



The Paradise Snare (Star Wars, The Han Solo Trilogy #1) (Book 1)

By A.C. Crispin



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Here is the first book in the blockbuster trilogy that chronicles the never-before-told story of the young Han Solo. Set before the Star Wars movie adventures, these books chronicle the coming-of-age of the galaxy's most famous con man, smuggler, and thief.

The first book in this exciting new Han Solo series begins with a recounting of Han's late teen years and shows us how he escaped an unhappy adopted home situation to carve out an adventurous new life for himself as a pilot. Han Solo, the handsome rogue, is every girl's dream man, and every boy's hero. **The Paradise Snare** is another stellar Star Wars production, complete with original music and sound effect



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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

With the re-release of the Star Wars movies, interest in the books will likely increase. While many of the recent ones took the beloved characters into the future, this first book in the "Han Solo Trilogy" tells the story of the smuggler/pilot's childhood and teen years. Abandoned, then taken in by a Fagin-like thief/space pirate, and finally raised by an old female Wookiee, Han escapes into his first piloting job, where he falls in love for the first time and saves his girlfriend from enslavement. Crispin deftly weaves Han's early years into the Star WarsR storyline and provides details that shape his personality. This prequel belongs in Star WarsR sf collections.

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From the Inside Flap

This novel begins with Han's late teen years and shows us how he escaped an unhappy adopted home situation to carve out a new life for himself as a pilot.

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Han Solo gripped the stolen blaster as he tiptoed along the narrow metal corridor. When he'd wired into the sim and jimmied the lock into the weapons cache, he'd only had a moment to reach in and grab the first weapon that came to hand. There'd been no time to pick and choose.

Nervously, he pushed strands of damp brown hair back from his forehead, realizing he was sweating. The blaster felt heavy and awkward in his hand as he examined it. Han had seldom held one before, and he only knew how to check the charge from the reading he'd done. He'd never actually fired a weapon. Garriss Shrike didn't permit anyone but his officers to walk around armed. Squinting in the dim light, the young swoop pilot flipped open a small panel in the thickest part of the barrel and peered down at the readouts. *Good. Fully charged. Shrike may be a bully and a fool, but he runs a taut ship.*

Not even to himself would the youth admit how much he actually feared and hated the captain of *Trader's Luck*. He'd learned long ago that showing fear of any sort was a swift guarantee of a beating--or worse. The only thing bullies and fools respected was courage--or, at least, bravado. So Han Solo had learned never to allow fear to surface in his mind or heart. There were times when he was dimly aware that it was there, deep down, buried under layers of street toughness, but anytime he recognized it for what it was, Han resolutely buried it even deeper.

Experimentally, he swung the blaster up to eye level and awkwardly closed one brown eye as he sighted along the barrel. The muzzle of the weapon wavered slightly, and Han cursed softly under his breath as he realized his hand was trembling. *Come on, he told himself, show some backbone, Solo. Getting off this ship and away from Shrike is worth a little risk.*

Reflexively, he glanced over his shoulder, then turned back just in time to duck under a low-hanging power coupling. He'd chosen this route because it avoided all the living quarters and recreation areas, but it was so narrow and low-ceilinged that he was beginning to feel claustrophobic as he tiptoed forward, resisting the urge to turn and look back over his shoulder.

Ahead of him, the near tunnel widened out, and Han realized he was almost at his destination. *Only a few*

more minutes, he told himself, continuing to move with a stealthy grace that made his progress as soundless as that of a wonat's furred toe-pads. He was skirting the hyperdrive modules now, and then a larger corridor intersected. Han turned right, relieved that he could now walk without stooping.

He crept up to the door of the big galley and hesitated outside, his ears and nose busy. Sounds...yes, only the ones he'd been expecting to hear. The soft clatter of metal pans, the *sploooooch* of dough being punched, and then the faint sounds of it being kneaded.

He could smell the dough, now. Wastril bread, his favorite. Han's mouth tightened. With any luck, he wouldn't be here to eat any of this particular batch.

Sticking the blaster into his belt, he opened the door and stepped into the galley. "Hey...Dewlanna..." he said softly. "It's me. I've come to say good-bye."

The tall, furred being who had been vigorously kneading the wastril dough swung around to face him with a soft, inquiring growl.

Dewlanna's real name was Dewlannamapia, and she had been Han's closest friend since she'd come to live aboard *Trader's Luck* nearly ten years ago, when Han had been about nine. (The young swoop pilot had no idea of when he'd been born, of course. Or who his parents had been. If it hadn't been for Dewlanna, he wouldn't even have known that his last name was "Solo.")

