

The Hutt Gambit (Star Wars: The Han Solo Trilogy, Vol. 2)

By A.C. Crispin

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Here is the second novel in the blockbuster new trilogy that reveals the never-before-told story of the young Han Solo. Set before the Star Wars(r) movie adventures, these books chronicle the coming-of-age of the galaxy's most famous con man, smuggler and thief.

Solo is now a fugitive from the Imperial Navy. But he has made a valuable friend in a former Wookiee slave named Chewbacca, who has sworn Han a life debt. Han will need all the help he can get. For the Ylesian Hutts have dispatched the dreaded bounty hunter Boba Fett to track down the man who already outsmarted them once. But Han and Chewie find themselves in even bigger trouble when they agree to lend their services to the crime lords Jiliac and Jabba the Hutt. Suddenly the two smugglers are thrust into the middle of a battle between the might of the Empire and the treachery of their outlaw allies...a battle where even victory means death!

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap
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Han Solo, former Imperial officer, sat despondently at a sticky table in a dingy bar on Devaron, sipping an inferior Alderaanian ale and wishing he were alone. Not that he minded the other denizens of the bar--horned Devish males and furry Devish females, plus a smattering of nonhumans from other worlds. Han was used to aliens; he'd grown up with them aboard *Trader's Luck,* a large trading ship that wandered the spacelanes of the galaxy. By the time he was ten, Han had been able to speak and understand half a dozen nonhuman languages.

No, it wasn't the aliens around him. It was the alien *beside* him. Han took a swig of his ale, grimaced at the sour taste, then glanced sidelong at the cause of all his troubles. The huge, hairy being gazed back at him with concerned blue eyes. Han sighed heavily. *If only he'd go home!* But the Wookiee--Chew-something--utterly refused to go home to Kashyyyk, despite Han's repeated urging. The alien claimed he owed something called a "life debt" to former Imperial Lieutenant Han Solo.

Life debt . . . great. Just what I need, Han thought bitterly. *A big furry nursemaid trailing after me, giving me advice, fussing over me if I drink too much, telling me he's gonna take care of me. Great. Just great.*

Han scowled into his ale, and the pale, watery brew reflected his countenance back at him, distorting his features until he appeared nearly as alien as the Wookiee. What *was* his name? Chew-something. The Wookiee had told him, but Han wasn't good at pronouncing Wookiee, even though he understood it perfectly.

Besides, he didn't *want* to learn this particular Wookiee's name. If he learned his name, he'd likely never get rid of his hairy shadow.

Han rubbed a hand over his face blearily, feeling several days' stubble. Ever since he'd been kicked out of the service, he kept forgetting to shave. When he'd been a cadet, then a junior lieutenant, then a full lieutenant, he'd been meticulous with his grooming, the way an officer and a gentleman should be . . . but now . . . what difference did it make?

Han raised his glass in a slightly unsteady hand and gulped the sour ale. He put the empty tankard down, and glanced around the bar for the server. *Need another drink. One more, and I'll feel much better. Just one*

more . . .

The Wookiee moaned quietly. Han's scowl deepened. "Keep your opinions to yourself, hairball," he snarled. "I'll know when I've had enough. Th' las' thing I need is a Wookiee playin' nursemaid for me."

The Wookiee--Chewbacca, that was it--growled softly, his blue eyes shadowed with concern. Han's lip curled. "I'm perfectly capable of lookin' after myself, and don't you forget it. Just 'cause I saved your furry butt from being vaporized doesn't mean you owe me a thing. I tol' you before--I owed a Wookiee, long ago. Owed her my life, coupla times over. So I saved you, 'cause I owed her."

Chewbacca made a sound halfway between a moan and a snarl. Han shook his head. "No, that means you don't owe me a thing, don't you get it? I owed her, but I couldn't repay her. So I helped you out, which makes us even . . . square. So will you *please* take those credits I gave you, and go back to Kashyyyk? You ain't doin' me any favors staying here, hairball. I need you like I need a blaster burn on my butt."

Affronted, Chewbacca drew himself up to his full Wookiee height. He growled low in his throat.

