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## **Lair of the Blue Falcon**

### **Chapter 9: The Princess Takes a Hand**

by [J.A. Berger](#)

General Jan Dodonna, family friend to the ruling house of Alderaan, was an old man with too many deaths on his soul and a cause that had put tempered steel in his faded gray eyes. A man who instead of a warm hearth and a good book had found a second life as military strategist for the Rebel Alliance.

A tall, dignified, gentle man with white hair grown long and a full beard that fell just short of the second catch of his Alliance shirt he hurried along the familiar halls towards a meeting with a young woman. Pausing before a closed door, he hesitated, then rapped gently. Waiting an impatient moment, he rapped again; put his palm to the door plate and stepped into the sparsely appointed living quarters of Leia Organa, young Senator from Alderaan and the courageous, charismatic leader of the Rebel Alliance.

"General, please come in, I've been expecting you. Have you news?" Princess Leia Organa, a small woman, barely more than a girl, aged with the responsibilities and hardships of her cause, carried herself with the confidence and dignity of her breeding.

"Our carrier made contact on schedule," he informed her gruffly. "The fighter and her pilot have been retrieved and his debriefing completed." He hesitated, reading the flash of relief that flickered across the young woman's features.

"However, the pilot was not young Skywalker. Tala Vito, our man on Tatooine saw to the return of the fighter at a great and personal risk to his cover."

Leia Organa met the General's words without flinching. "Where's Luke; did Vito know?"

"Skywalker contacted him through a droid over an Imperial communications feed- in asking him to pick up the fighter and make contact with our carrier," Dodonna reported sternly. "Luke also coded in a decoy report stating that a man answering the Corellian's description was barricaded in a local tavern. The broadcast went out over Mos Eisley's Imperial networks calling for immediate reinforcements."

Leia nodded, pacing the small apartment. "It would seem Luke found Solo but was having trouble getting him off-world." She turned back to the General. "Do we have someone monitoring Vito's Mos Eisley tie-in?"

"Of course," Dodonna assured her. "I saw to it personally after young Skywalker left."

"Good. What else was Vito able to tell us?"

"Not much," Dodonna admitted reluctantly. "There was a great deal of activity above Tatooine about the time he was making contact. He was thankful for it at the time, using it as cover for his departure from the planet, but he later mentioned the possibility of it having something to do with Skywalker and Solo. At my request, he was going to check into it when he got back to base."

"So we don't know for sure."

"No, we don't." Dodonna sighed. "I checked the fighter he returned. She's undamaged, which would indicate Luke got to Mos Eisley safely. The R2 unit is missing; however, from Vito's message, I think we can safely assume the unit is with Luke. I found his flight suit, jacket, and helmet behind the pilot's seat, but no weapon. To my knowledge, he's wearing nothing that could link him directly to us."

"Tatooine is Luke's home world, he would have dressed like the farmer he was," Leia reminded him. "I issued him a blaster before he left. If you didn't find it in the ship, he has it."

"And he'll have the light saber," Dodonna reminded her. "He's never without it."

Leia's brow furrowed in thought, "I feel sure he did make contact with Solo. But Vito's report of Imperial activity over Tatooine, and the fact that we haven't heard from Luke, worries me. He's reliable and trustworthy to a fault. He said he would

stay in contact with us. I believe, if possible, he will." Leia turned toward the door. "Let's check the patch-in and see what we can learn."

Leaving her quarters, Leia and the general hastened to the Alliance's communications center. Heads turned as they entered the facility. Oblivious to covert glances from around the room, they traversed the complex and paused before the console patched into the Mos Eisley relay.

"What traffic have we intercepted in the last twelve planet hours, Ensign? I want everything you've picked up." The general ordered curtly.

"Anything, Ensign," Leia repeated. "It could be important."

