

[Back To Index](#)

This story was written just for fun and is not an attempt to make money or infringe on any copyrights or trademarks. Only the original ideas contained within the works on this nonprofit web site are the property of their authors, and please do not copy or link these stories to any other website or archive or print without permission of the author.

A Trip to Chansie

by [Linda Ruth Pfonner](#)

originally published in Outlands Chronicles, mid 1980s

"How much?" Han demanded, his tone flat.

Dodonna shrugged. "How much would you charge to ferry six old men and a girl to Chansie?"

"Depends on who they were and how badly they wanted to get there," Han returned, a wicked light in his eye.

Commander Willard sighed. "You're incorrigible, Captain Solo."

"I work at it."

"Very well. The six include Willard and myself; the girl is Princess Leia. We are the Rebel High Command. We are seriously considering moving headquarters to Chansie, and we must discuss the possibilities with the local Rebel units. To convince them to permit it, we send the High Command to talk them into it. That way, the High Command will already be in residence to coordinate the move."

"There's an Imperial outpost on Chansie," Han pointed out. "Isn't it a bit dangerous to put all your eggs in one basket like that?"

"It's a very fast basket," Willard said slyly.

"She," Han corrected, visibly flattered. "I got seventeen thousand for Tatooine-to-Yavin with three passengers and stops at Alderaan and the DEATH STAR. You gonna pay me thirty-nine thousand seven hundred to take seven people to Chansie?"

Dodonna's math was a little slower than Han's, and he was suitably impressed when he realized that the figure thus stated maintained the same rate per person as on the other trip.

"Considering everything," he allowed, "It seems a fair price. Twenty thousand now; the other twenty when we arrive. Is that acceptable?"

Han grinned avariciously. "Yeah. With you guys aboard to distract her, maybe Her Wonderfulness will leave me alone." Han was stunned: *I never expected him to agree...! Forty thousand! Stars around us all!*

"Then again, maybe she won't," Willard commented. That did not stop Han from agreeing to the deal.

("Captain? Captain?")

Han heard the call and rolled over in bed. He had been reveling in the rare opportunity to sleep in while planetside.

"Whattaya want, Chewie?" he growled sleepily.

("This trip to Chansie will we be staying with these people afterwards?") The Wookiee opened the door to Han's cabin and hesitantly stepped inside.

"Probably not. Gotta pay Jabba, remember," he yawned.

("Then--will you need me on board?")

Han sat up straight. "What?"

Chewbacca squirmed. ("The ship PALADIN has several of the People assigned as passengers. She would be following right behind you, so I could rejoin you at Chansie.")

Han eyed his copilot disgustedly. "You wanna quit? Go ahead. Join the damned Rebellion. Get your ass shot off. I don't care. Sure, go ahead. Chansie's got a SpaceTown; I can find another copilot." He rolled out of bed and dressed, ignoring the nervous Wookiee.

("I do not want to quit! I just want to make this trip on the PALADIN! One of the Wookiees is from the same forest as I; he is practically family! And you say we

will be leaving after this trip, so I will not have any other chance to visit. But I do not want to quit!")

Han buckled on his blaster belt and wiggled to set it properly. He squinted up at Chewie and then made a placating gesture with his hand.

"Yeah, Chewie. Go ahead. I'm just grumpy today."

("So what makes today different?") Chewbacca retorted.

Han laughed despite himself. "It's this charter, Chewie. I've got five days of Her Holiness on board ahead of me. And they assigned Luke to copilot the PALADIN, if you go on her, too, then I've got to borrow a copilot, and put up with the Princess by myself. If they weren't paying me so much..." he shook his head.

("I will stay with you, then,") Chewie volunteered immediately.

Han shook his head again. "Nah, you go ahead. No point in both of us being miserable. I'll manage. And from Chansie to Tatooine you can pilot, and I'll get drunk."

("Are you sure it is all right?")

"Yeah. G'wan. Get out o' here!"

Chewbacca did not reply until he was at the top of the ramp. He turned inboard and called, ("Thank you, Captain!")

A wordless growl was all the answer he expected and it was all he got. He left, chuckling.

+++

"Who?"

"Wedge Antilles."

"Like I said; 'who?'" Han repeated.

