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## **Lair of the Blue Falcon**

### **Chapter 36: Sweet Revenge**

by [J.A. Berger](#)

Han awakened to the needle sharp twinges of the stun. He tried to remain still, but his muscles tightened involuntarily and his discomfort grew. He groaned, then sent a still partially numbed hand reaching for his holster, while his mind tried to focus on words being spoken somewhere above him.

"Don't bother, Solo, it's empty."

The Corellian's hand brushed the leather then relaxed, having already verified the voice's soft-spoken comment. An impatient boot nudged still tender ribs and he fought to get to his knees and failed, the ground whirled before his partially opened eyes in a cartwheeling kaleidoscope of colors and shapes. The boot nudged again, more urgently.

"Get up, you're not hurt."

Gasping weakly in an attempt to force Karma's thin air into his awakening body and push past the final dregs of the stun, Han Solo struggled to his feet and cautiously opened his eyes. This time he was rewarded with a sight he had hoped not to see; an armored figure standing before him with a laser rifle fully activated and trained unwaveringly on him. He stiffened. A guy could get damned tired of being under a blaster as often as he had been lately.

"You're weak, Corellian. It was only a light stun," the being taunted. "It's been said Corellians are born warriors. I find them vastly overrated. Perhaps too much inbreeding, huh, Solo?"

Ignoring the comment, Han drew another short breath before allowing his gaze to rest momentarily on his blaster lying several meters from him; too far away to do him any good.

His legs wobbling unsteadily, he reached out and steadied himself against the hull of his disabled ship. The cold touch of titanium pulling his memory and his attention back to the skies and he studied the growing activity with silent interest.

"Yes, the battle continues," Finn informed him unnecessarily. "But whoever the Imperial forces have engaged cannot stand long before the firepower brought to this system by the Imperials." The mechanical breathing device in the Shocktrooper's helmet could not completely mask the unease in the being's voice.

Following the tiny flicks of light in the darkened sky, Han smiled. "I think you may be wrong there, Pal, looks to me like the Imperials are the ones pulling back." He glanced at the armored figure and chuckled. "If they pull back far enough, my friend, there'll be no way you'll get off this hunk of rock with or without me."

Finn's hand tightened on the trigger guard of the heavy rifle as he glanced skyward to verify the Corellian's assessment of the battle. He made no comment.

Han glanced again at his blaster, but again rejected any thoughts of reaching it from where he stood.

"We've wasted enough time, Solo."

"And Vader's getting impatient," Han guessed, smiling again when his barb struck home; the armored being had stiffened involuntarily at the mention of the Dark Lord. "Bashu Finn," Solo continued with impish pleasure, "Imperial lap dog."

"Imperial reward spends like any other, Corellian. This contract has been a good one. An easy bounty."

"Don't start counting it yet, Finn." Solo cautioned, looking again skyward.

The bounty hunter was not suckered into the obvious ploy. The laser rifle remained unwaveringly centered on the unarmed Corellian. "Call the boy."

Caught off guard, Solo's brow wrinkled in puzzlement. "What?"

"Call the boy."

Solo glanced quickly about, then back at the armored figure. "There's a battle being waged up there, remember? If I had communications---which I *don't*---I still couldn't get a message through all the manning that's going on up there."

"I tire of this, Corellian, so do not anger me further. Now, call the boy." The muzzle moved closer to the breast of the befuddled Solo.

"I'm not pulling Luke into this mess, even if I could; which I *can't*. End of subject."

"I have been around these systems since before you were born, Corellian, do not pretend ignorance with me!"

The rifle muzzle moved closer until the wicked sight touched the open neck of Han's shirt, brutally twisted, then intentionally snagged in the rough material.

"I know who and what you are." Savagely, Finn jerked the rifle, the rending of cloth loud in the silence around them.

Without conscious thought or intent, Han Solo came alive in a burst of uncontrollable rage, his hazel eyes afire with an insane light of total unbridled, undeniable, anger. "Damn! That was my last shirt!"

Recklessly, Han Solo moved in, slapped the rifle muzzle upward, and spun in under the weapon, kicking savagely at an armored ankle.

Caught off balance, Finn tottered, the weapon discharging as the Hunter fell under the unexpected and insane attack of the unarmed man. The discharge burned harmlessly past Solo's cheek.

Expecting Solo's next move would be toward the rifle, Finn tightened his hand about the weapon, the sling pulling tight over his armored shoulder.

Instead, Solo rolled, throwing himself toward his own weapon still a body's length away. Landing brutally and uncontrolled, he gasped, his wounded arm coming in rough contact with the unyielding ground. Shaking his head to clear the pain induced cobwebs, Han Solo reached for his blaster.