Han couldn't speak Wookiee--trying to reproduce the growls, barks, roars, and rumbling grunts made his throat sore, and he knew he sounded ridiculous--but he understood it very well. For her part, Dewlanna couldn't speak Basic, but she understood it as well as she did her own language. So communication between the human youth and the elderly Wookiee widow was fluent, but...different.

Han had gotten used to it years ago and never thought about it anymore. He and Dewlanna just...talked. They understood each other perfectly. Now he hefted the stolen blaster, careful not to point it at his friend. "Yes," he replied, in response to Dewlanna's comment, "tonight's the night. I'm getting off *Trader's Luck* and I'm never coming back."

Dewlanna rumbled at him worriedly as she automatically resumed kneading her dough. Han shook his head, giving her a lopsided grin. "You worry too much, Dewlanna. Of course I've got it all planned. I've got a spacesuit stashed in a locker near the robot freighter docks, and there's a ship docked there now that will be departing as soon as it's unloaded and refueled. A robot freighter, and it's headed where I want to go."

Dewlanna punched her dough, then growled a soft interrogatory.

"I'm heading for Ylesia," Han told her. "Remember I told you all about it? It's a religious colony near Hutt space, and they offer pilgrims sanctuary from the outside universe. I'll be safe from Shrike there. And"--he held up a small holodisk where the Wookiee cook could see it--"look at this! They're advertising for a pilot! I already used up the last of my payout credits from that job we pulled, to send a message, telling them I'm coming to interview for the job."

Dewlanna roared softly.

"Hey, I can't let you do that," Han protested, watching the cook set the loaves into pans and slide them into the thermal grid to bake. "I'll be okay. I'll lift some credits on my way to the robot ship. Don't worry,

Dewlanna."

The Wookiee ignored him as she shuffled quickly across the galley, her hairy, slightly stooped form moving rapidly despite her advanced age. Dewlanna was nearly six hundred years old, Han knew. Old even for a Wookiee.

She disappeared into the door of her private living quarters, and then, a moment later, reappeared, clutching a pouch woven of some silky material that might even, from the look of it, be Wookiee fur.

She held it out to him with a soft, insistent whine.

Han shook his head again, and childishly put his hands behind his back. "No," he said firmly. "I'm not taking your savings, Dewlanna. You'll need those credits to buy passage to join me."

The Wookiee cocked her head and made a short, questioning sound.

"Of course you're going to join me!" Han said. "You don't think I'm going to leave you here to rot on this hulk, do you? Shrike gets crazier every year. Nobody's safe aboard the *Luck*. When I get to Ylesia and get settled in, I'm going to send for you to join me. Ylesia's a religious retreat, and they offer their pilgrims sanctuary. Shrike won't be able to touch us there."

Dewlanna reached inside the pouch, her hairy fingers surprisingly dexterous as she sifted through the credit vouchers inside. She handed several to her young friend. With a sigh, Han relented and took them. "Well...okay. But this is just a *loan*, okay? I'm going to pay you back. The salary the Ylesian priests are offering is a good one."

She growled her assent, then, without warning, reached out to ruffle his hair with her massive paw, leaving it sticking out in wild disarray. "Hey!" Han yelped. Wookiee head rubs were not to be taken lightly. "I just combed my hair!"

Dewlanna growled, amused, and Han drew himself up indignantly. "I do *not* look better scruffy. I keep telling you, the term 'scruffy' ain't complimentary among humans."

He stared at her, his indignation vanishing as he realized that this was the last time he'd see her beloved furry face, her gentle blue eyes, for a long time. Dewlanna had been his closest--and frequently *only*--friend for so long now. Leaving her was hard, very hard.

Impulsively, the Corellian youth threw himself against her warm, solid bulk, hugging her fiercely. His head reached only to the middle of her chest. Han could remember when he'd barely stood as tall as her waist. "I'm going to miss you," he said, his face muffled against her fur, his eyes stinging. "You take care of yourself, Dewlanna."

She roared softly, and her long, hairy arms came around him as she returned the embrace.

"Well, ain't this a touching sight," said a cold, all-too-familiar voice.

Han and Dewlanna both froze, then wheeled to face the man who'd entered through the Wookiee's quarters. Garris Shrike lounged in the doorway, his handsome features set in a smile that made Han's blood coagulate in his veins.

Users Review

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