Luke grinned and explained. "Wedge was one of the fighter pilots in the battle. He was flying cover for me when Vader attacked. His ship was damaged, and he couldn't keep up with me and Biggs. He returned to base."

"That's how he lived through it," Han observed.

"Yeah." Luke was silent for a moment, remembering and Biggs all over again.

"So I get him as a copilot," Han continued, aware that Luke was depressed but not fully understanding. "Oh, well. All he has to do is stand the other watches." Han stretched wearily. "This is gonna be a hell of a trip."

"You're getting paid enough! Forty thousand credits for five days' flight!" Luke snorted disgustedly.

"Hey--that's hazard pay, kid! You realize that if we get stopped the Empire'll tar us all with the same brush--and that a hot one?! I ain't no goddamn Rebel, but you guys pay good."

"So why should we get caught? Any of us?" Leia snapped.

"Oh, shut up," Han muttered, turning away and heading for his ship.

Luke and Leia stared after him, amazed.

"What's the matter with him?" Leia demanded.

"He's nervous. If you get caught you're all guilty; he's right about that." Luke watched the Corellian duck into his ship.

Leia grinned wickedly. "Yes, And if you think the Empire's mad at me, you should hear the list of charges they've accumulated against Dodonna! They'll have to execute him fifteen times to satisfy all of them." Leia seemed to derive some kind of perverse pleasure out of this. Luke only found it depressing. "Yeah. And how often would they have to kill you and me?" he asked glumly.

"Oh, only two or three time," she teased. "Unless they found out that you're the one who hit the DEATH STAR, of course."

Luke snorted. "Great. Let's get this show on the road. Why do you have to go on the FALCON?" he grumbled.

"Because if Han had to put up with the High Council by himself for five whole days he's sure to end up killing somebody. He's not very patient, and they've been known to drive saints to distraction--and he's far from saintly. He can get mad at me, but he won't get violent: I think I can defuse that."

"Then why can't I come on the FALCON? I know her better than Wedge! He's never even been on board!"

Leia looked away. "I know the answer to that, but you won't like it."

"I don't like it now!"

"Well...Dodonna doesn't want us together too much. He's afraid..." she stopped.

Luke smiled grimly. "Little does he know..."

Shyly their hands touched.

Leia ducked her head. "It's only five days."

"Five days for Han to flirt with you," Luke teased.

"Han?" she was surprised. Then she cocked her head to one side, and grinned impishly. "He's very attractive..." she admitted slyly.

"Yeah--so's a neutron star. But you splatter if you get too close. Watch it."

"I wonder what he's like under all that armor," she mused as Luke formally escorted her to the All around them people were scurrying around, preparing to abandon Massassi Base.

"You've got five days to find out. Chewie told me that they're going back to Tatooine after Chansie; something about a debt that Han has to pay off."

"Is that a challenge?" she asked archly.

"In the mood he's in? It's an impossibility!"

+++

"Good-bye, Luke. I'll see you on Chansie."

"Good-bye, Princess. May the Force be with you."

She smiled quickly. "And with you, Luke."

She vanished on board the FALCON and Luke turned away, depressed. After rescuing her from the DEATH STAR, he had had three days with her on board the MILLENNIUM FALCON and then, after the battle, the celebration dinner. Since then he had been so busy with packing and learning to fly the PALADIN that he had not had time to spend any with her. He had been looking forward to this trip for days, and now they had to travel on separate ships!

"Oh, well," he sighed. Then he headed for the PALADIN, mumbling a less than comforting, "it's only for five days..." Very soon thereafter he was totally involved in the take-off checklist, and he forgot all about Leia.

+++

In the interests of maintaining an air of civility for at least part of the trip, Leia had retired to the lounge where she resorted to playing harryhausen with Wedge. "What's the matter, Your Highness?" the dark pilot inquired politely.

"Nothing."

"That piece can't do that, Highness. You're not paying attention."

"I'm sorry, Wedge. My concentration's not in it."

"Oh? What are you thinking about?"

She glanced at him inscrutably and Wedge nodded, understanding. "Luke."

"Han is being unusually insufferable today. I have to put up with him for five days...!"

"You'll manage," Wedge assured her confidently. "Your Highness is a person of iron determination."