"You'll never make it, Solo. Give it up."

The rifle discharged and a blue bolt struck the sand only inches from the Corellian's reaching fingers. He stopped.

"Finn!"

Both men froze at the sound of another voice.

Behind the Hunter stood Luke Skywalker in a wide legged stance, both hands locked about the hilt of a fully activated light saber, his eyes vacant and devoid of all emotion.

Spent and gasping for breath, Han swore. A blaster riding his narrow hips and the kid chose to play Jedi. Kenobi again, he guessed, and swore again. That old Jedi would be the death of the boy yet.

Finn spun to face the new challenge, firing blue charged bolts toward the motionless youth.

Using the distraction, the Corellian scooped up his blaster, thumbed the weapon to kill, and struggled to his knees. His eyes widened in amazement. Luke, moving with the grace and efficiency of a seasoned warrior, parried and deflected each of Finn's shots.

"Finn!"

The armored figure spun again, the rifle bearing down on the no longer helpless Corellian. Solo fired. The blaster bolt struck the butt of the rifle, tearing it from the Hunter's numbed fingers. Caught between the boy with the ancient weapon and the angered Corellian with the leveled blaster, Bashu Finn froze.

"You make a move toward any other weapon and my next shot will fuse your life support." Solo warned. He edged slowly, cautiously toward the Shocktrooper.

Reading deadly intent in the hardened gaze of the tall spacer, Finn glanced again at the Tatooine youth who stood as before, feet shoulder width apart, both hands locked about the hilt of the saber, his eyes strangely mature and vacant. He turned back to face the Corellian.

"Thanks, Luke. Glad you could make the party." Han addressed the young Jedi, his attention unwaveringly firm on the bounty hunter. "By the way, you're getting damned good with that thing." He advanced on the armored being, his blaster held at ready. "And you, Finn, I owe you...Big time! And it's time to collect."

"Han?"

It's okay, Kid, I know what I'm doing," the Corellian assured the uneasy Jedi.

His eyes locked on the helmeted visage of the silent Hunter, Han Solo kicked the rifle out of reach then, without warning, tripped the armored being. Once again, Finn fell unceremoniously to the ground. Straddling the fallen Hunter, Solo forced him flat until the muzzle of his blaster rested on the armored breastplate. Slowly, deliberately, he knelt, his knees locking Finn's arms tight against his sides. "And now, Finn, you're all mine."

"Han, what are you...?"

"Luke, keep a blaster trained on him and hand me your light saber."

Puzzled, the young Jedi drew his blaster and centered it on the prone figure in green armor. Deactivating the saber, he handed the silver tube to the Corellian.

His eyes reflecting his anger, Han took the weapon and holstered his blaster, the discomfort of his tattered shirt only further fueling his fury.

Within full sight of the hapless Finn, Solo activated the saber, the energized blade burst forth in deadly radiance. "I'm not much of a hand with one of these things, Finn, so I'd lay real still if I were you." Solo warned, feeling the being under him stiffen. "Sure hope I can find the proper setting..." He pushed another control on the hilt.

"No, Han, you can't...." Luke pleaded, fearful of the Corellian's intent.

"Oh, yes, I can." Han assured the boy without looking up.

Set to produce a tight, concentrated, cutting beam, the glow of the blue-white blade reflected off the shielded lenses of the shocktrooper's helmet. Solo smiled.

Leaning forward, he shifted his weight onto his knees and locked his enemy tightly to the ground. Once assured of the being's helplessness, Han slowly advanced the deadly beam toward the top of the armored breastplate. Finn struggled involuntarily as the weapon moved closer.

The energy beam touched the armor, blackening the plating on contact. Holding it steady, Han Solo watched in satisfaction as the armor reddened, then whitened under the intense heat. Slowly moving the beam downward, the Corellian cut through the heavy plating, only partially aware of the uneasy youth standing at his back.

Remembering when one such weapon had severed the arm of a cantina patrol with one swift, clean stroke, Luke stood silent, fearful of breaking the Corellian's concentration and inadvertently being the cause of the Hunter's untimely demise.

The blackened edges of the green armor grew as the cutting beam advanced down the prone body. While under the Corellian's tight hold, Finn struggled in desperation to avoid the hot edges of the metal threatening his unprotected flesh beneath.

"Finn, I strongly advise you to lie still." Solo panted, his breathing labored. This is payment for my shirt..."

"Han..."

"Take it easy, Luke, I ain't hurting him...yet." Solo moved the narrow beam still further down the rapidly parting armor, edging the weapon toward the lower portion of the heavy body armor. "So don't try to talk me out of this..."