"Yeah, I know I tossed away my career and my livin' that day on Coruscant when I stopped Commander Nyklas from shootin' you. I *hate* slavery, and watchin' Nyklas use a force whip ain't a particularly appetizing sight. I know Wookiees, you see. When I was growin' up, a Wookiee was my best friend. I knew you were gonna turn on Nyklas before you did it--just like I knew Nyklas would go for his blaster. I couldn't just stand there and watch him blast you. But don't go tryin' to make me out as some kinda hero, Chewie. I don't need a partner, and I don't *want* a friend. My name says it all, pal. Solo."

Han jerked a thumb at his chest. "Solo. In my language, that means me, alone, by myself. Get it? That's the way it is, and that's the way I like it. So . . . no offense, Chewie, but why don't you just *scram.* As in, *go away. Permanently."*

Chewie stared at Han for a long moment, then he snorted disdainfully, turned, and strode out of the bar.

Han wondered disinterestedly if he'd actually managed to convince the big hairy oaf to leave for good. If he had, that was reason for celebration. For another drink . . .

As he glanced around the bar, he saw that over in the corner several patrons were gathering around a table. A sabacc game was forming. Han wondered whether he ought to try to get in on it. Mentally he reviewed the contents of his credit pouch, and decided that might not be a bad idea. He usually had very good luck at sabacc, and every credit counted, these days.

These days . . .

Han sighed. How long had it been since that fateful day when he'd been sent to assist Commander Nyklas with the crew of Wookiee laborers assigned to complete a new wing on the Imperial Hall of Heroes? He counted, grimacing as he realized that he'd lost days on end in there . . . days probably spent in a dark haze of ale and bitter recrimination. In two days it would be two months.

Han's mouth tightened and he ran an unsteady hand through his unruly brown hair. For the past five years he'd kept it cut short in approved military fashion, but now it was growing out, getting almost shaggy. He had a sudden, sharp mental image of himself as he'd been then--immaculately groomed, insignia polished,

boots shining--and glanced down at himself.

What a contrast between then and now. He was wearing a stained, grayish shirt that had once been white, a stained, gray neo-leather jacket he'd purchased secondhand, and dark blue military-style trousers with his Corellian bloodstripe running down the outside seam. Only the boots were the same. They were custom-fitted when each cadet was commissioned, so the Empire hadn't wanted them back. Han had been commissioned just a little over eight months ago, and no junior lieutenant had ever been prouder of his rank--or of those shining boots.

The boots were scuffed now, and worn. Han's lip curled as he regarded them. Scuffed and worn by life, all the spit and polish gone . . . that about described *him* these days, too.

In a moment of painful honesty, Han admitted that he probably wouldn't have been able to stay in the Imperial Navy even if he hadn't gotten himself cashiered for rescuing and freeing Chewbacca. He'd started his career with high hopes, but disillusionment had quickly set in. The prejudice against nonhumans had been hard to take for someone raised the way Han had been, but he'd bitten his tongue and remained silent. But the endless, silly bureaucratic regs, the blind stupidityof so many of the officers--Han had already begun to wonder how long he'd be able to take it.

But he'd never figured on a dishonorable discharge, loss of pension and back pay, and--worst of all--being blacklisted as a pilot. They hadn't taken his license, but Han had quickly discovered that no legitimate company would hire him. He'd tramped the permacrete of Coruscant for weeks, in between alcoholic binges, looking for work--and found all respectable doors closed to him.

Then, one night, as he'd tavern-hopped in a section of the planet-wide city near the alien ghetto, a huge, furred shadow had flowed out of the deeper shadows of an alley and confronted Han.

For long moments Han's ale-fogged brain hadn't even recognized the Wookiee as the one he'd saved. It was only when Chewbacca began speaking, thanking Han for saving his life and freeing him from slavery, that Han had realized who he was. Chewie had been quite direct--his people didn't mince words. He, Chewbacca, had sworn a life debt to Han Solo. Where Han went, from that day forward, he would go, too.

And he had.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Eleanor Yoo:

The book The Hutt Gambit (Star Wars: The Han Solo Trilogy, Vol. 2) has a lot details on it. So when you make sure to read this book you can get a lot of benefit. The book was authored by the very famous author. The writer makes some research prior to write this book. This book very easy to read you can get the point easily after looking over this book.

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