"Is that what I am? I suppose so," she sighed. "But sometimes I don't feel like it. You know, if this wasn't Han's ship I'd be sorely tempted to do something to get back at him for all his snide little remarks."

"So? Don't you? I'll help," Wedge volunteered.

She grinned impishly. "Would you? That sounds like fun."

"Sure. Besides, it'll give us something to do."

They grinned at each other, and Leia burst into delighted laughter.

+++

On the bridge of the MILLENNIUM FALCON, Han Solo heard the Princess laugh, and frowned. She was with Antilles--most of the old men were asleep or having private chats in their cabins. Han was darkly suspicious of the machinations of assignment that had put Leia on the FALCON while Luke came via the PALADIN.

Somebody--probably that busybody Dodonna--doesn't want the Princess and Luke together, Han fumed privately. That's not right. He rescued her; he has every right to fall in love with her. Han remembered those tension-filled hours between their escape from the DEATH STAR and their arrival on Yavin. The kid and the Princess were always together. I wished the FALCON was slower, just to give them more time together. Damn it, they belong together! Who the hell does

that General think he is? Trying to pair her with Antilles like this? His father was her pilot, I hear, and the old man's dead. But Wedge just ain't in Luke's class.

Ah, hell. What business is it of mine? I'm going back to Tatooine after this, and I'm gonna pay off Jabba. After that...

It occurred to him then that there was really very little he wanted to do besides the basic passions: stay alive, stay free (that meant nothing more or less than keeping the MILLENNIUM FALCON operational) and raise a little hell in port now and then. Playing tag with the Empire had been exhilarating. Terrifying, but exhilarating. He had not felt that...that alive since his first run to Kessel.

Terror'll do that to ya ev'ry time, he reminded himself wryly.

But then he heard Leia giggle delightedly and Antilles' constricted tenor chuckle blended in. *Well, there's something I can do about that!*

"Hey, Antilles!" Han yelled. "Drag your ass up here!"

"Yes, Captain?" Wedge's cheerfulness just made Han more irritated.

"Take the con. I've got work to do."

Han rose, and Wedge, always politically astute, took the copilot's couch. The smothered giggle he heard from behind him as he left did nothing to soften Han's mood.

Intending to find some isolation--*Damn, the ship's crowded with eight people aboard!*--Han retreated to his cabin. He slid the door aside, stepped in, and fell headlong.

"What the hell!" he snarled, holstering his blaster as he sat up. He hit the light switch and growled. Someone--*as if I'd have to guess who!*--had strung a trip-wire across his cabin doorway at ankle height. *Goddamn that kid--! I'll pulverize him!*

Then he stopped, and thought about how that would look. Dodonna and the others would laugh themselves sick if he tried to get back at Antilles for a silly kid's practical joke. And if there was anything that Han Solo hated, it was being laughed at.

But he also hated letting anyone count coup over him.

So...it never happened. I saw it, and stepped over it. And I'll get him when he least expects it. I won't have the Princess laughing at me!

He stopped. She had been laughing with Antilles just before he had called Wedge to the bridge.

No...she's a Princess. Princesses don't pull practical jokes on people...! She's a Senator, too. Yeah, and she's maybe eighteen, and she's just finished a wild, scary adventure. I'll bet she put him up to this!

He coiled the wire up and took it out into the lounge. "Hey, Princess."

She turned guileless eyes up from the book she was reading. "Yes, Han?" she asked innocently.

He dropped the wire in her lap. "Shame, Princess. What would Luke think? And you a Senator, too!"

She picked the coil up and looked at it as if she had never seen anything like it. "What's this, Han?"

Oh-ho! Gonna play it that way, are ya? "You know what it is. Just remember one thing, Your All-fired Mightiness: you're the only woman on board my ship, and I'm the only one who's armed. You think about that before you and Wedge try anything like that again."

Her eyes flashed angrily. "Are you threatening me, Captain?"

"Yes," he said bluntly. "I saved your ass, little girl. By Corellian custom you owe me anything I ask. Absolutely anything," he concluded meaningfully. Then he continued before she could speak, in a much more nonchalant tone: "Of course, I'd usually ask for money. But you're tempting me to make an exception."

Leia was so furious that she sputtered. "Oh? If Luke hadn't promised you money you would have left me on the DEATH STAR!"

