

[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.

Bespin Breakout

by [Carolyn Golledge](#)

Dazed, sick with horror, Lando Calrissian leaned against the clean white wall of one of Cloud City's gleaming corridors. He could not make himself believe any of this day was real. Forced to betray his good friend, Han Solo, that hideous dinner with Vader, the look of utter shock and hurt in Solo's eyes, then the nightmare sounds of agony as Vader had had him tortured. Lando had thought it couldn't possibly get any worse than that.

But it had, and with a vengeance. Solo's torture had been horrific, but he'd survived, was alive and kicking. Well, punching at least! Lando managed a wry smile as he rubbed his jaw. The smile faded to anguish as Vader's recent words echoed again in his mind.

"We will test it first -- on Captain Solo."

This time Han almost certainly would not survive.

He and Lando had once been firm friends, covered each other's backs through many a battle while daring death to try to claim them. In those exuberant, youthful days, death had seemed part of the glory, a small price to pay for the adrenaline-rush. Blood pounding with the thrill of adventure, they'd been partners as they made one smuggling run after another, taunting the Corporate Sector gunships. That was how they wanted to die, free among the stars, hurling defiant battle cries with their last breath.

Not like this. Led to the slaughter like an animal to sacrifice or a criminal to execution, this was no way for a man like Solo to die, for Lando's good friend to

die. Slaughtered because he'd been betrayed by his 'buddy'. Lando's stomach heaved and he swallowed hard. He had a city to protect; all those lives were his responsibility. But how big a price must he pay? Surely this was too much. There had to be an alternative.

"Sir?" Lobot's electronic voice sounded in Lando's earspeakers. "Are you unwell?"

"No, no." He waved off his aide's concern, but Lobot's dark eyes continued to watch him carefully. "Yes," he admitted, "I do feel sick. Did you hear what that animal said in there?" He waved a hand behind him at the carbon freeze chamber.

"Animal, sir?" Lobot turned and looked.

"Vader!" Lando snarled.

"Yes, I see. It was never meant for use on humans. You fear for your friend, Solo?"

Lando nodded. "Then your illness has no cure." Lando straightened, his shoulders squaring as he pushed himself away from the wall. Sudden inspiration gave him hope. "I think I just found one!"

"Sir?" Lobot followed, frowning then said, "You cannot mean to defy Lord Vader?"

"Not openly, no. But listen, Lobot, accidents happen. Remember that power fault we had in sector Seven-Dee last month?"

"Terrible, sir. I could not forget. Several workers were sucked out into the atmosphere to their deaths when..."

"Exactly!" Lando interrupted, amazed to find he was smiling as he slapped his aide's shoulder. "It happened once, it can happen again." He lowered his voice as he concluded, "In the Detention Area." :

"My friend," Solo repeated disgustedly, then flinched as he touched his fingers to the sore spot at the base of his skull, "couldn't even give me a fair fight! Had to call in his henchmen!"

Watching as Solo paced their tiny cell, Leia felt compelled to defend the truth. "He didn't ask them to intervene, Han, and he did call them off immediately."

"Oh, right," Solo scowled, turning to face her. "I'm so grateful. I wonder what he's got planned for us today. Yesterday was so much fun. Who knows, maybe he'll come down here and invite us to dinner again."

Chewbacca rumbled some comment and patted his belly. Solo gaped at him, disbelievingly, then said, "Always thinking with your stomach. That's gonna get you into real trouble some day, Furball."

Leia had to smile over the exchange. "And this isn't real trouble I suppose?" she said ruefully. Solo turned, set to argue. No doubt his headache wasn't making his mood any better. Reading her expression he shrugged and gave her a wry smile.

"Yeah, some food would be nice. Maybe they're planning on starving us into submission." He glared up at the spy-eye mounted high in a corner of the cell. "You guys ever heard of breakfast?!"

As if in answer to his question, there was a clattering noise beyond the cell wall. Then came the loud screeching of alarms. "What the hell?" Solo muttered. Both he and Chewbacca went to the outer wall and put their ears to the metal. "Well, I'll be damned!" Solo muttered.

Leia watched impatiently for a moment, then asked, "What is it?"

