

[Back To Index](#)

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Lair of the Blue Falcon

Preface

by [J.A. Berger](#)

Note: This version has been corrected by the author from the original printed version.

Darth Vader, Dark Lord of the Sith, moved from behind the conference table and stepped forward to meet the Imperial officer who crossed the room to stand alone before him.

"The freighter, Commander, did you find her?"

"No, my Lord, I could find no record of the vessel." Akut'n Pactella nervously handed a computer printout to the black helmeted figure. "I fed the numbers you gave me into the Imperial Fleet Register; most were found to be illegible, some purposely altered, while still others contained only two or three digits in a series of ten or more needed for a complete ID; an impossible task."

"It was *meant* to be difficult, Commander, not impossible," Vader glanced at the tabulation of numbers on the printout before handing it back to the officer. "The ship's log?"

"It--it was very inconclusive," Pactella paused, struggling to control his fear of the dark being. "Most of the entries had been erased prior to the scan. All that we could garner from the fragmented remains spoke of a "charter" to the Alderaan System."

"And the Navigational vectors, Commander," Vader inquired softly, "Had they been erased as well?"

"Yes, my Lord," Pactella confirmed. "Many of the ship's systems including navigation and ship's log were wired into the vessel's memory banks where they could be erased from an auxiliary station located mid ship, the Captain's quarters, or from the cockpit itself. I--I fear," the officer stammered, "we learned very little."

"On the contrary," Vader disagreed. "Imperial computers were able to read enough number sequences to recognize the vessel as Corellian, repaired and modified with stolen Imperial parts." His voice hardened. "The ship was searched and her systems scanned shortly after she was pulled into the Death Star and prior to Princess Leia Organa's escape. This data confirms what I had already suspected, Commander. She's a pirate; a smuggler's vessel."

The air in the room grew heavy, charged with a building aura of darkness. Pactella's fear heightened.

"I want the pilot of that ship, Commander, and I want him *ALIVE!*"

"My Lord?"

"Aboard that ship, Commander, was a Jedi Knight of the Old Republic and druids entrusted with the plans of the Death Star which ultimately resulted in its destruction." The maelstrom of anger surrounding the dark lord intensified. "The freighter is part of the Rebel fleet and her pilot a conspirator to the Empire!"

Pactella remained silent under the evil malignancy of the dark lord's anger.

"The freighter reportedly lifted from Mos Eisley prior to its arrival in the Alderaan System; therefore, we will start on Tatooine. I want a bounty placed on the pilot's head. A sum large enough to attract the best--" Vader's voice deepened, "--and the worst."

"A--a--description, my Lord?" Pactella stammered.

"The ship is Corellian," the breath screen hissed. "Post the pilot as a Corellian national. 1.8 meters. 79.6 kilograms. Brown hair. Brown eyes. Post the ship as a modified Corellian freighter with a Wookiee first mate. The description will be close enough to insure an interest for those seeking reward. If a mistake is made--it is of little importance."

"The Wookiee." A spark of interest touched the officer's voice. "Such a pairing will not have gone unnoticed. However, they can be vicious and uncontrollable when angered, especially those free born--"

"Wookiees, by nature of their history, stay to themselves," the dark lord acknowledged knowingly. "However, some have been known to develop strong ties through blood debt to others outside their race--even Corellians."

"If the Wookiee is bounded by debt, my Lord, it could make capture--difficult." The officer interjected carefully.

"Then kill the Wookiee. But remember, Commander, I want the pilot alive." The ominous voice hardened. "He is of no use to me dead. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, my Lord." The Imperial officer stood at stiff attention as the black robed figure moved away from the table and started toward the door. "I--I understand there--was another with the Corellian." He ventured cautiously.

The dark lord stopped.

"A--boy," the soft-spoken words hung in the heavy atmosphere of the room, the overhead illumination catching the contours and angles of the grotesque mask bathing it in an aura of darkness and evil. The great shoulders shrugged under the heavy weight of the armor. "He's of no use to me. I want the pilot, Commander. He led us to the Princess and her rebel forces once; he will lead us to them again."

end preface

[Continue To Part 1](#)

[Back To Index](#)