"Sure," he shrugged, infuriatingly complacent. "How'd I know you were some one I'd want anything else from?"

"If it was within my power I'd revoke that medal we gave you, you...you mercenary!" she spat.

Han's grin became a trifle forced. "Lady, if I'd known you were such a spoiled little brat, I'd've left you with Tarkin! He deserved you!" Under most circumstances Han considered himself to be a rather mercenary character. But, somehow, when Leia used the word to wound, it hurt him.

Leia slammed her book shut and stood up. "I'm going to find some more congenial company. If you'll excuse me, Captain?" She was icily polite.

Han stepped aside and bowed her out of the lounge with insultingly exaggerated courtesy. When he saw she was heading for the bridge, he could not resist a parting shot.

"And don't touch anything up there! I'd like to get to Chansie!"

Leia ignored him.

Han found some repair work that kept him fairly well occupied for the rest of the trip. The lateral controls needed work, and, since they were only used at sublight speeds he could work on them, although he would not be able to test them until they dropped out of hyper in Chansie's system.

It was quite a while after their fight that Leia realized that one of Han's retorts had not really been an insult: "How'd I know you'd be someone I'd want anything else from?" That had sounded as if he thought she attractive. In an extremely backhanded, indirect fashion he had inserted a compliment into a brawl.

However, by the time she realized that--and she marveled that it had taken her that long--she had firmly established that she was not speaking to Han. She could not just forget the rest of the fight! She would have to admit that he had been right, and she refused to concede. She continued to ignore Han.

In return, since she was not talking to him, he stopped talking to her. He had not really been angry, but he was becoming furious at her for her childishness.

Wedge suddenly found himself caught in the middle, with both of them snarling at him, blaming him for the entire thing. He had no place to turn and no place to hide. He spent a lot of time regretting the setting of the trip-wire, which had triggered everyone's anger.

+++

Luke sighed and stretched out as best as he could in the copilot's couch on the bridge of the PALADIN. Captain Ziggbriew was a good teacher--Luke had learned a lot in the past four days--but he was a slave-driver. Luke was standing a watch in three, and Captain Ziggbriew made him re-do five hyper jumps every watch. Also, the way "Cap'n Zig" made him do it, every jump took half an hour or more to figure.

"Cap'n Zig?"

"Yes, boy? What is it?"

"When Han helped us escape from Tatooine he had the jump figured, and laid in, and we jumped, all in less than two minutes. Why does this take me so long? Is it just because I'm not that good yet?"

Captain Zimbriew frowned. "Two minutes? No pre-figuring?"

Luke shrugged. "He knew we wanted to go to Alderaan for a few hours before. He might've done some of the work ahead, I suppose, and just corrected for the exact time. But still--"

"Does he use a standard navi-computer?"

Luke laughed rather scornfully. "I don't think anything on board the FALCON is standard!"

"Hmmm..." the captain was obviously intrigued.

"Hey," Luke sat up straight. "Chewie's on board--let's ask him!"

"Chewie? Who's Chewie?"

"Han's copilot Chewbacca. He's a passenger. Let's go ask him!"

"Hold it." The captain's voice was lazy. "Why's Captain Solo's copilot riding with us?"

Luke grinned. "He met some distant cousins in the militia, and stayed to visit. Wedge Antilles is co-piloting for Han."

"Call him. I think I want to find out."

Luke obeyed eagerly. Then he looked up very innocently.

"Captain? Do you speak Wookiee?"

"No. Why?"

"Cause Chewie's a Wookiee. We're going to need a translator."

"Call Firenle. She's our linguist. If she can't speak it herself she knows who does."

Chewbacca arrived on the bridge a few minutes later.

Luke was delighted to see him. "Hi, Chewie! What's new?"

Chewbacca grinned, gestured behind him and rolled his eyes heavenward.

"Family getting to you, huh?"

The Wookiee nodded. Then he cocked his head over to one side and said, "Nrrrorrorrrr?"

"What did we want to see you about?"

Chewbacca nodded.

"Well, we were just wondering: when Han figures a hyper jump, how does he do it so fast? Over Tatooine we hit hyper in less than two minutes."

Chewbacca shrugged. "Arrreerrrweeeeow."

"We've got a translator coming, Chewie."

