



Honor Among Thieves: Star Wars Legends

By James S.A. Corey

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When the Empire threatens the galaxy's new hope, will Han, Luke, and Leia become its last chance?

When the mission is to extract a high-level rebel spy from the very heart of the Empire, Leia Organa knows the best man for the job is Han Solo—something the princess and the smuggler can finally agree on. After all, for a guy who broke into an Imperial cell block and helped destroy the Death Star, the assignment sounds simple enough.

But when Han locates the brash rebel agent, Scarlet Hark, she's determined to stay behind enemy lines. A pirate plans to sell a cache of stolen secrets that the Empire would destroy entire worlds to protect—including the planet where Leia is currently meeting with rebel sympathizers. Scarlet wants to track down the thief and steal the bounty herself, and Han has no choice but to go along if he's to keep everyone involved from getting themselves killed. From teeming city streets to a lethal jungle to a trap-filled alien temple, Han, Chewbacca, Leia, and their daring new comrade confront one ambush, double cross, and firestorm after another as they try to keep crucial intel out of Imperial hands.

But even with the crack support of Luke Skywalker's x-wing squadron, the Alliance heroes may be hopelessly outgunned in their final battle for the highest of stakes: the power to liberate the galaxy from tyranny or ensure the Empire's reign of darkness forever.

Praise for *Honor Among Thieves*

“If you like Han Solo . . . you won’t want to miss *Honor Among Thieves*. . . . A novel that flies by quicker than the *Millennium Falcon* on the Kessel Run.”—*Lightsaber Rattling*

“A fast-paced romp.”—***Big Shiny Robot***

“*Honor Among Thieves* felt very ‘vintage.’ . . . It nailed the classic *Star Wars* vibe in a way I haven’t experienced in a long time.”—***Making Star Wars***

“One of the best *Star Wars* novels I’ve ever read.”—***Knights’ Archive***

“Absolutely [captures] the magic of *Star Wars* and the era it’s aiming for.”—***Jedi News (UK)***

“[The] most pleasurable ‘Classic Trilogy’ *Star Wars* reading in a long time . . . With masterful pacing and witty, descriptive dialogue, [*Honor Among Thieves* is] fun to read from start to finish. Adding a complexity of thought and action to a classic character like Han will satisfy those looking to indulge a deeper side.”—***TheForce.net***

“James S. A. Corey manages to tell a delightful tale filled with a fun plot, entertaining characters, and great descriptions that draw you in and bring the world to life. Fans of all sorts are sure to enjoy *Empire and Rebellion: Honor Among Thieves*.”—***EUCantina.net***

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Editorial Review

Review

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“Han’s voice can be rather tricky for writers to truly nail but it’s absolutely spot on here. Leia’s characterization has depth to it that not every writer gets and I particularly enjoyed watching Han’s slow realization that he’s not quite as different from the Rebels as he might have previously thought. Even Luke and Wedge who admittedly don’t get tons of page time, give off the right character vibes especially given the time period. . . . Strong characterization and an enjoyable storyline put the latest Expanded Universe addition solidly in the ‘give it a read’ category for just about everyone interested.”—**Tosche Station**

“This is a book that needs only knowledge of the movies to follow. If you’re a fan of Han Solo, or Princess Leia, or just space adventures in general, get on it.”—**Fantasy Review Barn**

About the Author

James S. A. Corey is the pen name used by collaborators Daniel Abraham and Ty Franck. Under that name, they have written *Leviathan Wakes*, *Caliban’s War*, *Abaddon’s Gate*, and *Cibola Burn*.

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Corey: STAR WARS EMPIRE AND REBELLION HONOR AMONG THIEVES

CHAPTER One

From the Imperial Core to the outflung stars of the Rim, the galaxy teemed with life. Planets, moons, asteroid bases, and space stations peopled with a thousand different species, all of them busy with the great

ambitions of the powerful and also with the mundane problems of getting through their days, the ambitions of the Emperor all the way down to where to eat the next meal. Or whether there would be a next meal. Each city and town and station and ship had its own histories and secrets, hopes and fears and half-articulated dreams.

