter, did she get down?"

An Imperial officer, dressed in the high collared uniform of second in command, stepped onto the walkway and joined his commander. "Our sensors followed her until the moon's ionization disrupted further tracking. At our last contact, her pilot was making for the Nen'r Plateau where the Hunter awaits his arrival."

"If the pilot of that freighter is as skilled at fighting as he is at avoiding direct hits, it should be an interesting encounter." Pactella turned his attention away from the main view port and faced his first officer. "Kashyyk is before us, release the fighters."

"Orders, Commander?"

"A heavy strafing attack across all major populated areas."

The Imperial Officer repeated the orders to the control station, than turned back to his commanding officer. "And the armada, Sir?"

"We will await the Alliance." Pactella smiled confidently. "And prepare a very unpleasant welcome." His hands behind his back, he turned to study the emerald world and its surrounding star field with eager anticipation. The ravaging of a worthless planet of nonhumans is meaningless beside the possibility of destroying or better yet, capturing key personnel gleaned from the battle with the unsuspecting Rebel Alliance and the advancement such a victory could bring.

"The TIEs are away, Commander," Makta reported, pulling Pactella from his thoughts. "The Fallon and the Mojack have moved to our flank until further orders."

"Excellent. Communications, open channels to our squadrons and switch all long range scanners to auto; I wish no surprises should the rebels pop hyper somewhere outside the system."

Pactella moved restlessly in front of the main view port trying not to pace as the Ravisher's lighting went to battle alert. From Communications, the first reports were being received from the small, short-range Imperial fighters moving toward Kashyyyk. He waited impatiently.

"They're coming up behind the planet's closest moon----Kalyyyyn, Commander and holding for your orders."

"Screens on full magnification," Pactella ordered, his voice tight with excitement. "Let the attack begin."

The star field with its emerald jewel sped towards them caused by the increased magnification, then settled to show the small TIE fighters spreading out in attack formation, moving rapidly toward the peaceful, unsuspecting world of Kashyyyk. Suddenly, without warning, several of those in the front wave opened fire and swerved from formation and away from the planet.

"What?!" Pactella leaned forward, eyebrows furrowed in angered protest as other TIEs moved into evasive maneuvers. "Communications! What are they fighting?"

"Unknown, Commander. First reports are garbled."

The tight formation had broken ranks, the small fighters rolling away from what seemed to be empty space between them and Kashyyyk. Again several ships opened fire, their lasers directed, not at the targeted world, but across open space.

"Have they taken leave of their senses? Mackta, I want answers! What's going on out there?"

Mackta ordered the communications officer away from his station and seated himself before the monitor, tapping hurriedly into the communication channels between the Ravisher and the small fighters. "They're under attack, Commander!" He frowned, leaning closer to the monitor, "Our wingmen are attempting to contact us, but they're being jammed."

"Under attack?!" Pactella moved quickly to the flagship's powerful sensor banks. "There's nothing out there!"

"Small ships, sir. One-man fighters have spread a line of defense between our TIEs and the planet. Our fighters are engaging..."

Pactella whirled back to the main view port, "Increase magnification! I want to see these ships!"

"We are at full magnification, Commander," the Navigator reported uneasily.

Suddenly, out of the black field of space outlined by the exploding energy of what had been an Imperial TIE, a squadron of small, deadly fighters were momentarily visible; and then gone.

"Identify!"

Mackta snapped an order to the ship's computer and waited as it ran comparisons against the small fighter's captured pattern. "Not Imperial, not Alliance, Commander," he reported shortly.

"Check archives!"

"Yes, Sir, checking!"

"Scanners! Report!"

"Nothing, Sir," the navigator reported, looking up from the ship's scanners. "They're too small---too fast. Our scanners can't pick them up."

Pactella seethed as he watched the small fleet of TIEs flanked and outmaneuvered by the mysterious ships only visible when exploding gases outlined them briefly against the blackness of space.

"Order our fighters to fall back and regroup behind the Fallon until we can get some idea of what---and whom---we fight!"