The Wookiee nodded again.

Firenle was a lady in every sense of the word, well past middle age, who dressed in styles that had gone out of fashion with the Clone Wars. Her hair was very short and very white, and her eyes were violet

"Hello, Captain. Hello, Luke. Rrror arr, Chewbacca."

"Hello, Firenle."

"Arrrr ror. Rrorrrrorrir eerr, rorri."

"He says this is going to be more fun than arguing about who did what to whose grandmother five hundred years ago," Firenle reported, her eyes snapping with amusement.

The Captain and Luke laughed.

Chewbacca started explaining, and Firenle translated. Occasionally she stopped the copilot to ask for clarification: the Wookiee's language was not suited to technicalities, and his euphemisms for parts of intergal's electronics lexicon were highly obscure.

It eventually became clear that Han had a permanent subroutine in the navi-computer that did most of the arithmetic, and filled in the most basic variables itself. Han just had to give it the exact time and destination. It always knew exactly where it was.

"That," the Captain commented, "is a pretty good computer he must have!"

"It's a Prefsren SX-495 with," she stopped, and looked at Chewbacca in amazement. "How much core?!"

"Rrrrruirrruir."

"Ninety gig."

"Ninety?" Ziggriew gasped. "What the hell does he need that much core for?!"

"I think he's built himself a pretty wonderful little system there," Luke commented. "I know that the computer also controls ship security, and that's tight: handprint ID."

"By the Seventeen," Ziggriew muttered. "I want to talk to that man!"

"You'll get your chance. We're only about eight hours out of Chansie. The FALCON's probably landing now."

"Now?" the captain repeated in disbelief. "She only left a half hour before we did. They can't be at Chanport yet."

Chewbacca and Luke swapped amused grins.

"The engines are about the least standard part of her. Han says she'll do point-five past light speed."

Captain Ziggriew shook his head. "I believe it. I think I'd believe that she thinks for herself!"

"Talk to Han. Maybe she does."

+++

"Coming into Chansie system," Han said tersely. "Deflectors up."

Wedge, much subdued, obeyed without a word. Han stood and reached for a set of switches on a panel over his head.

"Cutting in the sublight engines...now." He hit them all together, and the swirling blackness of hyperspace in the viewport coalesced into stars.

Han sat again and keyed the communicator.

"This is the free trader MILLENNIUM FALCON entering Chansie System. I've never been here before. Somebody like to tell me how to get to Chanport?"

There was a moment of silence. Then the com crackled with a reply.

"MILLENNIUM FALCON, this is Chanport Control." There followed a set of instructions, delivered so briskly and in such an abbreviated and shorthanded a fashion that Wedge was not sure he understood. But Han obviously did. He dove the little freighter unhesitatingly at the second planet, went around her once, then arrowed for the spaceport visible on the triangular southern continent.

"Thanks, Control. MILLENNIUM FALCON setting down in Docking Bay 83. Out."

"Welcome to Chansie, MILLENNIUM FALCON. Enjoy your stay. Chanport Control, out."

The FALCON settled majestically into the bay, and Han shut down all flight systems.

"Chanport. All ashore that's going ashore!" he called backwards into passenger country. The ship's chronometer showed 114 hours elapsed since they had left Yavin.

"When will the PALADIN be in?" Wedge asked hesitantly.

Han shrugged as he left the bridge. "Six or seven hours, I suppose. Less if Luke pushes her; the kid's got promise."

Dodonna heard that, and he grinned. "The balance of your charter fee is in the lounge, Captain. Thank you. Will we be able to get in touch with you again at a later date?"

Han shrugged again. "Ask around. I wander all over the galaxy; wherever I can get a cargo. You can probably track me down eventually."

Dodonna realized that Han was being evasive, and that he was not going to get any more details than that out of the Corellian without asking questions. Somehow, he suspected that Han would be evasive no matter what he asked, so he gave up.

The Rebels gathered up their luggage and left the ship. Han went down first; the passengers were his responsibility until they disembarked. The docking bay was quiet and empty.

"C'mon," he called briefly.