But for every circle of light—every star, every planet, every beacon and outpost—there was vastly more darkness. The space between stars was and always would be unimaginably huge, and the mysteries that it hid would never be wholly discovered. One bad jump was all it took for a ship to be lost. Unless there was a way to reach out for help, to say Here I am. Come find me, an escape pod or a ship or a fleet could vanish into the places between places that even light took a lifetime to reach.

And so a rendezvous point could be the size of a solar system, and the rebel fleet could still hide there like a flake in a snowstorm. Hundreds of ships, from cobbled-together, plasma-scorched cruisers and thirdhand battleships to X- and Y-wings and everything in between. They flew through space together silently, drifting closer in or farther apart as the need arose. Repair droids crawled over the skins of the ships, welding back together the wounds of their last battles, sure in the knowledge that they were the needle in the Empire's haystack.

Their greatest danger wasn't the enemy, but inaction. And the ways a certain kind of man coped with it.

"I wasn't cheating," Han Solo said as Chewbacca bent to pass through the door in the bulkhead. "I was playing better than they were."

The Wookiee growled.

"That's how I was playing better. It's not against the rules. Besides, what are they going to buy with their money out here?"

A dozen fighter pilots marching past in dirty orange-and-white uniforms saluted them. Han nodded to each one as he passed. They were an ugly bunch: middle-aged men who should have been back home on a planet somewhere spending too much time at the neighborhood bar and weedy boys still looking forward to their first wispy mustaches. Warriors for freedom, and terrible sabacc players.

Chewbacca let out a long, low groan.

"You wouldn't," Han said.

Chewbacca's blue eyes met his, and the Wookiee's silence was more eloquent than anything he might have said aloud.

"Fine," Han retorted. "But it's coming out of your cut. I don't know when you went soft on me."

"Han!"

Luke Skywalker came jogging down a side corridor, his helmet under his arm. Two droids followed him: the squat, cylindrical R2-D2 rolling along, chirping and squealing; and the tall, golden C-3PO trotting along at the back, waving gold-chrome hands as if gesticulating in response to some unheard conversation. The kid's face was flushed and his hair was dark with sweat, but he was grinning as if he'd just won something.

“Hey,” Han said. “Just get back from maneuvers?”

“Yep. These guys are great. You should have seen the tight spin and recover they showed us. I could have stayed out there for hours, but Leia called me back in for some kind of emergency meeting.”

“Her Worshipfulness called the meeting?” Han asked as they turned down the main access corridor together. The smell of welding torches and coolant hung in the air. Everything about the Rebel Alliance smelled like a repair bay. “I thought she was off to her big conference on Kiamurr.”

“She was supposed to be. I guess she postponed leaving.”

The little R2 droid squealed, and Han turned to it. “What’s that, Artoo?”

C-3PO, catching up and giving a good impression of leaning forward to catch his breath even though he didn’t have lungs, translated: “He’s saying that she’s postponed her departure twice. It’s made a terrible shambles of the landing docks.”

“Well, that’s not good,” Han said. “Anything that keeps her from sitting around a big table deciding the future of the galaxy . . . I mean, that’s her favorite thing to do.”

“You know that’s not true,” Luke said, making room in the passageway for a bronze-colored droid that looked as if it had barely crawled out of the trash heap. “I don’t know why you don’t like her more.”

“I like her fine.”

“You’re always cutting her down, though. The Alliance needs good politicians and organizers.”

“You can’t have a government without a tax collector. Just because we’d both like it better if the Emperor wasn’t in charge, it doesn’t make me and her the same person.”

Luke shook his head. The sweat was starting to dry, and his hair was getting some of its sandy color back.

“I think you two are more alike than you pretend.”

Han laughed despite himself. “You’re an optimist, kid.”

When they reached the entrance to the command center, Luke sent the droids on, R2-D2 whistling and squeaking and C-3PO acting annoyed. The command center had taken a direct hit in the fighting at Yavin, and the reconstruction efforts still showed. New panels, blinding in their whiteness, covered most of one wall where the old ones had been shattered by the blast. Where the replacements ended, the old panels seemed even darker by contrast. The head-high displays marked the positions of the ships in the fleet and the fleet in the emptiness of the rendezvous point, the status of repair crews, the signals from the sensor arrays, and half a dozen other streams of information. None of the stations was staffed. The data spooled out into the air, ignored.