He swore again as three tightly grouped TIEs exploded simultaneously before the close magnification of the Ravisher's screen. And, for a brief moment, Commander Akut'n Pactella got his first good look at one of the attacking

vessels. The ship was a sleek black bullet of death, her canopy darkened, her graceful backward swept wings exposing her weapon emplacements. Pactella stared in fixation. The plating, normally covering the weapons, was tucked neatly into the fighter's hull, exposing not only the fighter's advanced weaponry, but revealing the symbol of a bird diving gracefully through a circle.

"The emblem! Mackta, run it! Hurry!"

"At once, Commander." Mackta paused to monitor communications. "The Fallon is moving up."

Pactella watched the Imperial interceptor move into the flagship's sight, the TIE squadron hurrying to rally around the added protection offered by the arrival of the huge man-o-war.

The Fallon opened fire, her turbo-lasers laying a cover of devastation to cover the retreat of the small Imperial fighters.

"This is no retreat," Pactella mumbled in shame. "It's a rout." Angrily, he watched the laser fire dissipate into open space coming nowhere near the fast banking, diving attacks of the smaller, darkened ships.

A sudden flash and one of the small, black bullets disintegrated.

"We got one!" A voice proclaimed from somewhere behind the bridge; Pactella bristled.

"He flew into the discharge," the commanding officer snapped, silencing the voice. "It was pilot error, not Imperial marksmanship! Mackta, what have you found?"

"Archives show them to be...." Mackta looked up in shocked surprise. "Drones, Commander, old, one-man drones. Era: Pre Clone Wars. Someone has converted them into fighters. The Emblem is listed as classified. The computer files cannot be accessed."

"We're in the middle of a battle and you give me bureaucracy! Mackta, I need answers, not excuses!" Pactella snapped. "Order the Mojack forward, I want this sector cleared of these inconveniences! Whoever they are! Whatever they are! They have toyed with us long enough."

A blinding flash and every member of the bridge shielded their eyes against the brilliance, the Ravisher rocking under the heavy barrage of debris that struck and rebounded from her shielded sides.

"What...!?" Pactella blinked his vision back into focus, settling his gaze on empty space where, moments before, the Fallon had been.

"The Fallon, Commander!" Mackta reported in disbelief. "She's been totally blown away!"

"I want answers, Mackta! Now!"

"Reports are coming in, Sir." Mackta hunched over his monitors, disbelief washed across his face. "Concentrated fire, Commander, from the small fighters."

"Explain!"

"I'm in contact with the Mojack, it seems the Fallon had a laser weakened emplacement prior to this engagement."

"So?" Pactella snapped. "Those fighters couldn't have known that!"

"No, Sir." Mackta agreed. "However, the concentrated fire was directed at that emplacement. The Fallon overloaded."

Pactella swore in frustrated worry. "We don't need that kind of luck..."

"Commander," the first officer hesitated, waiting for Pactella's complete attention. "According to Commander Vatyle, aboard the Mojack, those fighters were directed to the Fallon's port guns by their squadron leader."

Disbelief washed over Pactella's rugged features. He glanced again at the peaceful world floating ahead of his shrinking armada, his trained eyes attempting to pick out the advancing line of small fighters that had formed an impregnable defense between the Wookiee world and the weakening Imperial forces. He could not see them; but he knew they were there.

"Give the order to fall back. I want immediate damage and casualty reports."

"But, Commander..."

"You heard my orders, Mackta, follow them! We were sent here to attack Kashyyyk, a world of less than sentient beings who live in trees and bark like Loll-san wolf dogs. Our computer records say these ships are not Alliance, not Imperial. Before we go further, I want to know who and what it is we fight. Contact Lord Vader. At once!"

Mackta turned to his communications officer and motioned him back to his station, relinquishing his seat while he watched the officer hurry to carry out Pactella's orders.