The young officer blushed, ducking his head to concentrate on his board. "Just before suns rise, Tatooine time, Princess..." he stammered self consciously, "a.. a small independent freighter blasted out of Mos Eisley right under the Empire's nose." Excitement replaced his uneasiness in the presence of the young woman. "Her pilot was reportedly fired upon at the docking bay and there's been some chatter that he may have been wounded. Anyway, from the reports I've intercepted, he was able to get off-world, break up and destroy five or six TIE interceptors, and then outflank and disable a Star Destroyer before disappearing into hyperspace." He grinned, shaking his head in amazed admiration. "She was no stock freighter. Reports say she was heavily armed and she had some of the most powerful jamming equipment I've ever tried to override. In fact, I got most of my information from Imperial transmissions *after* she went hyper."

"Did you pick up an transmissions from the freighter?" Leia inquired tensely.

Kaylor shook his head. "From what I was hearing, the crew on that freighter was doing all their talking with their guns. She handled those TIEs like a professional cruiser twenty times her size. Her pilot's a hell of a spacer and he gunner...damn-near uncanny." He ducked his head again, "Sorry, Princess...I...mean..." His voice trailed off.

"Thank you, Ensign." Leia smiled. Turning back to Dodonna, she sobered. "General, we have much to discuss."

Away from the eyes and ears of the communications center, the general put his thoughts into words. "You believe that she was the Millennium Falcon?"

"Yes," Leis admitted softly. "I also think there's little doubt Solo was piloting the ship. The irrational, huh, creative," Leia revised diplomatically, "exploits described by Ensign Kaylor has Solo's name all over them."

"It's possible," Dodonna conceded. "The Corellian and the Wookiee make a formidable team."

"Yes, they do," Leia admitted. "But my intuitions say Solo was piloting, but it was Luke on the Falcon's guns. Vito said Luke contacted him from the docking bay shortly before all this happened, yet we've heard nothing from Luke."

"He should not have gone," Dodonna stated firmly. "If he's with Solo...it was foolhardy on his part and a danger to us if they're caught."

The Princess looked up at her advisor. "Yes," she admitted softly. "It *was* foolhardy." She sighed. "What could I do? Order his to stay and not try to help Han?" She shook her head in helplessness. "We would have lost him to our cause and, in the end, he would have gone any way."

A smile touched the General's thin-lipped mouth. "He's young...and youth is invincible." The smile disappeared. "We, on the other hand, are not."

"Age has nothing to do with it, Jan."

"No," he agreed, "it doesn't. And it's not so much a question of Skywalker's youth, but of his innocence. Perhaps he has found us too soon."

"Perhaps," Leia whispered. "But while we in the Alliance revere the Force, there are few of us left who remember its true power; a power I can't begin to understand. That power is in Luke; I can feel it."

Dodonna snorted. "Leia, he's only a boy; a child in the ways of the Force. And there are no longer Masters to guide and train him in its use. Don't push the fledgling to try his wings before he's fully feathered."

"Not I, Jan. Obi-Wan Kenobi did that when he put a light saber in Luke's hand."

"A Master who had not taken a student in over 20 years," he reminded her.

"Yet he choose Luke," she countered.

"We've been told Kenobi's last student was Darth Vader," Dodonna snapped. "We can ill afford any more like him, my dear."

Leia jumped to her feet in anger. "And what of Anakin Skywalker? Could we not do with another like *him?!?*"

Surprise pulled the general to his feet to meet the young Alderaan Senator face to face. "What does one of our greatest warriors have to do in this discussion?"

"He was also a student of Obi-Wan Kenobi's," she reminded him.

"Yes," the general whispered in agreement. "It's true. We lost more than a great pilot when Kenobi brought word that Anakin had been betrayed and murdered."

"That's old history," Leia commented softly. "But didn't you ever wonder why Kenobi choose to live on the desert world of Tatooine after Anakin's death?"

"I assumed he went there to avoid the slaughter of the Jedi Knights being carried out by the Empire."

"My father, Bail Organa, told me stories of Obi-Wan and Anakin Skywalker. But I don't think anyone, except my father, knew the real reason behind Kenobi's exile. General, Ben Kenobi was on Tatooine to watch over, protect, and one day train the son of Anakin Skywalker."