Solo merely waved off her question, intent on his eavesdropping. Leia let out an exasperated breath, then got to her feet to join them. The outer door suddenly hissed open and a gust of ice-cold, foggy air rushed in, tearing Corellian and Wookiee away from the wall and drawing a startled yelp from Leia as she was thrown back against the metal bunk.

"Grab hold," Solo yelled to her, himself anchored as Chewbacca clamped one giant hand -about a stanchion and the other about Solo's arm.

Leia was being plastered against the rear wall, held tight by the force of the wind. She didn't need to grab hold of anything. But then, almost too late, she saw the reason for Solo's warning. A loud, whining roar reverberated through the Detention Area and there were various sounds of metal and plas-steel under stress. The wind-storm suddenly reversed direction, sucking up everything in its wake. The roar increased in pitch, higher and higher, and beneath that came the crashing as anything not bolted down was torn free. Somewhere within Cloud City there had been an explosion that had caused part of the outer hull to give way.

Leia screamed as her feet were dragged out from beneath her. She grabbed the edge of the bunk, but it was slick and smooth and gave no purchase. The maelstrom tugged harder and pulled her free. Just as she would have been swept out the door, Solo snagged her. His fingers dug painfully tight into Leia's upper arm but she only prayed that he would not let go. She managed to twist about and grab hold of his belt with her free hand and the wind held her parallel to the deck, tearing her hair free of its braids.

Then, as abruptly as it had begun, the storm ended. Leia fell to the deck with a thud and silence reigned supreme. Even the alarms ceased.

"You okay?" Solo bent down to her.

She nodded and got to her feet with the aid of his helping hand. Like Solo she too could do no more for the moment then stare in open mouthed astonishment. The cell door remained open and there were no stormtroopers anywhere in sight.

"Let's get the hell outa here," Solo said.

Leia nodded agreement and followed after him adding, "Or as far as we can before we come up against a sealed blast door."

Solo spared her a glance. "Hey, at least we're out that hole. All we gotta do is find some weapons. They won't take us again without a fight."

Chewbacca bellowed such fierce agreement that Leia flinched before she said, "Right, but where? Take a look, anything that wasn't bolted down is gone."

"Including the troopers," Solo panted, charging toward the corridor end. "Such a shame." He halted, back flat to the wall, edged to the corridor junction, and peered round. "Clear," he called, waving them closer. Then began another race down another gloomily lit corridor where only the red emergency lights were still working.

"Do you have any idea where you're going?" Leia asked breathlessly when they halted at the next -comer.

"As if there was any doubt." He turned and winked down at her. "I always know where I'm going." Chewbacca gave a mournful growl as he overheard. Solo gave his partner a wounded look. "I tell ya the Falcon's in this direction..." he added under his breath, "...somewhere. I've gotta find a U-shaft."

"Is tthat one over there?" Leia indicated the end of a short corridor to their right. Solo made to check it, and she added, "It's sealed. They all will be after a blast like that."

Solo stared at her, nodded grim agreement, and ran a hand through his disarrayed hair as he tried to think of an alternative. "There's gotta be some other access."

Chewbacca rumbled same comment, and Solo said irritably, "I know that!"

"What?" Leia questioned.

"Ah, he says if there were any open route it'd be bleeding air and we'd spot it with no trouble."

"In other words," Leia summarized, "our cell just got a little larger."

Solo shook his head. "I ain't buying that. There's gotta be a way."

Leia looked around, shrugged and said, "Okay, let's check the cross corridors. Maybe we'll find something useful."

"Hoping for more garbage mashers, your Worship?" Solo grinned.

She smiled back at him. "Whatever works."

"Hey, wait!" Solo stopped dead. "That's it!"

"Not quite," Leia told him. "Cloud City doesn't have mashers. The garbage is dumped down and out into the atmosphere. It's a very long drop."

"No problem." Solo waved away her concern. "We can anchor ourselves before we get to the bottom."

Leia only looked all the more skeptical. "With what?"

"With some of the finest climbing equipment in this or any other galaxy," Solo declared proudly. He turned toward Chewbacca. "Show her."

