

CINEMATIC CLASSICS



**STAR  
WARS**™

EPISODE V

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK



### THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

*It is a dark time for the Rebellion. Although the Death Star has been destroyed, Imperial troops have driven the Rebel forces from their hidden base and pursued them across the galaxy.*

*Evading the dreaded Imperial Starfleet, a group of freedom fighters led by Luke Skywalker has established a new secret base on the remote ice world of Hoth.*

*The evil lord Darth Vader, obsessed with finding young Skywalker, has dispatched thousands of remote probes into the far reaches of space....*

Far out in the depths of space, the Imperial Star Destroyer drifted silently. Its vast underside released a number of small, unmanned projectiles. The probes fired their engines, blasting out across the galaxy in search of the Rebels' newest hideout. It wasn't long before one of them found its target.

Rocketing through the atmosphere of Hoth, the probe crashed into the planet's snowy surface. From the impact crater a gleaming black droid emerged, its sensors whirring.

A short distance away, the rebel hero Luke Skywalker peered through his macrobinoculars. Seated astride a two-legged creature known as a tauntaun, he used the comlink on his wrist to radio his friend Han Solo. They'd been sent out to patrol the area around the Rebels' secret base. 'There isn't enough life on this ice cube to fill a space cruiser,' Han grumbled. 'Sensors are placed. I'm going back.'



Concept art for an Imperial probe droid. RALPH MCQUARRIE

Luke promised to follow, just as soon as he checked out the meteorite whose smoke trail he'd observed moments before. But before he could reach it, his tauntaun began to gabble fearfully.

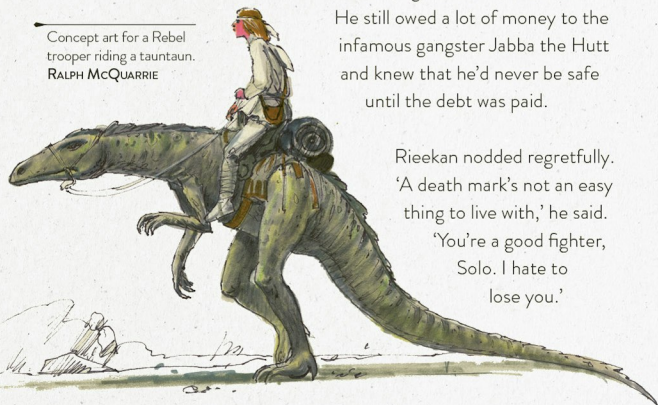
There was a sudden deafening roar! Before Luke could react, a huge, white-furred paw swiped at him, knocking him unconscious. It belonged to an ice-beast called a wampa, which stood three metres tall and had huge teeth and claws. It dispatched Luke's tauntaun with a single blow. Then it began dragging Luke away through the snow.

Back at the Rebel headquarters, codenamed Echo Base, Han Solo returned from his patrol. Entering through a hangar teeming with Rebel troops, he made his way to the command centre to be greeted by the officer in charge, General Rieekan.

'General, I gotta leave,' Han stated. He still owed a lot of money to the infamous gangster Jabba the Hutt and knew that he'd never be safe until the debt was paid.

Rieekan nodded regretfully. 'A death mark's not an easy thing to live with,' he said. 'You're a good fighter, Solo. I hate to lose you.'

Concept art for a Rebel trooper riding a tauntaun. **RALPH McQUARRIE**



Concept art for a Rebel trooper outside of Echo Base. **RALPH McQUARRIE**

From across the command centre, a young woman glanced in Han's direction. It was Princess Leia Organa, whose brave actions had helped destroy the Death Star. She followed Han into an adjoining corridor and called out his name. 'I thought you had decided to stay,' she said.

Han shook his head. A run-in with one of Jabba's henchmen on the planet Ord Mantell had reminded him how much danger he was in.

'We need you,' Leia continued.

Han turned. 'We need?' he asked. 'What about, you need?'



'I need?' Leia shot back. 'I don't know what you're talking about.'

'Come on!' Han cajoled. 'You want me to stay because of the way you feel about me.'

Leia stared at him in disbelief. 'You're imagining things.'



Concept art for the headquarters of Rebel command centre, featuring portable equipment that could be carried in. RALPH McQUARRIE

'Am I?' Han demanded. 'Then why are you following me? Afraid I was going to leave without giving you a goodbye kiss?'

Leia lost her patience. 'I'd just as soon kiss a Wookiee,' she snapped.

Han stormed back to the hangar where his fur-covered Wookiee co-

pilot Chewbacca was working to fix their battered old spaceship, the *Millennium Falcon*. But it wasn't long before they were interrupted by two droids: gleaming protocol unit C-3PO and his diminutive counterpart, the astromech R2-D2. They'd been sent to ask Han if he knew the whereabouts of Luke Skywalker.

Suddenly concerned, Han consulted the deck officer only to discover that Luke still hadn't returned from patrol. 'Then we'll have to go out on tauntauns,' he said without hesitation.

An officer looked at him in horror. 'Sir, the temperature's dropping too rapidly!'

'That's right,' Han said, leaping onto the nearest mount. 'And my friend's out in it.'



Concept art for the wampa. JOE JOHNSTON

Before anyone could stop him, Han rode out into the frozen wasteland.

In a hidden ice cave, Luke Skywalker regained consciousness only to find himself hanging upside down by his ankles. A short distance away, the wampa was feasting on the bloody remains of Luke's tauntaun. Luke knew it was only a matter of time before the beast turned its attention to him.

Looking around, he spotted his lightsaber, an energy-bladed weapon used by the Jedi. It was just out of reach. Closing his eyes, Luke summoned the power of the mystical energy field known as the Force. The saber's hilt began to tremble.

The wampa rose to its feet, lumbering towards Luke. Just in time, the saber leapt into Luke's hand. He ignited the blue blade, cutting himself free. Then he slashed at the wampa, severing the beast's arm. The wampa howled in rage and pain as Luke fled, out into the raging snowstorm.



Concept art storyboard showing Luke Skywalker attempting to master the Force. RALPH MCQUARRIE