"Now wait a minute, my lady. You're not going to tell me that Luke..." He stammered in disbelief. "That's not possible."

"You knew Anakin Skywalker. Do you remember him?"

"One does not forget one's brush with greatness. Goodness. Gentleness." Dodonna nodded, his eyes reflecting his return to the past. "Yes, I remember Anakin Skywalker." The old man brushed his face with the back of his hand as if wiping away the memories suddenly forced upon him. "If Luke Skywalker is Anakin's son...how did you...?"

"I did want I'm trained to do; I checked our new recruit's background. I found records of a childless Tatooine farmer and his wife suddenly with an infant to raise only days after Kenobi's self exile. I ran a check on Owen Lars and his wife and..." She stopped, studying the general's features closely. "...you believe me, don't you? I see it in your face..."

"What little I know, fits with what you say..." he admitted. "Owen Lars was the brother of Ben Kenobi. Their families have been moisture farmers on Tatooine for generations. It all...makes sense." He met her gaze. "How many others know this?"

"No one." She assured him. "And no one else is to know. Not until Luke is fully trained and able to step into the place his father left for him. We need him, Jan. He *must* be a part of our fight. He's our future. Our chance to return to the old ways...our ways."

"And the Corellian? Are you going to tell me that young firebrand is the son of another of our heroes?"

"No," Leia chuckled. "I don't think I could convince you of that, could I now?"

"Not likely." Dodonna agreed sternly. "That hellion is all trouble. It's best we're shed of him."

"We need him, too." She disagreed, smiling at the disbelief in the general's eyes. "Can't you see? You say you need more professional warriors and yet you miss one of the best prospects we've had in years when he flies in under our very noses...and the Empire's."

Suspicion touched the general's faded eyes. "I'm not so blind that I haven't noticed a certain young woman's head turned by that young rake. Watch your step, Leia Organa, I think he may prove to be more than even you can handle." He held her with his gaze. "He's not for you."

"No man is. Not now," she snapped heatedly. "I'm a realist, General, not a romantic. Han Solo is an arrogant, blaster happy, hot tempered bastard." She blushed at her rise to Dodonna's barb, then lifted her chin in defiance at the old man's smile. "But he's also brave to a fault; a professional warrior, and the best pilot I've ever seen. The kind of a man the Alliance can't afford to lose."

"Granting all that, who's going to get him to follow orders?" The general inquired. "I know his kind. Han Solo is a Corellian and a pirate; he fights for one cause and one cause only...his own."

"Jan, in the time they've been together, Luke has learned more from Han Solo than our training facilities could have taught him in twice the time."

"Solo could also get him killed," he cautioned. "Or worse, lead him into the hands of the Empire. Anakin's son, or not, why wasn't Luke given MPRT after the Death Star run? You briefed him. It's standard procedure here. He *should* have been given the training immediately."

Leia Organa sighed. "I have no excuse, General. Luke was upset over Kenobi's death and Solo's decision to leave; I put it off. It's a painful ordeal and," she met the general's concerned gaze, "I wanted him in a better frame of mind."

Dodonna swore softly, then shook his head in disappointment. "What are your plans now?"

"I'm going to Tatooine."

Dodonna groaned at the impetuosity of youth. "You can't do that, you're too well known. You could walk right into an Imperial trap."

"Tatooine is Luke's home world. If he's able, I know he'll return there and attempt to reach our Mos Eisley contact."

"I'm against this, my Lady. It's too dangerous.

"I'll be careful," she assured him in a voice that denied any argument on the subject.

"If your father were here..."

"But he's not." Sadness touched the young woman's dark eyes before she successfully shut the door on her feelings. "We've got to help Luke and Solo if we can. If we wait for them to come to us, it may be too late."

General Dodonna shook his head. When Leia Organa of Alderaan made up her mind, there was no changing it. He smiled, remembering her hot-tempered evaluation of the rogue Corellian. The pirate and the princess were forged from much the same steel. Together with the son of a Jedi Knight, the old man reasoned, the threesome could become a powerful force to be reckoned with.

**end Chapter 9**

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