Leia stood at the front of the room, the bright repair work and grimy original walls seeming to come together in her. Her dress was black with embroidery of gold and bronze, her hair a soft spill gathered at the nape of her neck in a style that made her seem both more mature and more powerful than had the side buns she’d worn on the Death Star. From what Han had heard around the fleet, losing Alderaan had made her older and

harder. And as much as he hated to admit it, she wore the tragedy well.

The man she was talking to—Colonel Harcen—had his back to them, but his voice carried just fine. “With respect, though, you have to see that not all allies are equal. Some of the factions that are going to be on Kiamurr, the Alliance would be better off without.”

“I understand your concerns, Colonel,” Leia said in a tone that didn’t sound particularly understanding. “I think we can agree, though, that the Alliance isn’t in a position to turn away whatever help we can get. The Battle of Yavin was a victory, but—”

Harcen raised a palm, interrupting her. He was an idiot, Han thought. “There are already some people who feel that we have become too lax in the sorts of people we’re allowing into our ranks. In order to gain respect, we must be free of undesirable elements.”

“I agree,” Han said. Colonel Harcen jumped like a poked cat. “You’ve got to keep the scum out.”

“Captain Solo,” Harcen said. “I didn’t see you there. I hope I gave no offense.”

“No. Of course not,” Han said, smiling insincerely. “I mean, you weren’t talking about me, were you?”

“Everyone is very aware of the service you’ve done for the Alliance.”

“Exactly. So there’s no reason you’d have been talking about me.”

Harcen flushed red and made a small, formal bow. “I was not talking about you, Captain Solo.”

Han sat at one of the empty stations, stretching his arms out as if he were in a cantina with a group of old friends. It might have been an illusion, but he thought he saw a flicker of a smile on Leia’s lips.

“Then there’s no offense taken,” he said.

Harcen turned to go, his shoulders back and his head held high. Chewbacca took a fraction of a second longer than strictly needed to step out of the man’s way. Luke leaned against one of the displays, his weight warping it enough to send little sprays of false color through the lines and curves.

When Harcen was gone, Leia sighed. “Thank you all for coming on short notice. I’m sorry I had to pull you off the training exercises, Luke.”

“It’s all right.”

“I was in a sabacc game,” Han said.

“I’m not sorry I pulled you out of that.”

“I was winning.”

Chewbacca chuffed and crossed his arms. Leia’s expression softened a degree. “I was supposed to leave ten standard hours ago,” she said, “and I can’t stay much longer. We’ve had some unexpected developments, and I need to get you up to speed.”

“What’s going on?” Luke asked.

“We aren’t going to be able to use the preliminary base in Targarth system,” she said. “We’ve had positive identification of Imperial probes.”

The silence only lasted a breath, but it carried a full load of disappointment.

“Not again,” Luke said.

“Again.” Leia crossed her arms. “We’re looking at alternatives, but until we get something, construction and dry-dock plans are all being put on hold.”

“Vader’s really going all-out to find you people,” Han said. “What are your backup plans?”

“We’re looking at Cerroban, Aestilan, and Hoth,” Leia told him.

“That’s the bottom of the barrel,” Han said.

For a second, he thought she was going to fight, but instead she only looked defeated. He knew as well as she did that the secret rebel base was going to be critical. Without a base, some kinds of repair, manufacturing, and training work just couldn’t be done, and the Empire knew that, too. But Cerroban was a waterless, airless lump of stone hardly better than the rendezvous point, and one that was pounded by asteroids on a regular basis. Aestilan had air and water, but rock worms had turned the planetary mantle so fragile that there were jokes about digging tunnels just by jumping up and down. And Hoth was an ice ball with an equatorial zone that only barely stayed warm enough to sustain human life, and then only when the sun was up.

Leia stepped to one of the displays, shifting the image with a flicker of her fingers. A map of the galaxy appeared, the immensity of a thousand million suns disguised by the fitting of it all onto the same screen.

“There is another possibility,” she said. “The Seymarti system is near the major space lanes. There’s some evidence that there was sentient life on it at some point, but our probes don’t show anything now. It may be the place we’re looking for.”