"Han, forget this," Luke ventured uneasily. "Turn him over to the Alliance."

"Uh, huh, Luke, I've got too much to settle with this space slug." Solo's hand tightened and the beam moved down another centimeter. "He's been a bad influence on business; namely mine. He damned near cost me a leg. And the, had the nerve to think he could sneak in here behind the Imperials, grab you and me, collect his blood money, and just fly away."

"Us?"

Solo stopped the downward progress of the blade, the anger easing as he looked up and met the innocent surprise in the boy's blue eyes. "Yeah, Luke, us. I warned you this might happen, remember?"

"You're contracted----to Vader---for the two of us?" Luke questioned. The armored being having grown strangely quiet under the impact of the Corellian's words lay still.

The laser beam advanced toward the opened armor and the being's exposed throat.

Sensing the Corellian's intent, Finn shook his head from side to side; the blade stopped. "Yes," he breathed softly.

"Go on, Finn, tell him the rest." The blade intensified. "Now."

The heat increased. Bashu Finn attempted to wrench away only to be stopped by the bulk of the Corellian's body.

"All right! All right! Vader contracted for the two of you," Finn admitted. "After he found the mark of the Blue Falcons on Solo, the saber burn on the floor of the interrogation chamber, and evidence of Wookiee involvement. He couldn't chance the possibility of a liaison between surviving members of the Falcons and their ancient allies. I was to bring the two of you in for deep interrogation and Vader was to handle the Wookiee problem. I assume the armada was his solution."

"Why were they ahead of schedule?" Luke asked.

Finn stiffened at Skywalker's question, his voice soft with barely concealed anger. "I don't know. I can only surmise it was a trap to pull in the Alliance."

"That sounds like Vader," Solo interrupted, seeing the pieces fall neatly into place. "Vader found out who the Alliance contact was on Tatooine, didn't he?"

The laser beam moved forward again and the helmeted head nodded a quick affirmative.

"Vader fed attack information to the contact who in turn passed the information to the Alliance. My guess is he---died---soon after," the Corellian surmised, his eyes hard with anger.

Reading the rage and unwilling to add to it, Finn quickly nodded.

"It was a set up," Luke stated softly.

"You got it," Solo swore, longing to push the beam through the hole in the damaged armor; only his iron will kept his hand steady. "They came early to ravage Kashyyyk, than were going to sit by and wait for Leia's group to show up and knock them out of the skies.

Glancing skyward, Luke smiled at the bright flashes of continued battle raging about them. "I guess it didn't work out quite like Vader planned, did it?"

A calculating light flickered in Solo's hazel eyes. "I'll bet Vader's going to be real upset when he finds out the Alliance second guessed him." Solo's gaze halted Luke's momentary attempt to correct him. "And, I think someone should tell him, don't you?"

"No!" Finn struggled to get up. "I can't go back there. Not..." He halted, realizing what he had almost admitted to his captors.

"Luke, what do you make of that?" Solo teased relentlessly, forcing Finn back to the ground.

"I don't think Vader accepts failures."

"My thought exactly." Solo eased the beam away from the mutilated breastplate, deactivated the saber, and again drew his blaster. "You can get up, Finn, but do it nice and slow."

Solo stepped back, watching as the Hunter climbed to his feet. His blaster again trained on the shocktrooper, the Corellian handed the silver tube back to its owner.

"What about his other weapons?"

"He's fangless. I fused the controls on his breastplate. He has them, but he can't use them."

"What area you going to do?" Finn ventured, his suspicions noticeable in his worried voice.

"Luke, did you see a ship when you landed?"

"Yes. I set down right next to it. She's Imperial"

"Yeah, I know. He suckered me into that armada up there," Solo paused, a sudden thought occurring to him. "When you landed, did you retract your gun emplacements?"

"Yes," Luke confirmed, remembering the Falcon's insignia revealed when the small fighter's guns were advanced.

"Good. Lead the way. Our friend here has a long trip to make and we don't want to keep Vader waiting."

Finn stiffened at Solo's words. "What do you mean?"

"We're sending you back to Vader," Solo stated simply, keeping close behind the Hunter.

"You'd be a fool to take me back," Finn snapped. "And there's no way I'm going back on my own."

The lopsided smile touched Solo's mouth, and his hazel eyes sparkled. "A challenge! Uh, Finn, I thought you knew Corellians better than that."

Bashu Finn fell silent.

Ahead, its running lights activated, Luke's small fighter sat parked along side its larger Imperial counterpart; one flaunting the Empire's symbol of ownership on her silver titanium hull, the other, black, sleek, and unmarked. Finn gave the small fighter only a passing glance, before being shoved roughly toward the open hatch of his own ship.

