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Lair of the Blue Falcon

Chapter 35: Falcon Rout

by [J.A. Berger](#)

Luke Skywalker banked the small, black fighter and put her expertly on the tail of Maycar's craft, then tuned his receiver to his assigned channel to his wingman. "Maycar, can you read?"

"Yes, Sir. Are you having any difficulties with the ship?"

"Not so far." Luke glanced quickly over his board. "It's one of the simplest panels I've seen. Defense shielding?"

"None, Sir. These ships are too small. It would drain too much their engines to effectively shield."

"...And speed is more important, I understand," Luke acknowledged.

"We're coming up on defense corridors, Jedi Skywalker. You are to remain behind our defenses at all times. My channel will stay open to your frequency to receive your orders."

"Just Luke."

"Sir?"

"Call me Luke, Maycar." Silence met the young Jedi's request. "I'd rather be up with the squadron, Maycar. I feel I could be of more help fighting with you."

"Understood, Sir, but Commandant M'Fe felt you'd be of greater help to the squadron guiding us from behind our defenses."

"But...how?"

A silence fell over the communications link between the two small ships moving rapidly toward the line of defense forming between Kashyyyk and Kalyynn.

"You are Jedi."

Luke fell silent, doubtful of the role he was expected to play in the coming battle. For all his desires, his dreams...his breeding, he was not a Jedi. And the only man who might have been able to train him in the ancient arts was dead. How could he allow M'Fe and his Order to place such esteem, such faith...to a lie?

"Trust in the Force, Luke..." The familiar voice echoed within the confines of the small cockpit.

"Ben...?" Luke whispered the name and closed his eyes, hungrily reaching out to the voice of his master---his teacher---his friend. "Ben...I can't do this. I'm not a Jedi. I don't know what is expected of me." Helplessly his hands tightened on the fighter's yoke. "I don't belong here. Ben!"

"Luke, put aside your doubts...your fears. Reach out...with your feelings, Luke. The Force is there to guide you..."

The voice was all around him, comforting and guiding him. Gratefully, Luke opened his mind to the warm, gentle waves of the Force that arose from within to meet him.

The console blurred before his vision, no longer important. His hands continuing to guide the small ship expertly behind his wingman, his eyes blank, his sight centered somewhere deep within, guided by the familiar tingling of the Force.

"They're past Karma and have released their fighters." The voice was his, strong and confident.

"Acknowledged, Squadron Leader."

The small ship rocked under the young Jedi caught momentarily in the thrusting jet stream of his wingman's ship. Luke eased back on the yoke, forcing his ship back and allowing Maycar to advance. No longer uncertain of his role in the coming battle, Luke Skywalker gave himself willingly and completely to the guidance of the Force.

He watched the sudden appearance of small Imperial TIEs moving toward the Falcon contingent from the direction of Mayyyk and Katyyyn, and knew they were as yet unaware of the danger into which they flew. Deep within the Force, he watched the first Imperial TIE fall victim to Falcon guns and felt the pilot's surprise...his fear...his death.

Momentarily distracted, Luke felt a brief surge, a gentle wave of familiarity, and tapped it eagerly, recognizing the touch. "Han..." he whispered, then smiled. The Corellian had landed safely. He was on Karma, behind the battle lines...safe. Relieved, Luke turned his Force attention back to the battle at hand.

Banking the small fighter, he moved above the attacking forces, maintaining his cover as Maycar had directed. From there, he watched the Falcons expertly take the vanguard of the Imperial attack force apart, breaking their formations, and running them down one by one. The Imperial TIEs were no match against the speed and maneuverability of the smaller ships.

Again Luke felt the Force's touch and gave in willingly to the power. "Maycar," he transmitted. "Ten degrees starboard, left flank. They're wide open."

Responding immediately and without question to Luke's guidance, Maycar's small fighter, followed by his own wingmen, slipped into the opening with their guns blazing; three TIEs exploded as one, leaving a gaping hole in the Imperial advance.

Disoriented, their communications to their base ship jammed, the TIEs continued on toward Kashyyyk and into the path of another driving wave of small black ships. They disintegrated in a flash of exploding gases.