The Imperial officer paced the bridge in mounting agitation, his battle experience sending off alarms he could no longer ignore. He glanced again at the screen and the receding world, which was to have been his target. The small one-man fighters---her defense---unseen, but no doubt, maintaining their vigilance as the Ravisher increased her distance from the emerald world.

These were professionally trained warriors, encountered in a dead system. A force, the like of which he had never seen in all twenty years of his Imperial service. Who were they and where had they come from? This time he reached within his own experience for an answer. Ships this size would need a base ship; he had seen none and his long-range sensors had remained silent. Therefore, they would have to have...a base...close by. He whirled away from the view port to face his bridge crew.

"Navigator, scan for life forms on Kashyyk's moons!"

"Yes, Commander." The Imperial officer bent intently over his scanners, rapidly compiling the information as it appeared on the screens before him. "None, Sir. Kalyyn, the smallest and closest moon, is devoid of life, registering no atmospheric or life readings of any kind. The same for Mayyyn and Katyyyn further out. Karma---her furthest moon---we scanned upon our arrival, it alone has any atmosphere and it's marginal with no life forms."

Pactella shook his head in defeat, than tried again, his suspicions growing along with his anxiety. "The fighters could not have come from this system, therefore, there must be base ships. Navigator, scan for base ships on long-range. This has the feel of a trap and I don't like it. Communications, have you reached Lord Vader?"

"No, Commander. I've tried on several frequencies, but cannot get a signal out. We're being jammed."

"Jammed! Jammed!" Pactella bellowed. "That's impossible! These ships are too small! They can't carry equipment powerful enough to jam us!"

"No, Sir." Mackta reported from the communications station, reading the information from over his officer's shoulder. "I can't tell where it's coming from, but it's strong---as strong as any I've ever seen."

"Circumvent interference." Pactella snapped, his discomfort building.

"We cannot, Commander."

"Retreat! Now!"

"Commander?!" Mackta whirled to face his CO. "Retreat from a couple of squadrons of one-man fighters? Reconsider, Sir, I beg you. They've been lucky. We can take them!"

Pactella, smarting under the first officer's pleas, stood fast to his intuition and repeated his orders.

Mackta tried once more. "Commander, Lord Vader will not accept anything less than a full strafing of Kashyyyk and an aggressive attack on the Alliance fleet upon their arrival. We have our orders..."

"Take care, Mackta, you forget your place." Pactella warned coldly. "I am fully aware of our orders. I also know that if these unknown fighters and their pilots get any 'luckier'---as you put it---we won't be around to meet the Alliance forces when they arrive."

"Lord Vader will not understand your fear of these...." Mackta stammered to silence. He had overstepped his place and saw his future in his commander's eyes...it would not be advancement.

"I do not fear these fighters, Mackta; I respect them---and you should, too---after seeing what they have done to this fleet and what they might be capable of doing once their base ships arrive."

"Base ships...?" Mackta shared out the viewport in sudden understanding. "You believe..."

"Our scanners have confirmed no bases in this system, Mackta. If there are no bases..." Pactella paused for cold emphasis, "there *will be* base ships."

A muffled explosion rocked the Ravisher and the bridge lights dimmed, then flared as they switched over to reserve power. Somewhere within the bowels of the great destroyer a klaxon sounded.

Pactella waved Mackta back to his place at communications. "That was a direct hit. Report!"

"We're under attack, Commander..." Mackta looked up in fear. "From our flank!"

Pactella sighed in resignation. "The ships, Mackta, can they be made?"

The Ravisher struggled under another heavy blow, her crew battling feverishly to strengthen failing shields. The weapons station was busy returning the heavy fire to her rear.

"Yes, Sir." Mackta whirled to meet the unreadable gaze of his commanding officer. "They've just come out of hyper. They're Corellian, Sir---at least, most of them---old battlewagons from pre-Imperial years. I've seen holograms of them in the history archives."

The destroyer shuddered again under another heavy barrage and Pactella tightened his hold on the command railing. "Turn and engage. It seems our alternatives have greatly lessened. We fight."

**end Chapter 34**

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