Entering the vessel, Luke activated ship's lighting, then followed Han and his prisoner to the cockpit. Along the way, Solo grabbed cargo straps and handed them to the young Jedi. They had entered the close confines of the craft's control center before he spoke.

"Take the pilot's seat, Finn. And I'd caution you against any sudden moves. My patience is real thin about now. Fine." Solo congratulated softly as Finn seated himself before the ship's controls. "Just do as you're told and you just may get out of this alive. Luke, take the straps and belt him in. Tight!"

Luke moved behind the pilot's seat and swiftly followed Solo's directions.

"When you're finished, keep our friend company while I see to the ship's programming."

"Can you do it?" Luke smiled at the mischievous gleam in the Corellian's eyes.

"Am I Corellian?"

Luke chuckled. "Can't deny that now, can I?"

Solo winked and turned back to the ship's navicomputer. Snapping in coordinates for Tatooine, he turned and disappeared toward the back of the ship. A moment later, several heavy panels clattered to the decking.

"He's crazy." Finn swore under his breath.

"No," Luke denied softly. "Just Corellian."

"He's crazy," Finn reaffirmed stubbornly.

A moment later, Solo strolled back into the cockpit, whistling good naturedly and seemingly unperturbed by the torn shirt that somehow had managed to stay on his rugged frame. Leaning past the bound shocktrooper, he punched several buttons then switched to autopilot.

Realizing the Corellian's intent, the Hunter stiffened. "You'll kill me!"

"Have faith, Finn," Solo spat contemptuously, without looking up. Setting the hyper drive systems and punching in directional vectors, he smiled at the uneasy bounty hunter. "After all, you can't report to Vader if you're dead."

"If I pop Tatooine's defenses that close in, they'll blast me out of the sky! Providing I'm not torn up by the planet's gravitational pull when I come out of hyper."

Solo leaned over and opened Finn's transmitter, flipped it to the Imperial network and left the channel on automatic to activate when the ship arrived in Tatooine space. "With concerns like that, Finn, I would suggest you start broadcasting as soon as you arrive. If you say something of interest to Vader, I'm sure he'll see you get down...safely."

Pulling away from the control board, Solo turned to leave.

"Wait!" Finn shouted frantically. "Solo!"

"Yeah?"

"You've got all the answers for getting me to Tatooine, but how in the hell are you going to get me off Karma without those Alliance ships gunning the hell out of me when I clear this moon?"

An evil smile pulled at the corners of the Corellian's mouth as the small ship came to life, the autos answering to Solo's expert programming. "May the Force be with you, Finn." He turned on his heel. "Come on, Luke, she's running her pre-flights. Let's get out of here."

"Go ahead. I'll be right behind you."

Shrugging, the Corellian turned and left the cockpit.

The deck plates under his feet began vibrating as the small ship's autos took her systems through preflight warm ups.

Reaching into his pocket, Luke Skywalker pulled forth the small pendant. Fingering the intricate design with reverence, he laid it gently into the empty copilot's seat. Without a backward glance, he left the cockpit.

Jumping from the ramp, Luke stepped aside, allowing Solo to secure the vessel's entry. Together, they moved away as the ship began her slow acceleration away from the barren moon.

"How *is* she going to get past our fleet, Han?" Luke watched the small ship climbing rapidly away from them. "The Corellians are the best I've ever seen. They're not likely to miss even a ship as small as Finn's."

"Keep watching." Han commented smugly.

Suddenly, the small vessel shot upward in a tremendous drive toward the weightlessness of space. The gees mounting in breathless anguish, the speeding vessel hit the edge of Karma's gravitational field and winked out.

Luke moaned in sympathy. "I'm glad I didn't have to make that jump. Han Solo, that was absolutely ruthless."

"Yeah, it was, wasn't it?" Solo replied smugly.

"And, very Corellian," Luke stated with a touch of admiration.

"That, too." Solo agreed. "Come on, help me get the Falcon aired out. Then you can lead us home. Damned Imperial armada liked to shot her to pieces. Good thing I managed to get that message through to Chewie or M'Fe might have been caught sleeping."

Luke followed without comment, remembering the warning of the impending attack he had received from the Corellian spacer through their bonding. Had Solo been unaware of sending it? Or, just unable to acknowledge that such contact between them was possible? He smiled wondering if it really mattered.

"By the way," Solo continued, "You arrived in just the nick of time. You keep pulling off rescues like that, Kid, and you'll soon have me believing there's something in all this crazy mumbo jumbo you think so much of."

"I doubt that, Han," Luke chuckled, lengthening his stride to match his friend's longer one. "I really doubt that."

**end Chapter 36**

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