Leia descended next, and Han stepped away from the ramp, heading; for the access plates on the underside of the ship. Seeing her walk away so upright, so icy, so vulnerable, tore at him. She had swiftly become a part of his life, and he was already feeling the pain of parting. He was rather glad they were not on speaking terms: this way she would not try to say good-bye. He did not think he could cope with that. He turned his back on the Rebels, pretending to be busy.

Leia glanced at Han's back, feeling guilty. She owed him so much, and now he was going to go away, and she would never see him again. She noticed again, that he was, as usual, working primarily with his left hand, leaving his gun hand free; the way he stood, the tilt of his head, the curve of his back...

What am I doing, thinking like that?! She was shocked at herself. She had never thought about anybody like that before! Han was wild and free and he made no bones about being a smuggler, and he had hinted tantalizingly at darker crimes. She knew she disapproved of him... but he was always fascinating. And now he was leaving.

However, neither the Corellian nor the Alderaani would unbend enough to break the ice, so Leia followed the High Command out of the docking bay, and Han heard the door close behind them and fought against the emotions he was experiencing.

He was alone. The door had closed behind the last Rebel, shutting them out of Han Solo's world. It was an odd feeling, and it disturbed him so much that he concentrated on the feeling of being alone as opposed to the feeling of being apart from the Rebels. Even Chewbacca was not here, and he was not due in for hours. Han stretched luxuriously, bending backward until he heard his spine crack. Nothing vitally important to do...

Through the sealed door of the docking bay he heard blaster fire and a high-pitched scream that was unmistakably Leia. It cut off suddenly as Han flung the door open, his blaster out and ready.

His first visual impression was one of hordes of storm troopers. But his view narrowed swiftly to one small tableau: Wedge, lying bloody on the ground, and the Princess sprawled over him, obviously stunned.

Acting purely on reflexes honed over a decade of fast and dangerous living, Han killed the storm troopers standing around Leia. Then he shifted his aim and started efficiently depleting their ranks. He noticed only peripherally that Dodonna and Willard and the rest of the Command were lying near Leia, also plainly the victims of stunshock.

The storm troopers scrambled for cover at Han's first shot, and hesitatingly began to return his fire. They were evidently firing more to force him to keep

ducking than trying to actually hit him, for their blaster bolts kept hitting the wall around the door. Finally one of them got a brilliant idea and aimed for the fallen princess.

"Hey, you in there! You surrender right now, or I'll fry that girl!"

Han's reply was a shot aimed at the speaker, but this one was a genius of his kind, and was speaking from behind a wall.

"I mean it, buster! You throw that blaster out here now! Or else!"

The storm trooper punctuated his demand with a blaster bolt that sizzled the floor close enough to singe Leia's gown.

Han swore atrociously, but could not think of any way to avoid it. He tossed the blaster a few feet out of the doorway, easily within reach of a fast dive-and-roll. Then he stepped out, showing open palms.

"All right, you motherless bastards," he grudged them their victory. He was not really surprised when the blue cone of a stunbeam licked out and engulfed him. He never remembered hitting the ground.

+++

Captain Zighbrew knew Chanport well, and only asked Port Control for a landing assignment. The controller was systematic, and the PALADIN was assigned to bay number 85.

Luke was the first person to disembark. He had half-expected Leia to be waiting for him. Instead, the bay area was quite empty. Luke was mystified.

"Where are they?" he wondered aloud.

Chewbacca, following him out, growled.

Captain Zighbrew did the logical thing; neither Luke nor Chewie thought of it. He called Port Control and asked where the Corellian freighter was berthed. Then he led them to the FALCON's berth.

The bay door was ajar, and Chewbacca suddenly bellowed and started running. The two humans looked more closely, and Luke gasped in horror. There was fresh blood on the pavement and the doorjamb.

Chewbacca unlimbered his bowcaster and pushed the door open cautiously. His eyes were for the ship, and he moaned worriedly: her hatch was standing open, and her captain was nowhere to be found.

Luke looked lower. "Wedge!"

The darker youth was lying, very still, at the foot of the stairs to the bay. From the blood trail, he had been injured outside and crawled in here.

Luke rolled him over very gently; he could not yet tell how badly his friend was hurt.

"Wedge?"

But the boy did not respond. Captain Ziggbriew made a fast decision.

"Chewbacca, pick him up. We'll take care of him on board the PALADIN. But you come back here and take possession of the MILLENNIUM FALCON. If any of them are free or can escape, they'll come here."