“That’s a terrible idea,” Han said. “You don’t want to do that.”

“Why not?” Luke asked.

“Ships get lost in Seymarti,” Han said. “A lot of ships. They make the jump to hyperspace, and they don’t come back out.”

“What happens to them?”

“No one knows. Something that close to the lanes without an Imperial garrison on it can be mighty appealing to someone who needs a convenient place to not get found, but everyone I know still steers clear of that place. Nobody goes there.”

Luke patted his helmet with one thoughtful hand. “But if nobody goes there, how can a lot of ships get lost?”

Han scowled. "I'm just saying the place has a bad reputation."

"The science teams think there may be some kind of spatial anomaly that throws off sensor readings," Leia said. "If that's true, and we can find a way to navigate it ourselves, Seymarti may be our best hope for avoiding Imperial notice. As soon as Wedge Antilles is back from patrol, he's going to put together an escort force for the survey ships."

"I'd like to go with him," Luke said.

"We talked about that," Leia said. "Wedge thought it would be a good chance for you to get some practice. He's requested you as his second in command."

Luke's smile was so bright, Han could have read by it. "Absolutely," the kid said.

The communications panel beside Leia chimed. "Ma'am, we've kept the engines hot, but if we don't leave soon, we're going to have to recalibrate the jump. Do you want me to reschedule your meetings again?"

"No. I'll be right there," she said, and turned the connection off with an audible click.

Han leaned forward. "It's all right, I see how I fit in here," he said. "The weapons run from Minoth to Hendrix is off. That's not a big deal. I'll just bring the guns here instead. Unless you want the Falcon to go along with the kid here."

"Actually, that's not why I wanted to talk with you," Leia said. "Something else happened. Two years ago, we placed an agent at the edge of Imperial space. The intelligence we've gotten since then has been some of the most valuable we've seen, but the reports stopped seven months ago. We assumed the worst. And then yesterday, we got a retrieval code. From the Saavin system. Cioran."

"That's not the edge of Imperial space," Han said. "That's the middle of it."

Chewbacca growled and moaned.

"It's not what I would have picked, either," Leia said. "There was no information with it. No context, no report. We don't know what happened between the last contact and now. We just got the signal that we should send a ship."

"Oh," Han said with a slowly widening grin. "No, it's all right. I get it. I absolutely understand. You've got this important guy trapped in enemy territory, and you need to get him out. Only with the Empire already swarming like a hive of Bacian blood hornets, you can't risk using anyone but the best. That about right?"

"I wouldn't put it that way, but it's in the neighborhood of right, yes," Leia said. "The risks are high. I won't order anyone to take the assignment. We can make it worth your time if you're willing to do it."

"You don't have to order us, does she, Chewie? All you have to do is ask, and we're on the job."

Leia's gaze softened a little. "Will you do this, then? For the Alliance?"

Han went on as if she hadn't spoken. "Just say please and we'll get the Millennium Falcon warmed up, skin out of here, grab your guy, and be back before you know it. Nothing to it."

Leia's expression went stony. "Please."

Han scratched his eyebrow. "Can I have a little time to think about it?"

The Wookiee made a low but rising howl and lifted his arms impatiently.

"Thank you, Chewie," Leia said. "There's also a real possibility that the whole operation was compromised and the retrieval code is bait in a trap. When you make your approach, you'll need to be very careful."

"Always am," Han said, and Luke coughed. "What?" Han demanded.

"You're always careful?"

"I'm always careful enough."

"Your first objective is to make the connection and complete the retrieval," Leia said. "If you can't do that, find out as much as you can about what happened and whether any of our people are in danger. But if you smell a trap, get out. If we've lost her, we've lost her. We don't want to sacrifice anyone else."

"?'Her'?"

Leia touched the display controls again, and the image shifted. A green security warning flooded it, and she keyed in the override. A woman's face filled the screen. High cheekbones, dark eyes and hair, V-shaped chin, and a mouth that seemed on the verge of smiling. If Han had seen her in a city, he'd have looked twice, but not because she was suspicious. The data field beside the picture listed a life history too complex to take in at a glance. The name field read: scarlet hark.

"Don't get in over your head," Leia said.

Users Review

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