"Maycar," Luke reported. "A wide range interceptor is moving up! The TIEs are retreating to regroup with her. Watch her starboard guns...stay to port. I repeat, stay to port."

"Anything else?" Maycar questioned, patiently waiting for clarification, unaware of the blank-eyed stare that Skywalker had trained on the huge Imperial interceptor ahead of them.

"Concentrate on her port guns. She's damaged. You should be able to cause an overload with concentrated fire. But keep away from her starboard emplacements." Luke warned.

"Gotcha!"

Luke willed himself still deeper into the Force, putting anxiety and fear for his squadron from him to concentrate on the huge Imperial ship. From within his self-imposed trance, he watched the Falcon squadron drop into a power dive to the

port side of the great Imperial man-o-war. As if pushed by one hand, all fired a concentrated and devastating fire into the already weakening shields on the great ship's port side, peeling off and coming in again.

"Maycar," Luke opened his channel to his squadron leader, "Get clear! Now!"

The small ships hit their main thrusters and sped away from the great ship, their speed taking them out of reach as the darkness of space flared with the blinding light of the interceptor's brilliant demise.

"Good shooting!"

"You pointed the gun, Sir," Maycar acknowledged, "We just pulled the trigger."

Luke allowed himself a touch of pride, then pushed it away from him; it had no place...in the Force. "They're falling back."

"They'll regroup," Maycar guessed. "I expect we're in for it now. Next round, that destroyer will move up to back the TIEs and they'll throw everything they've got at us. It ain't over yet."

Luke smiled at the familiar statement, his attention unwillingly drawn to another Falcon, in another place. "I..." He paused, his hand suddenly tightening about the yoke. "Han..." He drew within, studying his feelings of sudden unrest. Ill at ease, he swallowed hard and reached with his Force senses beyond the retreating Imperial armada.

"Sir?" Maycar waited. The opened channel remained strangely silent. "Luke? Are you okay?"

"I...don't..." Luke reached past the ships, past Kashyyyk's twin moons, Mayyyyn and Katyyyn, toward Karma...to a friend. "They won't be back." He spoke to his wingman, but his attention was centered on the barren moon.

"We hit 'em hard, but we had surprise on our side." Maycar replied. "With another interceptor and a full destroyer as a flagship, I figure they're not going to let us off the hook that easy." Maycar stated confidently.

Luke listened only half attuned to Maycar's words, while he searched for the reasons behind his growing unease. "Maycar, I've got to get to Karma."

"Luke, we can't get you past the Imperials until they pull back at least as far as Katyyyn. What is it?"

"I don't know," Luke admitted. "Han landed on Karma, but something's not right. I can feel it. He's in trouble."

"Has he contacted you through the bonding?"

"No," Luke blinked in surprise. "Can he???"

"I've heard tales told of Falcons attuned enough to their Jedi counterparts to do so, but I can't say for sure. Commandant M'Fe says each Sealing, each bonding, is different; some are more attuned than others."

Luke sighed, the meaning behind Maycar's words clear. Han might be able to contact him, *if* he would willingly lower his barriers long enough to ask for help. "Maycar, I can't wait. I've got to get to Karma...to Han."

"I understand, Luke. We'll open a corridor for you as soon as possible, I promise."

"Maycar, they won't be back."

"What?"

The conversation ceased between the two as a brilliant flash announced a solid hit to the shielded hull of the Imperial destroyer. Another rocked her hard from the rear; she turned to engage an unseen foe.

"The Corellians!" Maycar whooped over the open channel. "I'd know those old battle wagons anywhere! Luke, stay close, you're on your way to Karma. Set your coordinates for the Nen'r Plateau, northern hemisphere. That's where Falcon Solo will have landed. We'll cover you until you make orbit."

Luke acknowledged his thanks, put his ship behind his squadron, and they moved swiftly away from Kashyyyk. Contact and a brief explanation between Maycar and a heavy Corellian cruiser rapidly opened a defended corridor ahead of them. With Maycar and his squadron at his back, Luke sped toward the barren moon of Karma.

end Chapter 35

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