Chewbacca nodded, and gently scooped the injured pilot up into his arms, Luke followed him, frightened, but hiding it well. Suddenly everything was out of control again.

Luke spent the next few hours waiting nervously outside Sick Bay waiting for the medic to finish working on Wedge. They had to bring him back to consciousness: they had to find out what had happened, even though everyone knew what had to have happened.

It was almost five hours before the Chief Medic, Harlen, came out, looking tired.

"He's awake," Harlen reported wearily, "but he's not very coherent, I'm afraid. The painkillers are pretty powerful."

"That's okay," Luke assured him hurriedly. "As long as he can remember what happened and he can talk about it."

"I think he can handle that. But be gentle and go slow: he feels very guilty."

"Guilty?!" Luke was amazed. "Why?"

Harlen shrugged. "Because he failed to protect the Princess."

"That's ridiculous--he damn near died in her service!" Luke pushed past the doctor and into the room. "Wedge?"

The younger boy was lying very still, looking very pale. There was a bulky dressing, complete with drain, encircling his chest, and an IV was replenishing some of the blood he had lost.

At the sound of his name Wedge opened his eyes. "Hi, Luke," he whispered wearily. "I...I guess I...blew it, huh?"

"You did fine, Wedge. Now you've got to tell me what happened to Leia and the Command."

The door opened, and Captain Ziggbriew came in, just in time to hear Wedge whisper, "Storm troopers... waiting for us... outside... Never had a...a chance... First one... shot me... got yelled at... f'r not using... stun setting... I don't... remember... much else... Princess... she got... stunned. Fell... on top o' me... an' I...I couldn't... move t' help..."

"It's all right, Wedge," Luke's voice was firmly reassuring. "If you had moved they would have killed you, and we would never have known for sure what happened."

Wedge frowned in confusion. "Han... Han stayed in the docking bay. Did they get... him... too? He wasn't... with... us..."

That puzzled Luke. "Han didn't go with you?"

Wedge shook his head weakly. "Him... an'... th' Princess... they fought... the whole... trip..."

"Oh, God," Captain Ziggbriew breathed reverently. Then he turned businesslike. "You go to sleep, Wedge. We'll take care of everything, you just relax and get better."

"Yessir," he replied sleepily.

Captain Ziggbriew and Luke left quietly.

"They must have come into the docking bay to make sure they had everyone, and captured Han then," Luke extrapolated confidently. "He would never have left the FALCON unsealed if he had a choice."

Captain Ziggbriew entertained some darker suspicions, but he knew better than to voice such things in front of Luke

+++

Leia woke up slowly, primarily aware of the familiar pain of a stunblast. She looked up dazedly, and was unsurprised to find herself in a cell. It was a rather primitive arrangement, too: metal bars, and a real cot instead of the steel cube she had become accustomed to on board the DEATH STAR. There was a video monitor mounted in the wall.

She sat up slowly and swung her feet off the edge to sit on the edge of the cot. Her foot struck something, and she looked down, curious.

"Han!"

The Corellian lay sprawled on the floor, quite unconscious, where he had apparently been thrown. His gunbelt was gone, but he seemed to be unhurt.

"Princess?" A voice called from outside her cell.

She looked up and saw Generals Dodonna and Willard in the cell across the hall.

"Hi. Did they get everyone?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so," Dodonna admitted. "Even Captain Solo. But not Wedge. I guess they killed him."

Leia swallowed her grief; if he was dead he was probably better off than they were. "Why did they arrest Han?" she asked. "He wasn't with us..." She was rather confused, and the blinding headache of a stunblast hangover did not make thinking any easier.

"We heard the storm troopers' report. It seems he came out of the docking bay and started shooting. He got eight of them before they forced him to surrender," Dodonna explained happily.

"How?" Leia wanted to know. "He's a singularly uncoercible man."

The General smiled. "They threatened to kill you."

Leia smiled slowly. "For that, I'll knight him. Can you imagine how he'll squirm!"

The General laughed. Commander Willard did not, but chuckles could be heard from neighboring cells, where the rest of the High Command were imprisoned.

Then, abruptly, Dodonna sobered.