Holding out both immensely long, strong arms the Wookiee displayed his hands. Then with a sudden flicking motion he unsheathed the powerful curved claws at the tip of each finger. Leia's eyes widened in awe and hope.

"We hang on, he does all the work," Solo finished cheerfully. "Come on, you're the expert." He indicated Leia should precede him down the corridor. "Find us a garbage intake."

Having watched the trio's progress in secret until the moment they disappeared into a garbage chute, Lando Calrissian breathed a huge sigh of relief when he spotted them again some time later. None of Vader's stormtroopers were expecting the escapees to appear from outside the city. Climbing its exterior, Chewbacca's giant frame trembled with the strain as he finally clambered over the docking bay rim and off-loaded his clinging cargo. Solo grinned from ear to ear as he turned and spotted his beloved Falcon waiting for him. Chewbacca steadied a somewhat white-faced princess as Solo returned to help her to her feet. He gave her an exuberant kiss, seeming surprised when, rather than push him away, she responded in kind. The embrace was passionate but hurried. Chewbacca barked a warning.

Lando cursed, watching as the access doors came open and a squad of stormtroopers rushed onto the walkway, their laser rifles firing. Lobot had not quite managed to keep Vader's technicians from re-opening that particular vid-channel. Unarmed, Solo could only try to distract the troopers as he covered the princess and the Wookiee's retreat toward the Falcon's ramp.

"No, Han, no!" Lando pleaded helplessly. Solo's plan was working—he'd kept the laser fire concentrated on him, his friends were safe. But now he had fallen, was lying inert on the walkway, a pool of blood spreading from beneath him. With an outraged roar, Chewbacca reappeared, bowcaster at the ready, determined to rescue his fallen partner.

"No, no," Lando groaned. "Not like this. It's not supposed to be like this!" Leia too had re-emerged from the Falcon. The Wookiee's defiant war-cries became an agonized howl as a laser bolt seared across his flank, setting flame to his russet fur.

"No!" Lando cried in anguish, "you're supposed to be safe! All of you safe!"

Again, it hadn't gone as he planned, as he wished, as he dreamed.

For Lando Calrissian was not watching from high on a Bespin city balcony but rather was tossing and moaning in his sleep on a pallet on the stone floor of Jabba the Hutt's fortress. Not far away, just across the room, Han Solo too may have been dreaming, encased in carbonite and held in hibernation. His frozen body could have been watching his former friend's tormented sleep. Solo's carbon-frozen hands reached out as if trying desperately to touch, to make contact with someone who could help him. It was those hands and that face, twisted into an awful grimace of a final moment's agony, that haunted Calrissian every waking hour and triggered his dreams. Dreams that began the same, filled with dozens of alternate escape planes, fantasies conjured in the daylight, schemes he wished he had thought of months ago when they may have had a chance of success.

Yet asleep, each and every fantasy turned to nightmare. Each and all ended the same.

Chewbacca's giant hands closed fraction by fraction, squeezing, denying Lando air, so slowly displaying a control of powerful muscles that Calrissian could never have credited to the Wookiee.

"There's still a chance to save Han!" Lando tried frantically to say, almost as afraid for the Corellian as he was for himself. But Chewbacca would have none of his excuses. The impossibly strong fingers dug deeper, and Lando's sight blurred, went black. His only awareness was the terrible sound of hatred in the Wookiee's snarls.

Drenched in sweat, Lando gasped, came awake, and sat up suddenly. He groaned anew as he remembered where he was, that there was still no help to be had for his tormented, imprisoned friend. Lando could swear he could still hear Chewbacca's enraged growls. Would these nightmares never leave him be? Wasn't it enough that he suffered an agony of guilt and of never-ending self-recriminations, through every stifling day, guarding Solo's frozen form, protecting him as best he could?

Chewbacca's snarls came again, echoing from the entry tunnel that led down a winding staircase and into Jabba's immense audience chamber.

Lando blinked, turned and looked. Could it be? And then-he saw them. A tiny figure concealed in bounty hunter attire leading a chained, Wookiee.. Lando's knees trembled, his heart pounding with both relief and anxiety. Finally the longed-for day was at hand! At last the nightmares would end. For this day would see freedom for them all -- in life or in death.

THE END

[Back To Index](#)