"They know who we are, just not which is which. Well, they are very sure. But they do not suspect your true identity, as far as we can tell, and they have no idea who he may be," he pointed toward Han with his chin, "so I suggest, if he'll go along with it, that you are his sister. If they connect you with him and the ship rather than us...? Maybe they'll leave you alone."

"And," Willard interjected darkly, "if you're his sister he won't be able to touch you. Damn those Imperials for putting him in there with you!"

Leia stared directly at him. "Commander Willard, Han may be a reluctant hero, but you have no right to cast aspersions on his honor!"

"I beg Your Highness's pardon," Willard said stiffly.

"Don't beg," she retorted, obviously still angry, "you're old enough to steal."

The General was shocked, but ascribed her new vocabulary to Corellian contamination.

The budding argument was cut off when Han moaned and rolled over.

Leia turned back to face him, a ready smile lighting her face. "Hi, Han. Does your head hurt?"

"Leia?" He looked up and focused on her.

"Uh-uh. I hear you made 'em pay for us."

He stood up and went to stand by the door. "Yeah. I got a few storm troopers." He hung his hands outside the bars, looking up and down the corridor.

"Thank you," she said sincerely. "I'm sorry I got you caught, Han."

Her tone made it clear that she knew, and so Han did not try to deny it. "I should've stayed with the ship."

"Why didn't you?"

"I heard you scream."

Leia just stared at him. He seemed to be waiting for her to say something, and rather dreading the prospect. She did not think he had meant to say that.

"Thank you, Han." She could not bring herself to tease him for it, and that surprised him nearly as much as it did her. To cover her confusion she explained Dodonna's little scheme, and he agreed rather listlessly.

He seemed to be quite depressed, and Leia thought she might know why. He was totally helpless to do anything for her or for himself, and it was frustrating. He spent hours pacing their cell like the caged tiger he was. Conversation was difficult; he tended to snarl.

Then an Imperial officer came strutting down the corridor and stopped in front of their cell.

"All right. Vacation's over."

Dodonna and Willard stood up slowly. Han placed himself unobtrusively between the Imperial and Leia. She stayed behind him, understanding his motivation.

The two storm troopers flanking the officer stood with their weapons at high port, their attention focused, primarily, on the cell containing the Corellian pirate and the Alderaani princess.

"This one," the officer announced to the cell block at large, indicating Han, "is a convicted murderer. The sentence is death."

Leia gasped in horror.

Han snorted; he was not surprised. "Imperial justice. Fast, and you don't clutter the proceedings with anything as messy as a defense."

"No defense is possible," the officer replied without hesitation. "Now, I am reliably informed that all of you are high-ranking Rebel officials. I don't know which of you is Alliance Supreme Commander General Dodonna, but I know one of you is.

"Interrogation can be rather... strenuous. You are all old men. If my interrogators are just a tad overeager, I '11 have several dead old men on my hands, but no information. Therefore, for the sake of argument, I will use this one as an example." Again, he indicated Han. "As you are all aware, murder of Imperial military personnel in the performance of their duty is a capital offense. Usually the sentence is carried out by firing squad. However, because of the unique situation with which I am faced, his death will be a little more... imaginative, shall we say?

"You will all be able to watch. I will activate the video system in your cells. Take him out of there." The last sentence was aimed at the guards, who moved forward decisively.

The storm troopers obviously knew how he had been captured: one trained his blaster on Han, the other his on Leia. The officer unlocked the cell door.

"Out," he ordered briskly.

Moving very slowly, Han did as he was told, judging distances, trying to decide if now was a good time to make a break. *No...I better not. I got myself caught trying to help her; no point in getting her killed, now. How'd I ever explain that to Luke?*

Leia watched, wide-eyed, as they handcuffed a completely passive--and impassive Han Solo. The officer held up his hand and the storm troopers stopped.

"He dies first. After him, the girl. Then I will start on the strongest of you men. But, eventually, I will find out everything I want to know."

Han spoke up then, for the first time. "You leave my sister alone, you slimy little son of a bitch."

The officer only waited until Han finished and then waved the storm troopers on. They hustled Han out roughly. He made no attempt to fight, but walked, back straight as a rod, looking more military than the soldiers he walked between.

[A Trip to Chansie: Part 2](#)

[Back To Index](#)